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## The Annals of the Southern Mission: A Record of the History of the Settlement of Southern Utah

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*The Annals of the Southern Mission: A Record of the History of the Settlement of Southern Utah*, by James Godson Bleak, edited by Aaron McArthur and Reid L. Neilson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019)

Author James Godson Bleak (1829–1918) was a British convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and veteran of the Edward Martin handcart company. In the early 1860s, Bleak accepted President Brigham Young’s charge to be a clerk and historian for the Utah South Mission in St. George. *The Annals of the Southern Mission* is the result of decades of Bleak’s fulfillment of this commission.

Editors Aaron McArthur and Reid L. Neilson together systematically transcribed and verified over two thousand manuscript pages to bring Bleak’s work to the modern audience. Their purpose was largely to bring credit and recognition to Bleak’s long-lasting influence on Utah and Latter-day Saint historiography: “Without the contributions of obscure and underappreciated individuals like Bleak our understanding

of pioneer Utah would be poor indeed” (xxiv).

The book is organized overall by year and particularly by day, written in the same manner as a journal or diary. Some years span only a page while others many more. Bleak recorded the gamut of topics, including administrative records, such as tithing yields, priesthood ordinations, land distribution, and county and municipal affairs; notes or full transcriptions of discourses of local and general Church leaders; and progress reports of the St. George Temple, including construction milestones, expenditures, and a transcription of the dedication services.

Although much of the text is readable as a narrative, such as the discourse transcriptions and notes of major events, these segments are mixed among administrative records, which discourage casual reading. *Annals of the Southern Mission* will be of interest mainly to those investigating southern Utah and pioneer history. Like similar reference works, this book will be especially useful as a scholarly source.

—Alec Joseph Harding