

Book Reviews

S. KENT BROWN, DONALD Q. CANNON, and RICHARD H. JACKSON, eds. *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994. xiii; 169 pp. Illustrations, references, and index. \$37.50.

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In June 1992, during a visit to Brigham Young University, the president of the Academic Reference Division of Simon and Schuster suggested a cooperative venture between the university and his publishing house to produce an atlas that would introduce readers "to the geographic relationships associated with the history of the Mormons" (vii). His suggestion was seized upon with vigor. Within a period of less than two years, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, all prominent BYU faculty members, had tapped deeply into the expertise of more than four dozen scholars of the Mormon experience to create the *Historical Atlas*. The atlas presents a new perspective on Mormons and Mormonism from the birth of Joseph Smith in Vermont to announcements in the early 1990s of plans to build temples in Hong Kong, England, and Spain.

This atlas is, however, much more than just a collection of maps. Each of the seventy-eight maps (or, in some instances, groups of maps) is supplemented by an informative one-page essay and a brief, but pertinent, bibliography that usually contains standard published sources as well as works that are less well known, including numerous graduate theses and dissertations. What emerges from this format is a capsule review of Mormon history as seen within a spatial framework, an approach which is second nature to most geographers but which may open new windows of interpretation for others when they absorb the cartographic presentation and begin to sense the broader picture.

The maps, prepared by cartographers in the Geography Department at BYU, are clear and unambiguous and are produced in a uniform style that provides continuity from one presentation to the next. Some, by their very nature, are a bit stark and austere, particularly when their principal function is to merely pinpoint locations. Included in this category are map 1, which shows the birthplaces of early Church leaders, and map 10, a compilation of places in Ohio that were of importance in the early years of the Church's existence. But more often than not, they are real gems, incorporating depth and intriguing detail in a single illustration that can serve as an analytic tool in its own right. Maps in this category are almost too numerous to mention, but they include map 11, a wonderfully detailed portrait of Kirtland and its surroundings; map 12, which is actually a series of maps demonstrating the emerging patterns of Mormon land ownership near Kirtland from 1830 through 1836; and map 44, which traces the sequence of Mormon expansion along the Wasatch Front from 1847 through 1851.

The most valuable contributions are the sets of several maps, supplemented by lively, informative essays that examine related topics at different scales and from somewhat different perspectives. Two sets deserve special commendation. The first is a set of four maps of Nauvoo and its surroundings (maps 25–28) that situate Nauvoo within the broader mid-1800s midwestern context of land speculation, expanding agriculture, and young, vigorous towns and cities; analyze the city's site and its utilization before the Mormons arrived; describe Nauvoo in 1842; and outline the extent and impact of Latter-day Saint expansion into neighboring parts of Hancock County, Illinois. The maps in this section are exceptionally well integrated with the accompanying essays, written by Richard H. Jackson and Donald Q. Cannon, and convey a sense of process in place that could not be adequately achieved if they stood alone or were separated by other topics.

The second exemplary set is a pair of maps (maps 41 and 42) that provide clear pictures of Salt Lake City as it existed in the latter part of 1847 and in 1870 and describe the sequential expansion of settlement outward from Salt Lake City to other parts of the Salt Lake Valley during that period of time. The use of shaded relief creates sharp cartographic images. The essays prepared by Brian Q.

Cannon are smoothly written and include a great deal of information within a very few paragraphs that are direct and to the point.

Unfortunately, the atlas does contain some flaws. As a native of Providence, Rhode Island, I was distressed to see, in map 7, that the place of my birth had been moved several miles to the north and now appears to be mostly in Massachusetts. Similarly, my cousins, who grew up in southern Maine, would be surprised to discover on the same map that Maine's southernmost county (York) has also been relocated well to the north and now appears to be a bit closer to Canada than to Maine's southern tip. It is perhaps understandable that these miscues in distant New England escaped detection, but there is no excuse for Provo—where the atlas was drafted—being nudged out of place in map 74. In the essay accompanying map 13, the author places Colesville, an early stronghold of Mormonism, in Ohio rather than New York. The author of the essay accompanying map 53 asserts that “to simplify the map, the return from distant centers is shown as a straight line”; in fact, no such line or lines are on that particular map. As noted above, map 11 is a real treasure, but it is also in desperate need of a scale. None of these (and other similar slips) is a serious problem by itself, but collectively they do mar the volume's overall quality.

The atlas is a handsome piece of work, and the editors and publisher should be congratulated for producing such a fine volume in such a short period of time. It is often difficult to meld the work of so many people into a meaningful, integrated unit, but with few exceptions, this goal has been achieved. Most maps are excellent, most essays are highly informative, and some of them provide provocative analyses that, when considered from the perspectives that the maps supply, will encourage further investigation of a historical/geographical nature. Many users of this volume will be familiar with a large share of the topics, but few will have in-depth knowledge of all of them, and fewer still will have considered these historic circumstances from a geographical point of view. On one hand, the atlas is a convenient reference tool whose utility transcends mere cartographic presentation. On the other, it is a starting point for inquiry about the Mormon experience in which understanding may lie well beyond the domains of

theology and the more traditional approaches to history and closer to the realms of geography and spatial inquiry. The atlas already occupies a prominent spot within easy reach of my work table, and I know I will use it often. I am equally confident that scholars and lay people alike will make it a valued addition to their own bookshelves.