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*In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph
George W. Givens; Old Mormon Nauvoo,
1839-1846: Historic Photographs and Guide* Richard
N. Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle

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GEORGE W. GIVENS. *In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990. xi; 290 pp. Index. \$10.95.

RICHARD N. HOLZAPFEL and T. JEFFERY COTTLE. *Old Mormon Nauvoo, 1839–1846: Historic Photographs and Guide*. Provo, Utah: Grandin Book Co., 1990. xii; 259 pp. \$12.95.

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Latter-day Saints have a fascination with Nauvoo. Nauvoo Restoration projects, a steady stream of visitors to the area, and a continual flood of new books and articles attest to the attraction of this “kingdom on the Mississippi.”¹ Early in 1990 two new books were released that dealt with Nauvoo. While both books deepen our knowledge, each has its own character and purpose.

In Old Nauvoo is a social history. Its author, George W. Givens, states that his book was written “to fill a vacuum that has been neglected by Mormon historians” (ix). Givens is only partially correct. It is true that there are no book-length social histories of Nauvoo; there are, however, numerous articles and monographs that focus on various dimensions of Nauvoo’s social life. Givens seems unaware of these, and I can only conclude that he has not attained the cutting edge of Latter-day Saint historical scholarship. A reading of Givens’s sources will quickly reveal this deficiency. He cites well-known general studies but overlooks specialized and even pathbreaking articles. For instance, in his chapter “Sickness and Death,” Givens has not cited the article by Bishop, Lacey, and Wixom entitled “Death at Mormon Nauvoo, 1843–1845” (*Western Illinois Regional Studies* 9 [Fall 1988]: 70–83). Similar examples could be given for almost every chapter.

Having said this, I would still maintain that this is a useful volume, especially for the general reader. It is informative and the narrative is lively. Givens’s description of roads and travel in Nauvoo is especially insightful and helps the reader comprehend the difficulty of getting from one place to another in that era. Givens also is effective in relating much of his material to a broader historical context. For example, in this same chapter on roads and travel, he compares travel in Nauvoo to travel in other parts of the U.S. during the 1840s.

Old Mormon Nauvoo, 1839–1846, is a guidebook. It skillfully combines historical photographs and maps to help the visitor discover the often hidden charms of Nauvoo. The motivation for this book is rooted in a visit which the authors made to Nauvoo in

1988. They naturally wanted to see several historic sites “but found it difficult to locate many of them” (vii).

Following an introduction and a discussion of both historic and modern Nauvoo, the reader comes to a section entitled “Guided Tours of Nauvoo.” These tours are divided into sections such as “Upper Nauvoo” and “Flats—East.” Each section includes a detailed map, photographs, and descriptions of individual sites. The volume also includes “Guided Tours of the Surrounding Communities.”

One of the strengths of this book is the high quality of the photographs. Some of the historic photographs are published for the first time. The sources used to document the historical and descriptive narratives are excellent. Clearly these authors have done their homework. The bibliography reads like a “Who’s Who” in Church historical scholarship. An added feature of this guidebook is its attempt to inform us about historical sites where the original structures have vanished. Here sketches and old photographs converge to assist the Nauvoo tourist to find and re-create the past. Unfortunately, the sources of the photographs are not clearly identified. The authors could have specified the geographical location of the photograph collections and even the catalogue numbers. This criticism is perhaps a little picky, but a better system of identification would be helpful, especially to scholars.

This is a very useful book and should enhance the pleasure and understanding of everyone who visits Nauvoo.

NOTE

¹This phrase was coined from the title of Robert Bruce Flanders’ book, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).