

JOURNAL OF  
MORMON HISTORY

SPRING 2011

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use of this edition to the scholarship of the introductions and the appendix. This text is meant to be read. It is designed to be read. Because it attempts to reproduce the oral dictation, I would even suggest rich rewards from reading it aloud from time to time.

So much of what was required to produce *The Earliest Text* is invisible in this book. That is unavoidable. It is also fortunate. Those who want the scholarship can access it in the other sources. What is here, prominently, is the Book of Mormon. There is a reverence for the text that shows in the thought and care that has gone into reconstructing the text and in finding the right way to present it. I hope that many will appreciate and replicate that reverence by taking advantage of the real power of this volume, which is to create a fresh encounter with an old friend.

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Gerald N. Lund. *The Undaunted: The Miracle of the Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009. 804 pp. Maps, notes, bibliography. Hardcover: \$34.95; CD (unabridged): \$69.95. ISBN: 978-1-60641-191-9

*Reviewed by Morris A. Thurston*

Historical novelist Gerald N. Lund is probably the most widely read author writing about Mormon subjects. His epic THE WORK AND THE GLORY series, consisting of nine novels, is said to have sold nearly three million copies.<sup>1</sup> That series follows the fictional Steed family through the main events of Mormon history in the United States, from the founding of the Church in upstate New York, through its migrations to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, to its final settlement in Utah. On the heels of that series, Lund published the stand-alone *The Fire of the Covenant: A Novel of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999). All ten of these works were published during the 1990s, an astounding literary output totaling nearly 6,000 pages.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Cracroft, "Telling the Restoration Story: Gerald N. Lund's The Work and the Glory Saga," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 233-34, quoting untitled news item, *Irreantum*, Winter 2000-2001, 102.

It is commonly said that more Church members of our generation have learned about Mormon history from Lund's books than from any other source. Lund has attracted a wide, appreciative LDS audience by injecting new life into the founding stories we've come to know by rote. His fictional characters experience some of the primary events of Mormon history, mingle with revered Church leaders we sometimes have trouble visualizing, and move about in a world that somehow seems more real and immediate than it feels in Sunday School lessons and history books. This is the magic of historical novels. But, in a way unusual for a novelist, Lund communicates a scholarly, authoritative tone to his narrative with a liberal use of chapter endnotes that document his source material. Along the way, Lund's stories reveal new insights about people and events that, I suspect, may be new to the average Mormon reader.

Although Lund's historical novels may open the eyes of his readers to some of the controversial elements of Church history, his approach is unfailingly faith-promoting. He generally sidesteps the more problematic issues in favor of emphasizing the positive aspects of the Mormon story. As a long-time seminary and institute instructor, Lund seems more interested in strengthening testimonies than in tackling difficult or contentious matters. As he put it in a recent interview, "I love to write, because I love to teach. A novel is a sneaky way to slip in some teachings."<sup>2</sup>

In 2002, after producing three more novels, set in the time of Christ, Lund was called to be a member of the Second Quorum of Seventy. After serving six years in that calling, some of them spent in England, Lund has returned to Mormon historical fiction with his latest novel, *The Undaunted: The Miracle of the Hole-in-the-Rock Pioneers*.

As the subtitle suggests, this novel tells the story of the famous colonizing expedition by Mormon settlers to the San Juan Mission in 1878–79, during which they were required (or chose) to pass through territory that was little explored and proved enormously inhospitable to wagons and teams. The journey involved descending to the Colorado River through a gap in the cliffs that became known as "the hole in the rock." The descent was harrowing and dangerous and required the settlers to use blasting powder and innovative engineering methods to jury-rig a roadway sufficient for teams and wagons to pass through. Constructing a roadway three-quarters of a mile from the top of the plateau down to the river took a month and a half. No one was killed, a fact that the settlers considered to be a miracle. Elizabeth Morris Decker, a

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald N. Lund, quoted in Carma Wadley, "Gerald Lund Highlights Pioneers' Struggle across Untamed Southern Utah," *Deseret News*, August 9, 2009, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705321916/Gerald-Lund-highlights-pioneers-struggle-across-untamed-southern-Utah.html> (accessed July 28, 2010).

