

Book Reviews

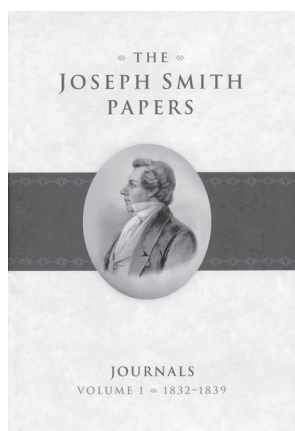
DEAN C. JESSEE, MARK ASHURST-MCGEE, and RICHARD L. JENSEN, eds. *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed., Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Historian's Press, 2008, lxvi + 506 pp., illustrations, reference material, bibliography, \$49.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Kenneth Stevens, professor of history at Texas Christian University and editor of the diplomatic papers of Daniel Webster.

Publication of this volume marks the long awaited debut of the Joseph Smith Papers. Published under the auspices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church History Department, the series promises to be a masterwork of documentary editing, one that—barring the discovery of yet unknown materials—will stand as the definitive collection on the early period of Mormon history.

This first volume of Joseph Smith's 1830s journals is the beginning of a much larger editorial project. The series will eventually total thirty-two volumes in six series: three volumes of Smith's journals, eleven of documents (such as correspondence, sermons and speeches, and editorials), four of revelations and translations, seven of history, three of legal and business records, and four of administrative records.

Volume 1 includes a wealth of reference material. The introduction includes an essay that covers Joseph Smith's background and character, his discovery of the Book of Mormon, the early history of the Church, and the conflict that developed between Mormons and non-Mormons. The volume includes an excellent chronology that covers the years of the journals, a geographical directory that describes most of the places mentioned in the journals, a biographical directory that identifies many of the people in the book, and a pedigree chart showing Joseph Smith's grandparents, parents, siblings, and children with Emma Hale Smith. There are excellent maps that feature,



in addition to overviews of the United States, maps of the “Burned-Over” District of New York; Mormon activity in Ohio and Northwest Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa; detailed maps that indicate settlement patterns in Kirtland Township, Ohio; and Church land purchases in western Illinois. Additionally, the volume includes ecclesiastical descriptions and charts, and a glossary that defines particularly Mormon references, such as the orders of priesthoods, that appear in the journals. The book has an essay on sources and a list of works cited. Finally, the work contains illustrations including photographs of the journals, reproductions of text from the original journals, and photographs of major individuals, historic sites, and buildings.

This volume contains five of Smith’s journals, covering the period from November 1832 through October 1839. The first journal opens with the efforts to build a church community in Ohio; the last concludes as Smith is about to set out for Washington DC, for an unsuccessful effort to convince the government to grant compensation for losses sustained by the Mormons in Missouri. Each journal is introduced by a source note that provides a detailed physical description of the journal, its provenance, and a historical introduction that gives the context for the entries. There are also occasional editorial notes inserted before journal entries to provide explanations for events. One such note, for example, prefaces a lengthy journal entry describing the November 1835 meeting between Joseph Smith and a man who introduced himself as “Joshua the Jewish Minister.” Joshua turned out to be the infamous Robert Matthews, the prophet Matthias, who had been tried (and acquitted) for murder in New York.

The transcription practices of the project are excellent and are carefully explained in the volume’s front matter. The editors preserve the exact language, spelling, and punctuation of the original journals. Canceled words are printed with strikethroughs; when necessary for clarity inserted letters are enclosed in angle brackets. Editorial insertions that expand, correct, or clarify the text are enclosed in brackets. Joseph Smith most often relied on scribes (who are identified) to record his journals; original text in his own handwriting is indicated in bold type.

The journals are extensively and carefully annotated. The citations provide historical background that explain matters from the journal entries and sources where additional information can be found. Many of the citations in the journals refer to revelations, and these are carefully documented as well.

It is unfortunate that the volume does not include an incorporated index. A separate, paperbound index accompanies the volume, but in my view this is a serious fault in the project design, and I hope it is a decision the editors will reconsider.

