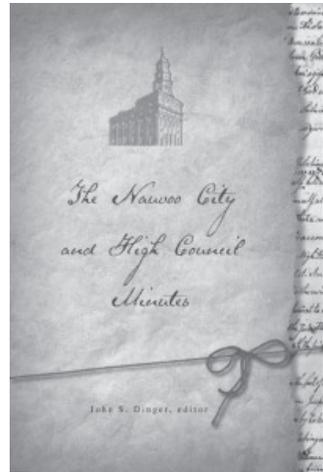


JOHN S. DINGER. *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011, lxxxii + 616 pp., appendices, index, \$49.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Brady Winslow

Minutes of the Nauvoo City Council and the Nauvoo Stake High Council are two fundamental records in understanding the Nauvoo period of early Mormon history. Approved on December 16, 1840, and effective February 1, 1841, the Nauvoo city charter stipulated that a city council be formed by electing a mayor, four aldermen, and nine councilors; the charter also allowed for the appointment or election of other city officers. Essentially, the city council governed civic activity in Nauvoo by passing resolutions and ordinances. Minutes from city council meetings include summaries of meeting proceedings, resolutions, and ordinances passed.



Patterned after the high council established in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834, the high council, organized in Commerce, Illinois, on October 5, 1839, consisted of twelve high priests whose purpose was to settle “important difficulties which might arise in the church, which could not be settled by the church or the bishop’s council to the satisfaction of the parties” (D&C 102:2). Minutes of the council contain discussion of disciplinary actions and other Church business. All the known manuscript sources containing minutes of both organizations are housed in the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes, edited by John S. Dinger, the Ada County, Idaho, deputy prosecuting attorney, is a documentary compilation of the minutes of the Nauvoo City Council and the Nauvoo Stake High Council. In pursuing one of the main goals of documentary editing, this volume makes the minutes of these two organizations “more available to a wider audience than the small group of people who might be able to view originals in their home archives.” Included in the volume are biographical sketches of those who served on the city council and high council, appendices comprising a transcription of the city charter of Nauvoo, and the prospectus

and excerpts from the short-lived *Nauvoo Expositor* newspaper (a rather odd inclusion, considering the content of the volume).

Within the profession of documentary editing, standards have been established that enable editors to produce high-quality documentary editions that faithfully and responsibly represent the original documents. Unfortunately, in the case of *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, Dinger, perhaps unaware of documentary editing standards, disregarded fundamental editing techniques, thus diminishing the accuracy and usefulness of the volume.

In Mary-Jo Kline and Susan Perdue's *A Guide to Documentary Editing*—widely considered the “bible” of document editing—the authors caution that in editing historical documents for a documentary edition, “the manuscript or a reliable photocopy or scanned image is to be preferred over any later scribal copies or transcriptions as the source text.” Instead of following this guideline, Dinger “relied on typescripts, photocopies, and photographs” to create a transcription. The editor justified this approach by asserting that he “was not allowed to see the originals housed in the LDS Church History Library and Archives, where access to them is restricted” (xvi). In a footnote following this claim, Dinger reports that “the reason the Church archivists usually cite for sequestering these documents, especially the high council minutes, is confidentiality” (xvi, n. 2). From the language used in this general statement about document-access restrictions in the Church History Library, it appears that Dinger never attempted to access the original documents, but rather assumed that he would not be allowed to view them. If he in fact had requested to view the documents and was denied access, he should have stated this explicitly in his preface and mentioned the date he made the attempt. Also, it should be noted that a search for “Nauvoo city council minutes” on the Church History Library’s online catalog reveals that both primary collections of Nauvoo City Council minutes are “open for research” and are not restricted, as Dinger supposed. In short, before editing the documents for *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, Dinger should have secured access to the original manuscript minutes of the councils.

When compiling historical documents for a documentary edition, an editor should reproduce each manuscript source independently. Dinger, however, selected from all the manuscript sources of the Nauvoo City Council he could find—which comprise multiple entries for many of the meetings—the entry or entries he thought best represented each meeting; then compiled his selections chronologically, producing, in his words, “a full set of minutes” (xvii). The editor did the same for the Nauvoo Stake High Council. Notwithstanding the inclusion of two tables in the preface and editorial conventions throughout the volume indicating which primary source the minute entries were drawn from, the manuscript materials for both councils are

misrepresented in the book by the creation of what could simply be described as an *artificial text*. As a reviewer, I am left wondering why Dinger did not reproduce each manuscript source separately, including all entries for all the sources, not combining them as if one document. This approach would enable readers to understand the different original documents containing meeting minutes of these two organizations. Dinger's documentary edition merely gives readers easier access to a reliable reproduction of the manuscripts. Given the shortcomings of the transcriptions Dinger worked from, and his own presentation and formatting decisions, the compilation does not adequately meet the needs of the book's intended audience.

Unfortunately, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* is not the definitive documentary edition of minutes of the Nauvoo City Council or Nauvoo Stake High Council. Despite the volume's usefulness as a quick reference tool, serious researchers or anyone needing an accurate transcription must still consult the original documents.

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BENJAMIN C. PYKLES. *Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010, ix + 389 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, \$50.00 hardback.)

Reviewed by Scott C. Esplin

Like many Latter-day Saint histories, *Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America* by Benjamin C. Pykles, a former professor of anthropology and current curator of historic sites for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, begins with a story of the founding of a movement. In this case, the movement is not Mormonism and the founder is not Joseph Smith. Rather, *Excavating Nauvoo* opens with J. C. Harrington, "the father of historical archaeology," and the 1967 founding of the Society for Historical Archaeology. While the book quickly turns to Harrington's role as an archaeologist participating in the

