

Book Reviews

ALEXANDER L. BAUGH, ed. **Days Never to be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery.** (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2009, x + 403 pp., images, index, \$24.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Christopher C. Jones, a doctoral student studying early American cultural and religious history at The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Oliver Cowdery has long occupied a prominent spot in historical narratives of the Latter-day Saint movement, and rightfully so. His presence is altogether difficult to ignore, and historians from most branches of Mormonism see him as an important figure in the earliest period of their shared history. Cowdery was Joseph Smith's primary scribe in the translation of the Book of Mormon, was one of the three witnesses who testified to seeing the ancient record from which that book was translated, received with Joseph Smith the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods at the hands of angelic visitors, and was named Second Elder at the organization of Joseph Smith's Church of Christ in April 1830. Following the formal organization of the Church, he was among the first missionaries sent to preach the new Mormon message, assisted in overseeing the nascent Church's printing operations, and later served as Church historian and recorder, on the Kirtland high council, and as assistant president of the Church. Additionally, his series of letters printed in the *Messenger and Advocate* in 1834 and 1835 stand today as the earliest published history of the Church.

Despite the abundant attention granted him by historians, and at least in part because of the nature of his involvement in early Mormonism's development, Cowdery is usually discussed in terms of his relationship to Joseph Smith. The titles of the two biographical treatments he has received capture this point well—Stanley Gunn's 1962 volume was entitled *Oliver Cowdery, Second Elder and Scribe*, while Philip Legg chose *Oliver Cowdery: The Elusive Second Elder of the Restoration* (1989) for his more recent appraisal. Several of the articles written over the years assessing different aspects of Cowdery's life—from his earliest involvement in the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon to his subsequent departure from and return to the Mormon fold—have similarly followed this general approach. Until recently,

though, historians paid little attention to understanding Cowdery's life and involvement in Mormonism as anything but an appendage to Joseph Smith's life and prophetic career.

In an effort to do just that, and in recognition and celebration of the 200th anniversary of Oliver Cowdery's birth, Alexander L. Baugh, professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, organized a symposium dedicated to exploring the life of Oliver Cowdery. Several of the presentations from the 2006 symposium, together with two additional essays, were recently collected and edited by Baugh and published by Brigham Young University's Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book as *Days Never to be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*. Presenters and authors include several faculty members from Brigham Young University's English, history, and Religious Education departments, as well as the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University, researchers from the Joseph Smith Papers Project, and the LDS Church's Seminaries and Institutes of Religion program. Their efforts cover several important facets of Cowdery's life and his role in the Restoration, and collectively help interested readers and researchers understand better who Cowdery was, both in relation to Joseph Smith and on his own.

In addition to succinct treatments of previously researched and well-known topics—including Cowdery's conversion, his role as Book of Mormon scribe, and his involvement in the restoration of the priesthood—readers are introduced to other insightful research, such as Grant Underwood's detailed look at Cowdery's earliest correspondence with Joseph Smith, and several essays that examine his civic service as newspaper editor, lawyer, justice of the peace, and banker. In addition to eleven papers selected from the proceedings of the conference, two additional essays are included—one by Community of Christ scholar Ronald E. Romig on Oliver's wife, Elizabeth Ann Whitney Cowdery; and the other by independent historian Brian C. Hales on Cowdery's involvement (or lack thereof) in early Mormon polygamy. Three of the essays are reprints of previously published articles in scholarly journals—Hales's piece, the paper by Larry Morris on Cowdery's conversion to Mormonism; and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Robert F. Schwartz's rehearsal of the events leading up to the construction of an Oliver Cowdery memorial in the early twentieth century. But most of the research presented in the volume represents new and original interpretations of Cowdery's life.

While some of the papers included in the book appear to be virtually unchanged from how they were originally presented, other essays are significant expansions and revisions of the original presentation. For example, Richard Bushman's insightful reflections on Oliver Cowdery's relationship with, and description of, Joseph Smith comes in at twelve pages; while Mark Staker's take on "Oliver Cowdery as Banker" totals 110 pages (over one-fourth of

the entire book), with 188 footnotes taking up sixty of those pages. Staker's detailed examination certainly represents painstaking research for which he deserves acknowledgment, but the length of his essay disrupts the book's flow, which was already limited because of the nature of an edited collection of essays. Though the other chapters are comparable to one another in length—most totaling somewhere between 20 and 35 pages—the editor and publisher should have strived for more uniformity on this point. As with any collection of essays, the quality and originality of each chapter vary as well. As mentioned, almost all the authors are believing and faithful Latter-day Saints, and as such their writing sometimes proceeds on the assumption that certain supernatural events did, in historical fact, occur. The occasional use of more devotional language does not, however, distract from the scholarship presented. The book represents well the publisher's stated mission of producing "serious, faithful, gospel-related scholarship."

