until the women were thus organized” (Kimball, p. 51).

In light of her important early involvement with the Relief Society, it is not surprising that Sarah spent much of her life actively engaged in its work. After her 1851 move to Salt Lake City, where she taught school to support her family while her husband recovered from some serious financial losses, she was called in 1857 as president of the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society. She continued in that position until her death in 1898, also serving during twelve of those years as general secretary of the Relief Society under President Eliza R. Snow and later as a vice-president of the organization after its incorporation in 1892.

Sarah Kimball’s tenure as ward Relief Society president was noted for its innovation and attention to the complete development of women. Her compassion and charity were legendary, and she organized the women of her ward to provide for the poor and needy. She directed their efforts to fund the first Relief Society hall, which functioned both as a store in which the women sold their items of home manufacture and as a meeting house devoted to secular and sacred education.

During her years of greatest involvement in the Relief Society, Sarah Kimball also became a major force in the suffrage fight as president of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association. Compared by one of her contemporaries to Susan B. Anthony, Sarah Kimball displayed the same courage and forthrightness in contending for women’s rights. She argued not only for suffrage but for equal esteem of women with men. Further, many of her sermons spoke of the ultimate and divine equality of “the Father and Mother God” (Woman’s Exponent 8 [1 July 1879]: 22; see also Mother in Heaven).

Sarah Kimball died in Salt Lake City on December 1, 1898. A widow for thirty-five years following her husband’s death in a steamship explosion while en route to a mission in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), she was survived by three sons and one adopted daughter.

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MARY STOVALL RICHARDS

KIMBALL, SPENCER W.

Spencer Woolley Kimball (1895–1985), twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1973–1985), came to the Presidency at the age of seventy-eight. Little new had been expected of his administration because of his age and long history of serious health problems, but his personal energy, broad vision, and openness to change produced a dynamic period consistent with the Church’s growing awareness of itself as an increasingly international institution. Under his leadership, access to the Temple and the Priesthood was extended, regardless of race; the number of missionaries greatly increased; administrative innovations significantly changed Church governance; and a burst of temple building occurred. His tenure proved to be one of the

Spencer W. Kimball (c. 1935) was a businessman and stake president in Safford, Arizona, when he was called as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1943. Courtesy Edward L. Kimball.
most active periods in twentieth-century Church history.

Spencer Woolley Kimball was born March 28, 1895, in Salt Lake City, Utah. His father, Andrew Kimball, was a son of Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to President Brigham Young, and his mother, Olive, was the daughter of Bishop Edwin D. Woolley, Brigham Young’s business manager. At that time, Andrew was serving as president of the Indian Territory Mission in what is now Missouri and Oklahoma, overseeing missionary work by correspondence and periodic visits while supporting his family as a traveling dry goods salesman through Utah and southern Idaho.

When Spencer was three, his father received a call from the FIRST PRESIDENCY to move to Thatcher, a Mormon settlement in the Gila Valley of southeastern Arizona, to become president of the St. Joseph STAKE. Andrew earned his living by farming and business while he presided over several thousand Latter-day Saints in the valley and the vast surrounding area.

As a child, Spencer suffered from typhoid fever and facial paralysis and once nearly drowned. Four of his sisters died in childhood, and his mother died when he was eleven. After high school, he served as a missionary in the Central States Mission from 1914 to 1916. During his second year in the mission, he served in the St. Louis area as a supervisor of twenty-five missionaries, all older than himself.

In 1917 he attended the University of Arizona for one semester. He then received an induction notice for army service in World War I. Although expecting to leave any day, he married Camilla Eyring, a school teacher, on November 16, 1917. They eventually had four children: Spencer L., Olive Beth, Andrew E., and Edward L.

Delay in organizing the army contingent from his area resulted in his being deferred, and he obtained work in a bank. When the bank failed in 1923, wiping out the Kimballs’ life savings, another bank hired him almost immediately as chief teller. In 1927 he left that bank and, with Joseph W. Greenhalgh, established an insurance and real estate agency in Safford, Arizona. Despite hard times caused by the Great Depression, Kimball said he would set up a peanut stand before he would become another person’s employee again. Operating his own business gave him flexibility to attend to Church responsibilities and, with his wife, to engage in many community activities—PTA, library, elections, city council, Red Cross, Boy Scouts, the local college, and the organization of a radio station. He was selected as statewide leader of the Arizona Rotary Club in 1936.

In the Church, Spencer Kimball served as his father’s stake clerk from 1917 until the latter’s death in 1924. He then became counselor to the STAKE PRESIDENT. In 1938, when the St. Joseph Stake was divided, he was called as president of the new Mount Graham Stake, extending 250 miles from Safford, Arizona, where he lived, to El Paso, Texas. As stake president, he supervised Church Welfare Services relief for victims of a major flood in Duncan, Arizona, in 1943.

