Creating Destiny: Crafting a Historical Tale Based upon the Life of Emmeline B. Wells.

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Creating Destiny – Crafting A Historical Tale Based Upon The Life of Emmeline B. Wells

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by
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ABSTRACT

Creating Destiny – Crafting A Historical Tale Based Upon The Life of Emmeline B. Wells

by

Rishi Allen Richardson

This study examines the process and procedures employed by storytellers to craft an oral historical narrative. Contemporary storytellers are working toward a transferable methodology and this work is an effort toward that end. Using the various procedures described by nearly 20 storytellers, a single process is assembled. The methodology is then tested, checking for transferability.

The case study used to test the methodology is based on the life of Emmeline B. Wells, the fifth Relief Society President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Wells was born in Massachusetts and emigrated to the west in 1848. She edited a leading suffrage paper of her time, The Woman’s Exponent. Wells also worked, unsuccessfully, to repeal anti-polygamy laws.

Engaging the methodology, through the means of this case study, the paper outlines both the contemporary storytellers’ crafting processes as well as her own experiences. As gaps in the descriptive model are noted, techniques are discovered to strengthen the procedure. Through replication of this process, insight will be provided into a transferable methodology.
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This work is dedicated to women everywhere who, like Emmeline, march to their own drumbeats. They make their own music. It is especially dedicated to a refined and noble woman, Beryl Roun Andrews Mausolf Endow, who encouraged this work but never heard the story in its entirety. She, like Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris Whitney Wells, was a woman of distinction who should not be forgotten.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the year 1877 Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris Whitney Wells took over the editorship of a newspaper called the Woman’s Exponent. For the next 37 years she acted as the chief voice of Mormon women within the Western United States. The magazine, only the second of its kind, was a place for women to express their feminist points of view and prove to the world that they, as women of the Utah Territory, were equal to their male counterparts. After all, they did have the right to vote before the women living in the Eastern United States. (Arrington, 1998)

Ninety-five years after Wells took over the newspaper, the National Storytelling Festival was started in Jonesborough, Tennessee. This event would have impressive ramifications.¹ Due to the continuation of this festival a national storytelling organization was created. This group has sought to bring the storytelling art into mainstream America. Through their experiential discussions at the festivals and conferences they have also explored a variety of applications for the art form. The local and regional festivals and conferences that later developed around the United States have sought to continue this discussion. (Adkinson, 1977)

These two seemingly unconnected events, both occurring before my birth, influenced the person that I would become, both as a Mormon woman (more correctly called a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) and as a storyteller. If not for my physical and

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¹ During the second festival held in 1974, several people including Jimmy Neil Smith gathered at a local restaurant in Jonesborough, TN to form the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling. This association has both struggled and survived over the past 30 years. It has changed its name several times and in the late 1990s the organization split into two separate entities. One calls itself the National Storytelling Network. This organization serves the national storytelling membership by acting as a clearinghouse for information regarding storytelling. The other organization, of which Jimmy Neil Smith is still executive director, is called the International Storytelling Center and it serves the community of Jonesborough by bringing storytelling from around the world to its facility and to the community. The latter organization also produces the National Storytelling Festival each year in October. (Sobol, 1999)
spiritual predecessors’ involvement within these two movements I would not be the person that I am today.

Shortly before arriving in Northeast Tennessee, I visited my first Storytelling Festival in Orem, Utah. During the event, two storytellers made a monumental impression on me. They were Heather Forest and Syd Lieberman. Their styles of telling were as different as the type of stories they chose to tell. As I listened to Lieberman tell the story of Raoul Wallenberg I wanted to be a historical storyteller, and when I heard Forest tell tales I wanted to perform fairy and folktales with her level of passion.

Six months later, living in Johnson City, Tennessee, I attended a Relief Society celebration. Relief Society is the adult women’s organization within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The Johnson City branch of this organization was celebrating its 161st year of existence by elaborating on its first five presidents’ lives. The story that intrigued me the most that evening was that of the fifth president, Emmeline B. Wells. I was impressed by her courage, her independence, and her influence on her fellow sisters. I knew then that I wanted to tell the story of her life to other Relief Society women.

My journey circled round: I had traveled East in order to tell a story in the style of the masters of the Jonesborough stage, and then found myself wanting to tell the life story of my own spiritual ancestor. By documenting the crafting process of the historical performance narrative, I will create a transferable methodology. Further, I will test that model through a personal case study in crafting so that other storytellers may replicate the journey with a transferable methodology to guide them.
Problem Statement

After documenting the writings of storytellers who craft oral historical narratives I will address a number of processes and procedures used in crafting such a story. I also seek to document the final production of such an experience as well as illuminate techniques that can be used to refine the process.

To craft a historical story, an inexperienced teller must have some guiding principles to follow. There is a lack of scholarly research on the processes employed within the storytelling field. However, a handful of storytellers have written anecdotally about their experiences. Fundamental questions need to be answered in order to create a transferable methodology. The questions include: What are the processes and procedures that tellers employ to create a historical story? How can I take advantage of the skills and techniques other contemporary storytellers have used? How do I replicate their processes? And finally, how can other storytellers use this crafting process?

Before the crafting begins, it is clear that a basic understanding of a character’s personal and public life within a historical context must also be obtained. Some of the historical questions that must be asked of this particular character include: What does Wells’ life offer to the story listener today? What did she contribute to the suffrage movement? What drew her to join and remain a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? How did she experience marriage and did it affect her personal or public actions in major ways? How could she be both a polygamist and a suffragette? What did she contribute to the Relief Society? Her lifetime (1828 – 1921) covered a time of great change both within her religion and in the world at large. How did
she cope with that change? How did Wells solve the private challenges she faced? What was her greatest contribution to the world?

Through an exploration of the creative story making process I seek to bring greater definition to the genre. Contemporary storytellers have produced workshops and classes around this topic. Yet, within the academic field there is a lack of information on the subject. As artistic professionals work toward a clear and comprehensible transferable methodology for crafting stories, this paper will serve as one small contribution toward that effort.

Review of Literature

The review of literature for this topic is two-fold. The first part will explore the contemporary storyteller’s personal processes in crafting oral historical stories. The second part includes a survey of relevant historical research relating to the life and labors of Wells.

**Oral Historical Narrative Crafting Procedures.** In studies carried out by both Bolley (2002) and Watts (2006) collections of historical data describing pertinent past events were compiled. After this research was complete, in both cases the writers crafted a series of oral historical stories. These oral narratives were then presented to audiences. The purpose of Watts’ paper was to illustrate that the oral presentation of historical narrative is far more effective in teaching history to fourth and fifth graders than other methods. Bolley’s purpose was to craft oral history narratives that would both entertain and inform.

The results of their work, both quantitative and qualitative (the stories themselves), are produced within the studies. However, the methods used by these researchers to structure the data into meaningful narrative form are not present in their work. This is not unusual as current
processes that are used to craft oral historical narrative have long been neglected in the academic storytelling field.

Within the discipline, nearly 20 practicing artists have anecdotally written about their historical story-making experiences. Rubright (2003, p. 26-27) questioned the initiation of the process. Knowing that research was important, she speculated that it may be the first step. Instead, she learned that discovering a story comprised the first phase. Her mentor suggested that she look at the various exhibits in the museum she worked at, find one that interested her, and begin to research information and documents about the time period of the historical display.

Another teller, Ruehlmann (2004, p.38), had been in search of a historical story that would benefit school age audiences. In casual conversation she was told of a character around whom a story could be created. After some amount of research she was pleased to find that there was enough attraction to the character that a historical tale could be centered on her activities.

In Harrell’s (1985) “The Search for Hidden Story Treasures,” he agreed that the subject should be chosen first. He suggests searching the local library. Beginning with a culture of interest, Harrell writes that sifting through the ‘raw stuff’ of its history the teller can find, “tales that have been overlooked for centuries or millennia.” (p.10) Once a story has been chosen Harrell claims that the teller must then engage in more research.

Shaw (1993) described historical tellers who engaged in this type of research. In particular she spoke of Rex Ellis. For 11 years he and his colleagues, “fashioned characters, both fictive and real, from gazette articles and ads, will, deeds, parish records, census data – anything that gave us information about where blacks lived and who they were as a people.” (p.17)
Searching both primary and secondary sources is significant in completing research that serves as a basis for a historically accurate tale. Speaking to the limitations as well as the value of primary sources Ellis (1997) wrote, “There is poignancy in primary source material. But for all its emotion and information it is not complete…the secondary sources are giving the historical perspective that puts the event in context. Both types of sources are necessary.” (p.7)

As Stansfield (1994) moved through the research phase he found a one-page story describing a woman’s remarkable achievements. This secondary source was enough to appeal to his desire to tell the story. However, only through searching the woman’s existing letters and journal entries (primary sources) was he able to collect enough detailed research from which to structure past events.

Exhaustive research into the primary and secondary sources of the time period is vital to the success of the crafting process. In conjunction with this research Reuhlmann (2004) “assembled a formidable stack of index cards, arranged in chronological order.” (p.38) Black (1992 p.4) suggests making an outline of the events of the time period. Whether using index cards or an outline, the tellers are suggesting techniques to map out the events of the time and setting of the story. This skill allows them to discover the structure of both the time period and the characters they hope tell about. O’Callahan (1997) describes it this way, “This process is repeated in any story that works. I try to gather the facts and immerse myself in the characters.” (p23)

Often at this juncture in the crafting process the tellers describe feelings of consternation. They have completed an enormous amount of research and found valuable information they are thrilled to share with their intended audiences. Also, as in Long’s (2003) case they find that, “I
wanted at first to include everything in my presentation, but I soon realized people were not interested in every detail.” (p.31) Ruehlmann (2004) describes the experience thus,

“I did enough research to leave myself feeling utterly overwhelmed. How could I consolidate all this information into a forty-five minute program that was interesting, accurate, and understandable to audiences of different ages with different levels of knowledge about the war? I knew it would be impossible to put all the information into a single program, so I shuffled the deck of index cards different ways, discarded what would have to be saved for another story, and finally found the arrangement I felt best blended Van Lew’s story with the historical facts.” (p38)

It appears that many of the tellers want to apply a story structure to the historical research. O’Callahan (1997, p.23) claims that after immersion within the research this story structure simply “appears” or is “discovered.” Others, like Hicks (2004) have some sense of this structure but use questions in order to gain insight into the character’s lives. Of her characters Hicks inquired, “Was her patriotic fervor so strong that she felt a divine call to nurse the wounded? Why did she stand up to Confederate officers who told her to seek safety and tell them she wasn’t going anywhere?”( p.41)

Stansfield (1994) did not write about his search for story structure in the form of questions; nevertheless, he made it clear that it was imperative to grasp a sense of the time period. He wrote, “Throughout the storyline I attempted to emphasize issues and concerns most valued by Holmes in her writings. These included: her family and their strongly-held beliefs in abolitionism and women’s rights; her burgeoning writing abilities; her sense of wonder in nature
and the American West; her determined enthusiasm for life.” (p.17) While two of the five concerns are central to the character, the other three relate to the historical context in which the character resided. Stansfield called this part of the creation process the Subject Focus.

Lieberman (1990) uses the same term, “once you’ve gathered the material, or while you’re in the process, you’ll need to decide your subject focus—what your piece will be about and which areas you’ll stress.” (pp.9-10) He then proceeds to list a number of examples pertinent to his story, all of which frame the general historical context. On equal footing with the historical context or subject focus resides what Lieberman terms the “narrative focus.”

The questions of his narrative focus parallel the inquiry Hicks made of her character’s motivations. While Lieberman’s questions are geared more to the audience needs, the answers will still determine how the characters within the story behave. Lieberman’s crafted story about the Johnstown Flood was the model for the questions that inhabit his narrative focus. They included, “How could I make that real (the flood) for my listeners? How could I help them appreciate what the townspeople felt when the wave hit? How could I convey the horror of the flood to my audience?” (pp.9-10)

The subject focus is centered on the historical context: how events in the past shaped a person or community. The narrative focus centers on the specifics of the story: how individual reacted to past events. Lieberman also suggests, “People have difficulty grasping large numbers or abstract concepts. It’s much easier for us to deal with specifics.” (pp.9-10) The balance between subject focus and narrative focus is key to the oral historical story crafting process. It is this balance that creates story structure.
When discussing this structure Ellis (1997) does not use the words subject and narrative focus, but rather the phrase, “Create Reality—Focus Listener Attention.” She agrees with Lieberman on this idea of balance within the piece. She writes, “Historical accuracy in a story is very important but the story must also entertain. Don’t shy away from elements that will grab people and hold their interest.” (p.8) As the tale’s crafter, Ellis ensures that the historical facts within the subject focus are accurate and the details within the narrative focus are able to sustain the listeners’ attention.

While story structure should hold the interest of an audience, Black (1992) implies it is only through the lens of the subject focus that they really understand the narrative focus. She wrote, “It is important to understand the social, political, economic, and philosophical temperament of a time and place. It is within these constraints that an act of courage, humanity, bravery, or deceit is defined.” (p.3) While the facts of history cannot be changed, the interpretation of how that fact affected the individual, family, or community is debatable. It is in the interpretation that the teller has artistic freedom to decipher the two focuses of their story.