Together with the volume of previously published essays edited by John Welch and Larry Morris, *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2006), this volume represents the most thorough, detailed, and up-to-date treatment of Oliver Cowdery. While it lacks the narrative quality that a biographical treatment provides (and an updated comprehensive biography is indeed needed), any future Cowdery biographer—as well as Mormon historians and interested readers more generally—will benefit from and need to engage the scholarship presented here.

GEORGE D. SMITH. Nauvoo Polygamy: "... but we call it celestial marriage." (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2009, xi + 728 pp., notes, bibliography, index, \$39.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Craig L. Foster, a research consultant in the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

George D. Smith has produced a very large, ambitious book that discusses a little understood but extremely important part of Latter-day Saint history. Contained in the book are some wonderful background and statistical information regarding Nauvoo polygamy. Smith attempts to place Joseph Smith's plural marriages and the introduction and spread of polygamy within the larger context of everyday life in Nauvoo. Understanding the pattern and time frame of plural marriages will certainly help Mormon historians.

Probably the most important part of the book is Appendix B, an extensive list of Nauvoo's polygamous families. This is an excellent compilation

of information, listing the husband and each wife, and includes vital dates (including sealing dates), as well as the number of wives taken during and after Joseph Smith's life and the offspring that resulted from these marriages. As a historian and genealogist, I appreciate this information and find it to be not only helpful but absolutely fascinating.

Unfortunately, the negative aspects of *Nauvoo Polygamy* far outweigh the positive. Because there are so many problems, I will not attempt to address all of them in this review; my main concern is the overall tone, language, and expressions used by the author to sensationalize plural marriage and scandalize the reading audience. For example, in his introduction, Smith uses the peculiar comparison of Napoleon Bonaparte's love letter to Josephine exulting about their first night together with that of Joseph Smith's note to Sarah Ann Whitney and her parents, inviting them to visit him. I fail to see the similarity other than what the author suggests was a proposed tryst (xi). I read and reread the juxtaposing of Napoleon's love letter with that of Joseph Smith's invitation to the three Whitney's and failed to make a similar connection. The author's suggestion that Smith was proposing a secret tryst seemed more than a little incongruous, and I could not help but think, "Oh sure, doesn't everyone invite the parents along when they are planning a sexual encounter with their daughter?" I also could not help but ask, "Where is the evidence of a sexual encounter?" None was given, but the seed suggesting Smith's sexual escapade with Sarah Ann was certainly planted for the reader.

Throughout the book the suggestive language and innuendo continue with the obvious intent to sensationalize and portray Joseph Smith and plural marriage in a negative light. Here are some examples: "The prophet interrupted other activities for secret liaisons with women and girls" (55). "We might ask how Smith was able to share intimacy with so many women" (56). And there is Emily Partridge's quote when she said she was an "inmate" in the Smith home, and then Smith stating, "as she described it" (173), when the author should know full-well that was a common term in the nineteenth-century for a person boarding in a home or hotel rather than being involved in anything illicit. Perhaps the most offensive is his discussion of the impact of Joseph Smith's marriage to Emily and Eliza Partridge. The author calls it a "celestial ménage-à-quatre" (180), with the obvious intent to create a sexual image in the reader's mind. I found the use of "celestial ménage-à-quatre" extremely offensive. One might ask what purpose does the use of such provocative language serve?