twenty-two-year-old mother of two, described the experience in a letter to her parents shortly after her arrival in Bluff:

If you ever come this way it will scare you to death to look down [the roadway] . . . [I]t is almost strait down, the cliffs on each side are five hundred ft. high and there is just room enough for a wagon to go down. It nearly scared me to death. The first wagon I saw go down they put the brake on and rough locked the hind wheels and had a big rope fastened to the wagon and about ten men holding back on it and then they went down like they would smash everything. I'll never forget that day. When we was walking down Willie looked back and cried and asked me how we would get back home.<sup>3</sup>

Although the best-known obstacle the colonizing party faced was the descent to the Colorado River, other portions of the journey—particularly the relatively unexplored stretch between the Colorado and San Juan Rivers—proved equally challenging. The settlers blazed new trails on every mile of this section and constantly relied on their scouts to make the best decision concerning the course of travel. Although they had expected to complete the entire trip in six weeks, it took them nearly six months before their journey ended. Most of the pioneers settled the new town of Bluff; a few continued on to Montezuma Creek, where a few families from an earlier exploring party had settled the previous year.

The Hole-in-the-Rock expedition was part of the larger Mormon expansion in the Mountain West during the nineteenth century. From almost the moment the Mormons settled in Utah, it had been Church policy for its members to occupy as much land as possible. Sometimes migrations to form new communities occurred naturally, but often settlers were recruited through official Church callings. This was the primary method used to assemble the San Juan pioneers, and no wonder, since the area to be settled (located in the Four Corners region of Utah) was remote, cruelly inhospitable, and seemingly inaccessible. The Church's purpose in settling this area seems to have been to claim it as Mormon territory before cattlemen from Colorado could occupy it and to create a buffer between other Mormon settlements and Native Americans (many of whom were still hostile to settlers), and outlaws (who used the remote territory to hide out from pursuing lawmen).<sup>4</sup> This area hardly held out enticing prospects for Mormon farming families.

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<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Morris Decker, Letter to her parents, William and Sarah Morris, February 22, 1880, reproduced in David E. Miller, *Hole in the Rock*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), Appendix 8, 197.

<sup>4</sup>Miller, *Hole in the Rock*, 3–9. Miller cites several sources identifying these purposes, including Albert R. Lyman, "The Fort on the Firing Line," *Improvement Era*, December 1948, 797, and Morgan Amasa Barton (son of Joseph F. Barton, a participant in the trek), "Back Door to San Juan," unpublished manuscript. Miller, *Hole in*

In this novel, Lund's characters are the "eyes" through which his readers view the unfolding events. The protagonist is David Dickenson, whom we meet on page 1 as he is celebrating his sixth birthday with his mother and father in a coal-mining village in Yorkshire, England. Book 1, consisting of 141 pages, covers 1862 to 1872, during which David becomes a teenager, his mother dies, and he and his father, John Dickenson, leave the deadly mines and immigrate to America. Their conversion to Mormonism in Liverpool is a matter of convenience (and a clever plot device) to garner them a place on a less-expensive Mormon ship. They know little about their new religion; and when they finally arrive in Utah, they are bewildered to learn that Mormonism, rather than being a minuscule sect, counts ninety thousand adherents in the Mountain West, spread over a territory larger than England.

Although John Dickenson soon comes to fully accept Mormonism, David is more ambivalent. He secures a job as a mail carrier and arranges to be on the trail on Sundays to avoid going to meetings. He doesn't believe that God hears and answers prayers; certainly He had not heard their prayers to spare his mother. In all other respects, however, David is nearly perfect. He is resourceful, honest, brave, hardworking—and handsome, to boot. Although he doesn't value his Church membership, he isn't antagonistic either. He doesn't drink or smoke and seems to keep every commandment. He just doesn't have a testimony.

During a mail run to Cedar City, David meets the McKennas, a close-knit, well-to-do, locally prominent Mormon family consisting of father Patrick, mother Sarah, son Patrick Jr. (whom David dubs "Billy Joe"), and two older daughters, Abby and Molly, both in their late teens, David first meets Molly, who is wearing a "long, full skirt . . . [that] emphasized the slenderness of her waist. . . . But it was her hair that arrested his gaze. It was honey-blond and cascaded down her back in long, soft curls" (182). The two are soon smitten.

