

[Review of *Before the Manifesto: The life writings of Mary Lois Walker Morris*].

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(2008). *BYU Studies*, 47(2), 170-74.

In *Before the Manifesto*, the late nineteenth-century world of Mary Lois Walker Morris (1835–1919) is covered by a happy blend of memoir and diaries as introduced by a capable documentary editor. *Before the Manifesto* contains the multi-faceted record of a Salt Lake City poet, plural wife, and Church worker. Mary Lois Walker Morris began writing diaries in a series of daybooks on January 1, 1879, and continued for forty years. From these accounts, editor Melissa Lambert Milewski selects passages written between 1879 and 1887 that are “among the most dramatic and significant in her life” (ix). The drama of Mary Lois’s two family-related events—becoming a second wife to her husband’s brother and lying to defend him from imprisonment for polygamy—centers the interest of the book within the field of gender studies. What is omitted in this volume are sections of Morris’s “Autobiography” covering the 1890s and events after 1905. The later years are not published, understandably, because the book already numbers 574 pages, but regrettably, too, because we lose her fuller accounts of family, social life, and responsibilities as a counselor in the Salt Lake Stake Primary Association. The published selections do not cover the expansive feminine social scene in Salt Lake City. A scan of the Emmeline B. Wells diaries, for instance, reveals Mary Lois Morris’s participation in the club movement beginning in the 1890s, where Morris was a presenter and officer in the Reapers’ Club. Nonetheless, this volume is a worthy addition to the Utah State University series. Its value lies in the alertness and acumen of the diarist, the intensity of the issues covered, and the skillful interpretations of the editor.