

## Book Reviews

JAMES B. ALLEN, RONALD W. WALKER, AND DAVID J. WHITTAKER, comp., *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography. With a Topical Guide to Published Social Science Literature on the Mormons*, compiled by Armand L. Mauss and Dynette Ivie Reynolds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000, xiii + 1,152 pp., \$100.00 hardback.)

*Richard E. Bennett, Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University.*

From time to time, a certain work comes along that immediately proves itself indispensable to the study of Mormon history. A herculean effort of truly monumental proportions, and already a recipient of several awards, *Studies in Mormon History* is such a work. A massive 1,152-page bibliography, a book of books, a bible of sorts, this reference work attempts to list everything substantive ever published in the ever-growing field of Mormon history since the founding of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830 until the present. As such, it is a worthy complement and successor to Chad Flake's classic, *A Mormon Bibliography 1830–1930*, although even more inclusive. It has the happy power to transform even the novice student of Mormon history into a person who suddenly sounds knowledgeable, intelligent, and in command of the entire field.

James B. Allen, former assistant Church historian to Leonard J. Arrington, Ron Walker, director of research and professor of history at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History at Brigham Young University, and David Whittaker, curator of nineteenth-century western and Mormon Americana in Special Collections also at BYU—all three gifted historians-turned-bibliographers, at least for this project—admit in their introduction that the dimensions of their enterprise fast outgrew even their

expectations. “We freely confess that fifteen years ago when we began this task, if we had known of the daunting task of completion, of its scale and mass, *Studies in Mormon History* would never have begun” (ix). Fortunately, we are all the richer for the fact that they endured to the end.

Much more than a bibliography to books and monographs, *Studies in Mormon History* describes not only some 2,600 books in the field but also some 10,400 published articles and more than 1,800 theses and dissertations, all of which deal directly with Mormon history. Erring on the side of inclusiveness, Allen, Walker, and Whittaker deliberately spread their net broadly, intent on describing everything that might be considered “serious scholarship” of an interpretive, scholarly nature on Mormon history, including biographical and autobiographical studies. The work is so inclusive that it may be more instructive to identify those few kinds of works not found here: short vignettes in periodicals, most polemical literature, most non-English publications (this is one area of possible criticism, since more and more modern works fall into this category), most home-published and uncritical family histories, and book reviews.

Published in a two-column, eight-inches-by-eleven-inches format, with as many as forty entries per page, *Studies* is highly readable, despite the condensed nature of the information. It is divided into three sections. In Part I, the Alphabetical Listing section (which covers the first 463 pages), every author is listed for as many works as he or she has published. This means that for Richard Lloyd Anderson, for example, there are seventy separate entries for each of his many works, while Richard Strickann has but one. In cases of more than one author, the full publication data are given under the name of the lead author with another, shorter listing under the name of each subsequent author. Each entry includes the author’s name, the title of the work, and full bibliographical information. In those cases where the title of a publication gives little insight into its content, the bibliographers provide a helpful explanatory note.

Part II, the Index to Historical Writings (which covers the next 586 pages), describes publications by key topic or subject matter. Although full bibliographic entries for each item appear only in the Alphabetical Listing, this “subject index is designed to provide enough basic information to guide readers and to speed their research” (467). The compilers assert that this “is the heart” of their work, categorized as it is under some sixty-five hundred terms and subheadings that allow researchers “to discover what has been written about the people, topics, and themes of Mormon history, at least through the year 1997” (xi). This index is made up of the person or persons discussed or described in the particular published piece and the major topic(s) of the work. For example, reflecting the various interests of Mormon

scholars through the years, there are seventeen pages of entries on the Prophet Joseph Smith, which are in turn broken down into 119 subterms, twelve pages of entries on plural marriage, and a single entry for the World's Fair of 1893.

As an added bonus, *Studies in Mormon History* is enriched by the publisher's suggestion to incorporate into the work the very valuable "Topical Guide to Published Social Science Literature on the Mormons," independently compiled by Professor Armand L. Mauss, a leading Mormon sociologist, and Dynette Ivie Reynolds. With ninety-three pages of entries on non-historical but related social-science literature on Mormonism—including such fields as Mormon art, folklore, education, sexual values, politics, economics, family life, interethnic relationships, and much more—the Mauss-Reynolds contribution is incorporated into the larger work in a most ingenious way. While remaining a distinct entity of its own as Part III in the bibliography, all authors' names are incorporated into Part I, the Alphabetical Listing. (Social science subject headings are not incorporated into Part II.) The result is an even more complete and compelling bibliography. "For the first time, students of Mormon history and society have a comprehensive listing in a single volume" (xii).