As tellers use their artistic freedom to interpret the focuses, historical accuracy must be considered. Lieberman (1990, p.11) chose to be completely true to the events as they happened. He also reminds us that there were individuals in his audience who participated in the historical event. If he portrayed his story inaccurately they would know. Lieberman admits that a level of accuracy is not always important by giving the example of his colleague, O’Callahan, who tells a story entitled “The Straight of Magellan.” (1985) The characters who participated in that event have all died and there is no way to really know what happened, so historical fiction is the only choice.
A more neutral choice is suggested by Blair (1991). If the subject of the oral historical narrative is a well known figure, she indicates that it might be more appropriate to tell the story using the voice of a friend, relative, or neighbor. This allows more leeway in determining what the narrator saw, did, and experienced.

Using both research and story structure to guide her crafting process, Horner (2004) employs a series of questions to clarify the work. They are, “1. What exactly is the story I want to tell? 2. How do I transform facts, dates and histories into living breathing characters? 3. How do I connect this story to my listeners, making it universal? 4. How do I fill in holes in the available research? 5. What is the best structure for this story? 6. What do I leave in? What do I take out? 7. What is this story really about?” (p.23) The first question deals with finding the story that interests the teller. The second deals with research and subject focus. The third, fourth, and fifth questions address story structure’s move from subject focus to narrative focus and the remaining questions provide the details of the plot.

Once the story structure has been established, it is important to ensure that the story contains a plot. Ellis (1997) wrote that there must be conflict within the plot of the story. “The heart of any story is conflict. Without conflict there is no story. When formulating your story, keep asking yourself, what are the points of conflict? How can I show them in the story? To whom can the story happen? Answers to these questions provide the basic plot and the major characters.” (p.7) The questions Ellis poses suggest that the existence conflict requires a character to whom something can happen. They further suggest that the world these characters inhabit is marked by conflict. It is the character’s journey from one conflict to another conflict and finally to some sort of conclusion that comprise a plot.
Ducey (1997) adds that “the narrator influences the relationship the listener will have with the events and the characters of the story through the choice of voice.” In addition, the listener should be able to “understand or identify” with the characters in the story even if their “chief accomplishment is damage and mayhem.” (p.6) She writes that the characters drive the plot of the story. It is through them that we envision the words spoken by the teller.

Thus, choosing the character who will narrate the story is crucial. Ellis (1997) recommends that if your purpose is “to impart historical information you may want to create a fictional character.” (p.7) This allows interpretational freedom in implementing the facts of the subject focus. Because the historical story has always taken place in the past, sometimes the listeners will not clearly identify with the characters in the story. Black (1992) suggests that “If your primary character can echo in some way the issues of your listeners, you have an emotional hook.” (p.4) She also advocates that creating “sympathetic characters” whose lives are placed in the proper historical context create a worthy plot.

Ellis (1997) writes that “Events and people are described positively or negatively depending on who is telling the story.” (p.8) Black (2003) also stated, “History may be the blueprint of our past, but the interpretation of it depends upon who is reading the blueprint.” (p.29) According to Ellis (1997) this is one reason that telling stories in the classroom is so important. “story allows us to supply all of history’s missing voices. What we have had in the past is white male history.” (p.8)

Regarding this choice of voice, Hicks (2004, p.41) wrote that she was “visited” by the two main characters within her narrative. It was then that she decided to tell the story using their voices. Ducey (1996) added that one teller used the voices of three different wives of a
particularly “complex” individual to share the many “facets of this ambiguous character.” (p.6) The term for this type of characterization is commonly called a composite character.

In addition to making a choice of voice the teller must decide upon the point of view. Ducey (1996) offers that “stories told in first person benefit from immediacy and implied truth,” but “limit the possibility of identifying with other characters.” She further states, “The omniscient voice, in which the teller describes events and characters, permits the listener to see the tale from a variety of perspectives.” (p.5) Stansfield (1994) explained the point of view for his historical story when he wrote, “I chose a straight-forward, third-person narrative style and interspersed occasional short, yet notable, quotes from Holmes’s writings.” (p.17)

O’Callahan (1997) illustrates this further when he begins his story, “The Spirit of the Great Auk.” He starts the story in his own character voice using the first person point of view. In this way he tells the listener how he met Richard Wheeler and why the story came to be. Later, he continues using Wheeler’s character voice, again in first person point of view. According to Hofer (1998) this choice allows the listener to visualize the conflict and plot with an immediacy that would not be felt in the second or third person point of view.

Black (1993) uses several character voices and all three points of view in one story. When facts are important to the forward movement of her story she uses the sound of a typewriter to cue the listener that her own character voice in third person point of view is impending. Other parts of the story are better told using the character’s first person voice, as when women in a factory converse about the war or workplace. Finally letters are read using the voice of the main character in second person point of view. These examples illustrate that combining voice and point of view can take a variety of forms depending on the teller’s prerogative.
Ellis writes that it is finally time to “tie up the loose ends and answer all the questions that may have been created in the listener’s mind.” (p.8) She says a satisfying conclusion can take a variety of endings. Lipke (1993) offers questions that will help to clarify these loose ends, making sure that the story is ready for the audience. “Do I have a good clear beginning? Do I have a strong ending that pulls the story together but doesn’t preach or moralize? Do I know the sequence of events? Can I see each incident in my mind’s eye?” (p.2)

These questions help to answer the specific issues within the plot. Lipman (1999, chap.7) also speaks to the structuring of a story, giving examples of various ways to outline the historical narrative. He further deals with something he calls the “Most Important Thing (MIT).” Knowing what is most important to you about the story you are telling is crucial to really getting a message across to the audience. While these things are important to the crafting of a story the other topics Lipman deals with speak more to performance and refining of story than to the actual crafting.

Birch (2000) wrote the Whole Story Handbook which helps the teller imagine in depth the attributes and uniqueness of the characters within the story as well as the setting in which they reside. The book can assist the tellers of the historical tales as they seek to bring the details of the story alive. It is a book that helps when working on the narrative focus and plot.

Each of these teller experiences emphasizes valuable aspects of a historical crafting methodology. As with most storytellers, their work takes the form of an oral performance in front of an audience. A few of the tellers claimed that their crafting process described either a personal or family story. Ducey, Horner, and O’Callahan are all included. Yet the story that resulted from this crafting could have been considered a historical narrative. Angle (1944) provides the delineating factor that separates the personal or family story from the historical when he wrote,
“Local history—regional history—in the sense which I am using the term comprises those events which have significance in the national story either in themselves or because they have illustrative value.” (p.269)

Similarly, when a story, whether personal, familial, or otherwise, is significant to the larger context of national events it can be classified as a historical tale. O’Callahan (2004) suggests that a personal story can illuminate a historical moment. Thus the crafting methods employed by these tellers are incorporated into the historical story genre.

Historical storytellers have recorded many completed narratives in an audio format. For example Lieberman recorded “Twelve Wheels on Mars, The Summer of Treason: Philadelphia 1776,” “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” “The Johnstown Flood of 1889,” “Intrepid Birdmen: Fighter Pilots of World War One,” and “One Righteous Man: The Story of Raoul Wallenberg.” Yet others tellers, like Elizabeth Ellis, have not recorded any of their historical stories. While she has a wealth of historical stories in her repertoire, there is little or no written or recorded evidence published. Because of the oral nature of this art, it is difficult to get a full picture of all the historical tales told by this group of artists.

One effort in the vein is entitled, “Many Voices True Tales from America’s Past.” Produced by the National Storytelling Association (1995) it contains a collection of historical tales crafted by contemporary storytelling artists. It was created with a companion book that is useful in sharing the stories in the classroom. Another book produced by the same organization, Tales as Tools (1994), includes an entire chapter on using story to teach history in the classroom. It echoes many of the same suggestions offered by the tellers writings.
Within other fields there are additional examples of historical narrative. Because of the oral nature of storytelling narrative, some of the practices and procedures may vary. However, the basic concepts of researching, organizing, and completing a story may be similar. And yet, when examining the results of other historical narrative the cannon of study is too large for the scope of this study. For example there is historical fiction, nonfiction, the novel, the textbook, comic strips, stage, video, and television mediums. Also, within the medium of the internet, blogs and podcasts use historical narrative in new ways.

While delivery methods may differ, it is still important to examine the tools for crafting from within another discipline. Within the historical narrative field a method of organization has. White (1978) has studied historical narrative as written in 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Like Lieberman, he suggests that historical narratives have two parts, “a historical narrative is not only a reproduction of the events reported in it, but also a complex of symbols which gives us direction for finding an icon of the structure of those events in our literary tradition.” (p.88) Further he adds, “As a symbolic structure, the historical narrative does not reproduce the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thought about the events with different emotional valences.” (p.91)

White considers historical narrative to be included in the canon of “literature.” Other theorists such as Rusen (1987) suggest that White’s ideas are misplaced. Instead he views historical narrative as a “highly rationalized, methodologically confirmed discipline.” (p.87) He further states that the historical narration has the general function of orienting practical life in time by mobilizing the memory of temporal experience, by developing a concept of continuity,
and by stabilizing identity. Rusen has created a typology centered on this concept. He indicates that every historical narrative can be classified within this typology.

Rusen also discusses the concept of time and how it relates to both the narrator (writer or teller) and the subject or character (the one being written about). Another theorist, Topolski, (1987) looks at narrative differently. He suggests there are three types of narration. The Internal Coherence narration is simply a list of events transpiring in the past. Topolski organizes these events from a to z by assigning the letter a to the first event, b to the second event, c to the third event, and so on. The Chronicle narration is similar to Internal Coherence, but in addition, it begins to draw some conclusions such as suggesting a reason for “a” happening or giving a reason why “b” is connected to “c”. Finally, the “Strictly Historical Narrative” is used primarily by scholars and draws major conclusions looking at the past, present, and future.

Each of these theorists has a different classification system and yet Carr (1986) writes that White only addresses the literary presentation and misses the hard work of discovery, explanation, evaluation of sources, etc. He further argues that the historical narrative structure is inherent the experience of reality. Human experiences and actions are already structured as if by storyteller recounting a tale.

While each of these philosophers has a different view of the overall structure of historical narrative, others write about elements used in the crafting process and their impact on the historical narrative and its intended audiences. For instance, Braid (1996) dissects the narrative in order to get at the root of its meaning. He looks at the experience of the listener in understanding the teller’s words. The article examines use of both verbal cues and emphasis.
Carr (2001) discusses how time and place have an impact on the point of view a person in the past had. We look at an event with the time and space we inhabit. However, the point of view we have about the event may be completely different than the point of view of the person inhabiting the time and space in which the event occurred. Our perceptions color our crafted narrative. This idea is reflected in the writings of Black (2003), Ellis (1997), and others.

Genette (1976) examines the differences between narration and description. He suggests that description does not include any sort of plot structure. Instead it simply describes the actions of an individual. He further suggests that description is subject to narration and while the majority of story can consist of description it is still subject to the principles of narration. In different terms this could be considered the same subject that tellers discuss when they suggest like Black (1993) that there needs to be dialogue in the story. Dialogue may be the teller’s method of using characters in conflict to move the plot forward and avoids description.

Barthes (1975) discusses the dual role of the narrator within the story. Suggesting that “The one who speaks (in the narrative) is not the one who writes (in real life) and the one who writes is not the one who is.” (p.261) When O’Callahan takes on the voice of Wheeler, he cannot take on Wheeler’s persona. Rather he “impersonates” him to the extent that he speaks in first person point of view. Barthes examines the different roles of each of the characters and participants within the context of the narrative.

Norman (1991) questions what legitimacy can be claimed by historical narratives. “as historical it claims to represent, through its form, part of the real complexity of the past, but as narrative it is a product of the imaginative construction, which cannot defend its claim to truth by any accepted procedure of argument or authentication.” (p.119) He answers that by saying that,
“histories as claiming, and sometimes attaining, truth.” He further states that “construction does not entail falsification.” (p.133) This is an issue of concern to tellers such as Lieberman, when he discusses the historical veracity of his narratives.

It is clear the historical theorists are concerned with many of the same issues that tellers must occupy themselves with during the construction of a story. Through the process of crafting an oral historical narrative I aim to show that the ideas and procedures used by artists and discussed by theorists are both traceable and transferable.

Emmeline B. Wells. Emmeline B. Wells first came to my attention on a spring evening in Johnson City, Tennessee at a church function partially in her honor. As the speakers juxtaposed Wells suffrage and polygamy efforts within the political arena I found that her life experiences interested me. The presentation that night suggested that while she led women in their efforts to vote, she suffered through depression. Despite this hardship she raised five daughters to maturity, married three different men, worked as president and secretary of a large woman’s organization for more than 25 years, edited a newspaper for more than 35 years, and advanced women’s rights on multiple levels through her political suffrage efforts.

While the evening aroused curiosity, it did not provide enough material from which to craft a story performance. In order to craft a narrative that would be interesting to an audience, an understanding of the time and setting (or subject focus) in which Wells lived was vital. She was born in Massachusetts in 1828. In 1842, at the age of 14 she joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. That single action had more influence in her life than any before or after. (Arrington, 1998)
Keeping the listener of this tale in mind, the subject focus was assembled. This included information on Mormon faith and culture during the 1800s and early 1900s. For as Schober and Brennan state (2003), “speakers who know their partner’s cultural background or level of expertise have the opportunity to tailor their utterances more appropriately than speakers or writers who don’t know their audience.” (p.124) In 1820 Joseph Smith was just 14 years old. He went into a grove of trees near his home in upstate New York to ask God through prayer what church he should join.

