

Chapter 8

Higher Education, 1930-38

In January 1930, Hugh returned from his mission at age nineteen, currently the standard age at which young men depart on their missions. The home town he came back to had changed significantly in the time he had been away. The crash of October 1929 crippled the burgeoning Southern California economy, which was heavily steeped in speculation. Los Angeles experienced the highest bankruptcy rate in the nation at the close of 1930. Building construction valuations dropped over one million dollars between 1929 and 1932. And as the nation's economy worsened, floods of homeless people poured into California, seeking "the Promised Land" but finding instead more of what they had left behind. The population of Burbank reached 34,090 by 1939, more than doubling over the course of the decade. Burbank's employment rate rose to 75 percent in 1936. Nationwide, unemployment peaked at 25 percent in 1933, rising again to 20 percent in the recession of 1938. It was also a decade of natural disasters: the devastating Long Beach earthquake of 1933 and the floods of 1933 and 1938. The bright spot, however, was the film industry. As people throughout the nation flocked to movie theaters to escape the gloom of their daily lives, that sector of the Southern California economy did well during the 1930s.²

Even though real estate was hard hit by the crash, El had cannily "sold his real estate interests and entered mining activities." He and Sloanie were still moving in elite circles in Glendale society, where El served "for many years as a member of the Glendale Park Commission." If he served in Church positions as well, they have not apparently been recorded. Sloanie's musical talents had often been employed in callings as ward and stake chorister and organist in the LDS auxiliary organizations. In Oregon, she had been

²E. Caswell Perry, *Burbank: An Illustrated History* (Northridge, CA: Windsor, 1987), 55-59. National unemployment statistics are based on data from the National Bureau of Economic Research as reported by Dr. Roger A. McCain, Professor of Economics, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on his web page on "Cyclical Unemployment" downloaded in spring 2001 from <<http://william-king.www.drexel.edu/top/prin/txt/probs/cycunN.html>>.