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Utah History Encyclopedia edited by Allan Kent Powell

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ALLAN KENT POWELL, ed. *Utah History Encyclopedia*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994. iii; 674 pp. 250 illustrations, list of contributors, index. \$50.00.

Reviewed by Beth R. Olsen, Historian, Community Local Government, Pleasant Grove, Utah.

Celebrations commemorating important events often result in extra efforts that bring new and significant contributions—milestones within themselves. So it is with Allan Kent Powell's *Utah History Encyclopedia*. What began years ago as a gleam in the Utah Historical Society's eye came to fruition because of goals to complete the book in time for the Utah State Centennial in 1996. This comprehensive collection covers subjects varying from pre-history to recent happenings. Like other encyclopedias, this hefty reference work provides foundational information that will satisfy the needs of some readers and will serve others as an important base for further inquiry. It is the first Utah history compiled in encyclopedic form, and it will benefit many segments of the state's population interested in Utah's unique and fascinating past.

School children and their teachers studying Utah history have long been in need of just such a volume. Now second-grade students, whose curriculum includes community history, literally have at their fingertips the history of nearly every Utah town. Fourth- and seventh-grade students, who study the entire state, have each aspect of the state's history laid out for examination. Thus the encyclopedia is invaluable as a reference work for revealing numerous state historical subjects to young minds.

The book is written for more mature minds as well. Adults who care to delve into the past or to satisfy their historical appetites for information about a place or event will find pertinent information. Historians or editors and publishers seeking background information can conveniently locate needed material in this capacious edition. When I lacked information about the defunct town of Garfield, Utah, for a family history, the encyclopedia's cross-referenced index sent me to "Copper Mining." Here the creation, existence, and demise of Garfield was discussed, allowing me to fill in the details of my uncle's history. The possible uses of this volume in homes as well as libraries are endless.

Recognizing the need for this history compilation, the Utah Statehood Centennial Commission provided a grant for part of the book's publication and further placed free copies of the encyclopedia in some 115 public libraries throughout the state. A centennial grant from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation provided for copies of the book to be placed in all of Utah's public-school libraries. A more worthy or lasting use of centennial funds could not have been found.

The array of over two-hundred authors who contributed articles is impressive. Most are exceptionally knowledgeable researchers and experienced writers who have published in their specialized areas. The three-column, two-page list of contributors attests to the credibility of the text and demonstrates the resource depth behind the work.

The editor, himself a contributor, holds the position of Public History Coordinator at the Utah State Historical Society. His contributions to the book include articles on mining, mine workers' unions, and Germans in Utah. Powell has authored several books including *The Next Time We Strike: Labor in Utah's Coal Fields, 1900-1933*, a well-researched and well-written look at labor unions and their impact on coal mining in Utah. A native of Price, Utah, he witnessed the operations of the coal mines and their problems during his youth. Powell's other publications are *Splinters of a Nation*, *German Prisoners of War in Utah*, and *Utah Remembers World War II*. Powell patterned Utah's encyclopedia after Howard R. LaMar's *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, also a benchmark.

The *Utah History Encyclopedia* contains discussions on several early Mormon topics, which can be separated from Utah history, as well as more recent subjects that do not reflect on Mormon history. Other entries integrate the two, such as those that combine ethnic involvement in Utah history with the various aspects of Mormon settlement, adequately addressing both by explaining Mormon patterns based on their beliefs and the changes wrought by later arriving groups. The reality of conflicts between the Latter-day Saints, who preferred to remain autonomous, and the newer elements of Utah society is also squarely faced in the articles.

A two-page chart that shows the national origin of Utah's population from 1850 to 1990 helps the reader to visualize the changes that caused those conflicts. The volume contains a number of other charts and lists that are equally helpful.

In addition to its many strengths, the encyclopedia has a few weaknesses. The one map that marks Utah's counties, major cities, and roads seems inadequate for a volume of this magnitude. Small black and white photos sparsely dot the narrative, although there are 250 of them. The apparent lack of pictures, perhaps because of their size, is partly forgiven by the discovery of a two-page centerfold of pictures titled "Life in Utah." Today's cost of publishing, coupled with the Utah Historical Society's desire to keep the volume affordable for all, makes these two drawbacks acceptable.

Public response to the *Utah History Encyclopedia* has exceeded all expectations, and the volume is now in its third printing. The completion of this project is not an end, but a beginning; those who sample the material in this extraordinary volume will want more.