Smith claimed that in response to the prayer, God the Father and his son Jesus Christ appeared to him as two distinct persons. They said Smith should not join any church. Instead he was to prepare himself to “restore” truths and principles from biblical times in the form of a “new” church.

Over the next several years Smith claimed to have been visited by other heavenly messengers, one of whom told him of the Book of Mormon. He said the book, written on golden plates, contained a spiritual history of the inhabitants of Ancient America and their dealings with God. The “crowning event” within its pages was the visitation of the resurrected Jesus Christ to these Ancient Americans. The messenger told Smith that the plates were buried near his home. He later obtained and translated the record (Smith, 1830).

Hartley (1978) wrote that Jesus Christ was the central figure within the theology of this new church. This was reflected in its official name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Yet as its first “prophet,” Smith played an essential role as well. After translating the plates into English, he printed the work as, “The Book of Mormon.” Then, on April 6, 1830, he
officially started the church. Over the next 14 years Smith sent missionaries throughout the world
to convert and then gather believers. He felt there was strength in numbers.

Perkins (2001) indicates that Smith first resided in New York State, but soon the number
of his followers began to overwhelm the local population. When the Mormons found they could
not live harmoniously with their neighbors, they relocated to Ohio, then Missouri, and finally
Illinois. Finally, on June 7, 1844, Joseph Smith was killed in Carthage, Illinois. Many in the local
Illinois community thought that Mormonism would die with him. But a new prophet named
Brigham Young emerged. Nevertheless, relationships between the Smith’s and Young’s
followers and other members of the local community did not improve. Within a few months
Young moved the “Saints” once again. This time more than 15,000 believers moved outside the
borders of the United States into the Salt Lake Valley. Young’s hope was that his people would
be so isolated they could practice their faith without interference. The church has been
headquartered in that location ever since. From the modest beginnings it has grown to a
membership of more than 11 million members residing all over the world.

As a member of this contemporary church, I have an intimate knowledge of the faith and
history of its members. As in any discourse there are certain words and practices that are unique
to its particular culture. However, if I hoped to craft a story that would appeal to a wider
audience, it had to be free of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saint (LDS) jargon, allowing
individuals to relate to the culture in their own way. Stivender’s work (1994) serves as an
example of a cultural insider who defines unknown elements in a religious context for the
outsider. Although some of his listeners are unfamiliar with his religious cultural background, he
explains and adds humor to the smallest of details about growing up Catholic.
While honoring the culture Wells assisted in forming, it was also a goal to depict her life in a manner that would connect many of the choices she made in life to the religious principles that she idealized. As a sixth generation LDS member, the women and men in my family who joined this church were Wells' contemporaries. Together they created a culture that was unlike any other in the United States. As thousands of converts believing the same raw, new ideas arrived in the Salt Lake Valley they began to create their own traditions. Over time the traditions solidified. Eventually, they came to be identified as a culture by the definition of Vink (2005). He wrote, “Culture is the way a group of people who occupy a similar position in a social space with specific access to economic and cultural goods and services embody this position in their perception, appreciation and behavior, expressing these in a common lifestyle.” (p.24)

One feature of this early culture did not survive to the end of the 19th century. It was the practice of polygamy. Smith insisted that as in biblical times, God had commanded him and certain other Mormon men to enter into the practice of marrying more than one wife. As the Salt Lake Valley was added to the Union, first as part of the Utah Territory and later as a state, this issue continually remained at the political forefront.

According to Gordon (1996), the general public in the United States believed that the Mormons first loyalty was to the church rather than their country, state, or local government. They thought because Smith had instituted plural marriage, converts would have no choice but to enter into the same state of marriage as well. They also maintained it was against the female nature to enter into such a contract, “Women were duped, hypnotized, or brutalized into polygamy, claimed antipolygamists. Never were they voluntary participants in their own
degradation. The betrayal of women’s trust and affection was so painful they argued that many
died of the wound; others tried to escape the horror by flight.” (p.834)

But Mormon women like Wells (1883) led the battle cry in favor of polygamy. She
insisted that she and her Mormon sisters did not “submit” to plural marriage. Rather they entered
into it because

“of the intelligence they possess on subjects connected with their existence here
and hereafter, as well as that of their posterity and kindred, the hopes entertained,
and the actual knowledge concerning the future that causes them to embrace a
doctrine so unpopular and so objectionable in the eyes of the world.” (p.20)

She extolled the virtues of her Mormon-American citizen sisters, explaining that they were
model perfect in every way.

Despite these differences, in 1882 the Edmunds law made the practice of polygamy
illegal. In 1890 Wilford Woodruff officially ended its practice. By then, more than two
generations of men and women’s lives had been affected by it. For the next 31 years of Wells’
life the church was basically ignored by the country at large. The New York Times (The End of
Polygamy, 1890) suggested that the question of Mormonism and polygamy were not very
important to the world at large. Yet Mormon missionaries continued to seek converts throughout
the world. In 1910 when Wells took over the presidency of the women’s auxiliary of the church,
the pattern for conducting the affairs of the various groups within the sect had been set.
(Arrington, 1998)

The women’s auxiliary over which she presided was called the Relief Society. It was
started on March 17, 1842, just 2 years before Smith’s death. This was due in part to the efforts
of Sarah Kimball. She saw suffering among the poor and destitute families in Nauvoo. She wanted to help. With the assistance of her seamstress they spoke to other women and decided to form a benevolent society, not unlike those that were common in the Midwestern states. They asked a leading sister of Nauvoo, Eliza Snow, to write a constitution and bylaws (A Centenary of Relief Society, 1942).

Snow took her completed work to Joseph Smith. According to Beecher, Cannon, and Derr (1992), the Prophet Joseph said that the writing was “the best he had ever seen,” but he would provide “something better for them than a written Constitution.” “I will organize the women,” he promised, “under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.” (p.26-27) Together, Smith and the women came up with the name Relief Society and at the same time began their charitable work. They met periodically over the next 2 years.

Carter (1996) wrote that early in 1844 as pressure was mounting on both Smith and his wife Emma (who was acting as president for the Relief Society) the meetings ended. The Relief Society never officially disbanded, rather it simply stopped meeting to decide the next course of action. It was not until 1867, at the urging of Brigham Young (the second prophet), that the women began again to organize local Relief Society units.

Since than time, at each level or unit of the church the women work within the auxiliary of the Relief Society. They practice charitable acts, work toward unity, and teach spiritual principles centered on the example of Jesus Christ. There are female presidents in each unit and one female president over the entire church. It was this latter position Wells held for nearly 11 years (History of Relief Society 1842-1966, 1966).
Madsen (1991) suggests the women of the Relief Society were defined more by the relationship to their religious auxiliary than to other women. She indicates that their “everyday” life was so intertwined with their faith that solidarity and cohesion bound these women together. They and their organizational beginnings inform the subject focus in this case study of the process.

Wells’ dedication to polygamy, suffrage, and the advancement of women comprise the narrative focus. In order to learn more about these roles, a friend in Idaho sent a book containing one well documented biographical chapter on Wells. The chapter described her as a woman who had lost her first love at sea and never heard from him again. Not only were suffrage and polygamy at stake, but Wells had a fascinating romance story. (Peterson & Gaunt, 1990)

Looking for primary documentation to support this claim a compilation of personal journals (Madsen, 1994) shed light on Wells’ romance. Wells confided to her diary, “…I loved him and I believed his professions to be true Then I thought all danger would be past but alas misery presses me heavier and more heavy can I go farther O God my Heavenly Father assist me…” (p.46) In another entry she writes how she was deceived by the darkness one night when she thought her first love had returned to her. Wells personal writings reveal a young woman who is poignantly miserable.

Obtaining another compilation of personal journals (Godfrey, Godfrey & Derr 1982) I caught a glimpse of Wells journey from the ordinary to the extraordinary. While in her mid 40s Wells wrote, “Mon. March 15, 1875. The snow is quite deep, and the cold raw wind blows terribly…I went to the eleventh ward to a Retrenchment meeting. It was a very good meeting. I rose and tried to speak for a few minutes, the first time in my life that I ever spoke in public
before men.” (p.303) It was incredible to read those words of any woman, but especially of one who was destined to a prolific writing and speaking career.

Although these diary entries were compelling, they did not contain enough conflict to create a full-length story. More research had to be completed and a trip west to one of the largest depositories of LDS history and media in the world was planned. This massive collection of Mormon history is stored at the church-owned university named after its second prophet, Brigham Young University. Subsequent trips were made.

During the first trip, numerous articles and biographies based on Wells’ writings and life were discovered. In 1985 Carol Cornwall Madsen wrote a dissertation entitled “A Mormon Woman in Victorian America.” This document examining Wells’ “common” life is the definitive biography on her public and private labors. Hours were spent pouring over the pages, examining its contents, as well as indexing the information on three by five cards.

In addition, other materials were examined. For instance, it was important to know what Wells’ personal interest and involvement in the Relief Society included. Arrington (1998) wrote that in 1888 Wells became the general secretary. Beecher et al. (1992) indicated that Wells was appointed as the correspondence secretary but acted more as managing director. She held this position until 1921 when at the age of 92 she was selected as president.

Arrington (1998) added that during her tenure she, “instituted the Relief Society Magazine, began the first uniform course of study, and adopted the still current slogan “Charity Never Faileth.” Welfare work became methodical and she coordinated Relief Society work with those of civic and county agencies.” (p. 127) The greatest example of this welfare work was found in words that had been transcribed from a speech she made in 1914 (Wells, 1995). In it she
described how she first received what she called a blessing. In this blessing she was told that she would do a work no other woman before her had done.

Later she accepted an assignment from Brigham Young to save grain. She recounts that he believed that through the act of grain storage his people would be able to support themselves through any famine or pestilence that might befall them. By using her influence as a journalist she urged the women to put aside grain for future use. Her writing efforts impacted the lives of thousands of Mormon women, spurring them into action. Under the direction of Wells, the women of Utah stored away grain for the combined Relief Society use.

In her master’s thesis, Embry (1974), states that the act of grain storage evolved into a program under the auspices of the Relief Society. It affected the lives of these women for more than 60 years as they sent wheat to San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and to China when there was a famine. In another article by Embry (1982), she discusses the conflicts that arose from the program. Sometimes Bishops at the “ward” or unit level would access the grain without the ward Relief Society’s permission. It appeared at first that Young had endowed the women with authority over grain usage, but eventually the power shifted to the men’s sphere (otherwise known as priesthood). In fact during World War I, the grain was turned over to the United States government without the full knowledge of Wells, who was president of the Relief Society.

Other details were drawn out of the Relief Society Magazine. In 1915 the women had “157,00 bushels of wheat on hand, with granaries owned by the Society, valued at over $33,000; while during the year 1913 $6,000 was received for wheat funds, and $22,000 was received for wheat sold.” (p.30) This was no small undertaking for these women. Also in 1915, Horne wrote that Turkey red wheat was the best variety and gave directions for planting, growing, harvesting,
and storage. These instructions, while interesting, did not really have a place within the story of Wells life.

Still looking for facts that would make a difference to the story, I accessed a newspaper article in the Deseret News describing a visit Wells received from President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. He personally came into her home to thank her for the grain saving efforts over the past years as the previous year she had supposedly sold the stored grain to the United States government to fuel war efforts in Europe. The article contained all the stylistic flavor of that time period and described Wells as a hero. It was significant because it illustrated Wells character through interactions with her contemporaries.

Finally, I accessed two Exponent articles that Wells (1876) penned in order to begin the program. In the first she began boldly, “At the suggestion of Brigham Young we would call the attention of the women of this territory to the subject of saving grain.” (p. 76) A few weeks passed and she continued, “To the women of this territory we make this appeal in all sincerity and after most serious thought on the storing away of grain while it is within their reach. We wish if it were possible, the subject might be agitated in public and private until every mother and every sister should feel the necessity of immediate action.” (p. 84)

It is clear that Wells’ writing skills galvanized this group of women as they undertook the monumental task of gathering wheat. Her success has indefinitely linked grain storage with charitable acts within the women’s Relief Society. However, the Relief Society was not the only arena in which Wells exercised her writing talents. The history of the Utah’s suffrage struggle as written by Wells (Madsen, 1997), implies that she was a major figure in the western struggle for suffrage. The women of the Utah Territory had the “temporary” right to vote before any other
women. This was due, in part, to the “Great Indignation Meeting” (Great Indignation Meeting, 1870). During this meeting the women of Utah gathered to let the world know they were ready to vote. Wells was most likely at that meeting but was not yet participating in a leadership role at the local or national level. However, the report of this event made it obvious that LDS women of the 19th century were accomplished, verbal, and willing to act in the political scene. This was an apt portrayal of Wells.

She especially magnified this description during the second half of her life. Madsen (1997) substantiates that in 1877 she took over the position of editor at the Woman’s Exponent. In essence, the paper belonged to her. She reflected the voice of the women of Utah as she first defended their territorial right to vote for 17 years and then worked to regain that vote after it was lost upon the territory’s entrance into statehood. The newspaper was so successful that twice Miss Susan B. Anthony traveled to Salt Lake City to seek the support of the women in Utah to further her cause in the east.