Throughout the book, the author also demonstrates a preoccupation in the age of Joseph Smith's wives. The author repeatedly draws attention to the young ages of the wives, implying that Joseph was involved in inappropriate relationships. Examples of the Prophet's supposed fixation for teenage young

women are the following: “He was betrothed to teenage women as young as fourteen” (xii); “Joseph proposed to the young girl that year. But the fifteen-year-old hesitated” (191); “his continuing affection for young women” (198); “a physical union at age fourteen with a thirty-seven-year-old man” (201); “perhaps it was primarily his interest in marrying teenagers” (226); “[Heber C. Kimball] offered his fourteen-year-old girl without question” (302); “Joseph had already fled three states under pressure that arose, in part, from suspicious relationships with young women” (408); and William Law becoming enraged with Joseph Smith’s actions—“Maybe it was their age, Sarah at sixteen and Maria at nineteen, still teenagers” (422). Although Law was definitely offended by Smith’s plural marriages, and may very well have been offended by Joseph Smith marrying two girls for whom he had fiduciary responsibility, it is highly unlikely he was offended by the girls’ ages. In fact, he would not have found the marriage ages to be out of place.

Nauvoo in the early 1840s was considered to be on the edge of the frontier, and the social and demographic conditions reflect those of a frontier community. For example, it is significant to note that western migration and the American frontier produced conditions that encouraged “early and continuous marriage of pioneer women.” This meant that “girls married young and were in a constant state of matrimony.” As the edge of the frontier pushed continuously westward, so did the marriage patterns, with frontier marriages on average being younger than those in the East. For example, in Ohio of the 1820s “girls were generally married before they were seventeen.”¹ The same pattern existed in western Illinois and Iowa of the 1840s. Thus, George Smith’s focus on Joseph Smith’s teenage plural wives suggests he intentionally played on modern American values and biases against teenage marriages.

George D. Smith’s views regarding Joseph Smith, Mormonism and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are known by many historians and other scholars. Paul Kurtz, the renowned atheist, secular-humanist and close friend of Smith, publicly acknowledged him “for publishing this and many other groundbreaking books in a courageous effort to redress the imbalance of the ‘official’ version of church history.”² That said, every person is entitled to his or her views. And while it is impossible for any author or writer to be completely unbiased, honest historians should do their best to present an even-handed, balanced work, something Smith shows no inclination to do in this work. While discussing Mary Elizabeth Rollins’ recollections of plural “sealings,” Smith refers to “her own admittedly selective memories” (97). Having read Rollins’ accounts of plural marriage as well as a good portion of her correspondence, I don’t remember her admitting to any selective memories. Unfortunately, no footnote cites a source for Rollins’ supposed selective memory. Also, while discussing Almira Knight, who refused to participate in

plural marriage, Smith writes that Knight “was removed from the menace of plural marriage” (271). Smith’s language and tone are also less than accurate. Rather than the potential marriage being a menace, would not the actual potential menace have been Joseph Smith and the other men who were asking her to participate?

I have spent a good part of my career reading and analyzing anti-Mormon literature, but in reading *Nauvoo Polygamy*, many times I wondered whether I was reading a scholarly work or a polemical exposé. Polemic writers use certain techniques to attack key figures. One way to do this is to focus on the moral character of the individual by “exaggeration, distortion, sensationalism, and casting everything in the worst possible light.”³ In the nineteenth-century, amidst the sensational tales of polygamic horror, critics of Mormonism described Joseph Smith and other polygamists of having “blunted moral sensibilities and insatiable sexual appetites.”⁴ Unfortunately, Joseph Smith doesn’t seem to fare any better in *Nauvoo Polygamy*.

Although *Nauvoo Polygamy* contains some valuable information, I cannot wholeheartedly recommend it. Because of the biased, sensationalistic language and tone that give this book the feel of an anti-Mormon exposé, I would only recommend it to certain scholars willing to wade through the chaff and find the few kernels of wheat. I am honestly disappointed, since this book had such potential.

Notes

1. James E. Davis, *Frontier America, 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Settlement Process* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1977), 51, 52.

2. Paul Kurtz, “Polygamy in the name of God,” Council for Secular Humanism (2009), http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=library&page=kurtz_29_2, accessed March 9, 2009. For a discussion of Smith’s relationship with Kurtz, see Louis Midgely, “Anti-Mormonism and the Newfangled Countercult Culture,” *FARMS Review* 10:1 (1998), <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=10&num+1&id=282>, accessed November 6, 2009.

3. Aaron Christensen, “Celsus and Modern Anti-Mormonism,” FAIR (n. d.), as quoted in Craig L. Foster, “Old Themes and Stereotypes Never Die: The Unchanging Ways of Anti-Mormons,” FAIR (2003), http://www.fairlds.org/FAIR_Conferences/2003_Unchanging_Ways_of_Anti-Mormons.html, accessed November 6, 2009.

