

Brian and Petrea Kelly. *Latter-day History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2000. 586 pp. Photographs, credits, bibliography, index. Cloth: \$39.95. ISBN 1-57734-737-4

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In their acknowledgments, Brian and Petrea Kelly explain that their book “began as scripts for a set of cassette tapes. . . . We provided some narration to tie it all together and made note of some contemporary events in the United States and the world. Many listeners requested a printed copy with references so they could study in greater depth.” This tape-to-book commences as a religious saga with the words: “True Mormon history begins long before the history of the earth. It started in the Grand Council in heaven . . . “ (1). With this introduction *Latter-day History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* opens to express visual Church history.

Latter-day History is divided into a section for each church president. Except for Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, each contains very short biographies, averaging about eighteen pages, on the lives of presidents from John Taylor to Gordon B. Hinckley. However, 46 percent (273 pages) of the book covers the life of Joseph Smith with Brigham Young accounting for another 10 percent (63 pages).

What may be distinctive of this volume is that it contains over 400 illustrations including photographs, drawings, engravings, maps paintings, daguerreotypes, portraits, and documents of the people, places, and events that form Mormon history. There are two photographs of Orrin Porter Rockwell (253, 313) and a rare image of Martin Harris (327).

Unfortunately, a photograph of one piece of the Joseph Smith papyri was printed reversed (169). Also reversed is the 1846 Lucian Foster daguerreotype of the Nauvoo Temple on the hill with an outhouse in the foreground (287), photographed by Charles William Carter (572). The daguerreotype should have been reversed with the front of the Nauvoo Temple facing left (west).¹

Although many of the images are very well known, a genuine rare gem is a photograph of the Assembly Hall on Temple Square, showing an angel placed on the top central pentacle as a weather vane (348). This angel has since been removed. The authors unfortunately do not tell the readers that, until the 1960s, the ceiling of this historic building was divided into different-sized panels containing drawings representing church historic scenes completed by William C. Morris.² It is unfortunate that none of these scenes, which were photographed for the *Church News*, could have been included. Other interesting photographs are marred with inaccuracies in the captions. For example, under “world events” is a photograph of Richard M. Nixon. According to the caption, the photograph includes Harold B. Lee, George Albert Smith, and N. Eldon Tanner (483). It is not George Albert Smith but Joseph Fielding Smith who is in the photograph.

¹ “A New Picture of Old Nauvoo,” *Church News*, 6 November 1965, 11. See also Richard N. Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, *Old Mormon Nauvoo 1839-1846: Historic Photographs and Guide* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1990), 22, 224-25.

² Arnold J. Irvine, “The ‘Cinderella’ of Temple Square,” *Church News*, 17 October 1964), 8-9, 12.

The narrative, while following the traditional account of Church history, contains many errors of fact that will be annoying to well-informed readers and misleading to those who attempt to use this book as a reference. Emma Hale is identified as the “only daughter” of Isaac Hale (25); but he actually had four. The book twice states that Brigham Young was baptized on 14 April 1832 and quotes from the *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* that he was baptized on that date by Eleazer Miller (104, 107). The correct date, however, is 9 April as recorded in Young’s personal journal. On the revelation or prophecy concerning wars in LDS Doctrine and Covenants 87, *Latter-day History* says “Wilford Woodruff is believed to have been the scribe” (109), even though he was not a member of the Church in December 1832 when the revelation was given. Woodruff evidently only made a copy of this revelation.

The section on Brigham Young’s administration omits completely any mention of the tragic 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre. *Latter-day History* also states, “After Brigham’s death, there were no questions about who would lead the Church” (340). In fact, the historical record is less than crystal clear, and the succession issue was still being worked out during the second apostolic interregnum.³ While the book quotes from an 1880 revelation of Apostle Wilford Woodruff (347-48), John Taylor’s revelations are not quoted or even mentioned. He gave at least eight written revelations as Church president.

When the reader comes to the issuing of the Manifesto (added to LDS Doctrine and Covenants in 1908 but not in all printings until 1921; now Official Declaration 1), the authors state, “Now that plural marriage no longer was being practiced . . .” (371). While the Manifesto issued on 24 September 1890 gives the impression that this may be the case, the historical facts show priesthood-authorized plural marriages continued for an additional twenty years (1890-1910).

There are too many typographical errors for a history book and the publisher must bear some responsibility for carelessness in proofreading. The Illinois newspaper *Quincy Whig* is printed as *Quincy Quake* (251) and Willard Richards’s baptismal year is given as 1835 (it was actually 1836) (306).

Latter-day History works into its thesis the recurring emphasis of Saints being persecuted. This is one of the most timeless myths of Mormonism, an element that has become crucially important in establishing the identity of the suffering but stalwart Saints. It is certainly true that they suffered and that much of it stemmed from unjustified persecution. However, this portrayal is too simple. We should not overlook evidence indicating that some members were, in fact, bad neighbors. We do not need to justify unrighteous actions or speeches, and we must not repeat hate crimes whether verbal or physical. Sometimes important insights into church history may take many years before becoming a recognizable fact. History has a strange way in telling its own story. Once we know that historical facts are sometimes carefully worked through for different audiences it opens up a new view of our heritage.

Latter-day Saint readers should desire to have a faith based on correct readings rather than traditions that may be founded on inaccurate rendering of historical records. I must reluctantly state that, while *Latter-day History* is rich in illustrations, their presentation and identification are not always reliable. More seriously, the text fails to give a good understanding of the Latter-day Saints as a church or as a people, even for a young or general audience.

³ Steven H. Heath, “Notes on Apostolic Succession,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Summer 1987):44-57.