

NELSON B. WADSWORTH. *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass: The Great Mormon Temple and Its Photographers*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992. xi; 388 pp. Photographs and index. \$39.95.

RICHARD NEITZEL HOLZAPFEL and T. JEFFERY COTTLE. *A Window to the Past: A Photographic Panorama of Early Church History and the Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993. ix; 106 pp. Photographs, selected bibliography and sources. \$15.95.

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Each of these pictorial books was apparently published to take advantage of a ready-made 1993 Mormon audience. The publication of *A Window to the Past* coincided with the Church curriculum emphasis on Church history and the Doctrine and Covenants. *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass* capitalized on the interest and market created by the centennial anniversary of the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. Both books reflect ambitious research, the culling of many and diverse collections, and the bringing together of photos, objects, and informative items, many of which have never before been readily accessible to the average reader. However, these books do not work equally well.

It is generally unfair for a reviewer to review the book she or he wanted written, rather than the book which exists. However, when the author and the publisher themselves lead prospective readers to believe a book is other than it turns out to be, comparing the appearance with the reality may be a service to an unsuspecting public. Such is the case with *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass: The Great Mormon Temple and Its Photographers*. The title, cover photograph, design, and author's introduction all set expectations, summarized in the first paragraph of the inside cover flap: "To celebrate the centennial of the [Salt Lake Temple] dedication, Nelson Wadsworth has assembled nearly 400 rare turn-of-the-century glass, copper, and dry-plate exposures which place the temple in historical and aesthetic perspective."

However, even randomly fanning through the book immediately suggests that much besides a "historical and aesthetic

perspective" of the Salt Lake Temple is contained between the covers. Only when one sits down to read and looks seriously at the pictures does the discrepancy become glaring. Of the approximately three hundred photographs in the book, only about one-fifth could generously be said to be about the temple. The text seems even more skewed. A better title for this book may have been "Utah's Photographers and Photographs of Utah," but even that would not reflect the wide-ranging and sometimes bizarre (James Talmage dressed as a monk at Santa Barbara, p. 103) photographs presented with little or no context to help readers make sense of what is going on.

The book's introduction contains an account of the capstone laying of the Salt Lake Temple, and its epilogue recounts the strange "Max Florence Affair" of 1911, in which a former Salt Lake City theater owner tried "to sell 'to the highest bidder' sixty-eight pictures taken clandestinely inside the temple" (355). Each of the book's eight chapters, however, treats a photographer or team of photographers. Throughout these chapters—filled with intriguing photographs of Salt Lake City, the Great Salt Lake, actresses, plain folk, photographers' studios, baseball, football, mine rescue teams, and even Mormon missionaries in Jerusalem in 1903—references to the Salt Lake Temple often seem contrived, as if to say, "Oh, yes, this book is about the Salt Lake Temple; let's say something here."

The fact that this book is not primarily about the Salt Lake Temple is ironic since such a book could have been produced with no more (and perhaps less) effort and resources than the one published. The author has access to more photographs of just the Salt Lake Temple and its construction than the total number of photos in this book. Maybe this book was not intended to be about the Salt Lake Temple at all, but rather, as its subtitle suggests, about the *photographers* of the temple.

However, this is not really a book about photographers of the Salt Lake Temple either. While photographers with relatively tangential interest in the temple (James H. Crockwell or James and Harry Shipler, for example) have whole chapters to themselves in this book, Charles William Carter—the most prodigious photographer of the temple—and Charles W. Symons share a chapter.

Only one sentence on page 165 acknowledges Carter's substantial, systematic, thirty-year effort to document the construction of the Salt Lake Temple: "Carter took numerous photographs of the temple as it rose from its foundations."

Unfortunately, many photographs in the book are not attributed. Since credits are not generally given, the reader might assume that all photos within a particular chapter are representative work of the person highlighted in the text, but this assumption should not be made. For example, Carter photographs of Salt Lake City (50) and the Beehive house (53) appear unattributed in the chapter on Edward Martin. A Carter photograph of workmen quarrying granite is in the chapter about C. R. Savage (81), and a Savage photograph of a boy sitting on a bridge in Salt Lake City (140) appears in the Carter and Symons chapter. Such errors seem too common. This deficiency is especially puzzling since many of these same photographs are correctly attributed in other Wadsworth books. Some errors of identification also occur. The photograph on page 310, identified as the construction of the present Church Administration Building, could not possibly be of that building since it is in the wrong place! It is probably of the old Deseret Gym.