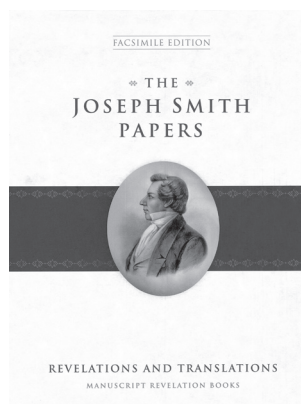
Overall, this is an excellent start to this very important addition to the history of the Latter-day Saints. It vividly documents the efforts of Joseph Smith and other members of the Church as they struggled to establish a unique presence in the American landscape.

ROBIN SCOTT JENSEN, ROBERT J. WOODFORD, and STEVEN C. HARPER, eds. *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, facsimile ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Historian's Press, 2009, xliii + 707 pp., appendices, reference materials, acknowledgments, \$99.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by David B. Gracy II, Governor Bill Daniel Professor in Archival Enterprise, School of Information, University of Texas at Austin.

As a documentary publication, *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books* is a hallmark volume in a series designed to serve three clear and important goals. Publishing a documentary edition of Revelation Books 1 and 2, first, provides to Mormon scholars, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and those interested in the foundation of the Church, broad access to the most fundamental documents of the Church (in print in this volume and, in due course, electronically on the web as well). The second purpose is preservation, which will be achieved by having images of such high resolution (higher than can be reproduced in print) that utilizing them can replace most handling of the precious original volumes. The third is to facilitate study of changes that occurred, especially during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, in bringing the revelations into print.

Revelation Books 1 and 2, in which early Church leaders inscribed scores of revelations dated between 1828 and 1834, with notes dated 1843 and 1845, rank among the most fundamental historical documents of the Mormon Church. These manuscript books preserve the earliest known copies of most revelations, including a few texts that exist nowhere else. The revelations in these books that are not the earliest surviving versions are valuable as texts against which to compare printed transcriptions by which the revelations were disseminated far and wide. Indeed, because most of the texts in the manuscript



books were edited in preparation for publishing the revelations in the 1830s, the books constitute the most important source available for understanding the process of publishing the early revelations.

In the *Manuscript Revelation Books* volume reviewed here, each page of each revelation book is presented in facsimile, employing a screen sufficiently fine that a reader wishing to use a magnifying glass to study any mark can do so without having the subject of study disappear among the halftone dots. On the page opposite the facsimile is a transcript of the text, contextualized with the date the text was written and accompanied by glosses presenting observations of the editors regarding the content of or markings on the original page, and concerning physical changes in the original page and other matters pertinent to reading the page.

While the volume appears not unlike other documentary publications, it, and the Joseph Smith Papers project of which it is a part, are unusual as documentary publications. The Papers project, the editors inform visitors to the Joseph Smith Papers website, “is not a ‘documentary history’ project comprising all important documents relating to Joseph Smith. Instead, it is a ‘papers’ project that will publish, according to accepted documentary editing standards, documents created by Joseph Smith or by staff whose work he directed, including journals, revelations and translations, contemporary reports of discourses, minutes, business and legal records, editorials, and notices. The project also includes papers received and ‘owned’ by his office, such as incoming correspondence.”

Though the original revelation books are historical artifacts, and though the editors followed best practices in designing and constructing this volume, in fact this documentary edition of the revelation books is not conceived as, or produced in, the mold of a traditional documentary edition of historical texts. Traditional historical documentary editions presented texts as close in appearance to the handwritten originals as hot type allowed. But beyond simply making documents available to those for whom a trip to the archives where the originals were held was not possible, historical documentary editions were enriched with glosses, often very substantial, contributed by the editor to provide context and to deepen the understanding of the text by readers, especially those less familiar with the events recorded in the documents. In some instances, the work of identifying persons, places, and things even just mentioned in documents was so thorough that users knew that all important extant sources had been consulted in preparing the glosses. Documentary editors patted themselves on the back for their thoroughness, which stood to require readers to do little if any further research to fully understand the matters discussed in the text.

