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Thirteenth Apostle: The Diaries of Amasa M. Lyman, 1832-1877

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Scott H. Partridge, ed. *Thirteenth Apostle:
The Diaries of Amasa M. Lyman, 1832-1877.*

Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2016.

Reviewed by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

Scott H. Partridge, professor emeritus of business administration at California State University–Hayward, died in 2015 before completing his last project, a transcription of the forty-three diaries of his famous relative, Amasa M. Lyman (1813–77). Partridge had previously edited Eliza Maria Partridge’s diaries, *Eliza Maria Partridge Journal* (2003). He is also the author of a number of articles published in *BYU Studies*, including “The Failure of the Kirtland Safety Society” (12:4, 1972), “Edward Partridge in Painesville, Ohio” (42:1, 2003), and “Two Early Missionaries in Hawaii: Mercy Partridge Whitney and Edward Partridge Jr.” (52:1, 2013).

This diary project was a massive undertaking; the publisher reflects, “It is hard to imagine the amount of time the compiler and editor devoted to the diaries” (vii). For anyone interested in early LDS history, especially from the viewpoint of an insider, the diaries provide a clear and expansive window into Mormon beginnings from the early 1830s through the end of the Brigham Young era in the late 1870s.

Lyman was released from the Quorum of the Twelve in 1867, and his diary entries after that point become a window into Utah life and society from the view of an outsider. Lyman was eventually excommunicated in 1870.

This handsome volume contains more than a thousand pages and includes the annotated transcriptions of the diaries that Lyman began recording as he started on a Church mission in 1832. Lyman’s remarkable effort to record his life ended the day before he died in 1877 with four final words about his very weak condition: “The same as yesterday” (939).

Sometimes the entries are daily, and, at other times, they are a reminiscence of the past few days, weeks, or months. The diaries, like many diaries, contain mundane details about Lyman’s ecclesiastical obligations,

his domestic and family life, and his travels across oceans and between pioneer settlements on the Mormon frontier. He rarely reveals his personal feelings and observations. Nevertheless, the *Thirteenth Apostle* will be of interest to those who read it cover to cover and who will use the excellent index to identify people and places.

Readers have the benefit of an insightful life sketch about Lyman in the introduction (ix–xxiv). The publisher also included a semiadequate biographical register (957–76), a comprehensive bibliography (977–96), and an exhaustive index (997–1050).

The decision to include Lyman's sermon "The Nature and Mission of Jesus" (otherwise known as "The Dundee Sermon"), given in Dundee, Scotland, on March 16, 1832, allows readers to "hear" Lyman as he began to distance himself from the Church's theological, fundamental teachings about Christ's Atonement (941–55).

As Partridge opines, "What was controversial was that he said Jesus was not so much a God-Savior as an older-brother exemplar. Believers, he asserted, did not need a savior; people are capable of improving themselves through decency and good works" (xviii). Even though Lyman later recanted and asked for forgiveness, the talk was the beginning of his fall from grace.

He went on to preach more sermons with universalist themes, and he was disfellowshipped from the Church in early May 1867. Lyman then joined with William Godbe, an adversary of Brigham Young, in practicing spiritualism along with attending séances. Lyman's public association with the Godbeites led to his excommunication in May 1870.

With *Thirteenth Apostle*, Scott Partridge has performed a great service to readers interested in gleaning an understanding of the times, as well as the man who began so close to the Prophet Joseph Smith but died in quiet estrangement from the Church. On January 12, 1909, Church President Joseph F. Smith posthumously restored Lyman's Church membership and his office as an apostle.

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