On July 8, 1943, the First Presidency notified President Kimball of his call to fill a vacancy in the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. Though he had a slight premonition of the call, he felt shocked, knowing so well his own limitations. With assurance from Camilla and after a long personal struggle, he received spiritual confirmation several days later that the call came from God. He sold his business, moved his family to Salt Lake City, and at the October General Conference in 1943 received the sustaining vote of the Church’s membership and was that same day ordained an APOSTLE by President Heber J. Grant.

For thirty years Kimball served in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helping with Church administration, dealing with the personal problems of individuals, visiting stakes and missions, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1946, President George Albert SMITH gave him the responsibility of working with Indians. Soon afterwards, he awoke sensing a horrible enemy, unseen but very real, trying to destroy him. After a struggle, he rebuked the evil spirit and obtained relief. He concluded that perhaps the work he had just begun presented a special threat to the powers of darkness. He publicized the suffering of Navajos during the harsh winter of 1947 and organized relief for them, but concluded that improved roads and education were the keys to long-term improvement. He helped establish the Church’s INDIAN STUDENT PLACEMENT SERVICES, under which LDS families with access to good schools took Indian children from the reservations into their homes for the school year on a voluntary basis. The program grew in two decades from one child to nearly 5,000 a year, before improved schools among the Indians reduced the need. He preached vigorously against racial prejudice.
Among other assignments, Elder Kimball also headed the missionary committee. As he traveled about the Church he gave hundreds of twelve-year-old boys a dollar each to begin a mission saving fund. He visited all the missions of Europe in 1955, circled the world in 1960, supervised the Church in South America for four years—where he began missionary work among the Indians of the Andes—and then supervised the missions in Great Britain.

His experience in counseling hundreds of individuals about personal problems, especially sexual immorality, moved him to write The Miracle of Forgiveness, a book on the process of repentance that has been well received among Church members.

Elder Kimball suffered a heart attack in 1948 and throat cancer a few years later. Removal of most of his vocal cords left him with a distinctive weak, raspy voice. In 1972 successful open-heart surgery replaced an obstructed artery and a failing valve. Since he was then age seventy-seven, he considered foregoing the surgery, but President Harold B. Lee said his work was not finished, and he should have the operation.

On December 26, 1973, when President Lee died, Spencer W. Kimball succeeded him. Though already seventy-eight, President Kimball led energetically until 1979, when a cerebral hemorrhage required two brain surgeries. He recovered well, but in mid-1981 a third such operation left him seriously weakened. From that time until his death in 1985, he left active leadership to his counselors, especially President Gordon B. Hinckley. On November 5, 1985, at age ninety, President Kimball died, and was succeeded as Church President by Ezra Taft Benson. Camilla, notable in her own right, survived to age ninety-two.

Spencer W. Kimball’s remarkable resolution and purity of spirit grew from a solid religious background provided by parents and a strong community. In his early teens he met a challenge to read the entire Bible. At age fourteen he taught Sunday School. Given a believing heart, he was serious but not solemn. Short but strong and quick, he enjoyed sports, especially basketball. He played the piano, sang, and all his life was the center of fun and activity. Annually his classmates elected him president of his small high school class. His verbal humor turned to wordplay rather than anecdote, his quick wit usually directed against himself. He often joked about his being short.

He greatly missed his mother and always desired to be a credit to his parents. He hungered for approval. His capacity for hard work as a General Authority was legendary. He had the ability to nap for a few minutes and start afresh. Despite his serious illnesses, including typhoid fever, smallpox, two bouts of Bell’s palsy, a heart attack and later heart failure, recurring throat cancer, three subdural hematomas, minor strokes, and scores of boils, he never slackened his efforts. He was relatively uncomplaining in suffering and ever grateful for medical help.

Because his formal education ended at marriage, President Kimball feared people might judge the Church negatively because of his inadequacies. He compensated by working doubly hard. In fact, he was well educated by his wide reading. His addresses were carefully prepared, with his own poetic eloquence. A humble man, he felt completely at home with common folk. He expressed
appreciation and love easily and generously. There was no presumptuousness in him; he made no demands. He encouraged publication of a candid biography that portrayed him as an imperfect man striving to meet a divine challenge.

He and Camilla celebrated sixty-eight years of devoted marriage. She was well-spoken, forthright, highly intelligent, and a committed Christian. Ever supportive, she perfectly complemented President Kimball in his calling.

People sometimes perceived him as a strict moralist because of his seriousness in preaching, but he understood individuals’ failings. He was the soul of kindness and unfailingly thoughtful. He carried on a massive correspondence, answering children’s letters and writing to people he had counseled. He had great compassion for those struggling physically, socially, and spiritually. He expended huge energies trying to improve the conditions of the American Indians. As President and Prophet of the Church, he sought and obtained revelation that Church members of black ancestry could be full participants in all aspects of the Church. Few Church leaders called forth the affection that this unassuming man did.

Many changes resulted from the explosive Church growth during his twelve-year administra-

tion: from 630 stakes to about 1,500; from organization in 50 countries to 96; and from 3.3 million members to nearly 6 million. At the time of his death, nearly half the Church’s membership had known no other president.