For the documentary edition of *Revelations and Translations* reviewed here, glosses appropriate for a traditional documentary edition simply did not fit because the revelations are not accounts of people, places, and actions needing factual orientation or elaboration. Instead, the editors have provided considerable reference material. In the two sections of Contents and Reference Material, readers will find:

- A biographical summary of Joseph Smith's life and an account of his work as Revelator and Translator. One should note that the biography of Joseph Smith on the Joseph Smith Papers website is fuller than that in the printed volume.
- Chronologies of Joseph Smith's life and of the years 1828–1835.
- Brief biographical sketches of the scribes who recorded the revelations, some of which are more, other less substantial than the sketches appearing on the Joseph Smith Papers website.
- A bibliography of works cited.

In place of an index to the volume, the editors provide:

- Correspondence of Items in Revelation Books 1 and 2 with Selected Published Versions through which readers can track a revelation and its subsequent publication, both contemporary to Joseph Smith and in two works produced in the twentieth century.
- The Use of Revelation Books 1 and 2 in Preparing the Revelations for Publication, which is composed of three tables documenting Relationship between Items in Revelation Book 1 and *The Evening and the Morning Star*; Relationship between Items in Revelation Book 1 and the Book of Commandments; and Relationship between Items in Revelation Books 1 and 2 and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

A comprehensive index to the whole of the Joseph Smith Papers is planned for publication in a subsequent volume.

A particularly useful contribution of the editors is identifying the hands that contributed to the manuscript text. On the transcript pages, the work (sometimes only marks of punctuation) of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, William W. Phelps, Sidney Rigdon, and John Whitmer is distinguished by a different color of ink. This puts at the disposal of readers the expertise it took the editors hours to acquire becoming familiar not just with the singular shapes characteristic of the handwriting of each individual, but also with even the most minute, but important elements of an individual's style—marks of punctuation and marks associated with letters requiring a pen-lift and sepa-

rate stroke to complete, as the letter “i” with its dot and the letter “t” with its cross. For both the new and the seasoned student of any or all of the scribes, this contribution is of inestimable value. Further, the editors have pointed out changes that are more easily seen by studying the original, so as to ensure an accurate reading of the facsimile.

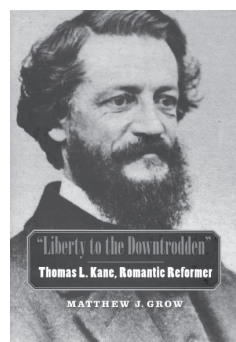
The reader interested in the technical decisions made by the editors in preparing the transcriptions and the published volume, as well as the work that went into producing the facsimiles, will be well informed on the six pages describing the Editorial Method, including Rules of Transcription and Annotation Conventions. The “Note on Photographic Facsimiles” relates in three sections on seven pages explanations of Creating the Photographs, Preparing the Photographs for Print Publication, and Limitation of the Photographs and Techniques Used to Recover Canceled Text.

“Producing scripture, Joseph Smith believed, was a fundamental component of his role as a revelator and translator,” the editors state, “and this series will provide unprecedented access to the material that resulted from his efforts” (xxiv). In *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books* the editors have achieved their goals.

MATTHEW J. GROW. *“Liberty to the Downtrodden”: Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009, 348 pp. Illustrations, notes, index, \$40.00 hardback.)

Reviewed by Lavina Fielding Anderson, an editor in Salt Lake City, Utah. She is researching a biography of Lucy Mack Smith.

