

events of Orrin Porter Rockwell's world" (p. xiii).

These lengthy footnotes give added evidence of Schindler's meticulous research but often add to the difficulty of following the narrative. In fact, footnotes in fine print occupy from one half to two-thirds of several pages, reminding one of the writings of Herbert Howe Bancroft and other nineteenth-century writers. Readers might be well advised to ignore the footnotes during the initial reading and, after getting the narrative in mind, return for a more careful evaluation of the validity of the account by a careful examination of the footnotes.

The late Gustive O. Larson reviewed the first edition of the Rockwell biography for *DIALOGUE* (Winter 1966) and objected primarily to the "over-abundance of irresponsible testimony and sensationalism represented by such names as William Daniels, Bill Hickman, Joseph H. Jackson, Swartzell, Achilles, Beadle, and . . . Kelly and Birney's 'Holy murder' . . ." I feel that Larson's criticism is still valid and see little effort on the part of the author to rectify this tendency.

True, he has identified the oft-quoted "Achilles, the mysterious tale-teller and self-proclaimed purveyor of Rockwell's confession . . . as Samuel D. Serrine" but admits that he "continues to elude close examination" and "is as much a mystery as his pseudonym" (p. xv).

The extensive use of such sources may

reduce the credibility of some of Schindler's conclusions and leaves the reader wondering about Rockwell's involvement in the Boggs, Aiken, and King Robinson affairs, not to speak of lesser known crimes such as the drowning of an elderly female gossip in Nauvoo (see lengthy footnote on p. 105). Similarly, sources quoted describing Porter's involvement with the wife of Amos Davis (pp. 142-43) are Hall's *Abominations of Mormonism Exposed*; Ford's *History of Illinois*, and the *Warsaw Signal*. Schindler seems to accept the incident as factual but makes no attempt to give Rockwell's side of the story nor to account for why this "plural wife" is not mentioned again.

Perhaps the author's desire to be objective has led him to include questionable sources, but this should not obscure the fact that Hal Schindler has produced a very readable and valuable book. His subject, Orrin Porter Rockwell, emerges from the legendary shadows as a rugged, courageous, warm human being who was involved in many important events in Mormon and Utah history, and Schindler has included enough historic background for these events to give the reader an interesting interpretation of this history to 1878.

An extensive bibliography, a detailed index, and Dale Bryner's miniature pen-and-ink illustrations coupled with Harold Schindler's exhaustive research and journalistic writing style make this handsome volume an attractive "must" for anyone interested in Mormon and Utah history.

## Accolades for Good Wives

*Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), xv+276 pp., illus., biblio., index, \$17.50.

Reviewed by Gene A. Sessions, associate professor of history at Weber State College.

I HAVE WRITTEN book reviews on a regular basis for almost a decade. Most of them have been in the field of Mormon/Utah history, although I consistently try to disclaim my expertise in the area due to a lack of training. Whatever the case, in the course of all those reviews, I am afraid that I got a deserved reputation for being rather harsh. The truth is that when rele-

gated to reviewing Mormon studies, anybody would get such a reputation. Most Mormon-studies stuff is just plain terrible, any way you look at it. So what a joy it is to do a book by a Mormon author about something else that turns out to be nothing short of *great!*

*Good Wives* qualifies in my book of some experience for every accolade a reviewer might dream up. Written in a lucid and imaginative style, it opens a facet of history to view with such clarity and fascination that one wonders if it can really be history. Laurel Ulrich's insights into her subject develop with remarkable strength and even familiarity, perhaps an indirect proof of Sidney Ahlstrom's truism that Mormonism is the last gasp of Puritanism. Born and reared in the heart of rural Mormonism in southeastern Idaho, Ulrich is currently an assistant professor of history at the University of New Hampshire. No one, from Degler to Cott, and across every intellectual and polemical point in between, has ever written about women in colonial New England with such power and the flavor of truth as does Ulrich in *Good Wives*. Not only is this work a triumph of historical dissertation, but it is also a literary masterpiece, ingeniously crafted and full of sentient impact. In short, no one in modern America could have handled the task better than a Mormon woman who is also a New Englander and a first-rate scholar.

That last statement might require some defense. In addition to writing reviews over the last eight or nine years, I have also been teaching American history, including a course entitled "Women in American History." Some of the best times I have in that course revolve around my discussions of Puritan women and Mormon women. I spend two days each quarter talking about Mormon women, justifying the expense by citing the current anti-feminist position of the Church and its impact upon such things as the ERA. But I also maintain that an understanding of current Mormon womanhood is essential to com-

prehending the spiritual foundations of American culture, namely in Puritanism and its historically pervasive attitudes. Ulrich's profound insights into colonial womanhood in New England convince me of the veracity of that thesis.

Using a modified "role analysis," Ulrich dissects colonial womanhood with command precision. She divides the body of her topic into three parts, each based upon a mythic feminine symbol extant among the Puritans—Bathsheba, or the "virtuous woman," who taught her son Solomon an appreciation for huswifery; Eve, or the "beguiling woman," whom God gave man for companionship; Jael, or the "heroic woman," who lured an enemy into her tent and killed him. John Cotton thought of all three as one, "a comfortable yokemate" who could teach his children, satisfy his need for feminine attention, and assist him in any task conditions the frontier might demand. Ulrich utilizes a vast compendium of fascinating biographical episodes from the lives of scores of New England women to present a crystal image of both the real and the ideal colonial female as she fit into whatever symbolic mold the moment demanded.

*Good Wives* entertains as well as it instructs, but the completely casual reader should probably avoid it. It is one of those tough yet moving histories that manage to carry the reader along as would a good novel. One moment we wince at the experiences of a young woman captive of the Indians and the next notice our adrenalin surge as two more women kill and scalp ten of their captors in order to escape. But such tales are incidental to the intent of the book. The author possesses a clever ability to take us well beyond the obviousness of an event into its deeper meanings, often couched in myth and symbol, which, after all, are what really matter in history. "It is from myth that causal energy flows," wrote William Miller in his essay on the causes of Southern violence, and it is certainly from myth that the traditional female role has become institutionalized in American