Wells also traveled east to participate in conventions, associations, and other gatherings that promoted suffrage. In 1895 she spoke in Atlanta, Georgia. (Madsen, 1982) During another convention in Washington, a newspaper in that city considered her a remarkable person when it stated, “Mrs. Wells is editor of the Woman’s Exponent of Salt Lake City and is one of the most interesting women at the [National] council [for Women].” (Lyman, 1945, p. 92) But Wells (1893) spoke most ably for herself after participating in a suffrage event in Chicago. In her personal journal she wrote, “This morning I presided over the General Congress in the Hall of Columbus—an honor never before accorded to a Mormon woman—if one of our brethren had
such a distinguished honor conferred upon them it would have been heralded the country over
and thought a great achievement.” (p.22)

That her contemporaries honored her in this way demonstrated their acknowledgement of
Wells’ ability to write and speak in defense of suffrage. According to Madsen (2006) she was
also adept at organizing. In 1895 she organized a western suffrage convention where national
leaders played a key role. But her finest work was done with pen in hand. For this reason she
edited the Woman’s Exponent for nearly 40 years.

According to Dushku (1997), the Exponent’s aspired to “expose injustice and to publicize
and promote equality of opportunity for the sexes.” (p.186) Peterson (1991) added that the paper
had both social and religious tenants, promoting suffrage and polygamy side by side. She also
pointed out that Wells hoped the paper would “furnish good material for future historians...not
only concerning woman’s work, industrial and educational, but the lives of the women.” (p.170)
Whether or not her hope was realized, the paper did advocate the cause of women. This is
evident when Wells (1908) wrote in the newspaper, “I have a grand opportunity of helpfulness to
women. I love my work and only wish it were possible to do more. I stand for the higher
advancement of woman the world over, for everything that will better her condition, mentally,
morally, spiritually, temporally.” (p.48)

While examples of her writing have been preserved for generations, Madsen (1983), is
the only person who has cataloged her writing career and critiqued her work. She writes that
Wells decided that she wanted to be a novelist from her childhood experiences, reading old
letters in her sister’s attic. Yet the stories she wrote were “lacking the imagination and narrative
skill that vitalized the words of best selling authors.” (p.132) She was more successful with her
poetry which was autobiographical in nature. In 1896 Wells published a volume of poetry, with a second edition printed in 1915. While her stories and poems did not reach the prominence she had hoped for, Madsen writes that her journalistic talents “added a western American voice to a larger literary movement.” (p.140)

It was clear that Wells felt a sense of destiny regarding her writing and her leadership role among Mormon women. While Madsen suggests that Wells fostered writing ambitions in her childhood, Crocheron (1884), mirroring that idea states that she fostered a childhood notion that she was destined to do something grand:

“…men and women gray haired now, say, that watching the thoughtful child they knew there was a special destiny for her, undefined, but nevertheless felt as something grand and great. So, hovered the spirit of her mission around her through her childhood.” (p.63)

According to Madsen (1985) it was in her youth that she first heard of the Mormon Church. After baptism at the age of 14, her mother requested she court a young Mormon living in a nearby community. His name was James Harvey Harris. In 1843, at the age of 16 she married him. Within a few months she became pregnant and together the family traveled to Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Mormon converts were gathering.

Arriving in Illinois, she described her first encounter with Joseph Smith, “Before I was aware of it he came to me and when he took my hand, I was simply electrified, thrilled through and through to the tips of my fingers, and every part of my body, as if some magic elixir had given me new life and vitality…The one thought that filled my soul was, I have seen the prophet of God, he has taken me by the hand.” (Wells 1905, p.555-556)
Madsen continues, within a few short months Smith was dead. Harris was looking for work and told Wells he would travel south and return within 3 weeks. She never saw him again. Several months later she married Newell K. Whitney becoming his second wife. The entire Whitney family then moved to Nebraska. For 2 years they lived in a makeshift village called Winter Quarters. Shumway (1953) gives an account of what life was like during those years. Many residents suffered disease and eventually died, others enjoyed the company of their fellow pioneers.

Eventually Whitney moved the family to the Salt Lake Valley where Wells gave birth twice. She had two girls, first in 1848 and then in 1850. Two weeks after this second birth, Whitney passed away. Madsen (1985) describes Wells actions as “uncharacteristic,” as in 1852 she proposed to Daniel Hamer Wells. Eaton-Gadsby and Dushku (1978) purport that she wrote a note to Daniel in which she asked him “to consider the lonely state of his friend’s widow.” (p.459)

Daniel Wells accepted her proposal and within a few weeks they were married. To this polygamous marriage came three more daughters. Of motherhood Madsen (2006) quotes an 1875 article written by Wells, “motherhood brings into a woman’s life a richness, zest and tone that nothing else ever can I gladly grant you, but that her usefulness end there, or that she has no other individual interests to serve I cannot so readily concede.” (p.106) Madsen (2003) describes her as, “a devoted, almost obsessive family woman and a driven, ambitious professional.” (p.16)

This duality was a difficult burden for Wells. It appears that her personal writings were filled with complaints about the people she lived and worked among. An entry dated Friday
January 18, 1878 serves as a good example of how she grumbled about the daily business of life.

More than one entry followed along these same lines:

   Work – Work – Work – nursing the sick – looking after the household attending
to the office paying bills – mailing papers – answering letters – thinking over all
my affairs – trying to look after petitions – no single soul to comfort me in my
loneliness – girls cannot understand these matters. I wish there was some
congenial friend to sympathize with me in my heart hunger. I never supposed
when I commenced working on the paper that I should have to do everything for
myself – I feel sometimes my burden is heavy – May God strengthen me to bear it
all in patience. (p.6)

Wells used her journals as a means to unload her worries and troubles. In this manner she
was able to face the world with a calm and collected demeanor that radiated faith in the God she
followed.

In her public travels there is one personal experience that was not recorded in her private
diaries. On two different trips east she returned to the community of her girlhood. Both times she
visited the home of her first husband’s (James Harris) mother. Mrs. Harris had remarried and her
name was Mrs. Blackington. According to Madsen (1998) the second visit revealed that Mrs.
Blackington had recently passed away. Inside her home however, Wells discovered a packet of
letters. They were addressed to Emmeline from her husband, James Harris. Mrs. Blackington had
never forwarded the letters. Wells then went to her burial place and rained down curses upon her
grave. Madsen states that “The incongruity of her action was enormous.” (p.4) The complexity of
the personal and public personality was both puzzling and fascinating at once.
This complexity of feeling was the original attraction to the story. Wells was a woman who did all she could to just survive, yet had independence that few women even in modern times experience. She was a woman who lost the love of a lifetime but gained the ability and opportunity to lead thousands of women. Wells raised five daughters to be autonomous as she resolved in her diary, “to train up my girls to habits of independence so that they never need to trust blindly but understand for themselves and have sufficient energy of purpose to carry out plans for their own welfare and happiness.” (Wells 1878, p.164)

Most of all she believed in the power and capacity within woman. In 1874 Wells wrote, “I believe in women, especially thinking women. Are we human beings, rational and accountable, and yet permit to lie dormant the highest faculty of our nature—thought? Alas we see it every day! But there is a day dawning when we will be better understood.” (p.67) Her domestic life was marked by the journey of raising five girls to womanhood. She then stepped into the public sphere advancing the cause of Mormon women through political and editorial efforts in polygamy, suffrage, and Relief Society.

Leading the auxiliary for nearly 11 years she was surprised when the prophet came to her home and told her it was time to be “released.” (Madsen, 1985) Three weeks later Wells passed away. However, her voice crosses the boundaries of time as her writings are relevant to the lives of contemporary women.

At the beginning of this research phase, I wasn’t sure there would be enough material to craft a story of any significance, but once I passed through the annals of her life I was overwhelmed with significant facts that all seemed relevant to her journey as an advocate for
women. Providing structure to both the primary and secondary sources of the research was the next phase to be completed.
CHAPTER 2
FROM HISTORY TO HER STORY

It appears from the compiled research in the review of literature that the historical narrative crafting process can be deconstructed and reassembled in order to replicate the crafting methodologies employed by contemporary storytellers. Referring to the diagram in Appendix A, there are four phases within the crafting process. The techniques of each phase were previously described; however, elucidating their characteristics will simplify the procedure.

The first two phases are primarily concerned with the desires and needs of the teller. Finding a pivotal character or event and researching it is often a solitary activity. When implementing the second two phases the desires and needs of an audience are of primary importance. The teller becomes a guide for listeners, taking them on an historical narrative performance journey. The listener expects that the journey will have the necessary elements to entertain and inform.

The found character or event of the first phase is not a full fledged story. Rather, it contains sufficient information to be of interest to the teller, enough so that there will be a commitment to carry through the tasks of the other three phases. During the second phase the teller begins to research the times and places in which the character or event resided. Finding and then compiling both primary and secondary sources the teller must concentrate on making sense of the research. This can be done through indexing or outlining.

Moving into the third phase of the process, the teller assembles the information into a sort of structure. This structure has two facets or focuses. The narrative focus allows the teller to understand the historical context in which the story resides. The subject focus offers the specifics
of how and why the character reacted to the historical context. During this phase the teller delves into both the details and the context of the story looking for a meaningful structure that would appeal to the audience.

Finally, in the fourth phase of the process the teller is completely aware of the future listener. Creating rounded characters that can and do experience conflict defines the plot. The teller decides whose character voice the narrator will assume as well as what point of view he or she will employ. From the subject focus conflict is created. Lacing various conflicts together, a plot will soon emerge. While the tellers described this process, they did not define any particular model of plot. There are many models, but for the purposes of this study Freytag’s (1968) dramatic structure will be employed. His plot line includes exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. With the exception of the denouement these points each describe a type of conflict. The exposition is the beginning conflict, the climax is the major conflict and the rising and falling actions are the conflicts that drive the plot from the beginning, to the climax, and finally to the denouement. This last term describes the plot’s conclusion, or tying together of loose ends. Lastly, a theme emerges. This is the Most Important Thing in the story. The theme is what the story is about. It is this that the listener will take away from the story experience.

With a process assembled the case study illustrates the transferability of the methodology. As described in an earlier chapter, I found the character on a spring evening in 2002. I then researched many primary and secondary sources. Following the recommended course of action, I indexed this information on three by five cards and posted them on the walls of my home. Then I reorganized and categorized the cards. There were six categories under which I posted. They
included Wells personal life; her writing and the Woman’s Exponent; suffrage activities; polygamous political work; Relief Society and grain storage activities; and a miscellaneous category that included quotes worthy of notation.

Implementing the historical and narrative functions to impose structure on the piece was the next step. Because I am an insider to the Mormon faith, I already had an intimate knowledge of the historical context of Mormonism, Relief Society and their early beginnings. I did further research on Victorian Women’s Issues as well as the Suffrage movement.

It was also essential to address the narrative focus. I prepared to address the manner in which Wells reacted to the spread of Mormonism, the Suffrage Movement, and the opportunity to speak in the defense of the women inside and outside her faith. Beginning the writing process, fingers flew across the keyboard in the hope that a working story would surface through the pile of collected information. Not surprisingly, the completed task resulted in a chronological history based upon her life. While it did have historical structure, it did not contain a plot line.

With that realization came frustration, and the work was laid aside for a time. As I consistently came back to the problem the narrative focus settled on Wells and her sense of destiny. At times the idea that she understood and felt a sense of destiny served as an inspiration and the writing was reworked again. But after a few days the energy waned and all that remained were piles of historical documentation.

One substantial problem with this “pile of information” was that it had many, many fragments of writing that were truly inspiring. Wells main purpose in writing had been to inspire the women of her time. Because she was so good at her job there were many quotes that seemed to cry out for a voice. Despite the plethora of good material that was accessible, it became
obvious that not all of it could be shared in one single telling. Instead, the task was to find ways to put the ideas behind these inspiring texts into the story rather than the actual words or quote. Distillation was part of finding structure within the story.

Attempting another rewrite again resulted in a historical chronology. It was then that the work had to be laid aside as family matters claimed my attention. Several months later, after listening to and reading other storytellers’ crafting experiences, I gradually discovered a new perspective. Linking facts about Wells’ life together in a logical fashion did not make a story. Rather, creating a character and then expressing opinions and understanding facts as experienced by Wells and her contemporaries was key to the crafting process. Up to this point I had written the work using my own character voice in the third person. I felt it was the only way I could retain Lieberman’s goal of historical accuracy. Madsen’s words (2003) describe Wells physical and social characteristics:

“Her dominant characteristic, one contemporary noted, was “her supreme will.”

Barely five feet tall and less than 100 pounds, she was described as “exquisitely delicate and dainty, in her writing, her living, and in her life.” The fragile exterior, however, camouflaged “an exceedingly frank” nature, according to one associate. She could be “sarcastic at times, not to say caustic,” but such expressions were always softened by a show of repentance afterwards.” (p.19)

Because I am physically dissimilar to Wells, using her character voice in the first person point of view would compromise historical accuracy. Instead I sifted through the dormant research until four different characters emerged from the milieu. Their purpose was to illustrate four different aspects of Wells life.
The first chosen character voice was that of Augusta Joyce Crocheron, an author and contemporary of Wells. In 1884 she published biographical sketches of the leading Mormon women of her day. Wells received 10 pages. In the prologue Crocheron also thanked Wells for her assistance in writing the work, evidence that the two women had interacted. The 10 pages devoted to Wells biography covered her youth, conversion, and emigration to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Crocheron’s character voice would do the same, acting as the vehicle to carry a listener into the reasoning behind Wells conversion, commitment, and continued involvement in the Mormon Church.