There is another significant plus to both the comprehensiveness of this work and the meaningful way it has been organized. In the Index to Historical Writings, or the "topical" section, for each subject entry, publications are listed in chronological order from the first date anything was published on that subject until 1997, or in some cases, where the compilers were able to sneak it in, until 1999. The advantage of this approach is more than to show the long and continuing interest in the topic; it also presents in a single place a snapshot of changing interpretations and viewpoints through the years on the same subject. In so doing, the work becomes a statement, if not a testament, to the prodigious amount of research in Mormon history of the present generation, what some have called the era of the "New Mormon History."

This changing nature of research may be illustrated in the following example. A careful review of the 156 entries on the topical entry "British Isles, 19th Century" (see chart below) will show, for instance, that for the entire period from 1840 until 1960—a span of 120 years—our compilers found a total of forty-three studies of one kind or another on the subject. Most of these they found in Church-owned periodicals such as the *Contributor*, the *Juvenile Instructor*, and *The Millennial Star*. Since 1961, however—that is, during the past forty years—the corresponding figure stands at 113, a 72 percent increase in academic study. A cursory overview of many other subject entries reveals a very similar pattern

**Case Study—Entry for “British Isles, 19th Century”  
In *Studies in Mormon History*, pp. 541–43**

A. Total Entries 15

Number with publication dates 1840–1960 43

Number with publication dates 1961–1999 113

B. Types of Publications

Genre	Era	
	1840–1960	1961–1999
Publications of private journals/diaries	4	3
Census studies	2	0
Monographs	4	7
Biographies/autobiographies	4	11
Articles in Church-owned periodicals	21	16
Church Archives in-house publications	1	0
Master’s theses	2	10
Ph.D. dissertations	1	4
Articles in professional academic journals	3	31
Chapters in area study compilations	0	26
Substantive encyclopedia articles	0	1
Other	1	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>113</b>

One very significant factor behind this modern exponential increase in academic interest has been the proliferation of academic journals in the field. Herein lies one of the single most important contributions of *Studies in Mormon History*: its careful inclusion of periodical literature to the article level in such modern journals as *BYU Studies*, *Dialogue—A Journal of Mormon Thought*, *The Journal of Mormon History*, and others. The bibliographers have also included individual chapters of what might be termed area study publications. In addition, they have added every master’s thesis and Ph.D. dissertation in the field. Meanwhile, substantive articles in such modern Church publications as the *Ensign* and the *New Era* are included. Although the compilers have chosen not to include polemical literature,

they have entered those items that are both positive as well as critical in their interpretations. The key for inclusion is that of substantive and responsible historical literature.

The foregoing chart may also identify one of the weaknesses of the work. There would seem to be a bias or eagerness for including almost anything written on any topic in the earlier era—that is, before 1960—and a reluctance to cast the net so broadly since. Part of the problem, of course, is simply identifying everything written recently on a given topic. Yet scholars know that many more than a single encyclopedia article have been written on the Church in the British Isles since 1961, and many substantial family history and genealogical studies on census works and enumerations have likewise come out in recent years. Allen, Walker, and Whittaker may have gone overboard to include earlier writings while screening out a few significant modern studies.

So much has been published in the exciting field of Mormon history since 1960 that one might be led to ask if there is anything left to write upon. In one sense, perhaps, this is the ultimate compliment to this work that it is so comprehensive and even intimidating in its inclusiveness. However, a great work like this serves not to discourage but to encourage future research. And so it does, acting as a pointer and a guide, an inspiration for further scholarly endeavors. Although the compilers do not describe the bias in any of the works identified, their work, by its very comprehensive nature, does indicate what paths have not been traveled, what areas may need study, and perhaps what new arguments to pursue. This bibliography, therefore, succeeds wonderfully in identifying what has been written and what can and perhaps should now be studied.

