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The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood Gustive O. Larson

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GUSTIVE O. LARSON. *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood*. San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1971. 328 pp. \$7.50.

(Reviewed by Dr. T. Edgar Lyon, associate institute director at the LDS Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah and research historian for Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. Dr. Lyon is presently a member of the editorial board of *BYU Studies*.)

This book should be in every university, college, and public service library where inquiries are made concerning the ecclesiastical and religious aspects of Mormonism and their relationship to Utah's struggle for statehood. *The "Americanization" of Utah* is an all-inclusive phrase which Professor Larson has applied to the process by which a small minority of the inhabitants of Utah Territory in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, almost all of whom were not only non-Mormons but also not natives of the territory, attempted to secure political control by disfranchising the Mormon majority. After the "Americanization" program had failed, Frederick T. Dubois, a former territorial attorney general of Idaho during the period, referring to the efforts of federal officials to build a political structure on an anti-Mormon bias, made the following confession in his *Autobiography*:

Those of us who understood the situation were not nearly as much opposed to polygamy as we were to the political domination of the Church. We realized, however, that we could not make those who did not come actually in contact with it, understand what this political domination meant. We made use of polygamy in consequence as our great weapon of offense and to gain recruits to our standard. There was a universal detestation of polygamy, and inasmuch as the Mormons openly defended it we were given a very effective weapon with which to attack.

It is to this discussion that the book under review is concerned.

In the estimation of this reviewer, no writer is better qualified than Gus Larson to have undertaken an exhaustive

investigation of the efforts used to establish the power structure Dubois confessed the non-Mormons were endeavoring to create at the expense of the political and religious freedom of the Mormon communities. For many years, Professor Larson has been searching in national, state, and the LDS Church archives for relevant material. He has brought together much hitherto unpublished documentary material and placed it in its chronological, ecclesiastical, and political setting.

For students of Utah Mormon history, his account of the political opposition to the plural marriage system of the Mormons, generated and kept alive by intrigue both in Utah Territory and Washington, D.C., will prove provocative as well as challenging. His research on the so-called Underground system developed by the Mormons in their attempt to thwart the federal antibigamy laws is done in a scholarly manner with sympathy and understanding manifested toward both sides in the conflict.

Not only does he cover the months when a rather ruthless attempt was made to enforce the Edmunds and Edmunds Tucker Laws, but he also gives us the human, and often the humorous, side of the arrests and incarcerations of those arrested during the crusade. The glimpses of Church authorities and laymen imprisoned in various penitentiaries, their morale, and the sincere convictions of those who went to prison for conscience sake make this a fascinating book. Little-known material concerning the pardon (amnesty) granted Mormon violators of the federal statutes of marriage, and the accommodations agreed to by the Mormons before statehood was granted, are treated with skill and moderation. Some unusual illustrations add to reader interest in the book.

One must not forget that there is a message in this book as timely in 1971 as it was to those who participated in the events discussed. One cannot avoid the fact that the story of Mormonism's struggle concerning the plural marriage doctrine is the longest continuously sustained record of planned civil disobedience in the history of this nation.

Professor Larson has done in this book what an author should do. He gave his title, defined his understanding implied in the title, and then proceeded to interpret the subject from each angle which appeared to have bearing on the subject. If there are errors, they are few. If there are omis-

sions which should have been included, they are missing only because the limits of book size necessitated using the most pertinent material and leaving things less vital to some subsequent writer. This book will continue to serve a useful purpose for many years.