

*IN MEMORIAM:*  
*T. EDGAR LYON (1903–1978)*

DAVIS BITTON

T. EDGAR LYON, WELL KNOWN TO A GENERATION of students at the University of Utah Institute of Religion, died on September 20, 1978, at the age of 75.

Born and reared in Salt Lake City, Utah, he accumulated a remarkable variety of experiences in a life spanning roughly the first three quarters of the twentieth century. He was employed as an instructor in the seminary system of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1927. After teaching on the high school level in Idaho, he pursued graduate study at the University of Chicago in 1931–32, studying with Edgar J. Goodspeed and William W. Sweet, and earned a Master of Arts in Christian History. Having earlier served as a proselyting missionary in the Netherlands, he returned to that country as mission president at the age of thirty in 1933.

Upon his return in 1937, Ed (as he was known by his colleagues) began teaching at the Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah, which had been started just two years earlier. There hundreds, even thousands of students attended his classes on the New Testament, Christian church history, and Latter-day Saint history. Always full of enthusiasm, he had a sense of humor and a warmth that won him the affection of those he taught.

Blessed with energy and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, Ed Lyon never vegetated. He exhibited great tenacity in pursuing a doctorate in history, which was awarded at the University of Utah in 1962. The author of several courses of study, textbooks, and a series of scholarly articles, Ed became recognized as the leading expert on Mormon Nauvoo (Illinois) and in 1963 was appointed research historian of Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. He was a past president of the Mormon History Association. At the convention of that organization held in Independence, Missouri, in 1974, he stood on the bank of the Missouri River, light rain falling, wind blowing his hair, and told of the role of St. Joseph, Missouri, in transcontinental trade.

After retirement from the Institute of Religion and from Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., T. Edgar Lyon continued to give talks and to do scholarly research, and (after his ordination as a Stake patriarch) give individual blessings. His knowledge of historical details was unrivaled, his memory phenomenal. At the time of his death he was preparing a volume on the Mormon experience in Nauvoo for the projected 16-volume sesquicentennial history of the Latter-day Saints.

In late 1974 I had the choice experience of interviewing Ed for the oral history program of the Historical Department of the Church. In incredible detail his memory brought forth experiences going back to his boyhood in Salt Lake City,