Thomas L. Kane has been an icon in Mormon history for more than a century, known primarily through three vignettes. First, he was a hero who appeared at the Mormon’s most desperate hour after the murder of its Prophet and just when the mammoth task of the exodus was gearing up. His haunting portrait of Nauvoo, deserted and ravished, mobilized public sympathy for the exiled Saints. He reappeared at a second crisis—the approach of the Utah Expedition to crush the “Mormon rebellion.” His dash across the Isthmus of Panama to California and life-threatening journey from California to Utah, and then on to Wyoming, where the army was stranded by winter to negotiate an acceptable peace, is indubitably heroic. The third glimpse is of a leisurely



journey south from Salt Lake City to St. George, accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth, and youngest son, to spend a mellow winter in St. George with Brigham Young and grateful Mormon friends.

Now Matthew Grow has slowed down these flash-frames to show us who Thomas Kane was, what he did both between and during these well-loved vignettes, and, most important, why Kane adopted the despised Mormons as a special cause. Latter-day Saints may be surprised to learn that the answer has less to do with the justice of their cause than with Kane's self-image. Grow's subtitle, "Romantic Reformer," is both felicitous and accurate, and the biography itself is dazzling.

Born in 1822 to a prominent and close-knit family, Kane was obviously intelligent, noble-spirited, and thirsty for the kind of national acclaim his older brother Elisha achieved by becoming a polar explorer. Grow describes the paradoxes that made up Kane's personality in an introductory passage that also alerts the reader to the fine writing and incisive intellect brought to bear on a subject worthy of both:

An anti-slavery crusader, he longed for the chivalrous world of the southern gentry. A Philadelphian, a cosmopolitan urbanite, comfortable in the salons of Paris and the parlors of London, he spent most of the last twenty-five years of his life in the rustic Alleghenies, developing an eastern frontier. A master of media "spin," Kane generally preferred backroom negotiations to the public spotlight. Equally repulsed and fascinated by politics, he decried the corruptness of the American political scene but was constantly drawn toward it. A child of wealth, an American aristocrat, he worried endlessly about finances.

Raised in a devout Presbyterian home, Kane gravitated toward atheism and a "religion of humanity" . . . before experiencing not one, but two, conversions to Christianity, though he refused to join a denomination and the nature of his faith always remained ambiguous. Drawn to religious asceticism and self-denial, Kane was also deeply ambitious. A Jacksonian Democrat by birth, he betrayed his family and their true "faith," first by becoming a Free Soiler, and then, even worse in their eyes, a Republican. Kane could speak in moving terms of the humanity of blacks and Native Americans and simultaneously shudder in horror at the prospects of racial mixing. Diminutive (he stood five feet four inches tall and was exceptionally slight) and described by contemporaries as feminine-looking, Kane over-compensated with aggressive masculinity. In perpetually feeble health and often depressed, he felt most alive when in danger (xv).

Driven by the romantic ideal that emphasized the individual and believed in human perfectibility, Kane ardently espoused women's rights, abolitionism (he was a genuine Civil War hero), temperance, and religious minorities. Grow makes a useful distinction between Kane's style of reform (which had the goal of "liberty") and that of evangelical reforming efforts (which had the goal of a "Christianized nation and culture") (xvi). Grow's explanation in Chapter 3 is a lucid introduction to the reforming impulse of the early nine-

teenth century. Another illuminating discussion is the culture of honor and how it shaped Kane's conception of manhood.

I would have enjoyed seeing that concept applied to what could (and should?) have been an ethical dilemma for Kane: the discovery that the victimized Mormons whom he was defending against charges of polygamy had actually lied to him. What does honor require in such a situation? Grow describes Kane as "shocked," but he continued to defend the Mormons against the charges of treason by the "runaway" federal officials by "anonymously co-authoring a hard-hitting pamphlet that helped discredit" those officials. Grow also states that Kane's advice to acknowledge polygamy publicly influenced Brigham Young's decision to do so in August 1852 (73).

