

# 'A pioneering bishop'

"Edward Hunter earned a reputation as a great man because he learned how to be a good number two man to the strong-willed Brigham Young."

This assessment of the Church's third presiding bishop was offered by William G. Hartley of the Church Historical Department in a lecture at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History at BYU.

Hartley said Bishop Hunter was a pioneering presiding bishop in at least two ways

"First, he presided during most of the Mormon pioneering years and longer, from 1851 to 1883," he said. "His firm hand on the Church's temporal reins helped steer it through dramatic transformation in size and procedures.

"He also pioneered in terms of the office and calling of presiding bishop. The office had barely evolved beyond an embryonic stage when Hunter's predecessor, Bishop Newell K. Whitney, died in 1850. During the next decades, Bishop Hunter firmly carved

the presiding bishopric's niche in the General Authority hierarchy."

Hartley examined Bishop Hunter's labors in terms of the presiding bishop's two general areas of responsibility — tithing supervision and the presidency over the Aaronic Priesthood.

When he was called to be presiding bishop, Hunter was known to be a "careful and thorough businessman," a person with "great knowledge in temporal things," Hartley said. He was by profession a farmer, leather curer, cattle expert and businessman.

His business background served him well, Hartley said. While Hunter's predecessor often was chastised by President Brigham Young, he himself was never so reprimanded. President Young said he didn't need to chasten Hunter because "I knew he came into this Church and had transacted business on a large scale, was a good and competent judge of horses, cattle, cows, grain, etc.; and therefore did not need those severe chastisements

that some of you bishops are obliged to take from time to time."

As president of the Aaronic Priesthood, Hunter gave common sense counsel to bishops and Aaronic Priesthood workers.

"An 1877 instruction letter from Bishop Hunter advises about such matters as tithing, meetings ('let them be short and spiritual'), fast offerings, testimony meetings ('have no preaching sermons'), selecting block teachers ('select the best and wisest men') and solving disputes ('have all grievances and disputes settled by the lesser priesthood')," Hartley said.

He said Bishop Hunter ably filled both general areas of responsibility, and proved to be a valuable asset to the two Church presidents he served under, Brigham Young and John Taylor.

"Hunter played his team part well," Hartley said. "He was an able man who conscientiously sought to perform well and 'delighted to labor in the Kingdom.'"