Abby, however, is a different matter. She, too, is attractive, though perhaps not so eye-catchingly beautiful as her younger sister. She is, however, steady and contemplative. She is also outspoken, devoted to her religion, and committed to converting David. It is through Abby's mouth and pen that David learns his doctrinal lessons—the lessons Lund wants his readers to learn.

David begins working for Patrick McKenna and is soon beloved by the entire family, with the possible exception of Abby, who is frustrated by his stubborn agnosticism. David asks Patrick for permission to court Molly, and it is readily granted. Only one thing seems to stand in the way of eventual wedded bliss—David's equivocal attitude toward the Church.

In this setting, the call is issued to some of the citizens of Parowan and Ce-

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*the Rock*, 8, 16. As noted below, Lund accepts these purposes and incorporates them into his narrative.

dar City to leave their homes and colonize the remote reaches of the San Juan. Although McKenna is a successful businessman and the owner of a thriving hotel and dining establishment in Cedar City—hence, hardly the sort one would expect to be called on a farming mission—his name is nevertheless on the list. The entire family accepts without hesitation, something David finds confounding and foolish. Nevertheless, when Patrick is called to go with a preliminary exploring party to the region, David willingly accompanies him as his paid employee. During this expedition, David learns many lessons about himself, the devotion of the settlers, and the character of the McKennas that lead him to begin to change his outlook.

David still rejects the concept that God is moved by human prayers, nor has he determined whether eventual marriage to Molly is in the cards. He does, however, decide to join the colonizing party after his father returns from a mission to England and volunteers for the move. David and Molly put their courtship on hold because there will be stresses enough on the journey without adding romantic tensions, an amazingly adult decision by two young would-be lovers. For those who are familiar with Lund's style, it would hardly be a plot-spoiler to note that David learns important lessons in faith and humility during the journey and that the romantic issues eventually sort themselves out, though not without some twists and turns.

Judging from reviews and comments on various consumer websites, the majority of readers who have taken the trouble to comment are enthusiastically positive about this book. Lund continues his practice of providing chapter endnotes that document the sources he has used in creating the background to his story, so the reader is left with a sense of having studied history in addition to enjoying a novel. The book is handsomely printed and contains a number of nicely drawn maps, including a beautiful two-page spread that serves as an informative decoration on the front and back endpapers.

Even better is the engaging website Lund (or Deseret Book) has established at <http://www.undaunted-thenovel.com/>. The site has, among other things, a copy of the color map found in the book. The online version, however, has clickable “buttons” on key locations. When you click on one of the locations, a pop-up window opens revealing further buttons, which in turn provide access to photographs of the area along with a video containing beautiful aerial photography and a narration by Lund.<sup>5</sup> Text boxes explain the significance of that particular location to the story. It is a terrific way for the reader to better visualize what Lund describes in the

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<sup>5</sup>Lund has made several trips along the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail in ATVs, so he brings a compelling first-hand experience to his narration. The website contains a link to a PDF file that provides detailed instructions on how to retrace the steps of the *Undaunted* pioneers.



narrative and greatly enhances the reading experience.

The book is also available as an unabridged audio recording. I purchased the audio book and whiled away much of a drive from Utah to California immersed in the saga. The narrator is Simon Vance, an “A-list” reader from England<sup>6</sup> whose familiarity with British dialects is particularly helpful in voicing the first portion of the book. It was much more fun to *hear* the Yorkshire brogue of John Dickenson than to imagine it by trying to decipher Lund’s written rendition, which, of necessity, contains so many misspelled words I found the result a bit distracting. Unfortunately, one needs to do a lot of driving to finish an audio book of such length and I eventually elected to revert to the print version.

Two primary questions need to be asked when evaluating a historical novel: Is it based on sound history, and is it good literature? Regarding the question of history, many of the facts Lund relies on are contained in the leading nonfiction account of the trek, *Hole in the Rock* by University of Utah professor David E. Miller, first published in 1959. Lund’s rendition of these facts is unabashedly hagiographic, due in part to his reliance on recollections mostly written well after the fact by participants or their children that, inevitably, are idealized. Moreover, Lund’s own predilection, as a former LDS Church Educational System teacher and General Authority, is to present a faith-promoting story.