Many of the accomplishments of President Kimball’s administration came from the effort to cope with this growth, and particularly the expansion into new areas of the globe. He organized the First Quorum of the Seventy (see SEVENTY: FIRST QUORUM) to enlarge the number of General Authorities and called as members of that quorum men from Europe, Asia, and South America. The world was divided into areas with a presidency made up of General Authorities in each area (see AREA, AREA PRESIDENCY). He held numerous regional conferences and solemn assemblies. All of this reflected an effort to give the members closer contact with the general Church leadership. To meet leadership needs, additional General Authorities were called for limited terms of approximately five years and others were given emeritus status.

An influential address in 1974 set out his vision of expanded missionary effort. The total number of full-time missionaries increased during President Kimball’s administration by more than 50 percent, with many young women and older couples swelling the ranks. The fastest growth of the Church occurred in Latin America and Asia, but the Church also began organized activity in Communist-dominated countries and in sub-Saharan Africa. A center established in Jerusalem under the aegis of Brigham Young University stirred up protest by some orthodox Jews. The fifteen temples in operation when he became President grew to thirty-one around the world at his death, with eleven more under construction or announced. The use of computers to maintain records greatly increased the efficiency of temple work.

All of this activity exemplified his challenge to the Church to “lengthen your stride,” and his personal motto was Do It!

Despite all this growth, in his preaching and policies President Kimball emphasized the return of the Church to the simple basics of good living and Church service. He articulated a threefold mission for the Church: to proclaim the gospel, to redeem the dead, and to perfect the Saints. He preached about improved family life, planting gardens, cleaning up yards, maintaining personal journals, and writing family history. Church meetings were compressed into three hours on Sunday to reduce the demands on members and to allow

President Spencer W. Kimball, shown here with his wife Camilla Eyring Kimball at a 1980 Church area conference in Los Angeles, was the President of the Church from 1973 to 1985. Photographer: Jutti Marsh.
more time for family activity. Streamlined Church organization was approved for small groups. He urged Church members to give charitable service and backed up his preaching with Church relief for victims of a burst dam in Idaho, an earthquake in Mexico City, and famine in Ethiopia.

Ironically, this peace-loving and kindly man became involved in a number of contentious public issues. First Presidency statements addressed the issues of homosexuality, abortion, and pornography, evincing serious concern about the permissiveness of American society. The First Presidency opposed installation of an MX missile system in the United States and objected doubly because it was projected for the Utah-Nevada desert. Controversy arose over the role of Church historical writing and was accentuated by the purported discovery of significant historical documents by forger Mark Hofmann (see FORGERIES OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS). The First Presidency endorsed equal rights for women but opposed the Equal Rights Amendment as an improper means to a desirable end. Sensitivity to women’s issues resulted in Churchwide meetings for women and for girls, a statuary park in Nauvoo as a monument to women, authorization for women to pray in all meetings, speaking by women leaders in general conference.

No event in the twentieth-century Church matched the excitement attending President Kimball’s announcement of receiving a revelation on priesthood in 1978, ending more than a century of limitation on admission of Church members of black African ancestry (see BLACKS) to priesthood office and temple ordinances. The announcement made no doctrinal statement, but simply said that the Lord had indicated that the time for change had come. The change was implemented immediately, giving great impetus to missionary work in Africa. The announcement of this revelation was added to the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration—2.

From a man of whom little more than a brief caretaker administration was expected, remarkable achievements came. President Spencer W. Kimball’s energetic leadership and willingness to break new ground produced twelve years of unequalled growth and change in the modern Church.

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EDWARD L. KIMBALL

KINDERHOOK PLATES

In April 1843 some alleged New World antiquities were presented to Joseph Smith for his opinion. The six 2 7/8-by-2 1/4-inch bell-shaped brass plates with strange engravings were reported to have been excavated in Kinderhook, Illinois, about seventy miles south of Nauvoo (HC 5:372–79). They were shown to Smith because of his claim to have translated the Book of Mormon from ancient gold plates taken from a New York hill in 1827.

The Kinderhook plates created a stir in Nauvoo; articles appeared in the Church press, an illustrated handbill was published, and some Latter-day Saints even claimed Joseph Smith said he could and would translate them. No translation exists, however, nor does any further comment from him indicating that he considered the plates genuine. After his assassination in June 1844, the incident was largely forgotten. Decades later two of the alleged discoverers announced that the plates were a hoax; an attempt to discredit Smith. By then, however, the Church was headquartered in Utah and little attention was paid to these strange disclosures.

Interest was kindled again in 1920 when the Chicago Historical Society acquired what appeared to be one of the original Kinderhook plates. Later the Chicago plate was subjected to a number of nondestructive tests, with inconclusive results. Then in 1980, the Chicago Historical Society gave permission for destructive tests, which were done at Northwestern University. Examination by a scanning electron microscope, a scanning auger microprobe, and X-ray fluorescence analysis proved conclusively that the plate was one of the