When we consider the impressive historical credentials of the men who compiled this work, it is clear that *Studies in Mormon History* came at a substantial cost. Allen, Walker, and Whittaker could have been writing many other substantive works of a historical nature during the time they spent on this work. Some might argue that they should have spent their energies writing many other interpretive works. Was *Studies* worth their sacrifice? Perhaps we will never know the answer to that question. Since bibliographies, by nature of their publication date, are almost immediately out of date, the hope is that others will maintain the same standard of excellence provided here. In the meantime, it will be decades before serious scholars allow this work to collect dust.

~~~~~

ARNOLD K. GARR, DONALD Q. CANNON, RICHARD O. COWAN, eds. *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000, viii + 1454 pp, illustrations, chronology, list of contributors, index, \$49.95, hardback.)

*Jessie L. Embry, Assistant Director, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Instructor of History, Brigham Young University*

*Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* is a bold, ambitious project to provide “a convenient, one-volume reference work” (vii). The editors, Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, professors of Church history at Brigham Young University, represent two experienced and one newer face in Religious Education at BYU. “Over 350 authors” (vii) contributed entries to this volume. The list of authors reads like a “who’s who” in Mormon history, including professors from history, law, and religion from BYU and other universities, Church Educational System and the Family and Church History Department employees, members of the Community of Christ, and many others. They include senior scholars as well as newcomers. Especially impressive are the entries BYU Professor Fred Gowans wrote with students. Some authors contributed many articles; others contributed only a few. With so many authors, it is very difficult to find reviewers who were not involved. I have two brief entries and know very little about the volume, so I agreed to write this review.

In the preface, the editors explain, “Our objective has been to present accurate, concise, and readable articles on a wide variety of Church history topics” (vii). Having worked on several encyclopedia projects, I realize that is not easy. First, the editors have to determine the audience. Is the book for Mormons or non-Mormons; will readers know something about the subject or nothing at all? Then, those in charge have to decide what to include and, equally important, what there is not room for. They have to decide what broad topics, unique terms, and individuals should be included. After creating that list, they need to ask how important each topic is and how many words to allow. They have to find scholars who have researched the subjects, who they know will produce a readable essay in a timely manner, and who will give a balanced view. They need to give enough guidelines so the essays will fit the volume’s purpose but allow enough leeway that the authors can be creative. Finally, they have to nag authors who do not meet deadlines, decide what to do when some do not respond, and put the entries together in an organized, balanced, consistent volume.

According to the editors, “entries in the encyclopedia discuss a variety of topics” (vii). As I started to read the book for this review, I listed some of

the categories for the first three letters of the alphabet. I found definitions of Church and priesthood offices; biographies of Church leaders, members, General Authorities, friendly non-Mormons, not-so-friendly non-Mormons, and excommunicated members; scriptures; schools; Church programs; historical sites; explanations of doctrine; countries, states, and provinces; Church proclamations; political parties; popular symbols; general historical topics; temples; and titles of well-used Mormon books. And those are only the categories under the letter “A”!

As this list shows, the editors tried very hard to cover all topics. They also tried to be complete and objective. I am not sure how they went about that task. I wish there had been a longer preface explaining the process. I am not sure what audience the editors wanted to reach. If the goal was to help their students at BYU, defining words that all Latter-day Saints immediately recognize such as “confer” and “sustaining” may not have been necessary. But if they envisioned non-Mormons using the book, such readers might not understand the unique ways Latter-day Saints use these words.

I would also like to know more about how the editors selected the topics. Why are some cities in Utah, such as Brigham City, included where most, such as Logan, Hyrum, Richfield, and Blanding, are not? Why are some temples mentioned, such as San Diego and Oakland, but Provo and Ogden are missing? The editors bravely tried to include individual members, including General Authorities, other general Church officers, the “firsts” (like the first single women missionaries), local leaders, and “pioneers” from countries throughout the world. They provide a nice mix of nineteenth- and twentieth-century individuals. But their choices are limited by scholars’ research. E. Dale LeBaron has conducted oral-history interviews and extensively researched Africa, so that continent is over represented.

I am a twentieth-century historian, so I noticed things missing from that time period. The volume seems to avoid troublesome topics. For example, according to the “seminary” entry, “The constitutionality of released-time religious education was tested as early as 1929 and upheld in the courts” (1088) However, there was a dispute over Utah high schools giving credit for seminary classes, a policy that was later changed because of a threatened lawsuit. The entry on “tabernacles” lists several that have become “historic sites” (1215) but does not deal with the decision to destroy the Coalville Tabernacle and the fight to save the Heber Tabernacle. These issues are not discussed at all in the volume. I would have included a historic preservation entry.

The editors wanted to include information on the Church throughout the world, so there are entries on the U.S. states, Canadian provinces, and “more than 200 other countries, territories, and political entities” (vii). At

