
Reviewed by Douglas D. Alder

Stephen Prince’s biography of Hosea Stout is about an early Mormon lawman who served in that role in Nauvoo, on the trek west, and in the Intermountain West. These experiences of enforcing civic order could not have been predicted from the young Hosea because his youth was fractured. In Kentucky, Hosea’s father met serious financial crises and decided he could not raise his two youngest children. The Shakers took them from him upon his request so that the two children would avoid further disaster. Hosea found himself required to confess his sins daily. Eventually, his father came and forcibly took his two children away and gave them to their mother but also did visit them. Then Hosea was taken by Anthony Dunlap and James Davis and put to school work with the Shakers to prevent his father from getting him. Hosea broke away from the Shakers and wandered among disorderly youth. That finally convinced him to return to a life of order, but this time he went to the Quakers where Eli Harvey quickly put him in school. He learned to read, write, and do math. While in school he decided to become a schoolteacher instead of doing physical labor. He opened a school by himself in Illinois in 1832 but it lasted only a few months.

He moved to Illinois with his cousin Stephen Stout and there became a Methodist. Religion appealed to him. About this time, Hosea’s sister Anna married Benjamin Jones who became a key friend. Ben became interested in Mormon doctrine and tried to get Hosea to study it. Ben had a friend named Charles C. Rich who also was interested in the Mormons. Hosea moved to Caldwell County, Missouri, with Ben and his sister. Soon Ben became a Mormon. In 1838, Hosea married sixteen-year-old Samantha Peak. He was then twenty-seven years old. She soon became a Mormon. Hosea affiliated with the Danites, as they were attempting to thwart the Missourians who were persecuting the Mormons in such encounters as the Hawn’s Mill massacre. When the Mormons were expelled from Missouri, the Stouts went with them to the neighborhood of Commerce, Illinois. In Commerce, which became Nauvoo, Hosea became a captain major in the Nauvoo Legion, which included 650 men initially. Their assignment was to protect the Nauvoo Temple, which was under construction. That was the beginning of a lifetime of such assignments mostly without pay. He made a living through farming and carpentry.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith was killed in the Carthage Jail, the anti-Mormon persecution escalated, particularly because of the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press, which Hosea helped to destroy. As a result,
Stout’s leadership in the Nauvoo Legion also intensified. With the Prophet Joseph deceased, Brigham Young became the leader of the Church and soon decided the Mormons should not wait until spring to depart from Nauvoo. He sent the first party across the Mississippi to Iowa in February 1846. Hosea and his family were with them. Once in Iowa, they trudged in the snow until they reached the site of the future Winter Quarters, struggling all the way. Brigham Young reorganized the Council of Fifty and made Hosea the police chief even though he had opposition from men like Charles C. Rich and John D. Lee. This was the first of several times that Brother Brigham chose to stay with Hosea to achieve order, even though Stout was outspoken and sometimes generated criticism.

Once they arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, they almost had to start over again. By 1850, Utah had become a U.S. Territory. Hosea was made attorney general for the territory. He had decided to become an attorney because he had extensive experience in many court cases. Graduating from law school was not required to be an attorney because there were few law schools. The court recognized him as an attorney.

In 1852, Hosea was called with a dozen others to go to China and open an LDS mission there. He was stunned but accepted the call as he always did. His critics were pleased to see him out of the way. Upon arrival, the missionaries found the Chinese language daunting and soon ran into intense opposition from Protestant missionaries who attacked polygamy. Within a few months, the LDS missionaries decided to leave China and return to Utah. Upon arrival at home, Stout was stunned to discover that his wife, Samantha, had died in childbirth. He was devastated. He had lost three wives, one to divorce and two to death, and seven children to death. Now he suddenly had children to care for without his spouse. He married Aseneth Harmon in 1854 and their marriage lasted only a year. Then he married Alvira Wilson in July 1855. She was twenty-four years younger than Hosea and they had eleven children, three of whom died. She was a great influence on him and helped him farm and do woodwork as a basis for their life while Stout served in civic callings, mostly without pay.

Dr. Prince approached the study of Hosea Stout from a professional point of view. He did not write a eulogy of Stout nor did he attack him. His book is a candid analysis, based on the many documents available. The author was benefited by Hosea himself because Stout wrote an extensive journal between 1844 and 1861. Second, Dr. Prince had the great advantage of Juanita Brooks editing and publishing the Stout journal in two volumes. It is entitled On the Mormon Frontier, published by the University of Utah Press in 1964 with a second edition in 1982. Prince has been influenced personally by Juanita Brooks’s devotion to objectivity and her documentary basis for writing history. Prince had to seek other sources for the early part...
of Stout’s life as well as the period after 1861. Prince’s analysis of the court issues about the Mountain Meadows Massacre (312–18) is an example.

Having roots in St. George, the author came under Brooks’s influence, reading her work widely. He represents this generation of Mormon historians who are carrying on the Brooks commitment. His first book, a prize winner, was about Sherriff Antone Prince in Washington County (his grandfather). That must have stirred his professional interest in lawmen and especially the tension and opposition they faced—maintaining order on the frontier. It is impressive how this dentist could retire and become a master of documents. Reading the footnotes and bibliography in the Stout biography complements the text, making it all an adventure. Prince obviously did not wait until retirement to visit archives and read widely in Mormon history.

Hosea Stout could be called a second-level Mormon leader, never a general authority, but a key figure in Mormonism from 1840 to 1882. He died in 1889. In Nauvoo, he headed the Nauvoo Legion. He headed the police in Winter Quarters and in Salt Lake City. He had the confidence of Brigham Young and led the extensive efforts to achieve order in the Territory of Utah. He was appointed to be the Utah attorney general and member of the legislature. He was called to be in the founding group of pioneers to establish the Dixie Mission (St. George) while still serving as attorney general. Through it all he was a controversial figure. Dr. Prince’s outstanding biography allows readers to experience the local reality of organizing harmony on the frontier.

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Reviewed by Matthew Bowman

In the dead of the winter of 1910–11, George Brimhall was trying to walk a fine line indeed. He had been president of Brigham Young University (BYU) for more than half a decade and had vigorously tried to hire faculty who had studied in universities outside the Mormon culture region. In addition to a number of scientists who had studied at Harvard, the University of Chicago, and other schools of similar prestige, he had even hired a non-Mormon to