

provided for each point of argument. In short, the evidence often overwhelms the reader.

This complaint aside, *A Most Magnificent Machine* is a useful addition to the literature on both antebellum American social history and the transportation revolution. Miner does not break new ground, but his book reinforces the scholarship of others who have examined hundreds of subjects running from economic modernization in the Old South to Americans' morbid fascination with and fear of railroad accidents. Teachers and professors will no doubt find it an excellent resource for stories and pithy quotations, and casual readers interested in railroads will enjoy the lush retelling of the early years of the industry's development.

The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois: A History of the Mormon Militia, 1841–1846, by Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Donald Q. Cannon. Norman, OK: Arthur Clark Co., 2010. 436 pp. Illustrations, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer A. R. Blair is professor emeritus of history at Graceland University. He has held various offices in the John Whitmer Historical Association and the Mormon History Association.

One of the most controversial actions by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith was his establishment of the Nauvoo Legion. By 1844, it was the largest volunteer militia in Illinois and greatly feared by non-Mormons. Some historians have seen it as an example of Smith's megalomania, part of a plan for a "Kingdom of God" on earth, or as an example of a Mormon tendency toward domination. The authors of *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois* argue that it was a typical militia of the time, legal under the Illinois system, non-aggressive, and established by Smith as a defense.

The Latter-day Saints evolved from being adverse to the use of force, to carrying arms in 1834 for reclaiming "stolen" property, and, for some, in 1838, using force to "despoil" non-Mormons in Far West, Missouri. The authors contend that Smith rejected the violence and secrecy of those "Danite" vigilantes in favor of a legal, strong military force to protect his people.

It is a well-presented thesis but difficult at times to maintain, partly because of Smith's rhetoric, which alternated between admonitions to his followers to forgive their enemies and invectives such as "Damn them as traitors!" directed against government officials who had not aided them. Even more chilling was his vow to exercise his power if need be. The authors do not adequately deal with Smith's wavering stance in Illinois politics, or how Smith's interpretation of

the Nauvoo Charter (as giving the city the same powers as the state) created opposition. Some questionable interpretations in the book include why Smith chose "Lieutenant General" for his militia title and the role dissenters played in his death.

Whether Smith ultimately would have used force is impossible to ascertain. The authors present him as genuinely seeking peace but recognize him as volatile. They grapple with complications and tensions inherent in the Nauvoo period and note the responsibility of Smith, Mormons, and "gentiles" for the tragedy.

Most of the book is devoted to the development, organization, and character of the Nauvoo Legion. It is the most thorough account available, gives many details, and displays meticulous scholarship. The authors weigh conflicting primary references and historians' differing interpretations. They admit their inability to determine some facts but make plausible explanations. For example, estimates of the number of members in the Legion have ranged up to 20,000, with a traditional figure of 5,000. The authors conclude that the number probably never reached 3,000, a reasonable estimate given Nauvoo's population of about 11,000.

An interesting fact is that there were members in the Nauvoo Legion from Iowa, mostly Mormons who had settled there. Iowan General Swazey attended Legion parades and observed "evolutions" during sham battles. The first chapter helpfully details the status of federal and state military systems of the time. Other chapters cover the Legion's organization and its partial demise. The appendixes and tables are useful, especially the chronology and listing of members.

Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War, by Stanley Harrold. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. xvi, 292 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 cloth.

Reviewer Rebekah M. K. Mergenthal is assistant professor of history at Pacific Lutheran University. Her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Chicago, 2008) was "Border Lines: The People of the Lower Missouri River Valley and the Expansion of the United States, 1803–1855."

Stanley Harrold's *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* is a solid, detailed narrative of the violent conflict that developed along the border between the North and South in the decades before the Civil War. Drawing extensively on other historians' work, most prominently that of William Freehling, and his own archival research, Harrold considers contestations along the full extent of this border. This