Although Grow provides no further details, Jedediah M. Grant, Kane's "coauthor" on the pamphlet, sent Brigham Young a more illuminating report. When Grant brought Kane the papers containing the officials' accusations, Kane dismissed the charge "relating to our domestic relations . . . by saying it was false. I found myself therefore under the disagreeable necessity of volunteering to tell him how far it was false and how far it was true." He did so on the basis of a written memorandum, replete with scriptural references, which he read to Kane "with verbal explanations. . . . I will not undertake to tell you in this communication how the Col seemed to feel after my announcement," but Grant assured Young of Kane's continuing commitment.¹ Since one of Grant's points was the resoundingly untruthful statement that Church leaders had not had any "additions except children" to their families for "several years," it may be that Kane colluded with Grant in accepting the most palatable version of this deception. Furthermore, he may have done so because of his own ambitions. Grow spells out how Kane "unabashedly sought to use the press to 'manufacture' public opinion and create popular images" (74) through the use of pseudonymous letters from supposedly objective observers followed by ghost-written articles planted in sympathetic papers (see chapter 7). Kane even admitted, in the context of another political contest, "'I am by nature unscrupulous, a low animal cunning, a natural proneness to even unnecessary intrigue and artifice'" (104).

Grow's analysis of Kane's role in the Utah War is a fascinating chronicle of "intrigue" and "manipulation," during which he "ghostwrote letters for both Young and Cumming" (151), Young's replacement as governor, and created a face-saving Mormon "war party" against whom Young and Cumming could unite with U.S. President Buchanan's blessing (171).

I would have liked more analysis of Kane's marriage to Elizabeth Wood, his second cousin and junior by fifteen years. Although it was unquestionably a love match and they were devoted to each other, Kane saw Elizabeth

as someone to be educated and molded. But she was no passive partner. Her unfaltering faith contrasts sharply with Kane's on-again-off-again belief.

Grow's attention to balance and to doing justice to all parts of Kane's life (the Civil War chapters are particularly gripping) means that the definitive treatment of Kane's interactions with Mormons has yet to be written. The register of the Kane collection is a whopping 1,153 pages, and Kane's Mormon papers comprise Series III, organized in fourteen subseries. "The list of individuals with whom Thomas corresponded reads like a who's who of nineteenth-century Mormonism," comments archivist David J. Whittaker. Elizabeth Kane's "journals and scrapbooks," some dealing with Mormons and Mormonism, are in a separate series.² Obviously there are treasures yet to be unearthed in this collection. Meanwhile, both recreational readers and serious students of Mormon studies will find treasures galore in Grow's outstanding *"Liberty to the Downtrodden."*

Notes

1. Gene A. Sessions, *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Kofford Books, 2008), 118–19.

2. David J. Whittaker, "New Sources on Old Friends: The Thomas L. Kane and Elizabeth W. Kane Collection," *Journal of Mormon History* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 67–94. The collection is housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts Division, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

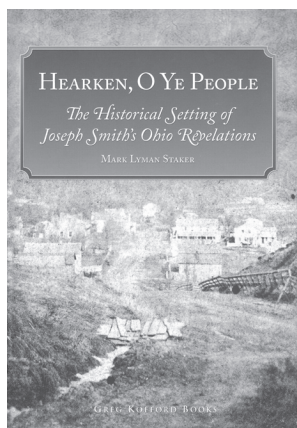
MARK LYMAN STAKER. *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations*. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009, 694 pp., chronology, maps, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index, scripture index, \$34.95 hardback.)

Reviewed by Matthew C. Godfrey, volume editor, Joseph Smith Papers, LDS Church Historical Department.

Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations is a long-overdue reexamination of Mormonism's development during the Kirtland era and the major players in that development. Superbly researched by Mark L. Staker, who has worked for many years for the LDS Church Historical Department in the Historic Sites Division, the book is rich in detail, providing a meticulous look into the social, economic, and religious life of "Mormonites" living in Kirtland and Hiram, Ohio, between 1831 and 1838.

