

A Valuable Addition to the Literature

Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith edited by Jean Bickmore White (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1990 [1991], xxx + 703 pp., \$75.00.

Reviewed by Thomas G. Alexander, professor of history and director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University.

REVIEWERS EXPECT TO APPLY somewhat different criteria to an edited diary than to a monograph, interpretive book, or collection of essays. Instead of asking questions about the scope of the research, the felicity of writing style, the selection of facts, and the soundness of the interpretation, we want to know about the importance of the diarist, his or her perceptiveness in understanding and commenting on contemporary events, and his or her candidness in discussing problems. We expect also to comment on the value of the interpretation, supplementary information, and identifications of people, places, and things supplied by the editor.

In general this edition of John Henry Smith's diaries, which he kept at times between 1874 and 1911, stands up very well. Smith, son of Sarah Farr Smith and George Albert Smith of the LDS Church's First Presidency, ranks among the first echelon of Church leaders who kept diaries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He served as a missionary in England during the early 1870s, an apostle from 1880 until April 1910, and a member of the First Presidency from then until his death in October 1911. A key figure in the political accommodation of Mormonism with the United States, he helped to organize

Utah's Republican Party and presided over the state constitutional convention in 1895. Also active in regional and national affairs, he served in offices in the Irrigation Congresses and the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congresses. At the time of his death, he was a member of the Capitol Commission, entrusted with overseeing the construction of a building to house Utah's state government.

In addition to politics, Smith helped promote a number of business enterprises, including Cannon, Grant, and Company; the Mexican Colonization and Agricultural Company; ZCMI; Consolidated Wagon and Machine; the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company; the Independent Telephone Company; and the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company. He was, by any measure, a man of importance—one of a handful of those who actively shaped the future of Utah and the Church from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century.

We ask, then, how Smith's diary compares with those kept by other important people of the time. On balance, while the diary is valuable because it chronicles events, it is not as reflective or candid as diaries of Anthon H. Lund and Emmeline B. Wells, or as detailed as those of George F. Richards, Abraham H. Cannon, Franklin D. Richards, and Heber J. Grant.

Smith often passed rapidly over events, noting various facts but failing to comment on them. The entries on the state constitutional convention, for instance, tend to be short notes on what delegates discussed or agreed to without a personal commentary on the events. With some notable exceptions, he treated meetings of the Council of the Twelve and First Presidency similarly.

Some of the exceptions are important. For example, on 6 September 1898, shortly after the death of Wilford Woodruff, Smith reported that Lorenzo Snow sent for him, told him he wanted him to run for United States senator, commented on the indebtedness of the Church, and "said he did not agree with Prest. Geo. Q. Cannon's business methods" (p. 406).

At the same time, the diary provides many valuable insights. Because he operated at the center of political and ecclesiastical power, Smith's comments give us a detailed chronicle of events and personalities. Moreover, his diary presents an intimate portrait of a husband and father dealing with problems of his wives and children. We learn, for instance, a great deal about dividing time and resources between two wives, about George Albert Smith's illness, and about Glenn Smith's wanderings. As social and ecclesiastical history, the diary details the lives of LDS missionaries in the 1870s when the rapid conversions of the 1840s had long since passed and missionaries worked as gleaners rather than reapers. Most important, it tells of the day-to-day activities of a key individual during a period of stress and rapid change.

Jean White's editorial work is competent, though this reviewer would have liked more information. The introductory biographical and family information is very useful. The list and short biographical sketches of the most prominent individuals mentioned in the diary are adequate, though more information would have been useful, and some people are conspicuously absent. For instance, John R. Winder was a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric before his call to the First Presidency, and neither Moses Thatcher nor William Spry is identified in the list.

In addition, we could well use more explanation in the notes of a number of the topics covered in the entries. By the standards I learned as assistant editor for the Ulysses S. Grant papers, the diary is underannotated. For example, I wanted to know more about several of the lesser-

known companies in which Smith had invested. What, for instance, were the objectives of the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company? What was its capitalization? Who were the other investors? Was it successful? Some of the information can be gleaned piece by piece from the diary, but some of it cannot, and a succinct note summarizing the story of the company would have helped.

Annotation could also have helped to explain alternative versions of incidents. On Saturday, 18 February 1911, for instance, Smith recorded in his journal:

John W. Taylor came into the office this morning very much angered at President Francis M. Lyman and the Twelve. He ordered A. H. Lund and John Smith out of the office. He demanded an interview with Prest. Joseph F. and me. He was quite wild. He staid over two hours. He said he had cursed My son George Albert for something He had said about . . . and had threatened to kill him. He demanded that President J. F. Smith call the Counsel of fifty to protect him from the Twelve in his violations of the law. (p. 666)

Taylor's version of the event as reported in the transcript of his trial is somewhat different. He denied having cursed George Albert Smith but said he had told "John Henry Smith that his son was talking against me and if he did not stop talking the curse of God would rest upon him and I told Brother [Anthony W.] Ivins if George Albert didn't stop he would have to answer to me the first time I met him" (Fred C. Collier and Robert R. Black, eds., *The Trials for the Membership of John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley*, 2nd Printing [n.p., 1976], 9).

The editor could also have directed readers to other diarists who discussed the votes on the Woodruff Manifesto in the 6 October 1890 general conference. Smith, for instance, wrote that "the people voted that he [Wilford Woodruff] had the right to make this manifesto and that it was authoritative" (p. 242). Marriner W. Merrill disparaged the vote with a comment that many did not vote. Franklin D.