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## *Utah's Black Hawk War* John Alton Peterson

Ronald O. Barney

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JOHN ALTON PETERSON. *Utah's Black Hawk War*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998. xi; 432 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. Hardbound, \$59.95; paperback, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Ronald O. Barney, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1977, Utah State University professor S. George Ellsworth asked ten dozen scholars, members of the Mormon History Association, to list their choices for the top ten books written in the field of Utah and Mormon studies. The criterion he used in that survey was excellence in both scholarship and literary quality. Standard titles such as *Great Basin Kingdom* and *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* topped the list, followed by others such as *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* and *Homeward to Zion*. A similar survey taken a few years from now may find John Peterson's *Utah's Black Hawk War* on many scholars' ten-best-books list. Every student of Utah and Mormon history must hereafter consider Peterson's account of the clash of Mormon and Native American cultures in nineteenth-century Utah.

Peterson, who now teaches at the Salt Lake City, University Institute of Religion (on the campus of the University of Utah), tells his readers that the relationship between the LDS Church and Native Americans is of singular importance in Latter-day Saint history. For not only is there a past but also an anticipated future to this story. According to Latter-day Saint doctrine, the "remnant of Israel" described in the Book of Mormon includes many present-day Native Americans. The faithful return of this remnant is fundamental to the timetable of eschatological events foreshadowing the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the interaction between the Saints and the Native Americans is of great consequence.

When Latter-day Saint settlers first spread into Utah's mountain valleys in the late 1840s, they squatted secondarily on territory claimed by Mexico but primarily upon traditional lands of Utah's indigenous tribes. Peterson splendidly describes the various tribal groups—Northern Utes, Paiutes, Gosiutes, Piedades, Pahvants, Shoshone, peripheral tribal entities, and amalgamations of the same—to put a human face on those whom the Saints eventually displaced. Their leaders are identified and characterized, including Antonga (Black Hawk) and his extended family. Peterson guides his readers through the impact of white settlement in the 1850s on Native American lands in Utah's most desirable and potentially productive valleys. The usurpation, which resulted in the elimination of food sources for the Native Americans, provoked the Walker and Tintic Wars in the 1850s, which led to Black Hawk's aggression in Utah's most extensive Indian war. The hostilities lasted from 1865 to 1872.



From the settlers' standpoint, Peterson portrays the dilemma of Brigham Young's leadership as chief strategist of the settlers' defense and the sometimes reluctant followership of his field lieutenants Orson Hyde and Warren Snow. While President Young sat in Salt Lake City advocating kindness, generosity, and benign coexistence with the Native Americans, Hyde's and Snow's central Utah constituents were losing both their cattle and about seventy of their neighbors' lives. Peterson argues that Mormons generally treated Native Americans better than did their American contemporaries, but he also speculates that the settlers' thirst for revenge, without Young's command for restraint, would likely have resulted in a violent retaliation that would have both shortened the conflict and eliminated for good the Native American presence among the whites. Peterson also shows the varying roles of federally placed gentile Indian agents, military officers, and other territorial appointees and the culpability of some who siphoned resources intended for Utah's Native Americans, consequently contributing to an escalation of hostilities.

The clash of cultures during the conflict was centered in several dominant personalities from each of the three components of the war: the Indians—Black Hawk, Mountain, and Tamaritz; the Mormons—Brigham Young, Orson Hyde and Warren Snow; and the Gentiles, primarily Patrick E. Connor (military leader and founder of Utah's Liberal Party). Each, Peterson asserts, had power at one time or another to temper the battle. Their decisions played a heavy part in the duration and intensity of the war.

Utilizing extensive primary and secondary sources, including neglected Utah territorial records, Bureau of Indian Affairs materials, and the vast collections of the LDS Church archives, Peterson brings together for the first time a definitive study of nineteenth-century Mormon–Native American violence. The author has tried to give balance to the history, showing the Mormon and non-Mormon postures and the heretofore unrepresented Native American viewpoint.

Peterson correctly asserts that the significance of Black Hawk's war on Utah's settlements and the intermountain region has been lost on both Utah Mormon historians as well as national chroniclers. At approximately the same time the U.S. government's military weight fell heavily on the Cheyenne and Southern Arapaho of Colorado at Sand Creek (1864), seven years of hostilities in central Utah brought little federal interest or response until the final scene in 1872. Brigham Young still held the *de facto* seat of power, and his disdain for anything federal meant reports of Indian depredations in Utah's central valleys were mostly kept from Connor and his resident military force. When Connor did hear about atrocities, he was happy to let the Mormons stew in their own juices. The bulk of documentation produced in the course of the conflict, therefore, was kept local. Consequently,

modern scholars of White–Native American relations in the nineteenth century, preoccupied with eastern sources, have neglected an investigation of this war, important to both Utah's and America's past. Peterson's remarkably well-written interpretation rectifies this neglect.

As good as Peterson's book is, it is not without controversies or problems. The revisionistic theme of his interpretation may cause some readers to conclude he has overemphasized Native American perspectives. Also, some may question his appraisal of Brigham Young's role in the war. President Young is shown as an enigmatic leader who was, at once, the principal "planner of the military operations" against the Native Americans, with singular liability for the escalation and continuation of the war, and at the same time was the prime advocate for white benevolence toward the Native Americans. Documentary support by Peterson for the former position is scant, while he shows preponderant evidence for the latter.

The volume also suffers from some small technical errors. For example, the misidentification of the Monroe, Utah, bishop Moses Gifford as George Halliday is a slight distraction. Also an effective assemblage of photographs enhances the text, but like many current historical publications, the book fails to provide adequate citations for those photographs. Photographs qualify as documents and consequently the photographer, if known, and the collection as well as the repository in which the photograph is found should be cited for the reader.

Another flaw, which can probably be blamed on the press, is incomplete indexing. For example, only one entry for the important Ute leader Grosepeen is cited in the index, yet discussions of him appear in multiple places. Also attributable to the press is the erroneous statement in one scholar's endorsement on the book's cover which states that, prior to Peterson's book, the study of the events portrayed therein had been "rigidly suppressed." This is nonsense. Peterson's outstanding treatment of the Black Hawk War has no peer because no one has previously had the tenacity to track and manage the multidimensional facets of this important encounter in Utah's past. Hereafter, John Peterson's story of Mormon–Native American relations will be the primary point of departure for future work on this still-relevant topic.