were hesitant to enforce the dictates of federal or state reformers, preferring local democracy to morality imposed by outside forces. Furthermore, country knitted together by railroad tracks, telegraph wires, and national publications, a heavyweight title fight could be a boon to a struggling local economy. Such contests offered lucrative opportunities not only for fighters, managers, and promoters but also for hotel, restaurant, and saloon owners in many western communities.

Frisbee similarly demonstrates how central this period was to the emergence of modern professional boxing. The promotional techniques of William A. Brady, Dan A. Stuart, and Tex Rickard blazed a path followed by their modern counterparts. Significantly, it was during this period that Rickard and Jack Dempsey emerged from the West, bringing prizefighting to New York City and, in a sense, the world. Without a home on the frontier, the sport may well have withered away.

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Defender
THE LIFE OF DANIEL H. WELLS
Quentin Thomas Wells
Utah State University Press, Logan, 2016. $39.95 cloth.

Daniel Hanmer Wells (1814–1891) played a significant role in the economic and political development of the Intermountain West and in the hierarchy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). Surprisingly, this is the first major biography of him in seventy-five years. Author Quentin Thomas Wells—a former CIA officer and writer of films, documentaries, technical instruction books, and spy thrillers—is a Wells descendant. His 488-page study has characteristics of conventional family history, yet he capably introduces readers to all important aspects of his ancestor’s consequential life.

The narrative follows Daniel Wells from his earliest years in New York to his pioneering experience and rise to local prominence as a young man in western Illinois. There, he converted to Mormonism and decided to follow the Latter-day Saints into exile, crossing the plains to the Rocky Mountains, where he became a key leader in establishing a western Mormon
empire. The book documents the essential decency and humility that made Wells one of the leaders most popular with and admired by the Mormon people.

"Defender" is a fitting book title, but "Builder" may be a more apt descriptor for Wells’s importance to the American West. He and Brigham Young developed a special affinity for one another, grounded in their mutual “practical, no-nonsense mindset” (p. 76). As a result, a multitude of responsibilities came Wells’s way—commanding militia general of the Nauvoo Legion during the “Utah War” with the U.S. government and years of complex Indian relations; superintendent of public works for both the Utah territory and the LDS Church overseeing such capital projects as the territorial statehouse and the Mormon tabernacle; territorial attorney general; mayor of Salt Lake City; chancellor of the University of Deseret (University of Utah); counselor in the Church’s First Presidency; two-time president of the Church’s European mission; and president of the Manti Temple. In his private capacity, he developed businesses in logging and lumber milling, coal mining, railroading, and telegraph operations—businesses that helped facilitate colonization of the Great Basin. His many successes, and his closeness to Young, created tense relations with some who jealously viewed him as a threat to their own leadership positions, a topic the author is not shy to acknowledge.

Nor does he shy from discussing the complexities of Wells’s personal life as the husband of seven wives and father of thirty-seven children. His first wife refused to follow him into Mormonism. He was briefly jailed for defending polygamy. Daughter Louisa suffered tragic scandal in a polygamous love triangle involving her sister and the son of another prominent Mormon leader. Still, Wells generally navigated the intricate shoals of plural marriage with sensitivity and understanding that engendered loyal affection and family harmony to a degree not always achieved in polygamous families.

The author has consulted much new scholarship, but his reliance on a number of dated secondary sources has perpetuated some minor inaccuracies. Though not analytical, this book is a serviceable biography of an important figure in nineteenth-century western history.

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