

While her life represents that of an exemplary and groundbreaking scholar, the biographers did not paint an easy ascent in academia. It is honest and represents a reality that many entering the field will find useful, even consoling.

It would be dishonest not to admit that this book was not only intellectually but personally meaningful to me. As a fellow non-Mormon woman in Mormon studies, Jan Shipps became something of a role model to me and someone whose scholarship I have admired since graduate school. In their conclusion, Gordon and Gary Shepherd write, “Jan Shipps’s salient scholarly contributions to the understanding of Mormon history, and her influential role in legitimating Mormon Studies as a significant discipline area of inquiry, merit deep appreciation of all contemporary scholars of the religious culture and history of the Latter-day Saints” (208). I, for one, am grateful.

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From Private Dreams to Public Damnings

George D. Smith, ed. *Brigham Young, Colonizer of the American West: Diaries and Office Journals, 1832–1871*, 2 vols. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021. 1296 pp. Hardcover: \$95.00. ISBN: 978-1-56085-274-2.

Reviewed by Katie Ludlow Rich

“Dont give me Council, its an insult to me . . . any man who takes a course independent of me—its a stink to me—I can not bear it” (1:200). On Saturday, September 23, 1849, Brigham Young spoke from the stand

in Salt Lake City with the sharpness and bravado that characterized many of his public speeches after assuming leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the outset of his leadership in Nauvoo, Illinois, Young insisted that he would grant no quarter to the dissension that he blamed for contributing to the murder of his predecessor, Joseph Smith. Unable to remain in Nauvoo, Young led the majority of the Latter-day Saints across the plains to settle in the Great Basin in what became the Utah Territory. He ultimately directed the founding of 340 settlements (1:xxv), married fifty-five women (1:xliv–xlvi), and led both the Church and government of Utah—either officially as governor or unofficially—for three decades.

Beyond the sharpness of Young's tongue and leadership style, George D. Smith's edited collection of Young's diaries and office journals offers a more complex picture of the life of the pioneer prophet. This two-volume set includes entries from dozens of diaries, journals, minute books, travel itineraries, and miscellaneous records. The first entries come from a diary that Young wrote in his own hand beginning at his baptism into the Church on April 9, 1832. As Young lacked formal education, the early diaries contain his irregular, phonetic spelling. They also highlight a softer version of Young who worried about the meaning of his dreams, wondered at miracles, and cherished quiet time at home with his wife Mary Ann after months or years away in missionary service. While his succession as leader of the Church was fraught with conflict, it is possible to see why so many trusted and were loyal to him through his accounts of relationships built as an apostle missionary and his personal ministering to the Saints in Nauvoo. On July 12, 1845, he wrote, “. . . laid hands on several sick which I do daily and thereby keep myself nearly sick” (1:122). Young could be an exacting leader, but throughout his life, he also spent significant time ministering, counseling, and performing temple ordinances for the Saints.

In 1846, handwriting indicates that multiple clerks assisted Young in maintaining a diary, which became the dominant trend for the

remainder of Young's records. The level of detail varies widely according to the style of the clerk, with some providing the basic outlines of office duties (such as noting the rotation of clerks who slept in Young's office as nighttime security from December 1855 through 1857 [1:337]) and others recording more details of Young's sermons and conversations (including one wherein he insisted he would not be dictated by Emma Smith and that "he had heard geese fart before" [2:112]). The records contain a mix of ecclesiastical, theological, business, civic, military, and political affairs and demonstrate that Young maintained a taxing schedule. In a single day, Young might be at a cattle yard directing business, counseling with men about marrying additional wives, working in the tithing office, meeting about overland migration, and receiving reports about new judges and a military guard expected to come to Utah (1:501).

Though many of the sources included are digitized and available for public research, Smith's editorial skills bring immense value to this collection. For some of the journals, Smith painstakingly went through previously produced transcripts alongside full-color scans of the original sources made available online by the Church History Library, adding in missing details to compile a more precise transcript. The volumes also contain several valuable resources in the front matter, including a genealogy that traces Young's ancestors back several generations and lists the names of each of his wives, the year of their marriage, and any children from each union. The genealogy also notes the page numbers in the text where the names of these family members appear, allowing readers to search the text according to family relationships in a way that an index doesn't easily permit.

Young is of course the main character of his own diaries and office journals. However, Smith's footnotes often include brief biographical information or point to other sources in a way that grants greater place to women, racial minorities, and lesser-known figures with whom Young interacted. For instance, Young's diaries and journals are vital for

tracing many key developments of plural marriage in Young's life and the Mormon community, such as his early Nauvoo marriages recorded in Masonic cypher (1:69) and his decision for the Church to go public about the practice in 1852 (1:269). However, the journals offer mere glimpses into Young's home and family life and certainly don't provide the perspectives of Young's wives and children. The footnotes are a rich starting point for further research on people whose lives intersected with Young but whose stories and voices lie beyond these volumes.

Smith's edited collection is certain to become an essential text for any scholar or student of early Mormonism or the Intermountain West. The volumes are especially timely, arriving as the Joseph Smith Papers Project nears completion of its twenty-seven volumes of documents from Joseph Smith's life. Many readers are certainly eager for similarly accessible, quality volumes on Brigham Young, and George D. Smith provides an immense contribution here. Though the printed two-volume set is costly for individual collectors, there is a more affordable e-book version that is also searchable. As an independent scholar without institutional support to travel to archives, I appreciate just how valuable volumes like these are to making research accessible.

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