Staker's goal in writing *Hearken, O Ye People* is to place the revelations produced by Joseph Smith during this period into "a physical and historical context that helps to shed light on what these revelations may have meant to those who first heard them" (xl). The book, Staker continues, is not meant to serve as a "comprehensive history of the Kirtland period," but more as an in-depth examination of elements of the Church's growth. The author structures the book around four major themes: the influence of Black Pete on the development of spiritual experiences of early Kirtland Mormons; Newel K. Whitney's impact on the Kirtland economy and the Church's United Firm (a short-lived directorate of Mormon leaders that governed mercantile and publishing efforts of the Church from 1832 to 1834); the contributions of the John Johnson family to Mormonism during Smith's stay with the Johnson family in 1831 and 1832; and the development and demise of the Kirtland Safety Society, leading to the eventual Mormon exodus from Kirtland in 1838. Interwoven into these themes are discussions of some of the revelations dictated by Smith and surrounded or influenced by these events. We learn, for example, that Smith's revelation known as "the law" (Doctrine & Covenants 42) came after "twelve elders met with Joseph Smith to discuss the law of the Church as it related to the community that had developed in Kirtland" by early 1831 (102). Since Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson, and Peter Whitmer (the missionaries who converted early Kirtland residents to the gospel) had left the new converts on their own to meld their new religion with their previous beliefs in Methodism and the Owenite movement (among other religious traditions), questions arose pertaining to "the religious experiences of the members" (103). The elders and Joseph Smith examined these questions, and the answers constituted what became known as D&C 42. Likewise, Staker carefully outlines the beliefs of some Disciples of Christ in a "plan of salvation" and different kingdoms that constituted heaven, and how Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon's vision of the three degrees of glory (D&C 76) both built on and contended with these beliefs. These discussions provide the reader with a much clearer understanding of what these revelations meant at the time they were given.

The strength of Staker's book lies in its meticulous details about Kirtland, Hiram, and the Mormons who lived there. Given his background in historic site preservation, it is no wonder that some of the book's strongest discussions center on physical attributes of Kirtland. For example, Staker painstakingly



explains the tarring and feathering of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, providing details on the “dark lantern” brought by Silas Raymond to light the mob’s journey (“It had a pointed top to shed rain and a wire handle to carry it,” Staker reports), where John Johnson was located when some of the mob prevented him from leaving his house, and the location of the actual tarring and feathering. A large part of the author’s discussion deals with the room where Joseph and Emma were sleeping when the mob broke into the Johnson house. Bucking the traditional interpretation (including the current one given by LDS missionaries to visitors to the Johnson home in Hiram), Staker convincingly argues that Joseph, Emma, and the twin babies, Julia and Joseph Murdock, were located in a work kitchen in the back of the house, which had an entrance from a side porch. His argument, based on reminiscences and other historical documents, is impressive.

Staker’s extensive research into the Kirtland era is a major reason why *Hearken, O Ye People* is such an important work. For his reconstruction of the background of Kirtland’s early converts and the religious context in which their conversion occurs, for example, Staker uses a host of literature from ministers and revival participants, as well as newspaper accounts and reminiscences, to provide one of the best explanations of this context (including citing a day book of an employer who docked a worker’s pay for attending a revival meeting in 1820, thus refuting the claims of some scholars that revivals really did not begin in New York until 1822). Given his earlier work on Newel K. Whitney, his section on Whitney’s economic contributions to Kirtland and Mormonism (including Whitney’s pre-Mormon life) is especially strong. Staker also draws on an abundance of writings by Disciple of Christ leaders, such as Walter Scott and Alexander Campbell, to highlight the influence of their theology on early Mormonism. Moreover, Staker adeptly uses material sources to flesh out the history of this era; for example, he examines the numbering and handwriting on Kirtland Safety Society banknotes to indicate how many notes were issued and at what times. Not only does this research mean that his book is based on solid historical ground, it also makes for fascinating reading.

