

expect, there is an equally compelling reason for seriously considering purchasing a copy. Proceeds from the volume to the publisher, the nonprofit Sunstone

Foundation, will support continued publication of *Sunstone*, a magazine which has already made its mark in behalf of Mormon thought.

A Minor Landmark

The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West. Edited by Richard H. Jackson. Charles Redd Monographs in Western History, No. 9. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978. 169 pp., maps, charts, graphs. \$6.95.

Reviewed by RONALD W. WALKER a research historian in Salt Lake City.

Ask any Mormon culture buff about *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, *BYU Studies* or perhaps the *Utah Historical Quarterly* and you will get an informed response. But the Charles Redd Monographs in Western History? The odds are better than even that all you will get is a blank stare and shrugged shoulders. These volumes deserve better. During the last seven years, the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University has issued nine volumes, sometimes uneven in format and quality but usually interesting and often important.

The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West, a compilation of seven essays edited by BYU geographer Richard H. Jackson, is the most recent and in some respects the best in this continuing series. While more carefully and expensively packaged than some of its predecessors, it nevertheless shares some of the earlier editorial pitfalls. There is no index, and pesky typos mar the text. Several tables are unclearly titled, while more than one map suffers from unclear definition and unexplained gobbledegook. Jackson would have pleased readers by providing biographical sketches of the contributors, several of whom are only beginning to make their professional way. And I fear some may sell this collection short because its introductory essay

does a better job summarizing contents than placing the book within its scholarly setting and attempting to assess its importance. If the Redd Monographs are to widen their appeal, they must continue to improve their readability.

Nevertheless the book is a minor landmark. Along with Richard V. Francaviglia's recently published *The Mormon Landscape* (1978), it is a clear declaration that Mormon geographers intend to extend what has been a rather low profile. Until now Mormon scholars have turned to Lowry Nelson and Donald Meinig or to a growing volume of graduate school theses and dissertations when looking for geographical insights. Mormon geographers have been reticent to speak beyond their professional peers to a broader audience. *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West* portends changing times.

The volume not only reaches out to the general Mormon reading audience, but it also communicates. Some of the essays display the paraphernalia of modern geography—age distribution pyramids, curlicue graphs which wiggle worm-like up a page, population density maps and over a dozen statistical tables. While this data and visual analysis may not be light bedtime reading, the material is not deadening. Generally the prose is lucid. The articles are written in lucid prose with the authors varying in perspective and methodology. Five of the essays are written by professional geographers and two by historians. The line between historical geography and geographic history is thin, and the blend is compatible.

Only the loosest of themes bind the subject matter—the interaction of nineteenth century Mormons, their culture and their environment. In the lead

article, Jackson summarizes the perceptions of 135 diarists who travelled the Mormon trail before the coming of the railroad. His conclusion: the pioneers themselves did not sense an hostile environment which subsequently became the grist for spread-eagle July 24th oratory. Lynn Rosenvall lists Mormon settlements that did not succeed and reminds that the usually skillful settlers at times failed to gauge their surroundings. Fully 46 or over 8 percent of their 537 settlements collapsed. Alan Grey argues that LDS westward expansion was only a thrust on the vast stage of Occidental migration, and he seeks parallels between the Mormon community and the New Zealand settlement at Christchurch. For those who do not realize the youthful, European nature of nineteenth century Mormonism, Wayne Wahlquist's profile of a typical early settler living near Salt Lake City may be surprising: "In 1860 the average (mean) Mormon settler along the Wasatch Front was Caucasian, not quite twenty years of age, with British-born parents and several younger brothers and sisters." Using almost two dozen maps, Dean Louder and Lowell Bennion chart by decade the movement and density of Mormon population from 1860 to 1970 and in the process attempt a sharper definition of the LDS "core" cultural area.

Predictably perhaps, historians Melvin Smith and Charles Peterson are more traditional in their presentation; neither tables nor bar graphs intersperse their writing. Smith tells the saga and sacrifice of the Mormons' failure to make the lower Colorado River a commercial artery and indicts Church leadership for caloused disregard to the settlers' trials and hardships. Finally, taking John B. Jackson's axiom that "Landscape is history made visible" as text, Peterson examines the Mormon past as seen from the successive and overlapping landscapes as produced by the Mormon village, the homestead farmer and the dry farms at the turn of the century.

Inevitably, quality in a collection of this sort will be uneven. And even the most pleasing and provocative essay will occasion a few *obiter dicta* from a critical reader. While Allen Grey's article seeks

to escape the provincialism which abounds in LDS scholarly literature, his Salt Lake City/Christchurch parallels seem so broad as to prevent any meaningful insight. Jackson's piece reminds us that the Mormon migration was probably the best managed, large-scale mass movement in American history. Yet one leaves his article with an uneasy qualm that only part of the story has been told. Andrew Jenson estimated that 6,000 Saints died enroute to Zion. Though his statement was undocumented (and apparently undocumentable) and most fatalities occurred on the Iowa and Nebraska plains in 1846-47, there still seems room for tragedy and toil on the Mormon trail. Were Jackson's diary-keepers subject to the same spirit of romance, i.e., excitement for the thrill of the journey, that later swelled the breasts of Pioneer Day orators?

My favorite pieces are those by Wahlquist and Peterson. One may carp that the former's population estimates rest on several unverifiable assumptions, such as the flow of unreported immigration and emigration (Brigham Young at times despaired over settlers leaving the territory). Nevertheless, Wahlquist's population totals are certainly the best available, and his survey of nineteenth century Wasatch Front sex ratios, age structure, ethnicity and nativity is insightful. Peterson, in turn, continues the quest for personal and LDS heritage which he expressed several years ago in his Mormon History Association Presidential Address. He writes eloquently of the land and the common people who inhabit it—sometimes with language which seems ready to soar beyond his control. Peterson is interesting reading, even if some of his views require other historians to follow his wake and provide nuts-and-bolts documentation.

Some will say that this collection offers little that is new. True, most of its essays are taken from the authors' graduate school dissertations with only minor retouching. But Jackson has chosen his selections well, and the result is a commendable public statement of what Mormon historical geography is currently about.