This book is not without merit, however. When I got beyond its opportunistic framing and my own unmet expectations as a reader, I decided Nelson Wadsworth has in fact treated the real subject of his book adequately. This is not a book about the temple, nor is it focused on the photographers of the temple. It is a history of photography in a part of the American West, principally Utah. Considered on these grounds, *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass* provides much interesting information. The details about various photographic processes, such as daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, wet plates, dry plates, and enlarging, answer some basic questions for this reviewer, who had often heard these terms bandied about without really knowing what they meant. The social history—often read between the lines—and personal vignettes are interesting and enjoyable. Nineteenth-century photography in Utah is placed within the wider context of an evolving art form.

A more cohesive framework in the text or an afterword tying together the diversity of information presented would help readers better appreciate the book's unique strengths. Perhaps the

book should have been two books, one about all the wonderful Salt Lake Temple photographs which are available and the other about the history of photography in Utah and its early practitioners.

A Window to the Past actually does what it says it is going to do: it provides a “Photographic Panorama of Early Church History and the Doctrine and Covenants.” People who work in museums often remind each other that “museum exhibits should not be books on the wall.” This book, however, seems to be a museum exhibit in a book. The section headings are very much like section headings in a museum, and the artifact captions are similar to museum artifact captions.

Virtually all the section headings refer to the Doctrine and Covenants, most of them quoting directly from the revelations. This framework ties together objects and ideas that might otherwise be viewed as simply an odd, if interesting, assortment of “things.” Artifacts can become vehicles to touch the past, but the stories of the objects are what gives them life. Even the sketchiest sort of story—“this belonged to your second-great-grandmother”—makes many an item a treasured family heirloom. The objects featured in this book, whether actually part of Church history (such as Joseph Smith’s office sign from the Red Brick Store [52]) or simply representational (such as Native American artifacts illustrating early Church efforts to preach to the Lamanites [47]), make early Church history visual and real by placing it in a context of actual people and events.

In a year of renewed interest in latter-day temples, I enjoyed seeing the temples and hoped-for temples of the Joseph Smith era highlighted. Both the familiar and famous and the unfamiliar and relatively unknown are featured here (as well as throughout the book). Thus the plat of Zion with the temple complex at the center and John Taylor’s watch from Carthage share space with the drawing for the temple in Independence, a Carthage mob member’s powder horn, and a sacrament goblet from the Nauvoo Temple.

I liked this book. Were there any things not to like? I would have preferred colored pictures. Of course the cost of the book would have increased, but I think the price would have been worthwhile. A few factual errors and typos were scattered throughout. The Book of Mormon featured on page 17 belonged to Emer, not

Martin, Harris, and the First Presidency's Official Declaration—2 was announced on June 8, 1978, not June 28 (79).

Just as documents are generally perceived as less interesting than artifacts in a museum exhibit, so the second half of this book is less visually interesting to the casual observer than the first part. The second half, however, contains a good general overview of the historical development of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is not (nor does it pretend to be) the final scholarly word on the subject. Many of the finest scholarly works to date on the Doctrine and Covenants are cited, a boon to beginning scholars who want to probe deeper. But for the general reader, the book presents usable information in straightforward and readable fashion. The book should appeal to a wide variety of readers, from a young child poring over the pictures to the serious student of Church history. All artifacts, photographs, and documents are credited in the back of the book. The numerous credit lines therefore do not intrude into the body of the text yet are readily accessible to those interested.

Both these books bring us closer to our material culture—artifacts, documents, and photographs in these instances. The exercise in reading material culture to gain important knowledge about the past is an especially useful exercise for members of a Church grounded in actual historical time and space. To consider real things owned by real people who are in many ways like us helps our eyes and hearts touch the foundations of history and belief.