



Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America (Critical Studies in the History of Anthropology)

Benjamin C. Pykles

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This detailed study of the excavation and restoration of the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, reveals the roots of historical archaeology. In the late 1960s, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sponsored an archaeology program to authentically restore the city of Nauvoo, which was founded along the Mississippi River in the 1840s by the Mormons as they moved west. Non-Mormon scholars were also interested in Nauvoo because it was representative of several western frontier towns in this era. As the archaeology and restoration of Nauvoo progressed, however, conflicts arose, particularly regarding control of the site and its interpretation for the public.

The field of historical archaeology was just coming into its own during this period, with myriad perspectives and doctrines being developed and tested. The Nauvoo site was one of the places where the discipline was forged. This well-researched account weaves together multiple viewpoints in examining the many contentious issues surrounding the archaeology and restoration of the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, providing an illuminating picture of the early days of professional historical archaeology.

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