Yet at times *Hearken, O Ye People* almost seems to drown in details and tangents that lack a strong connection to the book’s larger themes. This is especially true in Staker’s first section on Black Pete. Although he claims that this section will “explore the rise and fall of the Morley ‘Family’ communal experiment from the perspective of Black Pete and his many friends” (4), Pete is often lost from the pages of this section, as Staker moves in and out of discussions of abolitionism, Kirtland weather reports, and revivalist preachers, among other things. Other sections are stronger in maintaining connections to their larger themes, but Staker’s tendency to sometimes wander into sub-

jects not directly applicable to a section's major focus (or at least not clearly connected to that focus) sometimes detracts from his larger arguments. His contention that Black Pete played a central leadership role in the Kirtland congregation is not entirely convincing, mainly because Pete is missing from large chunks of the section. Part of the problem is undoubtedly the lack of sources dealing specifically with Black Pete, but that same lack of sources reduces the credibility of Staker's arguments.

Despite these issues, *Hearken, O Ye People* presents one of the best examinations of the Kirtland era in Mormon history and provides new insights into a host of issues, giving readers an authoritative work on this period of Mormonism. Historians seeking to understand the development of Mormon doctrine and practices during this era would be well advised to consult this book.

SUSAN EASTON BLACK, ed. *The Best of the St. Louis Luminary*. (Provo, UT: BYU Studies; and Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2010, 186 pp., illustrations, \$21.95 paperback.)

Reviewed by Fred E. Woods, professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

St. Louis, Missouri, was a thriving metropolis in the mid-nineteenth century when the Latter-day Saints came "marching in." Because of the perpetual flow of thousands of Mormon European emigrants to this region near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the St. Louis Stake was organized in early November 1854. Less than three weeks later, the LDS periodical *St. Louis Luminary* was launched by LDS Apostle Erastus Snow, who served as its editor in addition to overseeing Church affairs in this Midwest region. Although this newspaper lasted just a little over a year, running from November 1854 to December 1855, it had a major impact in the lives of the members of the Church worldwide.

Announcing the objectives of the new paper, Elder Snow proclaimed in the first issue, "The world has been too long stocked with falsehoods, slander[,] misrepresentations about Mormonism and the people of Utah. As there is another side to the question: they ask, may not that side be more favorable?"



We reply, it is, and the LUMINARY will be devoted to the exposition of the favorable side of Mormonism.” The idea of this periodical being a literary polemic was also signaled immediately with its masthead, which proclaimed, “Light Shineth in Darkness and the Darkness Comprehendeth it not.”¹

In *The Best of the St. Louis Luminary*, Susan Eason Black compiled gems from this weekly paper, providing a valuable research tool that exposes a little known corner of LDS history. As editor, Black sheds light on a high point of early St. Louis Mormon history. The volume also includes a diverse plethora of information which Black has skillfully assembled to help readers see the importance of St. Louis as an inland port for Mormon emigrants, as well as a literary arsenal to defend and explain LDS doctrines, especially the newly announced practice of polygamy.

Records carefully gathered from this Midwest Mormon periodical reveal the vast distance between branches and the demographics of various locations in parts of ten different states, as well as capturing the notion that the sheep in these outlying pastures were still carefully numbered. It is also evident that Church leaders believed these scattered Saints needed the opportunity to read the epistles of General Church leaders via the *Luminary*, and that periodically, leaders in the Midwest needed to gather to receive instruction from regional priesthood brethren. Further, marriage and death records included by Black add to the value of the volume for genealogists. Finally, serious researchers will be pleased that the book includes a searchable DVD-ROM of all fifty-two issues of the *Luminary*, including PDF copies of all the original issues as well as typescripts.

My only criticism of the book is that I felt more primary sources could have been used from the rich treasure trough of information on St. Louis Mormon history in the Church History Library. In addition, Brigham Young’s correspondence should have been checked and cited for possible inclusion to ensure the accuracy of the letters referred to instead of using secondary sources.

Notwithstanding, the book is well organized and well written, and I am confident it will benefit readers and researchers alike by helping them explore an important Mormon periodical from the mid-nineteenth century which helps us better understand a cluster of Saints gathered on the banks of the Mississippi.

Note

1. “Our Paper,” *St. Louis Luminary* 1, no. 1 (November 22, 1854): 1.