

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.

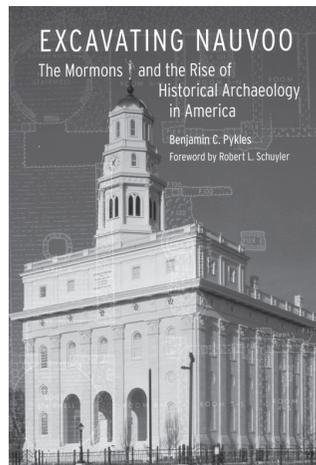
Unfortunately, *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes* is not the definitive documentary edition of minutes of the Nauvoo City Council or Nauvoo Stake High Council. Despite the volume's usefulness as a quick reference tool, serious researchers or anyone needing an accurate transcription must still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



modern restoration of Nauvoo, by beginning with a story external to Mormonism, Pykles immediately conveys a message to his reader. *Excavating Nauvoo* is more than a study of the archaeological explorations in Nauvoo during the latter half of the twentieth century. As its subtitle declares, this work chronicles the rise of historical archaeology in America, using Mormonism and Nauvoo as its case study.

The placing of Nauvoo's archaeological rebirth within a bigger American framework is one of the strengths of Pykles' work. Focusing on his larger story, Pykles successfully argues, "the excavations in Nauvoo serve as an illuminating case study of the history of historical archaeology at large" (4). With a vision broader than Mormonism, Pykles weaves unknown elements into his narrative, including details from the National Park Service and the State of Illinois and the roles they played in shaping restored Nauvoo.

Interplay between secular and sacred purposes for Nauvoo's restoration frames most of this excellent study. From a secular perspective, government officials, and especially the National Park Service, "conceived of Nauvoo's potential in terms of memorializing a romanticized period of national history," using "the story of Nauvoo and the story of Mormonism as one of the four major contributing factors in the westward expansion of America" (35, 73). Eventually, Nauvoo's restoration was portrayed as "a Williamsburg of the 19th century Midwest" (90). Pykles highlights that Church officials initially shared in this original purpose for Nauvoo's restoration, capitalizing on the project as "an opportunity to . . . memorialize what was truly American about the LDS Church" (37).

The author successfully demonstrates how both the government and the Church benefitted throughout the 1960s from the historical emphasis evident in Nauvoo's restoration. Citing a period of "low national morale among American citizens" (10) and "a time of accommodation and reconciliation for the LDS Church" (20), Pykles concludes that "both the secular and the religious interpretations of Nauvoo were . . . motivated by efforts to proselytize" (133). *Excavating Nauvoo* masterfully chronicles the restoration boom produced by this proselytization, including revealing plans for expanding the Nauvoo project beyond archaeology. Interestingly, Pykles details early proposals, including a university, golf course, tennis courts, hotels, restaurants, and a marina aimed at attracting those "content to stay only a few hours a day, if there is nothing for them to do but look at some restored shops and buildings" (115). The sponsoring faith would benefit from these projects by "improving the image of the LDS Church through the construction of impressive facilities" (99).

Pykles notes that Nauvoo's ambitious restoration sowed seeds of conflict because "for many Latter-day Saints, Nauvoo was more than just an important

place in American history; it was also a place of great spiritual significance” (127). Ultimately, with a change in Church leadership and the passage of time, the book chronicles how the spiritual focus for restored Nauvoo triumphed over earlier secular purposes.

Excavating Nauvoo offers an important description of how the purposes for Nauvoo’s restoration changed as well as how the Church uses historic sites to convey its message. Written from a Latter-day Saint perspective, it thoroughly details a story often untold by Nauvoo histories that focus on the city during its 1840s prime. The inclusion of the larger historical archaeology narrative is both informative and interesting. It could be improved slightly by weaving the two stories together rather than isolating much of the archaeological detail into the penultimate chapter of an otherwise engaging read. Furthermore, while there is some discussion about the role the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) played in Nauvoo’s restoration in the early twentieth century and again throughout the 1970s, there is little detail about how this branch of Mormonism reacted during the 1960s heyday that Pykles discusses in such detail. Although Pykles’ focus on the Latter-day Saint story hints at his response, the important question he poses, “Whose interpretation of Joseph Smith would prevail?” ultimately remains unanswered (25).

Furthermore, future research could expand his question to “Whose history of Nauvoo will prevail?” Certainly, it could include other groups not addressed in this study, such as the Icarians, the German settlers, the Catholic Sisters of St. Benedict, and rural Midwestern farmers. Additionally, though again beyond the scope of Pykles’ book, *Excavating Nauvoo* says little about the modern-day community’s response to the city’s more recent transformation (primarily as a result of the reconstruction of the Nauvoo LDS Temple), another facet that could further complete the picture of Nauvoo’s restoration.

While additional avenues for further study exist, Pykles’ work is both impressively researched and engagingly written. Transformed from his PhD dissertation, *Excavating Nauvoo* is written for an academic audience but will appeal to anyone interested in Nauvoo’s history. For a people and a place myopically focused on a seven-year window when the City of Joseph flourished on a beautiful bend of the Mississippi River, Pykles demonstrates that Church history did not end with the Prophet’s martyrdom. Indeed, though “the Church’s historic sites become three-dimensional witnesses to the supernatural events that underlie Mormon theology and identity” (302), the story of their preservation and restoration is a witness of the Church’s ongoing work today.