4. Craig L. Foster, “Victorian Pornographic Imagery in Anti-Mormon Literature,” *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 88.

DAVID L. CLARK. **Joseph Bates Noble: Polygamy and the Temple Lot Case.** (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2009, xii + 210 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, \$24.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by David J. Howlett, visiting assistant professor of religious studies at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio.

“Never judge a book by its cover,” quipped Cary Grant in a now largely forgotten 1947 comedy.¹ In the case of David L. Clark’s *Joseph Bates Noble: Polygamy and the Temple Lot Case*, the old truism could be modified to say “never judge a book by its title.” What I assumed was a book about contestation over sacred geography and sacred sexuality turned out to be a biography of Joseph Noble written by his great-great-great-grandson. With this caveat in mind, general readers will still find much to like in Clark’s well-researched, interesting biography of a lesser-known leader within the early Mormon Church.

Clark frames his biography as a much needed study of an early Mormon who “worked in the trenches” in contrast to other scholarly biographies that focus on top Church leaders (ix). He argues that “regular” members are understudied, and “unpublished family histories and short stories or historical novels” have been “the principal sources for most of the information” about such Church members (x). The need for historical studies of regular members is surely true, but whether or not Noble qualifies as a regular member or, as Clark later puts it, a “foot soldier of the Mormon church” (170), is debatable. As Clark’s biography reveals, Noble was a veteran of Zion’s Camp; a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy; a bishop in Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, and Salt Lake City; a personal friend to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; a husband to six different wives; and the man who officiated at Joseph Smith’s first plural marriage in Nauvoo. In short, I would argue that Noble was far more royal than common, but a knight rather than a lord.

In sixteen short chapters, Clark reviews Noble’s life from his birth in Massachusetts in 1810 to his death in Bear Lake, Idaho, ninety years later. Clark takes us with Noble on a familiar trek that epitomizes the movement of early Mormons—from New York state to Kirtland, Ohio, and then on to Northern Missouri and Nauvoo, Illinois. The reader follows Noble across the Great Plains with the first Mormon immigrants to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847, and finally learns of his settlement in a series of homes in the new Zion. Through Noble’s biography, Clark documents such topics as divorce in polygamous marriages; Gentile/Mormon conflict in Missouri, Illinois, and Utah; the evolution of the office of bishop from a primarily financial officer to a pastoral officer; and the vitriol of late nineteenth-century RLDS and LDS

polemics over polygamy. While Clark does not advance new arguments about any of these topics, he provides more than simply an extended homage to his famous ancestor. His work provides a relatively well-contextualized study of Noble's life across the nineteenth century.

In each chapter, Clark interweaves the story of Noble's life with the text from his 1892 deposition in the famed "Temple Lot" court case. In this deposition, Noble was questioned by a lawyer and member of the RLDS Presiding Bishopric, E. L. Kelley, who had brought suit on behalf of his church against the small Church of Christ (Temple Lot) in Independence, Missouri. The court case itself was over ownership of a small tract of land known as the "temple lot" where late nineteenth-century LDS, RLDS, and Church of Christ members believed that Joseph Smith Jr. had dedicated land in 1831 for a temple in the anticipated New Jerusalem. The strategy of the RLDS in this case was to prove that its leaders were the ecclesiastical successors to Smith's church and thus, they reasoned, the rightful heirs to the early Church's property from the 1830s. To do so, the anti-polygamous RLDS needed to attack the commonly assumed story that Joseph Smith had taught and practiced polygamy. RLDS members like Kelly loathed polygamy and sincerely believed that the marital practice had originated with Brigham Young, not Smith.

In the pre-trial depositions held in Salt Lake City, Kelley was determined to force Noble under oath to deny Joseph Smith's 1841 polygamous marriage to Louisa Beaman in Noble's presence. This led Kelley to pepper Noble with question after question about his life—all an attempt by Kelley to show that Noble had an unreliable memory or that he could not be trusted. The upshot of Kelly's questioning is that Clark has another detailed primary source about his ancestor. Clark quotes the court deposition at the beginning of nearly every chapter and then cuts back to the time and place that Noble remembers in the court testimony. This almost cinematic technique allows Clark to unfold the story of Noble's life around a conflict left unresolved until the end, giving the book a narrative arc that follows more than simply Noble's birth to death story. The battle of wits between Kelly and Noble becomes a central conflict in the biography. By the end, the reader is fairly sympathetic toward the elderly Noble after Kelly's constant needling.