The second character voice was that of an unnamed female journalist. This story illustrated the stature that Wells had attained through a commitment to her faith. It combined two pivotal events from the research phase. The first describes the interaction between President Wilson and Mrs. Wells in her home. The journalist then questions Wells about the President’s motives. This provides the opportunity for her to recount the second event: Wells grain saving efforts. This became the heart of the second story. It had enough detail to give the listener an idea of what life was like for Mormon woman of distinction.

The first character told how Wells started down the path of Mormonism and the second character explained where she went with that commitment. Placing the story of Wells’ love life last allowed the most sensational material to appear at the end. However, a few more focus details needed to appear in the story. For instance, there wasn’t anything in the narrative about her suffrage work, nor was there much about the roles she played in the Relief Society. These were important aspects of her life that I felt must be included. Thus the third character came to fruition.
This character voice was that my great grandmother, Maggie Evans Baird. In my family history there exists a picture of four generations of women. Maggie is the mother in that picture. All four of these women lived during part Wells lifetime. While they did not often frequent the same social circles, all of them were believers in the same Mormon tradition. Writing fictional accounts of their interactions with a woman of Wells prominence added a new dimension. The story was developing into a family narrative along with its historical attributes.

In using Maggie’s voice, it was appropriate to share details about the common Mormon woman of the time. Having just received a copy of a new book that was published by Madsen about Emmeline’s public life, I used details from it such as the yellow dresses that suffrage workers wore and the train rallies that women participated in as they welcomed Susan B. Anthony to Salt Lake City.

The fourth and final character voice was that of Wells’ great niece. This artistic decision was based upon the pivotal event of Wells’ cursing her first mother-in-law at the graveside. There was no way to disprove or prove the story’s veracity; therefore, it was decided that the character voice must be that of a woman who had never known Wells. Instead, she learned the story as it was handed down in family lore. She tells the preceding story and then continues by informing the listener that she wanted to learn more about her aunt. The niece travels west in order to meet Wells’ daughter, Annie Wells Cannon. From conversations with Cannon and the diaries of Wells, the niece discovers her aunt’s romantic but private nature. For the first time she learns of polygamy and how it affected Wells’ three marriages.

Finishing touches were added to the written story. Using “Musings and Memories,” a work Wells was most proud of, poems were inserted between the four stories. They acted as
transitions. I felt the poetry added distinction and charm to the piece. Finding that Wells was also a lyrist, as one of her poems had been used to write an LDS hymn, the lyrics were added to the story. Another song was desired, a second poem chosen, and Charith Bagley was asked to write accompaniment. Besides the poetry and music, quotes from her writings were included. Using these as a tool, the listener might sense how heavily Wells used and relied on words and text.

Finally, I felt the most important thing in this narrative was the concept of hope. Wells always had hope, no matter what new problem beset her. I trusted that this idea had come through in writing the piece.

Knowing that every facet of Wells' life could not be covered in detail, this draft attempted to share some of the most interesting moments in ways that would honor her. Writing this version took approximately 1 week to complete. The research had been percolating for more than 4 years and then spilled out onto the paper quickly and easily. Finally, the historical chronology had transformed into a piece that I thought could be considered a story. The written text was then given to editors for review.
CHAPTER 3
FROM THE PAGE TO THE STAGE

After reading the narrative the editors agreed that the story had structure and character voices. In spite of this, there was no climax, nor were the other elements of a plot line present. The next artistic challenge or fourth phase was to produce a plot from the crafting of a character driven conflict. To implement this phase the computer was laid aside. Instead a technique similar to that of Forest (1997) was used. Regarding the method she writes,

“When tellers take a tale from the page to the stage the actual sound and physical gesture can be put back into the story…I begin by telling the story out loud again and again. By casually “chatting” the tale to friends a sense of composition and vocabulary begins to gel.” (p.16)

To put this into practice, I verbally told and then retold Wells’ story.

One evening I met with a friend to practice the first 15 to 20 minutes. I found that because the narrative did not yet have conflict beyond those first few minutes it was virtually impossible to learn, let alone tell to a listener. Together we imposed a simple conflict driven plot line upon Wells’ life. (See Appendix B) This map was created by drawing a horizontal line across the paper. The line represented Wells life. Dividing the story into three sections, the major conflicts were sequentially mapped out according to her lifespan. The climax was placed at the end of the second section. It was epitomized by the image of Wells cursing her mother-in-law’s grave. This shifted the entire plot allowing the third section to end the story with a satisfying denouement. By manipulating the map correctly the story could now contain an opening exposition, rising action,
conflict, and finally denouement. I began to think that the previously written version must be condensed from four stories down into three.

Eventually a more complex plot line was formed. Rather than condensing the stories from four to three, the map acted as a guide in crafting three new stories. Working both verbally and mentally, without script, the first story’s character voice was changed from a colleague to Wells voice. She told in the first person point of view. Her character voice had been so vigorously denied audience, that once I removed this stumbling block, the story assumed an ease that listeners were comfortable with. This choice, coupled with the difficult decisions Wells experienced, became the emotional hook or exposition.

To infuse further conflict into the plot line I used several techniques. The first story consisted of two different lists acting as the skeleton. For the listener I fleshed out the details using both research and my working knowledge of Mormon history. But the two lists were originally written to help me remember the order of the conflicts. For example, the initial list consisted of conflicts that occurred for the “first” time in or near the brook next to Wells home. The list included: the first time Wells took baby steps, the first moment when she heard her father had been killed, the first time she heard her name connected with destiny, the first time she heard about the Mormon church, the first (and only) time she got baptized, the first time she met James, and the first time she met Joseph Smith. While part of the list did not remain in the final telling of the story, the process of creating and then sharing this list in the oral form helped the conflict’s verbal progression.
The second list concerned the latter half of the first story. Again it included pertinent
conflicts. Each one was listed in either two or three word phrases so that it was easy to
remember. The list included:

- Wells moved in
- no curtains
- James looks for work
- starts his own business
- Joseph’s sermons
- Joseph’s murder
- Harrises leave
- Aaron Johnson takes couple in
- baby born, dies
- James leaves
- looking for work
- will return in 3 weeks
- Wells waits
- feelings of desperation
- teaches school
- waits
- moves in with Whitneys
- waits
- journal entries
Examining the story in Chapter 4 will reveal how these two lists informed the completed narrative.

As I began to voice Wells’ character conflicts I found that there were details I wanted to describe, but did not have enough knowledge to do so. For example, Joseph Smith was murdered in Carthage Jail in Illinois. I knew this. I found from research that his death greatly affected Wells, her husband, and his parents. But I was unclear on the details of the murder. By returning to the subject focus research, I learned that men who had formerly been friends and colleagues of Smith declared he was no longer a prophet. This declaration came in the form of a newspaper called the Nauvoo Expositor. June 7, 1844, was the date of the papers first and only issue. After the paper was distributed, Smith, in his capacity as mayor, ordered its presses destroyed. This action was illegal and unconstitutional. Smith was sent to jail. While imprisoned there, an armed mob attacked the jail; murdering him and his older brother Hyrum. Finding this information allowed me the artistic freedom to let Wells explain how she felt about the words printed in the newspaper, about Smith going to jail, and finally about his murder.

The subject focus had the ability to inform the character’s relationship to the plot. From the narrative focus it was clear that Wells was upset by the death, but she left no guidance concerning her feelings on reading the Expositor, learning of his imprisonment, etc. While she may have discussed them in conversation with her contemporaries they have been lost in the modern day. Using my imagination I created a balance between the two focuses as I described her reaction to the individual events leading up to Smith’s death.

In crafting the second story, I knew my subject focus well. Wells started out in Nauvoo, moved to Winter Quarters, settled in Salt Lake, married, had children, politically participated in
both polygamy and the suffrage movement, and wrote in the Exponent. She did all of this before she cursed her first mother-in-law’s grave. I was unsure on how to incorporate all these big events. In the previous writing I had used a great niece’s voice to “discover” much of this information. This was too far removed. Instead I chose one of Wells’ daughters. At first Annie Wells Cannon seemed the best choice. However, her involvement in the hierarchy of the Mormon church was almost as intense as her mother’s. I would have to be more careful with details if I used her voice. Instead Wells’ eldest daughter, Isabel Modalena Whitney, was the chosen voice.

In order to tell her story I created a map. At the center I placed her parents, Newell K. Whitney and Emmeline Wells. Around their names, I listed conflicts in which Isabel would have participated in. Each of these conflicts was written from her perspective using one or two phrases. If the conflict was related to another conflict I drew a connecting line. I soon had more than 30 events written on the sheet of paper and connecting lines everywhere. Circling a group of conflicts that I felt were most important, it was evident that the major conflict surrounded Wells proposal and marriage to Daniel Wells. Because this was Isabel’s stepfather, I had to contrive a way to connect their marriage to her life. I chose the journals and the newspapers that Wells authored.

As a daughter she would know many things about her mother, but not all. To assist my memory in sharing conflicts, I originally used this duplicity as a device in telling the story. For instance, I would say, “I know I was born on November 1, 1850, but I did not know until I read my mother’s journal that it was a cold wintry day.” I repeated this pattern often. As I became more comfortable with the story the pattern partially disappeared.
Using this technique I described Isabel’s birth, her parents’ proposal and marriage, and her journey west. Now, another list was needed. This one consisted of all the qualities Wells could have desired in a husband. With two previous husbands and her desire for a third I compared the three men she married against the qualities I thought she would want. For instance, she wanted a husband who was established or prosperous. I recorded that Harris was not, but Whitney and Wells were. I listed that she wanted someone who was young, who could see her children raised to maturity. Whitney was not, Harris and Wells were. By making this and other comparisons the marriage proposal conflict contained stronger imagery. I believed a mother would not share this information with her daughter, so Isabel found it in the journals.

It was clear Wells third marriage was the central conflict of the second story. But once it was told the question was how to get her to the climactic graveside. The newspaper brought continuity to the plot line. Going back to my map several of the conflicts centered on Isabel’s dislike of her mother’s job and loveless marriage. Coupled with quotes from the Women’s Exponent, the time period stretching from her third marriage to the graveside cursing was amply illustrated. Using the newspaper made it an easy switch to begin talking about the places her job took her. Through the plot line the Exponent and her journals served to connect one conflict to the next.

After an examination of the previous third story, I realized that although it gave a vision of Wells interactions with four “common” women, it did not contain a strong conflict nor did it further a plot line. It did pay tribute to her as a woman, but without conflict it could not illuminate Wells’ character any further. The focus of this new third and final “chapter” became the story of her public service. Looking at what I still wanted to say I realized that in the 1914
speech Wells gave on wheat storage I almost had one whole story. It contained conflict and
described in conversational detail what she said and did. In the newspaper article surrounding
President Wilson’s visit to Wells bedside I believed there was another story. The two stories both
had grain as the unifying subject. Yet, if these two stories were all that was shared, the subjects
of Relief Society and suffrage would be omitted. They were integral to Wells life.

Contemplating these issues, I chose the voice of a female journalist to share this story.
Giving her the name of my great grandmother, Maggie, a shred of the deleted family story was
preserved within the body of the work. The point of view was first person. Instead of admiring
Wells from a distance, as my former Maggie did; this woman admired Wells as mentor. Using
this scenario, the frame of the story hung on Maggie’s conflicts rather than Wells. It was at first
her struggle to become a reporter and her accidental introduction to Wells during a suffrage
convention. As their relationship grew, the two spent time in Wells’ office where the Relief
Society met. They talked of familial relationships, allowing Wells to voice her late satisfaction in
marriage. Finally, Maggie wants to interview the President on his trip through Salt Lake City.
She conspires with Wells and as plans quickly change, Maggie observes the interchange between
these two great leaders and later questions Wells regarding the grain.

As in Isabel’s story, Maggie’s story also needed a device to connect the conflicts. This
was especially true because of its placement at the end of the plot line. Looking once again to the
subject focus I found that the women of Utah created a bust of Wells and on the one hundredth
anniversary of her birth, placed it in the state capitol. Under the bust they also placed a plaque
that read, “A Fine Soul Who Served Us Well.” That event became the “reason” for Maggie to
share these stories. At the end of her dialogue she contemplates whether or not Wells should be known for service or love.

Finally, I reexamined my artistic choice to use poetry and song throughout the piece. I found that the text heavy writing did not appeal to the oral sensibilities. Wells’ quotes that were captivating when read did not come across well in the oral setting. They had to be excised. One song remained between each of the stories. These helped the listener to delineate one character voice from the next. Most of the quotes left within the body of the oral story were found to be an impediment to the listener’s ability to comprehend. In fact, it was realized that listeners lost interest during lengthy quotations. They also struggled to regain their footing once the language became more conversational again.

Wells’ written text was clashing with the requirements of the oral performance and had to be removed. In some cases the quotations were simply eliminated. In other cases the text was cut and the same information was later inserted in a more conversational fashion. In either of the first two cases, it was found that the listener more easily followed the performance after the changes had been made. The third option was to shorten the quote. By exposing the listener to small doses of the written text, not as much work was required to decode the meaning. When the text was absolutely necessary the third option was used, leaving only the essence. Again the listener was able to understand the story more easily.

