



4-1-2021

Hugh Nibley Observed

David R. Seely

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Seely, David R. (2021) "Hugh Nibley Observed," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 60 : Iss. 2 , Article 19.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol60/iss2/19>

This Notice is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Kenneth L. Alford, Lloyd D. Newell, and Alexander L. Baugh, editors. *Latter-day Saints in Washington, D.C.* Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020.

Latter-day Saints in Washington, D.C., is edited by Brigham Young University professors of Church history and doctrine Kenneth L. Alford, Lloyd D. Newell, and Alexander L. Baugh. This volume collects essays written by the faculty of the Department of Church History and Doctrine at BYU after they traveled to D.C., attending a symposium in the Washington D.C. Temple Visitors' Center. The essays are organized into three sections—"History," "People," and "Places"—aiming to educate readers about the intriguing, complicated relationship between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the United States federal government.

In "History," Byran B. Korth, Jordan T. Watkins, and Gerrit Dirkmaat write, respectively, on the D.C. locations, religious revelations, and federal pressures that surrounded the Saints' expulsion from the United States. Fred E. Woods recounts Apostle Orson Pratt's defense of plural marriage in Washington, D.C. Alexander L. Baugh narrates the journey of the Nauvoo Temple sunstone now on display in the Smithsonian. Lloyd D. Newell lends a personal perspective to the history of the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square. W. Justin Dyer and Michael A. Goodman clarify the secular context and prophetic nature of the family proclamation, and J. B. Haws examines Latter-day Saint representation in the *Washington Post*.

In "People," Casey Paul Griffiths and Carter Charles provide separate takes on the trial and political career of Senator Reed Smoot. Other biographical essays laud WWII Senator Elbert D. Thomas's advocacy for peace, Ezra Taft

Benson's influence as secretary of agriculture, the rise of the Marriott family business, T. H. Bell's contribution to the federal educational system, and Beverly Campbell's efforts as Church public and international affairs director. Finally, Ralph W. Hardy Jr. canvasses the lives and achievements of eight Latter-day Saints in Washington, D.C.

In "Places," Anthony R. Sweat traces the providence and artistry of the National Portrait Gallery's rendition of Joseph Smith Jr. Alonzo L. Gaskill and Seth G. Soha explain the temple-like status of the Washington Chapel, while Maclane E. Heward focuses on the Washington D.C. Temple itself. Kenneth L. Alford explores Arlington National Cemetery and some of the Saints buried there. Scott C. Esplin navigates the hot-and-cold relationship between the Church and the National Park Service. Richard B. Crookston and R. Devan Jensen provide a photo essay of historic sites in Washington, D.C.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has had surprising influence in Washington, D.C. Casual students of Church history will discover rich biographical detail and intriguing political shifts, while academics and historians will benefit from the tight focus that allows each of the various essays to dive deeply into its chosen topic. Taken together, these essays tell of a church that began in obscurity but has since emerged onto the national and international stage.

—Tina Hawley

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Shirley S. Ricks and Stephen T. Whitlock, editors. *Hugh Nibley Observed*. Orem, Utah: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021.

As a tribute to Hugh Nibley the editors of this volume have collected forty

essays written by Nibley's family, peers, colleagues, students, and friends. The title of the book is a play on the title of Nibley's autobiographical film, *The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley*. As described in the introduction, this volume contains "a kaleidoscope of portraits, perspectives, and memories from family, friends, and colleagues—observers, as it were, of a preeminent observer."

This volume is a valuable and welcome addition to the two biographies that have already been written: *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life*, by Boyd Peterson, and *Sergeant Nibley, PhD: Memories of an Unlikely Screaming Eagle*, by Alex Nibley. A few of these pieces have been published elsewhere, but the great majority are new. There are over two hundred photos throughout the volume, many from the Nibley family, that help to illuminate the life and work of Hugh Nibley.

The collection is organized in four parts. "Part One: Portraits" presents a broad biographical overview of Nibley with an essay by John W. Welch, an essay by artist Rebecca Fechner Everett about her painted portrait of Nibley, and Nibley's own intellectual autobiography, which was originally published in the volume of Nibley essays, *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (1978). For the first time, this essay is accompanied with photos that illustrate aspects of Nibley's life that are vividly described in the text.

"Part Two: Nibley the Scholar" provides revised and enlarged versions of

thirteen presentations that were given as part of a Maxwell Institute lecture series organized for the centennial of Nibley's birth. These previously unpublished essays give an assessment of Nibley's scholarly work as they relate to various aspects of Latter-day Saint and secular scholarship. Eight additional essays highlight other aspects of his scholarship, including Shirley Ricks's comprehensive assessment of Nibley's publications; Ricks is an editor intimately familiar with his writing practices, including the reliability of his footnotes.

"Part Three: Nibley the Man" is a collection of pieces that provide personal insights into Hugh's life and character, including tributes presented at his funeral by his children, as well as the significant funeral addresses of John W. Welch and President Dallin H. Oaks. Tributes and reminiscences round out this collection. Especially notable is Jane Brady's rich selections from the vast folklore of Hugh Nibley assembled in the BYU Harold B. Lee Library Special Collections.

This is a delightful volume with many insights about Hugh Nibley the scholar and the man. It contains many valuable assessments of Nibley's contributions, looking in retrospect at the value and lasting significance of his scholarship. Even for someone who closely followed Nibley's life and scholarly writings, there are many precious observations, anecdotes, and evaluations that will give added insight into this remarkable person.

—David R. Seely