first, I was impressed with the concise summary of the Church in each entry. But then I started looking more closely at the sources. Often, the only item listed in the bibliography was the *Church Almanac* of the *Deseret News*. I compared the entry for “New Brunswick” in the *Encyclopedia* with the entry in the 1997–98 *Almanac*.<sup>1</sup> The information was almost identical. In addition, because the *Encyclopedia* lists 2000 membership for each location, the volume will quickly be outdated. Maybe something like the *Almanac* is a better place for time-sensitive material. Otherwise, like other encyclopedias, the editors would have to redo this volume frequently (a nightmare I would not wish upon anyone).

Selecting scholars was equally as problematic. Many researchers have focused on various aspects of Joseph Smith Jr.’s life, and they all could have written an essay about the founding president. BYU Church History Professor Susan Easton Black is a good choice for a faith-promoting summary of Smith’s life. Others might have focused on more disputed areas of his life. Only one or two scholars are really qualified to discuss other topics of Church history, however. In these cases, the editors often selected the senior, most experienced researcher. I would expect BYU History Professor Thomas G. Alexander, for example, to contribute essays on Salt Lake City and Wilford Woodruff, as these are topics on which he has published books. Another BYU history professor, R. Lanier Britsch, knows more about the Church in Asia and the South Pacific than anyone else and wrote many essays. However, there were a few examples where I was shocked by who wrote the entries. NASA historian and well-published RLDS scholar Roger D. Launius would have been my choice to write on Joseph Smith III. Recent Mormon History Association president Newell Bringhurst knows more about Fawn McKay Brodie than anyone else. Historian Valeen Tippets Avery has extensively studied David Hyrum Smith. In the last two cases, some of Bringhurst’s works are cited but not his 1999 biography, and Avery’s book is not even included in the bibliography.

There were a few areas where I was disappointed with the material presented because I know information that was left out. There are several entries that deal with Muslim countries. While the Church has had limited exposure in these countries, entries like the one on Egypt talk about Latter-day Saints on short assignments organizing a branch there. The entry on Iran, however, talks only about the unique mission the Church had in that country from 1975 to 1978. Because the volume does not mention the contact between the Church and Utah universities personnel and Iranian officials starting in 1912, there is no historical context for the 1970s mission. I believe the Shah’s government allowed the mission because officials in his government had attended Utah universities—especially Utah State

University—and because professors from BYU and USU worked for the United States State Department in Iran from 1951 to 1964. The Church organized a branch for these members; sometimes there were over a hundred members. Dean Farnsworth, who was the first mission president in Iran, served as the branch president in the early 1960s. The Utah professors also convinced the Church to provide humanitarian aid following an earthquake in 1962.<sup>2</sup> I use my own research as an example because I know that best. But other entries, such as the ones on the Equal Rights Amendment and the 1930s Depression, lack historical perceptiveness.

According to the editors, “a typical entry” includes “a topic sentence,” “a succinct discussion,” and “a list of sources” (vii). Some authors followed that pattern exactly, and their entries summarize the topic, explain the significance, give a brief summary, and then give sources for more information. Lyndia Carter’s entry on the handcarts, Donald Q. Cannon’s “Orson Pratt,” Jennifer L. Lund’s “Salt Lake Valley,” and Harvard Heath’s “Reed Smoot” and “James E. Talmage” are some examples that were easy to read. They had a clear thesis statement, they gave a few details but not too many, and they explained why the entry is in the volume. For example, Lyndia Carter shows that “while the number of handcart pioneers was small,” the experience is important because “the handcart experience has come to symbolize the faith, determination, and sacrifice of all the pioneers” (463).

Other entries did not fit the editors’ outline as well. For example, there is a lengthy discussion of each president of the Church. Edward L. Kimball’s summary of his father, Spencer W. Kimball, is one of the best because it briefly discusses early life, experiences as an apostle, and important decisions as president. The article on Harold B. Lee, on the other hand, included many childhood experiences that seem unnecessary.

There are other small concerns that only an editor or a very picky reviewer would notice. For example, technology helped the editors highlight every word in an entry that had a separate entry. I question highlighting “family” every time it is mentioned since it is often used simply to discuss a person’s family and not the role of family in the Church, which is the topic of the larger entry. “Pioneer” is another word that is often highlighted, but except for a concluding paragraph noting the presence of pioneers in every country, most of the article deals with the early Utah settlers.

A larger, more significant question is one about the purpose this volume serves. It seems like everyone is doing an encyclopedia these days, and there are several Mormon examples that cover similar information. The four-volume *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* will probably have a more lasting impact, and the *Almanac* of the *Deseret News* will provide up-to-date facts and figures. Still, this one-volume effort will be a valuable reference guide to stu-

dents of Mormon history. The readers of *Mormon Historical Studies* will find it a useful resource in their studies. They will probably either find the information they are looking for or locate a place to go for more details. After all, most readers go to an encyclopedia to find facts; only reviewers read it from cover to cover and notice flaws.

### Notes

1. "New Brunswick," *Deseret News 1997–1998 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1996), 302.

2. For more information on the Church in Iran, see Jessie L. Embry, "The LDS Church and Iran: The Dilemma of an American Church," *John Whitmer Historical Association* 21 (2001): 51–59 and Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Wards as Community* (Binghamton, New York: Global Publications, 2001), 83–104.