Unlike the history of the Church in New York, Ohio, and Illinois, there are no contemporaneous non-Mormon accounts that might provide a counterbalance to the stories of the participants and their children. Lund acknowledges that some historians have questioned the wisdom of sending men, women, and children on such a hazardous and grueling journey, blazing a route that would soon be discontinued, and establishing communities in remote and hazardous outposts that were never destined to grow beyond a few hundred souls. Lund tackles this issue in his introduction, comparing such historians to “Monday morning quarterbacks.” One of his objectives in writing the book was to counter such interpretations and to hold up the example of these settlers as “a compelling motivation for us all” (ix, citing Gordon B. Hinkley, “Faith of the Pioneers,” 3).

Lund dramatizes Miller’s statement of the purposes of the San Juan expedition by including them in an address given by Apostle Erastus Snow at a stake conference in Parowan on December 29, 1878 (253–63). Lund acknowledges that, although the conference minutes show Elder Snow attending the conference, they do not provide any details concerning the substance of his

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<sup>6</sup>Vance has been awarded three Audies and thirty-one Earphone Awards and is the narrator of a number of my favorite audio books.

talk. Lund states that his aim in having Snow explain the purposes of the expedition is to “help correct [the] misperception” that “although the San Juan Mission was an incredible example of faith and courage, in concept it was seriously flawed, and that the mission itself was a mistake” (263). Of course, even acknowledging these “purposes,” one might still question whether they justified uprooting families and subjecting them to the hardships that the journey and subsequent settlement imposed upon them. Questions that might be asked include the following: How important to the gospel plan was it to claim this desolate and remote land before Colorado ranchers could do so? Clearly this region was no “breadbasket” that might benefit the rest of Utah. How necessary was it to provide a “buffer” between Native Americans or outlaws and the rest of Mormon country? Doesn’t the very difficulty of the journey made by the San Juan expedition illustrate that the Colorado River, the San Juan River, and the mountainous terrain surrounding them, provided a natural buffer? And who was going to “buffer” the hole-in-the-wall Saints from these dangers? Was it fair to send men, women and children as human guinea pigs to serve this function?<sup>7</sup>

The second question—the literary quality of a historical novel—is more subjective. Lund’s decision to idealize, without exception, the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers results in a book that lacks serious interpersonal conflict, which greatly diminishes its literary appeal. The conflict between brutal natural conditions and human beings, which tests their resourcefulness and sheer endurance, thus becomes the chief conflict. However, I found this conflict insufficient on its own to sustain the novel. Perhaps I am different from most of Lund’s readers in this respect, but I longed for some serious scheming or back-biting or second-guessing—in other words, for some characters who would either grow during the course of the journey or be put in their place by our righteous heroes. Having read a number of first-hand accounts of pioneer treks and settlements of Mormon outposts, I know that conflicts were common. Indeed, human nature makes such contestations over authority and resources inevitable. Lund may have been concerned about alienating the descendants of the trekkers, who will be among his most avid readers,<sup>8</sup> but he could have created fictional characters to fill these roles.

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<sup>7</sup>Lund acknowledges that many, if not most of the original members of the San Juan expedition left the Four Corners region within a few years after arriving (798–800). It may be relevant to note that the principal settlement founded by the San Juan expedition (Bluff, Utah) had a total population of only 320 in 2007. The other community where some of the expedition members settled (Montezuma Creek) had a population 507 in 2007, 96 percent of whom were Native Americans. Statistics from [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com).

<sup>8</sup>There are certainly tens of thousands of descendants of these pioneers today. As

Some might say it is not the role of the historical novelist to create conflict where none can be proven to exist, but I believe that such creative efforts are the very reason for writing a *novel*, rather than a *history*. Fictional characters fulfill the roles of people we all know existed, but whose more distasteful thoughts and actions are not recorded by their descendants, who are unwilling (or unable) to do so. Great historical novels, then, seem even more genuine than fact-anchored histories because they are able to tell the emotional truth of those who lived through the depicted events.