While the book provides background for the Noble deposition in the Temple Lot case, and polygamy is discussed throughout the text, Clark offers no new substantive analysis of the two subjects. For example, he does not theorize how control of bodies (polygamy) and control of space (the Temple Lot) are linked in the dramatic Temple Lot case; this striking juxtaposition bears some real thought. Clark mentions that his great-great-great-grandfather gained notoriety in nineteenth-century Utah as the officiator at Joseph Smith's first plural marriage (though Clark notes that most modern LDS historians

now believe that Smith had previous polygamous marriages). There is much more that could be explored on this topic than what Clark provides. How exactly did Noble's story become enshrined in the moral rationale for polygamy by common members and Church leaders in the nineteenth century? In a broader context, what happens when an oral tradition, like Noble's story, becomes an official written tradition, like the court depositions and affidavits Noble gave? (This is not an unimportant question; temple rites in the same era were making this transition from oral to written traditions; how a community's collective memory is preserved makes a great deal of difference.) What role, if any, did Noble's testimony play in the promotion of polygamy to Church members? Beyond the court case, how did LDS use Noble's story to justify themselves over and against their small, but growing RLDS competitors? (The disparity in numbers between LDS and RLDS was far smaller in the late nineteenth century than today.) Finally, in the post-Manifesto era, how was Noble's story used differently by Church members? All of these questions are left unanswered by Clark and leave room for further scholarly reflection on how oral and written testimonies were received, and sometimes metaphorically and sometimes literally reinscribed for new circumstances.

To his credit, Clark has sufficiently situated his work into larger historical narratives so that his book merits attention by readers other than Noble descendants. Clark is willing to question conflicting traditions about Noble. He maintains a relatively even-handed tone throughout his text on controversial topics. His treatment of Noble is very sympathetic but not overly adulatory. Along the way, he makes a few minor factual errors based on a few outdated sources, although none of his minor mistakes undermines his work.² Despite some of my critiques and questions, Clark's book is a good example of the fusion of family history with academic history and could find a wide audience among Mormon history buffs and historians alike.

Notes

1. *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer*, directed by Irving Reis (New York: RKO Radio Pictures, 1947).

2. For instance, on page 2, Clark states that the RLDS church gained possession of Kirtland Temple through an 1881 court case (a case brought by the same E. L. Kelly who questioned Joseph Bates Noble on the stand in Salt Lake City). Scholars certainly thought that the RLDS had won until Kim Loving's research in 2003 revealed that in fact, the Kirtland Temple case had been dismissed by the Ohio court that heard it. The judge ruled that the state law regarding adverse possession settled ownership, though he adopted Kelly's finding of fact that included recognition of the RLDS church as Smith's ecclesiastical successor. Kelly publicized the latter, while he omitted mention of the former part of the judge's ruling. For a more complete explanation, see Kim L. Loving, "Ownership of the

Kirtland Temple: Legends, Lies, and Misunderstandings,” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (2004): 1–80.

JARED FARMER. **On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape.** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 472 pp., illustrations, index, \$29.95 hardback, \$19.95 paperback.)

Reviewed by David W. Grua, a doctoral student studying American history at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.

Jared Farmer’s *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* is an award-winning study of the physical and cultural significance of Utah Valley’s beloved Mount Timpanogos. Farmer, who teaches American history at the State University of New York—Stony Brook, argues that it was not until the early twentieth century that Mormons came to “see” the mountain (prior, it had been just one peak among many), a process that included forgetting the earlier centrality of Utah Lake and the Provo River in both Ute and Mormon economies as well as inventing fake Indian legends to give the mountain additional authenticity. In relating the biography of “Timp,” Farmer succeeds in illuminating several aspects of Latter-day Saint culture and accomplishes two tasks few Mormon historians can boast: smoothly integrating the nineteenth with the twentieth century and using the Mormon experience to explore the wider history of the American West.

