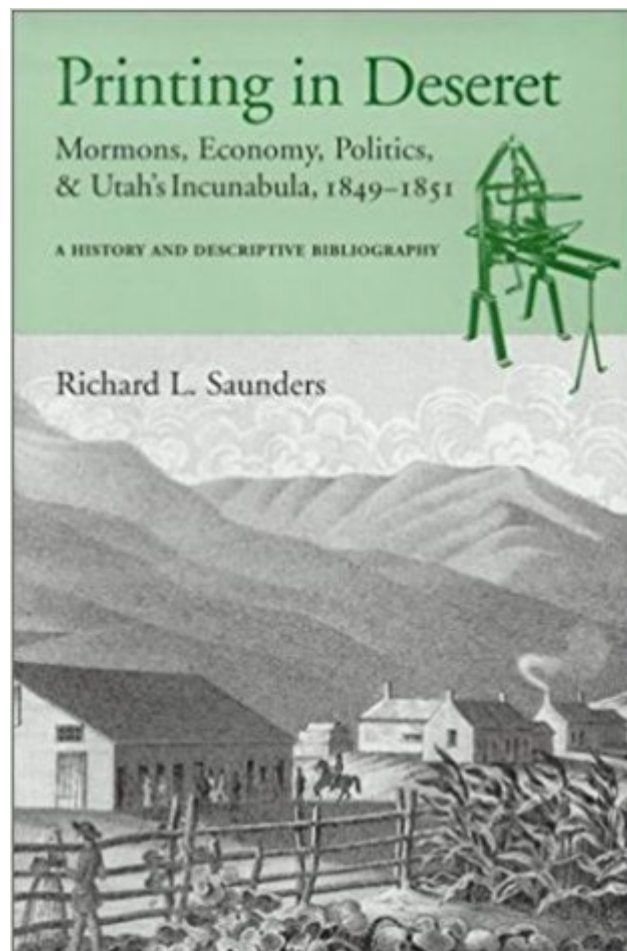




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Printing In Deseret: Mormons, Economy, Politics And Utah's Incunabula 1849-1851



Synopsis

Utah's first printing press arrived in Salt Lake Valley in 1849, barely two years after the first settlers. Purchased by printer W.W. Phelps at the behest of Mormon leaders, the press was initially the church's private venture, a social tool used to re-establish print communication -- and thus foster cohesiveness -- among the reassembling church membership after the Mormons' hasty flight from Nauvoo, Illinois. It also became a tool to project political interests onto the national stage. The first document produced was a general communique to the church at large. Written by Willard Richards and approved by Brigham Young, the "Second General Epistle" was committed to print by that leader's nephew, Brigham H. Young, on October 20, 1849. Other early jobs included the second printing of the Constitution of the State of Deseret, part of the first, unsuccessful statehood bid; the materials related to chartering the University of Deseret, the first institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi (now the University of Utah); and the first issues of the Deseret News, a newspaper conceived as the Mormon Church's voice to the outside world. Printing in Deseret is a concise narrative history of the advent of printing in the state, and of the earliest printed documents, or incunabula, created during the initial settlement years. It also includes a bibliographic history of the press, chronicling more than fifty printed items, most never before described. It will appeal to all those interested in Western Americana and the settling of the Great Basin.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: University of Utah Press (October 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0874806631

ISBN-13: 978-0874806632

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 0.9 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #4,306,463 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #91 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Bibliographies & Indexes > Politics #223 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Bibliographies & Indexes > Religion #1623 in Books > Computers & Technology > Graphics & Design > Desktop Publishing

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The bibliographic description of early Utah imprints is unsurpassed in its thoroughness of coverage and descriptive detail. -- George Miles, curator, Yale Collection of Western Americana

Richard L. Saunders is curator of Special Collections and Archives at the Paul Meek Library, University of Tennessee at Martin.

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