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## Return to the City of Joseph: Modern Mormonism's Contest for the Soul of Nauvoo

Anna Thompson Hajdik  
*University of Wisconsin-Whitewater*

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erated in Illinois. Under the law, a person of color who migrated to the state and failed to post bond was subject to arrest and sale at public auction. As late as 1863, when former slaves came into Illinois to fill war-related labor shortages, that provision was still enforced. The Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to Illinois, so free people could still be sold into slavery.

Heerman is especially good when exploring the ways people of color attempted to resist enslavement in Illinois. He considers how they learned to use the courts to establish their freedom, an analysis that will be especially useful to historians examining slavery in early Iowa. His stories are often filled with engaging detail, drawn especially from court records. His final chapters trace the “freedom practices” of communities of color, who assisted those fleeing slavery, and the political movement organized by African Americans to overturn the Black Codes. This is an important contribution, one that will comfortably share a shelf with Robert Dykstra’s *Bright Radical Star* (1993) and John Craig Hammond’s *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (2007).

*Return to the City of Joseph: Modern Mormonism’s Contest for the Soul of Nauvoo*, by Scott C. Esplin. Urbana, Springfield, and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018. xi, 199 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$99 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

Reviewer Anna Thompson Hajdik is a senior lecturer in the English Department and Film Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin–White-water. She is working on an image-based exploration of Iowa’s identity as it relates to the American cultural imagination.

In *Return to the City of Joseph*, Scott Esplin thoroughly examines the fraught religious history of Nauvoo, Illinois, and how it evolved to become a modern-day “Mormon Mecca” on the banks of the Mississippi River. The story of Nauvoo is one that combines historic preservation, outsider investment, and the role commemoration plays in the shaping of history and, perhaps more significantly, religious heritage. Esplin is also interested in exploring the underlying tension between the two branches of the Mormon faith—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, recently renamed Community of Christ). A central narrative thread of the book traces how that tension has both flared up and simmered just beneath the surface of the community as a group of wealthy, prominent Latter-day Saints took an increasing interest in the town during the second half of the twentieth century. Esplin draws primarily from archival sources and in particular church records to tell this story. He also dives deep

into the broader history of Nauvoo, devoting attention to other populations beyond the Mormons, including French, German, and Irish immigrants, who made their presence on the landscape visible. But the contested nature of the town's Mormon heritage remains the focal point of Esplin's project.

As the author outlines in chapter one, after the murder of Joseph Smith and continual harassment from non-Mormons in the region, most of the Mormons followed Brigham Young to Utah, but some stayed behind and retained a foothold in the community. Chapter two focuses on the beginning of the RLDS through the lens of an acrimonious relationship between Brigham Young and the Smith family, primarily Joseph's widow, Emma. They battled over Joseph Smith's legacy and fought over the Nauvoo church properties. Chapter three traces how the Utah-based church's interest in Nauvoo grew significantly after 1900, as that branch of the church began to purchase sites in the Midwest associated with Smith, most notably the Carthage jail where he met his demise at the hands of an angry mob. As the Utah-based church continued to make its historic link to Nauvoo more visible, the RLDS raised numerous concerns and criticisms about what it perceived as geographic overreach. As Esplin states, "As the Utah-based Church expanded beyond its western boundaries back into traditionally Reorganized Church strongholds across the Midwest, the latter group felt threatened." Esplin further notes, "Contests over memory were stronger than the potentially unifying social functions of commemoration" (57). This last point is further explored in the remaining chapters as various interests, from private individuals to top church leaders to historic preservationists and government officials, worked to make Nauvoo an appealing destination for tourists, Mormon and non-Mormon alike. In chapter four, Esplin effectively explores yet another tension in Nauvoo that continues to inform the tourist experience to this day — that of history versus religion or, more specifically, the celebration of westward expansion versus proselytizing or missionary purposes. More recently, religion has in many ways superseded the historical narrative in Nauvoo, and that has "created greater conflicts in the city, as other stakeholders . . . envisioned a different future from the celebration of Nauvoo's past" (101). This tension took on particular significance in the late 1990s, as the Utah-based Mormons announced their intent to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple, which had been destroyed by fire in 1848. In chapter six, Esplin includes the voices of several non-Mormon Nauvoo residents, including the lone city council member who voted against giving the church a building permit for the temple. "[The Mormons] were here for seven years in [the 1840s]. I have been here 48 years. People out there

[in Utah] are not even aware that people live here, thrive here, raise families here" (134–35). Esplin concludes the book by observing that the restoration of Nauvoo is "an American story" that offers important lessons on faith tourism, contested space, and commemoration (148).

The book's great strength is Esplin's ability to consistently situate his research within the broader scholarship of tourism and heritage studies, cultural studies (especially work focused on memory and commemoration), and the American Midwest. By doing so, the author demonstrates that the history of the Mormon faith is indeed uniquely American in its orientation. That history, like our national history, is messy at times, and Esplin does not minimize or gloss over those times. The book occasionally bogs down with minute details regarding property acquisition or church leaders' correspondence. Ultimately, however, Esplin provides a valuable text that would be of particular use to scholars interested in America's religious history, historic preservation in the Midwest, and the constantly contested nature of cultural memory.

*Lincoln in the Illinois Legislature*, by Ron J. Keller. The Concise Lincoln Library. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2019. xi, 160 pp. Map, illustrations, notes, index. \$24.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Kenneth J. Winkle is Thomas C. Sorensen Professor of American History at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He is the author of *Young Eagle: The Rise of Abraham Lincoln* (2001).

In *Lincoln in the Illinois Legislature*, Ron J. Keller identifies the four terms that Abraham Lincoln served in the Illinois legislature from 1834 to 1842 as an oft-forgotten but formative period. Although born in Kentucky and destined for greatness—and an untimely death—while serving as president in Washington, D.C., Abraham Lincoln spent most of his life in the Midwest. As he grew up and came of age in the invigorating atmosphere of the American heartland, Lincoln imbibed the rural and small-town virtues that he later came to personify. In 1834, at age 25, he was a newcomer to central Illinois: poor, uneducated, and still uncertain of his trajectory in life. Settling in New Salem, a small pioneer village near Springfield, Lincoln seized the opportunity to prove himself to his new neighbors, who found in him an earnest if rough-hewn representative of their own values. Helping him to improve himself, they supported his pursuit of a political career with near unanimity. In short, Lincoln won his first elective office on the strength of his personal reputation for honesty, hard work, common sense, self-improvement, and community spirit.