Faith

Book review: Quentin Thomas Wells biography 'Defender' sheds light on an unknown pioneer champion Daniel Wells

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Utah State University Press

"Defender: The Life of Daniel H. Wells" is by Quentin Thomas Wells.

"DEFENDER: The Life of Daniel H. Wells," by Quentin Thomas Wells, Utah State University Press, $39.95, 508 pages (nf)

He was a general, university chancellor, counselor to a Mormon prophet and one of Utah's greatest states' rights champions. Yet he is largely anonymous. Quentin Thomas Wells sheds light on the life of pioneer Daniel H. Wells in "Defender: The Life of Daniel H. Wells."

Using finesse and meticulous research, the Latter-day Saint author examines a peace-loving man who spent his public and private life fighting for causes aligned with his principles. Without fanfare and at great personal cost, Daniel H. Wells defended his community, faith, country and family.

Quentin Wells shares how his ancestor was born in 1814 and that Daniel Wells labored for decades in elected and appointed offices, too often without adequate pay or protection from his government employers. The author delves into how Daniel Wells diligently fulfilled demanding church assignments for more than 50 years. Daniel Wells' simple motive remained: "I was obliged to serve." His strategy against critics, mobs, hostile indians and militia was rooted in his conviction that "vigilant defense could work," according to the book.

Quentin Wells touches honestly, if lightly, on his ancestor's flaws. While unsuccessful in resolving certain conflicts within his family and fledgling church, Daniel Wells stayed loyal to his convictions and wore out his life defending them.

He stood as a watchman over the city and temple of Nauvoo before he ever joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Afterward, Daniel Wells lost his Illinois livelihood, property and even the fellowship of his family. He donated much of his rebuilt wealth in Utah to the church and spent years away from loved ones serving in missions and temples. The author maintains Daniel Wells "believed that what he had gained was more than what he had lost."

Quentin Wells, who resides in Utah, has shared a compelling historical biography. It is free from foul language and violent or sexual content.

Gail Sears is a lifelong learner. Her favorite teachers are her husband and five children.