*The Undaunted* does seek to create a conflict between David, on the one hand, and Molly and Abby on the other, centering on David's disbelief in the efficacy of prayer. But these differing perspectives are hardly serious enough to maintain our interest for 800 pages, since David has no other flaws and there is never any doubt about how it will turn out in the end. Couldn't David have been given some serious failings, such as dishonesty, or unfaithfulness, or at least a Word of Wisdom problem? Lund's WORK AND THE GLORY series gave us Joshua Steed, who for a time, at least, cheated at cards, was a bit of a womanizer, and actively persecuted the Saints. Couldn't such a character have at least temporarily vied for the affections of Molly or Abby? There is no scoundrel in this novel.

In the same vein, the McKenna family members are all uniformly sweet toward each other and toward David. They are the idealized "Ozzie and Harriet" family of the fifties transported to 1880s Utah, who manage to maintain their aplomb and loving generosity through every stressful situation. Though both Molly and Abby have strong feelings about David, their occasional spats quickly end in their embraces and expressions of sisterly love. None of the McKennas are estranged from each other. None of them die or are even seriously injured. Most families have their share of anger, bitterness, and sadness; the McKennas do not.

When I think of the novels I have enjoyed most, they always involve flawed characters who struggle with themselves and their life and don't always prevail. Their very imperfections make them real. One of my early favorites was Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, whose protagonist is a murderer, unrepentant for much of the book. I loved Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, featuring a hero who is a troublemaker, a thief, and a runaway. More recently, I have enjoyed Steig Larsson's wildly popular *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, whose title character is a tattooed, pierced, bisexual computer hacker with a borderline schizophrenic personality disorder. I suspect most people are engaged by stories with dynamic, flawed characters who have the potential to grow and

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a matter of disclosure, I am related to at least one of those mentioned by name in Lund's history, Danielson Buren (or Buron) Barney, who was a son of my great-great-grandfather, Edson Barney.

meaningfully change during the narrative. *The Undaunted* does not fulfill my need for real conflict. One potential source of conflict might have been the practice of plural marriage, which was outlawed at the time of these events, but nonetheless engaged in by a significant number of Church members. However, this practice is only mentioned once in passing and plays no role in the story.

Another problem I found a bit distracting in this novel was the dialogue, which often sounded too modern for the nineteenth century. It is said that Patrick O'Brian, one of my favorite historical novelists and author of the Aubrey-Maturin sea series set during the Napoleonic wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,<sup>9</sup> never used a word or phrase that wasn't in use during the timeframe of his novels. If he wasn't sure, he consulted the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary. As one of the greatest historical novelists ever, O'Brian sets an admittedly high standard. However, when Lund's characters use words and phrases like "Are you insane?" (238), "Yippeel!" (318 and 319), "Neat!" (467), "There was no way" (700), "Don't be so . . . male" (720), and "Yay! Yay!" (791), I have difficulty hearing a nineteenth-century voice.

Lund also has the people conducting his meetings use stereotypical Mormon catch-phrases, like, "That completes the reading of the names as given" (257), "All in favor please manifest it by raising your right hand" (492),<sup>10</sup> "Those opposed may likewise signify" (258), "The voting has been unanimous in the affirmative" (493), and "It shall now be our pleasure to turn the remainder of our meeting over to . . ." (258). I associate these turns of phrase with the present, not with the nineteenth century.

Finally, the book could have used an editor who had demanded that it be cut by 40 percent or so. I suspect that many people will find *The Undaunted* to be so lengthy that the action moves with agonizing slowness. David and John Dickenson don't leave England until page 130, but everything we need to know about them for purposes of the novel might have been handled in twenty pages. At one point, the main narrative comes to a halt while a non-Mormon rancher kills a Navajo, prompting a damage-control journey by Jacob Hamblin and some associates to head off a retaliatory raid, complete with scenes and dialogue (Book 2: "Setting," 143–66). This episode has very little to do with the actual Hole-in-the-Rock expedition.<sup>11</sup> The settlers do not even meet any Native Americans during their trip, and Jacob Hamblin plays no

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<sup>9</sup>The first novel of the series was called *Master & Commander* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970).