This leap from the page to the stage was the most physical work completed thus far. Creating character voices, motivations, and actions brought the conflict to life. Individual plot lines had formed three unique stories. The overall plot line of the story stood on the solid foundation of three individual voices.
Once the story had solidified, it was moved into a rehearsal phase. Performing for groups ranging from one to eight people allowed for smoother verbal cues and small costume changes. Each remaining quote was more appropriately placed within the story and feedback from listeners was obtained. Their nonverbal reactions were also gauged and changes were made based upon those responses. Sometimes these were small changes. When a pregnant mother listened to the story, the moment where Wells’ baby died became tragic. When teenagers listened, the baby’s death didn’t make much difference. Cueing into listeners’ reactions was essential to each rehearsal.

During the first major performance the written and spoken word coalesced. The audience connected to the characters. Together we journeyed through the conflicts Wells experienced. The plot line carefully balanced the narrative and subject focus allowing Wells to share her story while the listener learned more about the time and setting in which she resided. Upon completion of this first performance it was determined that the story could continue to evolve. The characters needed more definition and the piece needed a stronger denouement. The first two stories were about love and destiny. In contrast the third was about service. The plot line needed to be strengthened in order to clearly connect all three to the same theme.

Another performance was set up for 3 months later. In the meantime additional rehearsals for large audiences were set up in both Idaho and Utah. The practice would prove useful for many changes and ideas. Following is the second performance as it was recorded on September 6, 2007.
CHAPTER 4
THREE FACES OF DESTINY

It was almost 6 years ago when I started this story and since then I’ve gotten two little bitty Richardsons and one great big one. I’m very excited to be here tonight to share this story with you. I do want to give you a little bit of background before I begin the story.

The Mormon woman about whom I will be telling you a story tonight is Emmeline B. Wells and she was a Relief Society President. There is an organization for women within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is for all of the women who are 18 years of age and older and is called the Relief Society. Mrs. Wells was the fifth Relief Society President of the church.

She was born in 1828 and died in 1921. She lived a very fascinating life. I hope that you find her story interesting today. Before I start I want to give you a little more information about the church. In 1830 Joseph Smith, Jr. started The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He started it in upstate New York. In the beginning he sent out missionaries into the world. He hoped that the missionaries would bring back converts to him because he believed there was strength in numbers. However, it created other problems. At least that is what the local community that was already there felt upon the arrival of these Mormon converts. (That is the name that is sometimes given to the members of this church.)

The locals sort of pushed the Mormons out and from there they went first to Kirtland, Ohio where some people joined them. Others did not and they were again pushed out and moved on to Missouri and finally ended up in Nauvoo, Illinois. The story begins in the spring of 1844 when Emmeline arrives in Nauvoo.
There are actually three stories I’ll be sharing with you tonight. The first one comes from her perspective as she is arriving that day. The second story is told from the perspective of her daughter Isabel. It takes place in Utah. In 1844 Joseph Smith was killed and a new prophet, Brigham Young, took over. He was also known as the president. At this point the Mormons moved to Salt Lake City, Utah and that is where both the second and third stories take place. The third piece takes place on the one hundredth anniversary of Emmeline’s birth and it told by a journalist who would have known her.

So with that little bit of background I hope you enjoy this story about Emmeline Wells.

Face One: Emmeline Harris

I stood with my feet firmly rooted to the deck of the steamboat. I placed my hand in his and all my pulses thrilled. It was a transporting joy. He was my James. I placed my other hand on my belly and for the first time, it was a charmed spell, I felt new life there.

I put my hand back into James, “James, James please remind me that we are going to have a home of our own.” He looked at me and said, “Emmeline, you don’t have to worry about that. You’ve had a greater sense of destiny, of purpose in life than I’ve ever hoped to have. It will be fine.”

I knew he was right. I felt it within me. My face looked toward Nauvoo, the city beautiful. That is what we called it. I hoped that I would become everything that I was destined to be there. That morning as we were going up the Mississippi River, just about to arrive I thought back to my home in Massachusetts where I’d grown up. There was the little brook that separated my home from the trees there. I thought back to the first time I’d heard my name connected with destiny. It made me thrill again. I’d grown up there not wanting to play dolls with the little girls
or balls with the little boys. Instead, I loved to climb over the moss grown rocks or through the overgrown trees. The adults in my life thought I was a bit of an oddity until I could take pen in hand. Once I began to write words about the things that I saw around me, suddenly the people around me said, “Emmeline Woodward has a destiny. She is destined to be a great writer.” When I heard that I knew it was true and I thrilled.

I missed my home. That was where I first met James. My mother sent me with a letter of introduction. She said that if I would marry James he could get me to Nauvoo, to Zion. That was the other name we called it. She said his family would help me get there. I hoped she was right. But, I didn’t want to marry a man just because he was a Mormon. When I met him, whether he was Mormon or not I watched as he pushed his hair back, as he walked and something about him let me know that he was part of my destiny too…so I married him.

Even though I held his hand on the deck of that steamboat he was not the reason that I stood there. You might think it had something to do with my mother-in-law. After all she had paid our passage onto this boat, but you see the two of us, we didn’t get along very well. It started out okay. She used to tell her friends that it was great that I had a degree in school teaching until she found out that I couldn’t keep house very well. Oh, I used to write about how my sister would make the biscuits each morning. She would knead the dough and sprinkle the flour until it fell like snowflakes.

There came the morning that my mother-in-law asked me to do this. I set out the story that I’d written. I tried to follow it exactly. I dropped the flour like snowflakes onto those biscuits, but they turned out like lumps of coal. It was then that I knew I was not destined to be a
housekeeper. After that my mother-in-law said I should have gotten a degree in housekeeping rather than a certificate in school teaching.

No, it was not due to her that I stood with my feet on the deck of the steamboat. Rather, it had more to do with something my own mother had told me. When I was home on vacation my mother told me that there were new missionaries in the area spreading a new religion and she said that she wanted me to hear it. I agreed. An Elder Manginn came to our home and he told me a story. He said that there was a young boy named Joseph Smith who went out into the woods and he knelt down to pray. He went there because he wanted to know what church he should join. Then Elder Manginn said that when he prayed God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to this boy in the flesh.

I told my mother that it was all well and good that she had joined this new religion but it wasn’t for me. So, I went back to school. But my mother is a wise woman. She sent me with a book because she knew I loved to read. This book was called The Book of Mormon. She asked me to read it and so I returned to school.

As I opened its pages I read how a group of people who lived in Jerusalem 600 years before Christ came to the earth, got in a boat. And, it said they sailed all the way to the American Continent where we lived. In the middle of the book after Christ died in Jerusalem it said that he appeared to these people in the flesh. I thought this is an awful lot of appearances of Jesus Christ to so many people in the flesh. I thought if Jesus Christ could appear to them, certainly he could appear to me. I decided as I got to the end of the book where it said you could read, and ponder and pray, and know if this was true, I decided I wanted to pray and I hoped Jesus would appear to me too.
I was at school. I wished that I had the brook I’d grown up next to, but I didn’t so I found a quiet spot at my school and I knelt down and I prayed. Let me tell you, God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, they did not appear to me. I wish they would have. But I did get an answer. It wasn’t fantastic like Joseph’s answer. Rather it was soft and sweet and simple. It was that feeling, the one I told you about. When they said Emmeline Woodward has a destiny and I thrilled. That was the feeling I got when I said that prayer. I knew that this had to be part of my destiny too. That was the reason that I stood with my feet on that ship.

It was such a beautiful spring morning as we arrived. The sun was shining. We’d had friends who’d arrived there before us. We’d hoped they’d be there to greet us. We knew it was hoping for a miracle because we hadn’t told them we were coming. As we watched the sea of faces there wasn’t one we recognized.

As I stepped off the boat, before I was even aware of it a man took me by the hand, pumping it up and down. I looked into his face and he was a sandy blonde giant. And then he said, “Welcome to Zion, I’m Brother Joseph.” I looked at him and I thought this is the man that communicates with God.

I said, “I’m Sister Emmeline and this is James and I knew, I knew he was the prophet. But then things didn’t turn out exactly as I hoped. James and I had to move in with my mother-in-law. There were 15,000 people in the city of Nauvoo and 15,000 people were looking for work.

James was having no success and so my mother-in-law said that she would take care of us. We had told her we were having the baby and she said she would take care of everything. So we moved in with her. That summer there were some great moments like days when we got to sit in the cool evenings on the steps of the unfinished building. It was a temple we were building.
We listened to the Prophet Joseph talk about how families could be together forever. Listening to his words I thrilled again know that this man could talk with God.

There were other things happening around us that we didn’t really understand. On June seventh, that year was 1844, there were some men who had once said that Joseph could communicate with God but they didn’t believe it anymore. Now they said that he had lost all his power and he was a false prophet and so they printed a newspaper to prove their point. They called it the Nauvoo Expositor. Well, when that paper was printed, my prophet who was the mayor of Nauvoo called the city council together and the council ordered that press destroyed.

That caused the Governor of Illinois to call for Joseph’s arrest. He said that if Joseph would come willingly, no harm would come to him. But it was lie. Two weeks later my prophet was dead. After that, chaos reigned in Nauvoo. There were some people who said if Joseph is dead that means he wasn’t a prophet. What did they expect, for him to live forever?

My mother was among them. She said if Joseph was dead, Mormonism was dead and she was moving. She begged us to go with her. She said she would pay for the birth of the baby, but I couldn’t. I knew that James was my destiny and this church was my destiny. I told her I was staying.

She left. On September 1, 1844, in a friend’s, Aaron Johnson, home, I gave birth to my little Eugene Henry Harris. He was so beautiful. James was so proud of him. But would you believe that giving birth is hard work? Just a few weeks later my little Eugene, he died. My prophet had left me, my son had left me, and now James was leaving. It wasn’t that he didn’t believe anymore. Instead he had to go down river to find work. He promised me he’d be back in 3 weeks time. I hoped he was right.
When he left you can bet that at the end of those 3 weeks I stood firmly rooted to the docks waiting for James to return. But he didn’t come. I hoped he would. The weeks started to turn to months and soon I had to find work. I had to do something to support myself. I couldn’t rely upon the mercies of strangers around me. I got a vocation using that teaching certificate that my mother-in-law was so displeased with. I had 40 students. I made a dollar and a half a week.

I lived with a family called the Whitneys. They had 11 children and most of those children were in my school. It was their in that home one night as I wrote in my journal facing the Mississippi River. I glanced out the river. I thought I saw James. I couldn’t wait for him. I ran to the door and I opened it. I looked at the man. He pushed his hair back just like James and he walked like him. I spoke to him, James, James. Then he looked up. I realized I was deceived by the darkness. O James I thought you were my destiny.

In the chambers of the mountains,

Are a noble mighty band,

Gath’ring strength from crystal fountains,

Flowing through a chosen land.

Land of Zion,

Land of Zion,

Where the holy temples stand. (See Appendix C)

Face Two: Isabel, A Daughter

I am an old woman. I’m so glad to see all of you here today. My name is Isabel and my mother was Emmeline B. Wells. She was a nice, dear old heart. I’ve missed her greatly these last
2 years. Imagine if you will a room in your home, maybe the attic or your spare room where you keep all the things that you want to save, but you are sure you don’t want anyone else to see.

My mother used to say that you could learn more in 2 hours spent in someone’s attic than you could in 2 hours conversation with the person to whom that attic belonged. I don’t know if that was true or not but she did like to look through people’s attics. My mother!

You know when she died, we had to clean her home and it was full of so many nick knacks and things from all of her travels across the world. She had gone to England, to Chicago and Atlanta which were great feats for her day. Through all her travels she collected little nick knacks and treasures that she put in nooks and crannies and it was a monumental job for my daughters and me to clean out her home. But you know when we got to her attic we found something that surprised us.

My mother was the editor of the Woman’s Exponent, a suffrage paper that she hoped would help women to gain the right to vote. She edited this newspaper for over 40 years and every unsold issue was on the shelves in order. It took a lot of work to get those newspapers out into the trash. Then there was the 75 years worth of journals that we recovered from my mother’s attic. I’ve spent the last 2 years going through those journals, reading things about my mother that I never knew. Let me share some of them with you.

I was born on November 1st, 1848, in a wagon. I was born across the street from the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City Utah. That November day was one of the most cold and windy of the year. I knew that, but I read in my mother’s journal that I was “as healthy as a horse.” I found that odd considering that my older brother who was born in the middle of the summer died
at such a young age. You can never know these things until you read them in your mother’s journal in an attic.

Then I learned other things about my parent’s marriage. You see, my parents were married on February 14, 1845. You would think it was a day for lovers, but the story of how my parents met I learned after my mother’s death. It’s very interesting.

My mother was working in Nauvoo, Illinois as a school teacher. She was working with a family called the Whitneys. Newell K. Whitney was the father. He had 11 children. He was also the presiding bishop of the church. That meant he was in charge of all the other bishops. After the prophet Joseph Smith died the new prophet, Brigham Young, told him that it was time for him to take a second wife. It was time for him to begin practicing polygamy; we Mormons practiced it back then. As the presiding bishop he needed to set an example.

