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In addition to the documents themselves, introductory essays, annotation, and most reference material have been indexed. Most maps are not indexed; map coordinates for specific locations are given in the Geographical Directory. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of quotations have been standardized. Personal names are listed by their correct spellings, not by variant spellings that may be found in the documents, unless the correct spelling is unknown. Entries for married women are generally listed under the names used during the period covered by the volume, with appropriate cross-references under maiden names or other married names. Unidentified individuals, such as "Mr. Childs," are included in this index. In subentry text, Joseph Smith (JS) and Emma Smith (ES) are referred to by their initials.

When found in an entry, "id." indicates an entry in the Biographical Directory or Geographical Directory or other text that summarizes the topic, "def." refers to a passage that defines the topic, "illus." indicates a photograph or other illustration, and "handwriting of" identifies documents that an individual inscribed.

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