

plates which contained the records of an ancient people. I believe that Anderson — like the eleven witnesses — is an honest and sincere man when he writes: “After years of working with their lives and their words, I am deeply convinced that their printed testimonies must be taken at face value”

(p. xii). But I don’t believe that his research *by itself* requires this conclusion. As he admits, “spiritual truths must be spiritually verified” (p. 82). Believers must make a “leap of faith,” apprehending with their “spiritual eyes” rather than their “natural eyes.”

A Taste of Southern Utah

Quicksand and Cactus, by Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City, Utah: Howe Brothers Publishers, 1982), 342 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Richard W. Sadler, professor of history at Weber State College.

IN A LETTER TO Bernard DeVoto dated 5 August 1944, Dale Morgan described a manuscript which would be published thirty-eight years later in 1982 as *Quicksand and Cactus*. Morgan, who had become a particularly good friend, confidant, and advisor to Juanita Brooks, author of the as-yet-unpublished book, explained,

On the one hand it is a narrative of her own life — born into a Mormon family on the southern frontier, grandchild of the upstanding polygamists she described in Harper’s ten years ago; of life in Bunkerville (described to some extent in Harper’s three years ago); the values the family and the community lived by; the relations with outsiders — and finally, and most of all, Juanita’s own story, growing up in this environment, going out for a schooling, and finally coming back to make her home in the Dixie country . . . I feel that it is a rich and heart-warming and lively and colorful book. But I think that it is a book that no one can read without a renewed sense of the worth of human living, and it is at the same time a book to be read with delight. (p. 342)

This volume, the first half of Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks’s autobiography, is a warm introduction to those who have not met Juanita, and it is pleasant reunion for those who have. It is colorful, humorous, suspenseful, entertaining, and well-written, but most of all, like Juanita, it is honest, unassuming, and straightforward. It is not

meant to be a scholarly, well-documented history of life on the southern Mormon frontier. Instead it is the personal narrative of a young girl’s exciting, eye-opening, and sometimes sorrowful passage to womanhood. That journey begins in Bunkerville, Nevada, and ends in St. George, Utah, with numerous stops in between, including Berkeley, Moapa, Brigham Young University, the Mountain Meadows, and New York City.

The reader is rapidly introduced to Bunkerville-eze, language of this frontier, and to the flesh and blood characters who inhabited this eastern Nevada community. The closeness of the Mormon families and their reliance on each other and the Church is made most apparent. Aunt Maria, the midwife, had a standard fee of three dollars per baby which could be paid in cash or produce and this included a ten-day stay with the new mother and baby. The digging of a cistern and its importance to the community is the focus of one chapter, Juanita’s first visit to Moapa the subject of another. Visiting Moapa with its railroad, hotel, and strangers was a momentous occasion, made even more important by seeing a “colored” man for the first time and putting the electric light in the hotel room in the bureau drawer overnight because she knew no other method of turning it off.

In revealing her innermost thoughts and embarrassments to the reader, Juanita becomes both very human and very understandable. No one can read of the embarrassment she suffered during her first visit to St. George and the ice cream store without gaining insight into her capacity to

understand the human condition. The trip to St. George was for business and pleasure including the delivery of salt, attendance at the autumn quarterly conference, visiting relatives, and being exposed to the St. George Fair. The trip and all side-events took ten days. While at the fair, Juanita, not yet in her teens, decided to buy some ice cream with the dime and three nickels which were securely tied in the corner of her handkerchief:

To my right, on tall stools by a counter, three young ladies were sipping something out of tall goblets with straws. They were beautifully dressed, these girls, with sheer white blouses and dark skirts and high-heeled shoes. This almost stopped me, but gathering courage I started to walk right in. To my surprise, a little, funny-looking girl came forward to meet me, her hair braided, her red calico dress trimmed with white braid, her too-large stogie shoes—**HORRORS!!!** It was me myself in a full-length mirror coming to meet me! I was so embarrassed that I could hardly answer the clerk when she came to say, "May I help you?" . . . My day was ruined. Maybe my whole life was ruined. (pp. 96-97)

Her affection and closeness for her father, her two husbands, Ernest and Will, and her first son Ernie are spelled out throughout the narrative as well as her difficult relationship with her first mother-in-law, Mang.

Many threads are woven throughout the volume, including her deep love of people, her love for the land, and her acceptance of and her closeness to her heritage. Her relationship to animals, particularly her horses Selah and Flax and her dog Old Griz gives an idea of the closeness of frontier people to animals and their interdependence.

Second only to Juanita's own role, personality, and experience as a subject in the book is the impact and importance of the Mormon Church.

Much as we loved and respected our leaders, it was easy to see that many of our folk were a little jealous or resentful of the fact that the people of the north lived so much better than we and at less effort. And yet the Church was every-

thing to us. It was for the Church that we were all here; it was the Church that had drawn our parents far from all the far countries. Even the building of the ditch and the dam, the graveling of the sidewalks, the planting of cotton or cane had its inception in the Church, for ours was a temporal gospel as well as a spiritual one. (p. 112)

And in speaking of a particularly good preacher in Mormon circles on the southern frontier she wrote that many congregations would be willing to pay for his services but "within our own Church there would be no chance for an appointment for which he would be paid; he had not the right name, and his wife was not from one of the right families" (p. 204).

Although questioning constantly the Church and its people, she was one of them, and at home, and often expressed her feeling that her life was directed by the Lord. Thus she becomes a link between the rather closed communities of the southern frontier and those national figures dealing with Utah and the West—Dale Morgan, Bernard Devoto, Fawn Brodie, and Nels Anderson. She reveals a closeness with the people, the church, and the land, but has ongoing questions about polygamy, including the Indian plural wives of Jacob Hamblin who are not generally acknowledged in public and the rumors of blood at the Mountain Meadows which seem to surface and annoy those who know of it. She wonders why those in the south work so much harder and have less than those in the church in the north who seemed to live so much better. She writes of moments of divine direction and spiritual healing and yet notes that in seeking a cure for her husband Ernest, "the constant changing of clothes, the getting up and sitting down" (p. 238) at the St. George Temple were not the answer to his illness as he tired easily. Some parts of the ceremony seemed medieval to her.

Juanita wrote much of this volume more than forty years ago, and she gives glimpses of how she began to gather materials and to write her earliest pieces. One