He and Mother Whitney, as we used to call her, came to my mother and told her that she was the chosen one. My mother thought this was quite an odd proposal, there was no romance and his first wife came with him. She questioned this by going to Mother Whitney alone and said, “Mother Whitney, do you really want me to marry your husband?”

Mother Whitney said, “I do.” She said, “I joined the church in Kirtland, Ohio and I know this church is to be part of my life. I also helped to start the Relief Society. We are an organization that formed to help other people, to bring relief to them. When I see the joy that comes into those people’s lives I know that I am doing God’s work. I don’t really want any woman to marry my husband, but God has commanded it and I believe this is what I need to do.”

My mother could see no other way for her future. She had hoped that her husband James would return to her. She had heard that he had been conscripted in a merchant ship that was
heading for the East Indies. She had not received even one letter from him. She prayed about it and she agreed to marry Father Whitney.

On February 14 they were married. Mother Whitney acted as the witness. It seems a strange thing that they were married on the day for lovers when it was such a relationship. Surprisingly, Mother Whitney and my own mother became good friends after that. My mother traveled west to Salt Lake City. Three years after the marriage took place, I was born. Then my little sister came into the world. Six weeks later my father died.

Just before he died, he gave a blessing to my mother. That is when you put your hands on someone’s head and you pronounce a prophecy. The prophecy that my mother recorded in her journal was this: My father said that she would one day become a great leader and that she would do a work that no other woman before her had done, like Joseph in Egypt. My mother was just 20 years old when she heard that. She thought it was odd but believed that it could be true though she didn’t know how.

After Father Whitney died she was left in Salt Lake alone with two children. With those two children she had to teach school again she began with 60 students this time. When she taught she lit up the lives of those children. About this time I read in her journal, “Oh my poor aching heart, all that was warm tenderness has turned to cold hardness. Life seems hardly worth struggling for except for the babies.” (Wells 1891, p. 63) I knew then that my mother liked me.

After that she went to Mother Whitney to share her troubles and woes with her. Mother Whitney had no pity for her suffering. She told my mother, “You have a bright head on your shoulders, use it! You can have any man in Zion whether he’s married or not.” Mother Whitney was suggesting that my mother propose to another man. My mother did!
I don’t know if my mother made a list, but there were things she wrote about in her journal. She said that she wanted a man closer to her age. The man she had been married to, my father, had been 33 years her senior. The man she chose was just 15 years older than her. She also wanted a man who could give her the same social circles that she’d been accustomed to. Being married to the Presiding Bishop of the Church had required to her to entertain the many people who came through the home she lived in. The man that she chose was a counselor to the new prophet Brigham Young. He was also the Mayor of Salt Lake City. She also wanted a man who could provide for her so that she could continue to write while raising my sister and me. The man she chose owned three businesses. Oh, my mother also wanted independence. That last 4 years had been all about struggle and survival. The man that she chose already supported six wives. I think she hoped that he would forget about her.

Well, she wrote him a letter. His name was Daniel Hamer Wells. The letter that she wrote to him went something like this, “To a True Friend: Please consider the lonely state of your friend widow. I have always wished to be united to a being as noble as thyself Daniel. Please return a description of your feelings for me. Sincerely, Emmeline Whitney.” (Eaton-Gadsby, P.R., Dushku, J.R. 1978, p. 458).

I don’t remember this letter because I was only 4 and could not read, but when I read those words in my mother’s journal it sparked a memory within me. The answer it didn’t come for weeks and during that time my mother would pace back and forth every night, hoping for the answer to come. It finally did and the answer was YES! With that yes my mother became Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris Whitney Wells. What a mouthful.
There was one thing that she didn’t put in those journals that I think she should have. She didn’t write that she wanted love. She wanted all of those other things just so that she could survive but she didn’t write that she wanted love. There were times, times when she would write in her newspaper, like on September 30, 1874, when she wrote, “All honor and reverence to good men; but they and their attentions are not the only source of happiness on the earth and need not fill up every thought of woman. And when men see that women can exist without their being constantly at hand… it will perhaps take a little of the conceit out of some of them.” (Wells 1874, p.67)

But on the same day that she wrote that, she wrote in her journal, “O if my husband could only love me even a little and not seem so perfectly indifferent to any sensation of that kind, he cannot know the craving of my nature, he is surrounded with love on every side, and I am cast out. O my poor aching heart where shall it rest its burden? Only on the Lord, only to him can I look.” (Wells 1874, p.164)

There were times that my mother would pass my step-father on the street and she would shake his hand. She wrote that it seemed as if they were mere acquaintances rather than husband and wife. I guess that was partially because she was the only one of those seven wives who never shared a home with the other women, ever. My mother did not have the love she desired. She had thought that love was to be part of her destiny. But, she went on with life. She edited that newspaper and soon the newspaper began to take over her world.

It took her places that she never imagined. She once wrote in her journal, “Work—Work—Work—nursing the sick—looking after the household attending to the office paying bills—mailing papers—answering letters—thinking over all my affair—trying to look
after petitions—no single soul to comfort me in my loneliness—girls cannot understand these matters. I wish there was some congenial friend to sympathize with me in my heart hunger. I never supposed when I commenced working on the paper that I should have to do everything for myself.” (Wells 1878, p.6)

And she did have to do it herself. You see we girls were embarrassed that she went to the office everyday. The woman would go in at 9 o’clock in the morning and not come home until 6 or 7 at night. In 1870 this was an embarrassment to us. We did not believe any woman should be doing this and we told her so. But she said that you could not rely upon a man for your income. She was right. When we were teenagers we received a letter that said that my stepfather’s businesses were failing. After that, the newspaper became our sole support and we girls did go to work when we had to.

Then that same newspaper took her places. She went to Atlanta, Georgia where she spoke at a suffrage convention and Chicago, Illinois where she was the keynote speaker and she wrote in her journal, if a man had been accorded such an honor it would be proclaimed across the land, but it was kept silent when I spoke. She also went to Washington DC where she spoke with Mrs. Hayes and asked to please repeal the anti polygamy laws and then the next week she asked Congress to give women the right to vote.

But there was one trip my mother took that I did not know about until I read it in her journals. It was the trip where she went back to her old home in Massachusetts. She found herself on the doorstep of her old mother-in-law, Mrs. Harris, where she’d gone as a young bride. As she knocked on the door Mrs. Harris answered. She invited her in and they sat down and talked about
old times. Then my mother asked her what ever happened to James? Mrs. Harris said, “Your James? He was mine and he died at sea, no thanks to you.”

Well, my mother dropped the subject and she did the thing which was the custom of the times. She purchased a picture of Mrs. Harris and she left. Three years later she found herself on that doorstep again, only this time Mrs. Harris was dead. She talked her way up those stairs and into that attic and there my mother began going through old furniture, old clothing, and books that she’d had in her school days.

Then she came across the packet of letters. There were only half dozen or so. She knew that Mrs. Harris had kept them from her. They were addressed to Emmeline Harris and the return address was James Harris. My mother did not need to talk her way down those stairs. She went down to the bottom of those steps and told the people she’d come with that they were going to the cremetary right then. She wrote that when she got there she stood over Mrs. Harris’ grave and rained down curses on that woman. My mother believed that James Harris was to be her destiny and my mother was wrong.

Our mountain home so dear,
Where crystal waters clear
Flow ever free,
Flow ever free,
While thro’ the valleys wide,
The flowers on ev’ry side,
Blooming in stately pride,
Are fair to see (See Appendix C)
Face Three: Maggie, A Journalist Friend. Hello, I’m so pleased to be here today. My name is Maggie and I’m here to tell you about my dear friend Mrs. Wells. You see I’ve known her for a very long time. The other day I was reading in the newspaper where the women of Utah felt that she should be known for her service. In fact they felt it so strongly that on the 100th anniversary of her death, they placed a bust of Mrs. Wells in the Rotunda of the Utah State Capitol. Right underneath it they put a plaque that read, “A Fine Soul Who Served Us Well.” I suppose I agree with them, after all, she was of great service to me during my writing career.

However, tonight I want to share with you how I met her and how we became such good friends. You see in 1895 I was just 18 years old and I wanted to be a journalist. I’d been to the Deseret News and the Salt Lake Tribune, but they both told me that I should see the Woman’s Exponent. I had tried to visit Mrs. Wells, but it was nearly impossible to see her. Because I couldn’t get work as a journalist I was working temporarily as a waitress. I was working in the Hotel Utah. One day as I was going about my duties a short little woman wearing a pastel pink dress walked into the restaurant. That was not the common dress of the time. I thought she was a bit of an oddity.

Then she began to speak, “Miss, I need you to work at my suffrage reception.” I thought this little pink ball wants me to work at her suffrage reception? Sure. She was already in her 70s and I wondered if she was a bit dotty. Then she told me that Susan B. Anthony was going to be there that night. That made me stand up a little straighter. If Susan B. Anthony was coming, maybe, just maybe I could get an article out of this that could be published in one of those newspapers. I agreed to do it.
She told me that I would have to wear a yellow dress because yellow was the official color of the suffrage movement. I told her that I looked awful in yellow. I told her I didn’t want to wear it, but she said it would be the best dress I would ever have and that is what she would give me as payment. I agreed to do it and she was right. I looked beautiful. I arrived on the appointed evening. It was my job to carry the beverages. As I walked through the crowd I looked for Miss Anthony. You would have known her. She was a silver haired lady of great distinction. I saw her across the room and I began to make my way toward her. Just as I reached her someone bumped my shoulder and all the drinks went flying onto Miss Anthony’s dress. You can probably guess that she did not give a speech that night at the reception. I didn’t get my interview either. She left. Mrs. Wells took her place.

She said that she believed in thinking women. She said that the women of Utah would arise one day and do things no other women before them had done. I thought that was wonderful. I spoke with Mrs. Wells afterward and told her that I was a thinking woman and wanted to be a journalist. I asked her if she could help me.

Mrs. Wells said that indeed she could. She invited me to her office. I arrived and she worked with me to get published first in her paper and later in the Salt Lake Tribune. It was because of her that I fulfilled my life long dream and became a journalist. She was a member of the Relief Society in her church. She was a secretary over the whole church for 20 years and then she became the president for another 11 years. Because she was the only woman with an office in all of Salt Lake City, the presidency of her Relief Society would gather there to discuss things. Some afternoons I would stop by and she would stop the entire meeting just to speak to me. It
was one such afternoon when I went there because I’d lost my love, my first love. Marriage had not been right for us and I went to cry on her shoulder.

She told me that any love that was true love was worth waiting for. She said her first love had died at sea and I thought that was so romantic. She said she’d had another great love in her life. His name was Daniel Hamer Wells. She said she’d been married to him for 40 years. At first, for many of those years there hadn’t been much love there because she’d hoped to be forgotten. But late in life she suddenly became his favorite wife. He would be in the town of Manti, a couple of hours south of Salt Lake City. He would send her a telegram and she would get on a train and travel those 2 hours south. She would sit in front of the fire with him. She said that sometimes it seemed as if they were more like young lovers than husband and wife. I thought, “I hope that I don’t have to wait until I’m 60 to find true love.”

I didn’t, thankfully. I found true love and we were married and we raised a beautiful daughter to maturity. Mrs. Wells and I remained great friends. In 1919 World War One had just ended and Woodrow Wilson was coming to town. You see a few months before he had been in Paris, France and the women and children had spread roses at his feet as he walked triumphantly through the streets. There he had helped to start the League of Nations, but when he returned to the United States the country did not want the league. So he got on a train and traveled from the east to the west. When he arrived in San Francisco he turned around to come back. The further west he was on his trip the more people listened and helped him in his cause to get people to vote for the League of Nations.

He was coming to Salt Lake City and as a journalist it was my duty to get a story from him. I turned to my friend, Mrs. Wells. She was living in the Hotel Utah by then and she said that
I could come and see her. She was in her 90s. She said she would wheel out into the hallway and we could watch as the President and his wife walked down the stairs. I thought I could shake his hand and then interview him. I came to her home that afternoon and I knocked on the door.

But her daughter answered the door and she said, “I’m sorry Maggie, there isn’t going to be any interview in the wheelchair in the hall tonight. My mother isn’t feeling well.”

Do you know what happened? Just then a secret service man dressed all in black came to the door. He said that President Wilson wanted to come into Mrs. Wells home and personally shake her hand. Well, then I became a fly on the wall. I hid in her bedroom. She didn’t want to get out of bed so the fluffed up the pillows behind her just perfect for the president. She loved to wear rings on her fingers so she arranged her old frail hands on the coverlet of her bed. She pinched her cheeks till they turned rosy so that there would be some color in them.

Then the president came in. He was tired from his long trip. He had silver gray hair and wore glasses. His wife supported him by the arm and he approached Mrs. Wells. He sat down next to her and the president took Mrs. Wells hand in his and he said, “I want to thank you for the wheat you saved for our nation.” Wheat? I thought that’s an odd thing to say. I thought about it, I wondered. My thoughts were so confused and pretty soon the president was leaving. His wife took him by the arm and they left the room.

I asked Mrs. Wells, “Why did the President of the United States of America come into your bedroom to thank you for wheat?”

She said, “Have I got a story to tell you!” She sat me down and she told me that in the 1870s the new prophet of the prophet of her church, Brigham Young, called her to his office.

He said, “Sister Wells, I have a mission for you and that is to save wheat.”
Sister Wells said, “That’s an odd mission. Aren’t the men farmers, storekeepers…grain savers?”