Farmer begins with a discussion of the importance of Utah Lake to the Numic peoples of the Great Basin, the fish-rich source providing for the densest concentration of indigenous people in the region. After the Mormons settled Fort Utah (later renamed Provo) in 1849, they clashed with the lake Utes and gradually depleted Utah Lake’s fish supply, a loss that led to the collapse of Native economies and their eventual removal to a Uintah Basin reservation in the 1860s. Despite the earlier centrality of Utah Lake to Mormon survival, after World War II it faded in cultural and economic significance due to pollution and overfishing. Furthermore, in the years following settlement, Mormon leaders often distorted the historical record by claiming that upon arrival, Utah had been a parched desert inhabited primarily by crickets, and that only with hard work and divine guidance did the Church survive. Farmer describes this process as the “desertification of Zion,” which allowed little room in historical memory for real Indians (although providing space for one-dimensional stereotypes of bloodthirsty savages, Indian Chiefs, and Squanto-like helpers) or Utah Lake’s early importance in the settlement of Provo.

Just as the early significance of the lake began to recede into historical forgetfulness, Utah Valley's residents began to "see" Mount Timpanogos. Farmer argues that three factors produced these results: the Mormons carried with them to the West an inherited reverence for mountains, they participated in a European-derived fascination with alpenes that flourished in the West after the Civil War, and the federal government began to measure the "official" heights of peaks. Erroneously marked as the highest massif along the Wasatch front (Mount Nebo is actually the tallest), Timpanogos became the new symbolic center of Utah Valley by the beginning of the twentieth century. Becoming a cultural landmark was the product of national narratives—the growth of hiking as a recreational activity, the emerging passion for physical education, the industrial-revolution shift from outdoor work to outdoor play, and the Progressive-era expansion of federal power in managing western landscapes—as well as local initiatives, most notably BYU P.E. teacher Eugene "Timpanogos" Roberts' annual hike (inaugurated in 1912), local boosterism, and state efforts to promote tourism. After World War II, urbanization produced two important landmarks in Utah Valley—Robert Redford's Sundance ski resort, an escape for urban professionals; and the Mount Timpanogos Temple, itself a testament of Utah Valley's changing economy and concomitant population growth.

Last, Farmer explores the legends surrounding Timpanogos, beginning with how the mountain got its name. Timpanogos initially referred to the Ute bands that fished in Utah Lake, as well as its major river. Mormon settlers preferred to call this the Provo River. Government surveyors later attached the name to the snow-capped massif, and from there it gradually expanded into local usage. Farmer then explores the origins of the pseudo-Indian legend of "Utahna," first invented by Eugene Roberts as a promotional ploy for his hike which described the tragic death of an Indian princess whose body can supposedly be seen in the massif's crest. The author concludes with a discussion of Mormon collective memory and how it has privileged pioneering while downplaying not only polygamy and theocracy, but also the Indians who played such a crucial role in early settlement.

This summary of the work cannot do it justice, as every chapter is richly contextualized with broader American themes. Readers of *Mormon Historical Studies* will likely appreciate Farmer's theoretically informed depictions of historical sites and monuments. In addition, Farmer is a talented writer, with *On Zion's Mount* winning several awards, most notably the Francis Parkman Prize from the Society of American Historians, a prestigious award given annually for literary excellence in historical writing. Beyond his writing ability, Farmer demonstrates continuity between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by incorporating the role of collective memory in defining modern

Mormonism's relationship with its past. Finally, he is successful in transcending what Jan Shipps has called the "Donut Hole" theory, or the tendency of historians to write around Utah in their descriptions of the West, and of Mormon historians to write about Utah in a vacuum. Instead, Farmer illustrates that while "the religious element is of course distinctive, . . . the main story of Utah's formation—settlers colonizing Indian land, organizing a territory, dispossessing natives, and achieving statehood—could not be more American" (14). He does not solely situate Mormon Utah within nineteenth-century westward expansion and state formation. He also shows how Mormons participated in western and national stories of white romantic appropriations of Indian names and legends, or *Indianism*, the increasing power of the federal government after the Civil War, the industrial revolution-era popularization of hiking, the importance of World War II in transforming the West economically and culturally, suburbanization and urban sprawl, tourism, and the technology boom of the late twentieth century. *On Zion's Mount* is therefore an indispensable addition to the library of serious students of the place of Mormon Utah in the American West.