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The Journals of Addison Pratt S. George Ellsworth, ed

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Book Reviews

S. GEORGE ELLSWORTH, ed. *The Journals of Addison Pratt*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990. xxiv; 632 pp. Illus., maps, index. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Bruce A. Van Orden, an assistant professor of Church history and doctrine, Brigham Young University.

The University of Utah Press has succeeded again with volume six of its Publications in Mormon Studies series. Series editor Linda King Newell is to be congratulated for further enriching the disciplines of Church history and sociology. Editor S. George Ellsworth continues in his retirement years to bring forward fruit from his lifelong research. Much of the credit for this volume must also go to the editor's wife, Maria S. Ellsworth, a partner with her husband on this research of her ancestor Addison Pratt.

Exciting contemporary history jumps from nearly every page: from the beginning of Pratt's memoirs — "having a natural aversion to snow and cold weather, at an early period of my life, I imbibed a strong inclination for a seafaring occupation" (4) — to one of his last entries before leaving French Polynesia in 1852 — "I now had an opportunity to look around the town of Pape ete and see the state of morrals that the French influence has wrought upon them . . . all drunk, almost without an exception, fighting, dancing and hooting, indulging in evry licentious conduct that can be imagined" (496).

As an instructor of "the international Church" at Brigham Young University, I knew I would be interested in Pratt's missionary adventures in the South Pacific, but what I didn't expect were the priceless additional treats I found. Addison's well-reasoned and descriptive entries please one's historical tastes in such areas as 1820s whaling expeditions, West Indies piracy, reasons for conversion to the Latter-day Saint Church in the 1830s, the Church's unflagging zeal to evangelize worldwide, both the rigors and paradise of life in the South Pacific, activities of the London Missionary Society, Church life among the "Brooklyn Saints" and

the Mormon Battalion boys in northern California in 1847–48, forging of a wagon road through the Sierra Nevadas in 1848, the dreadful winter of 1848–49 in the Salt Lake Valley, the nearly disastrous Jefferson Hunt expedition along the Old Spanish Trail in 1849–50, and the flora and fauna in both western America and French Polynesia.

This volume contains the complete memoirs and journals of Addison Pratt, supplemented by cogent entries of his wife Louisa and other relatives, plus informative and immensely rewarding essays by the editor dealing with the missing years of 1829–43 and 1852–72. George Ellsworth has also provided us with historically enlightening notes, the provenance of the documents, and thorough bibliographic data. Thus the book is large and its price may scare off a few interested readers. But anyone who invests the time and money will be amply repaid.

The book's most rewarding feature remains its theme of Pratt's missionary labors among the Polynesians of the Society Islands from 1843 to 1852. This was the first foreign-language mission in the Church. And Pratt's Tahitian-language school in Salt Lake City in 1848–49 was the Church's first language-training center for missionaries.

We discover in these pages a valiant warrior for Christ who time and again endured privation to preach and establish Church branches among the islanders he came to love. We read with wonder as Addison and his noble companion, Benjamin F. Grouard, exercised various gifts of the Spirit and reined in hundreds of converts in Tubuai, Tahiti, and Anaa (all in French Polynesia) to higher moral, ethical, and spiritual standards. We, who know the travails suffered by the institutional Church from 1843 to 1848, nevertheless groan with Pratt and Grouard as they wondered what could possibly have happened to their families and why the First Presidency and Apostles seemed to ignore them and their needs:

[A Mr. Krause] lookt down at my feet and saw my toes sticking out of my shoes, and the ground in my house covered with hay instead of a floor, and askt again "And does your society render you no assistance?" I answered, "No," and was ashamed to tell him that they had neglected to send me even a word of consolation, when there had been no less than half dozen ships here, direct from the place I saide from, where there is a branch of the church of near 150 members, whom had promised with all faithfulness to write us evry oppertunity, and not only they but evry friend in America, had shewn us the same kindness, for we have not received a word from any of them since we left there, which is now 2 long years. And I think Br. Hanks [a fellow missionary who died at sea] has made a happy escape

from this mortification. And were I not looking to a higher source than the hand of treacherous man for the rewards of my labours, cross and privations, I should have long ago died in the slough of despondency. (243–44)

We sympathize with Grouard when he, at long last, couldn't take it any more, and without Pratt's approbation, took himself a native wife. We admire Pratt's perseverance over five years in the islands before he finally decided to look for his family in America and Grouard's nine years total of sacrifice as a missionary before he left the islands because of persecution from the French Protectorate in 1852. Not to be neglected in our veneration are Pratt's wife and four daughters, who first went without their head of household and later accepted a mission call of their own to the islands, where, with their womanly touch, they established the first of the Church's educational programs in the South Pacific.

The book ends with a degree of sadness. Both Pratt and Grouard did not adjust well to nonmissionary life in the Church after 1852. Polygamy was a thorn in the side; so, too, were what they considered the near-dictatorial edicts of Brigham Young. Both men chose to settle in the Latter-day Saint outpost of San Bernardino, California, where they would not have to endure the fridity of Utah winters. Grouard left the Church outright when he was not allowed to run for political office without Church approval. Pratt refused to make the "Big Move" from San Bernardino to Utah as requested by authorities in 1857. He did not deny his testimony nor reject his membership, but his zeal, so evident in his Polynesian missions, did not persist while he lived out his life in the homes of various daughters in California until his death in 1872.

This immense epic tale, which pulls at our heartstrings and helps us understand much more of human nature, is required reading for any historian and connoisseur of the worldwide missionary outreach of the Latter-day Saints.