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Nauvoo: The City of Joseph David E. and Della S. Miller

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Miller, David E., and Della S. Miller. *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph*. Salt Lake City and Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974. 262 pp. \$10.00.

(Reviewed by Glen M. Leonard, a senior historical associate with the Church Historical Department in Salt Lake City. Dr. Leonard is a former Publications Coordinator for the Utah State Historical Society and serves on the editorial staff of the *Journal of Mormon History*.)

Mormon Nauvoo is an easily defined subject. It begins in 1839, ends seven years later, and incorporates such essentials as the move to Illinois, city and temple building, the Nauvoo Legion, political stresses, and the death of Joseph Smith. The Millers' attractively printed narrative history recites all the generally known facts. In addition, it supplies newer information on land purchases and the operations of city government, plus descriptions of important landmarks now the object of historic restoration.

Nauvoo: The City of Joseph originated a dozen years ago as a dual-purpose report. Compiled for the National Park Service, which was considering the Mormon westward movement for its Mission 66 program, it also served as an initial historical summary for Nauvoo Restoration, Inc.

As published, the study proceeds in six segments. In the first, the Mormons move quickly from their beginnings in New York to the expulsion from Missouri and the purchase of an inheritance in Nauvoo. Section two briefly describes church government, then chronicles the daily routine of municipal affairs under the Nauvoo Charter. A lengthy third section touches on church activities and general growth, lists major economic developments, describes social and cultural life in Nauvoo, and identifies major public buildings. In the fourth division, the narrative moves forward through political conflict to the assassination of the Smith brothers and the succession crisis. Section five describes the death of Nauvoo and traces plans for the westward trek. A final part sketches the post-Mormon era and attempts an interpretation of the period's influence on subsequent events in Utah. A helpful survey of pre-Mormon Nauvoo is relegated to an appendix but deserves

to be read in its chronological position at the beginning of the book.

The initial report of 1963 described the Nauvoo experience in Latter-day Saint history with a straightforward description and numerous maps, pictures, and lengthy quoted excerpts. In adapting the manuscript for publication, the authors wisely deleted many of the long extracts. They reworked the text, retained selected maps and photographs, and inserted some new information on such things as Masonry, population, the Missouri background, the Council of Fifty, church activities, polygamy, and the martyrdom. Nevertheless, though newly published, the book is dated. It very much reflects the needs and the historiographical climate of the original report, which should have been published while the detailed reconstruction of land purchases and the on-the-scene investigation of historical buildings were fresh.

In their research the authors relied heavily upon Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*. In this, they give the Prophet greater responsibility for the preparation of the history of the Nauvoo years than he rightfully deserves; Dean C. Jessee demonstrated in *BYU Studies* three years ago that the Nauvoo history was compiled, albeit from primary sources—including the Prophet's diary—by scribes between 1845 and 1856. The Millers freshened their study with much new detail gleaned from Hancock County records and from the massive Southern Illinois University microfilm collection.

The Millers, it must be noted, did not intend a synthesis of scholarly interpretation. Leaving that for other writers, they have reconstructed a basic narrative which will be most useful to the Mormon traveler wanting a succinct review of the story behind the landmarks at restored Nauvoo. The authors dismiss out-of-hand the popular works of "able novelists and pseudo-historians." In numerous instances, however, they would have increased their service to the general reader had they worked into their narrative more of the findings of investigators who have written since the original report. They offer instead their own factual narrative which some professionals will regard as tending to defend the faith. *The City of Joseph* provides an alternative to the polemical work of B. H. Roberts, the sentimental recitals of E. Cecil McGavin, and the secular analysis of Robert B. Flanders. Of special note in this latest retelling of the Nauvoo story are Professor Miller's dis-

tinctive attention to place, his interest in the intrinsic value of history, and his ability to entertain while informing by the inclusion of quoted material often bordering on the dramatic, all of which combine to infuse this study with a straightforwardness characteristic of this well-known Utah historian. The book will serve a useful purpose until a needed comprehensive study of the Nauvoo period appears.