The prophet said, “Yes, but they tell me the women are preventing them from saving wheat. They want to spend the money on bonnets, dresses, and other finery. I want you to write the strongest editorial that you can on the subject to tell the women to save grain.

So she did. She went first to the people in her community and asked them to help her write this article. They said, no, it’s been given to you to do. She wrote it and sent it out with a little bit of fear. The response was wonderful. She was so proud of that piece of writing, she sent her daughter to get a copy of it right then at that moment. Her daughter brought it back and I read it.

It said, “To the women of this Territory we make this appeal in all sincerity and after most serious thought on storing away grain while it is within their reach. We wish if were possible the subject might be agitated in public and private until every mother and every sister should feel the necessity of immediate action…Surely if there is a spark of true fire in the hearts of the women of this Territory…they will arouse all their dormant energies to earnest, decisive and immediate actions.” (Wells 1876, p. 84)

Mrs. Wells said that within 1 year the women of her church had saved over 10,000 bushels of grain. By 1906 they sent train loads to earthquake survivors in San Francisco. They sent ship loads to China for famine survivors. But she said more than that they were able to save enough wheat that when some of her people were struggling or didn’t have enough to pay the bills they would sell off a little of the wheat and use the money to give them a loan until they were able to get back to their accustomed state of affairs.
She also told me that her second husband had given her a prophecy that she would do this. She said that it was her destiny. When she was young she thought her destiny was to be at home to be a wife and a mother. Then her husband said her destiny was to help the nations by bringing wheat to them. She said that during World War One President Woodrow Wilson had asked her to turn all the wheat that they had saved over to the United States to help the soldiers in the war and she had done it. That is why he had come into her bedroom and sat next to her bed, these two old great leaders, to thank her for that wheat. She said that she had become like Joseph in Egypt.

I think she was right. I think the women of Utah were right. She should have been known for her service. She should be known as a woman whose life was full of meaning and purpose. Tonight I wanted to read this poem that sums up her life in so many ways. She called it A Fragment. She wrote,

I only take my hand in thine, and all my pulses thrill to thee;
An indefinable transporting joy, which lifts my soul in ecstasy;
Some charmed spell which life invigorates,
A potent power that wakens tenderness,
And adds its joy to human happiness.
Thus wrapt with silence as a mantle round my soul, thoughts come and go,
And answering echoes from the distant past seem rippling soft and low;
And all the wile I feel the mystic touch
That brings such harmony of sight and sound;
And I am treading on enchanted ground.
Thou’rt gone! The visions fled, and moon and stars are dull, and sober night
Reigns all around in darkened robes, and mocks as ‘t were my lost delight;
And then some pitying angel softly speaks:
“Mortal, ‘t was but a glimpse of love and heaven;
Back now to earth and thorny paths again,
Stern duty holds the with a tightened reign,
Plod on and strive some victory to obtain,
And love eternal will to thee be given.” (Wells 1915, p.116-118)

Mrs. Wells did plod on, every day until her dying day and she obtained the victory that was her destiny. It was her destiny to serve thousands of people. I just hope that my friend, Mrs. Wells, does get that love eternal that she wanted so badly. I hope that is her destiny too.
CHAPTER 5

DESTINY’S CREATION

As stated previously, I had expectations that the “most important thing” in the overall plot line was the concept of hope. Listening to the oral historical narrative I thought the listener should discover that Wells was a woman of hope. She had hope in her future, in her potential, and in her own self. Instead, through my experience of combining character, conflict, and plot the most important thing that emerged was the concept of destiny. By the time I completed the first performance the theme of the story had taken on a life of its own. Once I accepted that change, the task was to sharpen the theme by drawing stronger connections to it within the plot line.

Maggie’s character voice was to be the denouement in Wells’ story and yet it also detracted from the theme of destiny by pushing the idea of service. Instead of repeatedly emphasizing service, I gently reminded the listener of Wells’ capacity to love. In order to attain this goal, words from Maggie’s concluding poem were interwoven into the prose at the beginning of the first story. This technique allowed the listener to recognize the poetry when it was heard a second time. Afterwards, two or three sentences were delivered that directly linked the poetry to the story theme. While service was a vitally important aspect in her life, it was not the theme of this story about Wells and as such it took a second place role in the telling.

I also spent time on characterization. Maggie’s voice needed more fire and spunk. Thinking about her traits and how she would react in situations helped to create her own sense of destiny. I came to the conclusion that Maggie’s destiny was only realized when she began working with Wells’ character. This sense of destiny was not original to Maggie’s character, but my acknowledgement of it affected my delivery positively.
Through practice and performance, I worked to bring life to all three of these character voices. Each time the story was told their personalities became clearer. These were three women of the Victorian era who ever so slowly began to make their egalitarian presence known through the words they shared with my voice.

In addition to studying characters, a review of the conflict brought a few questions and answers that sharpened the plot. These questions, which led me again to visit both the subject and narrative focus, included: was it important that the President of the United States visited her in her bedroom, and why? What was so significant about her finding true love in her old age? Who was the man that she found it with? How do I emphasize Wells involvement with the Relief Society without becoming overbearing? To bring destiny to the forefront, how can I more clearly demonstrate the fact that if not for losing James, Wells would not have had the same opportunity to advocate for women?

To answer the first question I spent 2 days researching the life and times of President Wilson. It appeared his motivation in visiting the elderly woman in her apartment bedroom was to secure more votes for the League of Nations. He had been traveling across the nation and this was the overarching purpose of his trip. Learning that within 1 week of his visit to the aged lady he suffered from thrombosis or a stroke brought understanding to his motivations and actions.

In regard to the questions about true love, I added imagery to the story. I emphasized that it was her third husband, Daniel Hamer Wells, with whom she found true love. He was also the man to whom she had proposed. She had hoped he would support her financially while allowing her the freedom to live apart from him. This created a stronger sense of love and destiny. I also spent a little more time in the conversation between Wells and Maggie. Allowing Wells to repeat
his name created a stronger connection between the second and third stories as it tied up the loose end of her seemingly loveless life.

In making the Relief Society more apparent in the plot I added to Elizabeth Whitney’s interaction with Wells. During the conflict in which Newell Whitney proposes to Wells, Elizabeth shares information about the Relief Society affecting her feelings regarding polygamy. By using the organization in that scene I was able to introduce the women’s auxiliary. The narrative focus supported this decision as it foreshadowed Wells future destiny as president of the Society.

To answer the last question I inserted two more short conflicts. The first also involved Newell K. Whitney. Right before his death he prophesied that Wells would do a work no other woman before her had done. Including this in the second story and then mentioning it again during the grain storage narrative illustrated that if James had stayed with Wells she would have experienced domestic bliss but would not have had the opportunity to advocate for women.

These changes to the story strengthened the theme; allowing listeners to visibly imagine characters, conflicts, and the overall plot. The acts of crafting and telling of Wells’ story of destiny has been an exercise in illuminating the transferability of this particular methodology. Overall, the exercise successfully fulfilled the demands required by the process. I found a pivotal character. I desired to tell the story of Emmeline B. Wells. In the second phase I began to research primary and secondary sources. The research was slowly indexed and then organized. As other tellers before me have noted, I too found that these first two phases were primarily concerned with information contained in books or other records. Knowing where and how to
access the information is key to this second phase. Categorizing the found research allowed me to see different aspects of Wells life.

During the third phase of the crafting process I successfully arranged the completed research into a meaningful structure. I was able to create balance between Lieberman’s (1990) two focuses. Reviewing O’Callahan (1997), I determined that I disagreed with his suggestion. He wrote that by immersing himself in the characters a structure appears. I concluded that his meaning of structure would equate with the plot line herein described. In the same manner Horner (2004) writes, “Finding these connections give me a good idea of the story’s structure and its primary through-line.” (p.25) Her use of the word structure is nearer that of its use within the third phase and her primary through line can be equated again with the plot line.

The terminology may differ, yet most of the tellers experience this third phase of the crafting process in one form or another. As noted in the literature review many tellers ask questions of the subject and narrative focus. My experience was no different. The period of questioning during the third phase formed the seed bed from which three character voices with their unique points of view grew in the fourth phase. Finally, as the structure matured, conflict transformed the work of Wells’ story and a plot line blossomed.

After testing this methodology, both strengths and weaknesses were discovered. The strength of this process is its simplicity. Not only has each phase been broken down into steps, but each of those steps can be comprehended and implemented during the procedure. On the other hand, the major weakness in implementing the diagram was that the tellers failed to list techniques that transformed the characters and conflicts into a plot. As I implemented the
process, it was clear that the maps and lists were my invention for Wells story. If the other tellers use different techniques, they do not share their methods.

One can only guess at the reasons for the absence of these techniques. One reason may be that the activity itself is subsumed by its proximity to the resulting story. At first I did not realize that these actions had the capacity to inform the story making process. Only upon further reexaminations were they included as an important procedure. The authors of the anecdotal writings examined may not have considered their final methods vital.

A second reason may be that this is one of the “artistic elements” within the process. The idea of this artistic element is what makes each historical narrative unique. Two individuals could find the same nugget, methodically follow each step of the process, and still when a plot is created they will result in two completely different stories. The two tellers may choose different character voices or the chosen conflicts may be entirely different from one another. Different aspects of the research and resulting structure will appeal differently to each teller. Once the tellers have reached this point their artistic technique might have been viewed as being unique to the piece rather than transferable. This may be one reason it was left out of the writings.

Whatever the case, Wells’ story is unique, as is every historical narrative. The overall process is transferable. Yet the list and mapping techniques may be exclusive to this narrative. Examining my encounter with the process provides insights to the techniques required for this particular story. However, further studies must be conducted in order to discover additional techniques currently being practiced by contemporary storytellers. In the meantime, as these tellers continue to seek greater definition in the oral historical narrative crafting process, this work will stand as one small contribution toward that effort.
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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

Methodology Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pivotal Character or Event</th>
<th>Centered on Teller Needs</th>
<th>Shifts from Teller to Audience Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>Conduct Research looking for:</td>
<td>Find structure within research using:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
<td>Subject Focus or Historical Context</td>
<td>Characters + Conflict = Plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
<td>Narrative Focus or Character's Interaction with Historical Context</td>
<td>Characters need voice and point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index and Organize Research</td>
<td>Conflict arises from the actions of past events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plot includes Exposition, Conflict, Rising Action, Climax, Denouement

Theme (or Most Important Thing) emerges from the milieu of Characters, Conflict & Plot
## APPENDIX B
Conflict Driven Plot Map

### Act 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Voice</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emmeline Wells</td>
<td>Conversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moved to Nauvoo</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets Joseph Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby Dies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James leaves to look for work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage to Whitney</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travels to Salt Lake City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposes to and marries Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three daughters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Act 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Voice</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wells Daughter</td>
<td>First visit Meets Blackington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second visit curses Blackington at grave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman Exponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Her writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suffrage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Act 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Voice</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Relief Society President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Released from Relief Society Duties – 3 weeks later, dies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3

Story Performance Music

Band of Children

Text: E.B. Wells
Music: C.A. Bagley
Our Mountain Home So Dear

Tenderly  \( d = 84-96 \)

1. Our moun-tain home so dear, Where crys-tal wa-ters clear Flow ev-er free,
   Flow ev-er free,
   While thru the val-leys wide The flow'rs on flow'rs,
   While thru the val-leys wide The flow'rs on flow'rs;
   The frag-rance on the air, The land-scape pass,
   The frag-rance on the air, The land-scape pass, Where'er we pass, Where'er we pass,
   The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine, And all com-bine,
   The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine,
   With most trans-port-ing grace, His hand-i-
   With most trans-port-ing grace, His hand-i-
   ev-ry side, Bloom-ing in state-ly pride, Are fair to see.
   ev-ry side, Bloom-ing in state-ly pride, Are fair to see.
   bright and fair, And sun-shine ev-ry-where Make pleas-ant hours.
   bright and fair, And sun-shine ev-ry-where Make pleas-ant hours.
   bud and tree, Or bird or hum-ming bee, Or blade of grass.
   bud and tree, Or bird or hum-ming bee, Or blade of grass.
   work to trace, Thru na-ture's smil-ing face, In art di-vine.
   work to trace, Thru na-ture's smil-ing face, In art di-vine.

2. We'll roam the ver-dant hills, And by the spar-kling rills Pluck the wild-flow'rs,
   Pluck the wild-flow'rs; The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine,
   Pluck the wild-flow'rs, Pluck the wild-flow'rs; The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine,
   The land-scape pass, Where'er we pass, Where'er we pass, Where'er we pass,
   The land-scape pass, Where'er we pass, Where'er we pass,
   The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine, And all com-bine,
   The hand of God we see, In leaf and bine, And all com-bine,
   With most trans-port-ing grace, His hand-i-
   With most trans-port-ing grace, His hand-i-

3. In syl-ven depth and shade, In for-est and in glade, Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-
   Where'er we we-

4. The stream-let, flow'r, and sod Be-speak the works of God; And all com-
   And all com-
   And all com-
   And all com-
   And all com-
   And all com-
   And all com-

Text: Emmeline B. Wells, 1828-1921
Music: Evan Stephens, 1854-1930

Doctrine and Covenants 89:16-20
Doctrine and Covenants 104:14
VITA
RISHI ALLEN RICHARDSON

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