<sup>10</sup>Similar Mormon vote-calling clichés are found throughout the book. For example, "All of you who feel to sustain the proposal your presidency now puts before you, please show it by raising your hand."

<sup>11</sup>It is briefly referred to in the dramatized talk by Apostle Erastus Snow to the

part in it. It is true that there is an encounter with a rogue chief during the exploratory expedition, but that preliminary trip itself takes up 81 pages (“Book 5: “Exploration,” 381–462). By the time the actual Hole-in-the-Rock journey gets underway, the narrative is up to page 522. It feels as if the expedition is almost an afterthought.

I don’t mean to be overly critical of this novel. After all, Lund is the best-selling of all Mormon historical novelists for a reason. He is an engaging storyteller who creates a heroic past for us; and many of his fans have, without doubt, found *The Undaunted* inspiring and delightful.

Lund is most engaging when he dramatizes interpersonal conflicts, brief though they are, in the form of crisp dialogue. Here is an example of Molly and Abby discussing the fact that it will be necessary for the scouts to leave the main camp again to try to find a route up and out of the Colorado River gorge:

“And David will be asked to go?” [Molly] dropped back again, knowing the answer to that. “It’s not fair. He’s done his part.”

“Oh?” Abby said, with a touch of impatience. “And just exactly what is his part?”

Molly gave her a look. “He was gone six months with the first group,” she snapped. “Now that we’re on the road again, they’re sending him out all the time. Ten days with Kumen. Two days with Lyman. Now another who-knows-how-long trip.”

“Somehow I thought that was what scouts did.”

“He’s not the only scout. It’s not right, Abby. Let someone else do it.”

Abby’s lips pressed together into a tight line. “Go back to sleep. I’m sorry I woke you up.”

Molly’s hand shot out and grabbed her. “No, Abby. You tell me. Is it asking too much to let him spend some time with us?”

After additional dialogue, the discussion between the sisters ends with a moral being taught and perhaps a lesson learned:

Abby started to turn away, then swung back, thoroughly exasperated. “You don’t even see it, do you? There are bigger issues here. This isn’t about Molly or Abby or David. Maybe it’s about finding a way to San Juan.”

“If that’s true, then why doesn’t God show us the way to go, so we can accomplish His purpose and get on with our life?”

“Maybe,” Abby said slowly, “because for now, this *is* our life.” (546–47)

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Parowan Stake Conference when he says, “How do we make sure that another non-Latter-day-Saint doesn’t grab a rifle and shoot more Navajos down in cold blood?” (260) The assumption, of course, is that no Mormon would kill anyone in cold blood, an assumption that is belied by several documented instances of such killings.

Although the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition has many heroes, I was particularly moved by the story of the crippled Jens Nielson, who emigrated from Denmark and was a member of Willie Handcart Company in 1856 when his legs became frostbitten. Twenty-two years later, when he no doubt would have preferred remaining in one of the settled communities of southern Utah, he answered the call to play a leading role in the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition. When many of the original settlers of Bluff left after a few years, Nielson steadfastly remained for the rest of the twenty-six years of his life, serving as bishop most of that time (800).

So notwithstanding my desire for more rounded characters, more serious conflicts, more realistic dialogue, and fewer words, I did come away from my reading with a tremendous admiration for the sacrifices made by the women, men and children who made up the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition.

And that, of course, was Lund's main purpose in writing the novel.

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Mary Jane Woodger, ed. *Champion of Liberty: John Taylor*. Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2009. xviii, 397 pp. Photographs, notes, index. Cloth: \$24.95. ISBN: 978-0-8425-2736-1

*Reviewed by Kenneth L. Cannon II*

*Champion of Liberty: John Taylor* is a timely collection of essays from the John Taylor Church History Symposium convened at Brigham Young University in 2008 to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of the Church's third president. The essays cover a relatively broad array of topics and explore the personality, talents, and experiences of this important nineteenth-century prophet. Unfortunately, the level of scholarship and quality varies a good deal, from first-rate to quite mediocre. As a result, the book