



1-1-2017

Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843-June 1844*

Reviewed by Michael Pasquier

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr2>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Pasquier, Reviewed by Michael (2017) "Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843-June 1844*," *Mormon Studies Review*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr2/vol4/iss1/18>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mormon Studies Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds. *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*. Vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015.

*Reviewed by Michael Pasquier*

*Mormon Studies Review*, vol. 4, 2017, pp. 159–62

© 2016 Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18809/msr.2017.0117> Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18809/mimsr.21568030>

READING THE THIRD AND FINAL VOLUME of the journals of Joseph Smith is a lot like watching a documentary about the *Titanic*: you know how it ends, but you cannot help but be enthralled. From May 1843 to June 1844, the volume covers some of the most dramatic and consequential moments leading up to the murder of the Mormon prophet in an Illinois jailhouse. Also, like any good journal of the nineteenth century, it includes the minutiae of life in a frontier town complete with the latest gossip and daily weather reports. With the publication of *Journals, Volume 3*, editors Andrew Hedges, Alex Smith, and Brent Rogers offer readers the definitive transcript of the last fourteen months of Joseph Smith's life in and around Nauvoo as seen through the eyes of one of his closest followers.

Joseph Smith was not the author of the journals transcribed in volume 3. That distinction goes to Willard Richards, the prophet's private secretary and historian from late 1842 to Smith's death on June 27, 1844. Richards filled four small memorandum books with his personal observations, sometimes written in the person of Smith. The daily inputs are usually short, broken, and unrefined, but nonetheless honest and mostly accurate portrayals of many of Smith's words and actions. On October 10, 1843, for example, Richards simply wrote, "saw Joseph at dinner table said he would attend municipal court next morning 10 oclock" (p. 110). They could also be long and rambling, as was the case on March 7, 1844, when Richards spent sixteen pages trying to transcribe a speech delivered by Smith on the matter of building a temple in Nauvoo. For every daily entry in *Journals, Volume 3*, there is at

least one footnote that includes extensive descriptions, analyses, and references, making even the most cryptic passages decipherable. The overall length of the footnotes far exceeds that of the journal, a feature that should be of great usefulness to scholars of Mormonism.

Joseph Smith held several offices near the end of his life, including president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, mayor of Nauvoo, and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion. These and other roles of Smith are on full display in the journal, as are key occurrences in the history of early Mormonism. Some of the more significant moments are Smith's sending of missionaries to England, his revelation on eternal marriage, his own plural marriage to Rhoda Richards (Willard's older sister), his multiple arrests, his nomination as a candidate for president of the United States, his conflicts with Missouri and Illinois authorities, his various business ventures, his troubles with building a temple, his King Follett discourse on the nature of God and humanity, his violent handling of an opposition newspaper, his military preparations against mob attack, and his decision to face the charge of treason in Carthage, Illinois. Among the more mundane but also curious activities of Smith include his meetings with a mesmerist, a phrenologist, and a Catholic priest, as well as his interest in forming a natural history museum.

There is a rawness to the journal, both in style as well as content, that results in a rather unvarnished image of Smith. He is a man under pressure, both from within the church and from outside opponents. There is a sense of paranoia about him, something that brings tension to the unfolding days. "I a rough stone," Richards recounts Smith saying during a Sunday sermon in June 1843. "the sound of the hammer & chisel was never hea[r]d on me, nor never will be" (p. 31).<sup>1</sup> Later that month, Smith denounced the "mobocrats" who sought to take away the liberties of Mormons. "I swear in the name of Almig[h]ty God," he told a crowd. "with uplifted hand the Legislatur shall never take away our rights I[']ll spill my hea[r]ts blood fi[r]st" (p. 47). During a Sunday sermon in July 1843, he boasted that "Mormons can testify whether I am willing to lay

---

1. The bracketed corrections in this transcription and those that follow are as they appear in *Journals*, Volume 3.

down my life for a mormon. . . . It is a love of libe[r]ty which inspires my soul. civil and religious liberty” (p. 55). The following week he warned of “a mans foes being they of his own house. such as having secret enemies in the city—intermingling with the saints &c” (p. 61). Words turned to deeds the following month when a resident of Carthage “gave me some abusive language” and “took up a stone to throw at me,” whereupon Smith “siezd him by the throat to choke him off” (p. 78). Fast-forward to December 1843, when Smith complained of the US government’s unwillingness to protect the liberties of Mormons: “if congress will not hear our petition,” he announced, “and grant us protection. they shall be broken up as a governme[n]t and God shall damn them, and there shall nothing be left of them, not even a grease spot” (p. 145). Not much had improved by April 1844, when Smith admitted to his followers, “You dont know me—you never will I dont blame you for not believe[n]g my histo[r]y had I not expeind [experienced] by it could not believe it myself” (p. 222). And in the weeks leading up to his murder, after he “ordered the marshal to dest[r]oy” the opposition newspaper *Nauvoo Expositor* (p. 277), Smith “told the people I was ready to fight if the mob would compel me to” (p. 278). The final journal entry is dated June 22, 1844, and includes notes on the military defenses of Nauvoo, a prophecy about the upcoming “sickly season,” plans to preach before the Nauvoo Legion, and negotiations with the Illinois governor over Smith’s impending arrest (p. 300). Two days later Smith departed Nauvoo for Carthage, joined by Willard Richards, Hyrum Smith, and Orrin Porter Rockwell. Richards left the journal behind.

In the appendix, excerpts from the personal journal of Willard Richards cover the remaining days of Smith’s life. His account is especially poignant for its hour-by-hour, sometimes minute-by-minute, countdown to the final shootout. At 3:15 on the afternoon of June 27, “Hyrum read from Josephus” while he and Smith’s small entourage sat in the Carthage prison. John Taylor, a member of the Council of Fifty and judge advocate for the Nauvoo Legion, sang the hymn “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” (p. 326). Two hours later they paid the jailer to procure them a bottle of wine and some tobacco. Then the attack came.

Richards looked out the window and “saw a 100 ar[m]ed men arou[n]d the door.— . . . Josep spr[a]ng to his coat for his 6. shooter, Hyrm for his single barrel. . . . the balls whist[l]ed up the stair way.” Hyrum took a ball “in the left side of his nose. fell back on the floor saying— I am a dead man.” In response, “Joseph discha[r]ged his 6 shooter” while “continual discha[r]ges came in the room” (pp. 327, 329). Taylor ran to the window, prepared to leap from the second floor, but was shot instead. And then the journal ends.

In addition to the Joseph Smith journal and appendixes, *Journals, Volume 3* contains almost three hundred pages of reference materials, including a chronology of events from May 1843 through June 1844; a geographical directory of Smith’s movements; maps; a biographical directory of people referenced in the journal; organizational charts for church, city, and militia officials; a glossary; an essay on sources; works cited; and an index. The careful and thorough work of the editors makes *Journals, Volume 3* a model for text transcription and accompanying scholarly analysis. Portions of the journal would suit undergraduate courses in Mormon and American religious history, while the entire volume could form the basis for any number of graduate courses on general historical methods and Mormon history. Those interested in the history of early Mormonism, both professional historians and informed lay readers, will find *Journals, Volume 3* to be an invaluable resource and an impressive compilation of information. Once again, the editorial staff of the Joseph Smith Papers Project delivers a top-quality scholarly edition of documents pertaining to the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Michael Pasquier** is associate professor of religious studies and Jaak Seynaeve Professor of Christian Studies at Louisiana State University. He is the author of *Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789–1870* (2010), editor of *Gods of the Mississippi* (2013), and author of *Religion in America: The Basics* (2016).