



A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit

Robert Lindsey

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As he proved in *The Falcon & the Snowman*, Robert Lindsey is a masterful journalist with a genius for suspense & an unerring eye for provocative stories. *A Gathering of Saints* is an astonishing report on one of this century's most puzzling, cunningly executed crimes. 16 pages of photos.

A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit Details

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Author : Robert Lindsey

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From Reader Review A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit for online ebook

Misty says

This is an absolutely riveting true crime book. It's probably more interesting for me because I live in the area in which these crimes were committed, and I am actually old enough to *remember* them being reported on TV. I remember the scared faces of my parents--all the adults I knew, really, watching the news reports with an intensity I had never seen before. It frightened me. Although I was not old enough to really understand the events unfolding around me, I sensed that the adult generation upon whom I relied for my sense of safety and security, for the first time, went about their lives in a haze of fear. The author handles the complexities of the LDS community deftly. He is fair and does not seem to inject any bias into the story--rather, he focuses on the events as they unfolded, and tries to explain a perhaps strange culture to the unindoctrinated so that they might understand the killer, Mark Hoffman (insofar as a man such as he can be understood.)

Mike says

So I pick this book off the shelf as I'm looking for something for a trip and on the cover I see big red "A Gathering of Saints" in gothic like letters, a picture of a home-made dynamite type bomb with an old watch thing on it (which btw was a lie - was all pipe bombs), a plug "Wonderfully Suspenseful....A Terrific Read!" and "story of Murder, Money and Deceit". Seems like a good fast thriller type. Start the book and in the first 10 pages or so, all prologue and set in the mid-80's, we get bombs going off, people getting killed, cops getting started on investigations with interesting backgrounds all with a religious tie in I'm not 100% sure of in terms of how it fits in - but yea, I'm digging it.

Then I got to Chapter 1....and it's 1840's and a little backstory on the Mormon faith....which is going real deep. After about 5 pages I'm thinking "I got it - lets get back to the bombs and stuff" and around page 8 I look at the cover again - seems I missed the "A True Story..." part of all this. So accidentally I'm now 20 or so pages into a true crime book that I really wasn't planning on reading. But hey, I'm hooked a bit so let's go.

If one was Mormon or had interest in their history, or was a big fan of old document dealings, this is a 5 star, get an autographed copy sort of book. The 120 or so pages on trading of documents and inner-workings of the Church's politics were a bit dry to me, but definitely were necessary to the wrap up so can't penalize too much. The story, which I'm guessing was huge around the country when I was 15 and paying attention to concerts and Michael Jordan, not pipe bombs in Utah, is pretty fascinating in all kinds of ways - you have a killer who comes off as weirdly both semi-sympathetic and right up there with the worst serial killers in his sociopathic ways. Victims who really were pretty innocent, including a woman who really was the definition of wrong place, wrong time (wrong husband) and a church / police tie-in that continues the obvious "separation of church and state is a necessity" theme that should always be remembered. The conclusion was both a terrific wrap up and somewhat unfulfilling in it's lack of novelistic drama as more just a study in individual human drama at it's worst than anything.

So recommend highly if true crime and details of backstories/lives are your thing, but if 100 pages examining possible forged documents is a bit much, may want to take a pass.

Jill Crosby says

My favorite of "The Mormon Forgery Murders" books; well-organized and very readable.

Margaret McCamant says

I just finished this book and was pretty much captivated by the story all the way. I heard a talk by a rare-books dealer in April, describing how competition and confidentiality agreements with their clients make dealers less scrupulous than they should be about tracing the provenance and authenticity of items they buy and sell. She mentioned the Mormon forgeries case and I looked for books about it. This turns out to be about much more than forgery, including murder, father-son issues, and a fascinating look at the hierarchy of the Mormon church and how its attitudes and actions affect everyone in Utah.

Samuel says

I found this book absolutely fascinating. The title does not clue you in to the specific event of the book so I must have looked over this book on my dad's book shelf a dozen times without pulling it out. Recently I mentioned to him that I did not know much about the Salt Lake City bombings that occurred in October 1985 in connection with forgeries of Mormon documents. My dad recommended this book among three others on the subject as the one that reads the most "like a novel." Novel indeed, Lindsey uses a style of writing popularized now by Dan Brown novels that weave multiple stories together often in alternating chapters that eventually culminate in a mysterious climax of history and murder. Better than Dan Brown's fictional stories with historical truths, this is a TRUE story with historical disputes. The antagonist has been deemed by some to be the greatest (American?) forger of the 20th century. With a rather fervent pension for Mormon history, I found this book to be very rewarding. But even if you know very little about Mormon history (and let's say the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon), I still think this book would be a fascinating read.

Abbey says

This book intersected two of my fascinations: belief systems and forgeries. It's a bizarre story set in a religious world that is both familiar and oddly foreign, like seeing a familiar photo in false colors and warped. I won't summarize - you can find a summary with a click.

The most clever move that Mark Hofmann made was to "discover" manuscripts that were mildly disruptive to the carefully redacted and cultivated Mormon history. This produced enough anxiety in the Mormon leadership to assure Hofmann a good price, but also keep the lid on too much scrutiny and publicity that might expose him.

Hofmann's dumbest move was to keep "discovering" sensational documents, and to actually think that he could pull off bigger and bigger scores while digging himself deeper and deeper in debt.

Hofmann's irretrievably stupid, moronic, and criminal move was to think that a murder here and there would be a good solution to his mounting problems.

Excellent stuff, if sometimes written in too much detail.

Chamie says

couldn't get into this book..

Steele At says

The story of the "salamander letter".

This was a painful effort. I admire Mr. Lindsey for the extraordinary effort it must have taken to compile all of the facts within this story. I believe he was as honest and fair as a man could be that was not in the Church. He did an excellent job of creating a marvelous story from reality.

As a Mormon, I like to believe that I know how the Church works. It was a challenge to read this book because it makes one question personal beliefs. By reading the book, I had to see this from the perspective of one who is not a Mormon; from that obvious sense of doubt that would invade anyones thoughts in light of such a story.

It is sad how truth and beauty and love can turn into something so completely ugly. And this was an ugly story. And very sad. At the same time, it was educational and challenging. I should bluntly state that I think it is typically unhealthy to purposely challenge ones faith. Life itself has a way of doing that without any additional effort on our parts to intentionally create a challenge. Nevertheless, I'm grateful to have managed to get through it. And I will gratefully return to read about how God loves us and how the gospel message is one of hope, love and peace... not of those things that are contrary.

Still... it was a powerful story. I wish that it would be made into a movie. I don't know how that could be possible as complex as it all was, but it would be interesting. Lindsey, the author - I believe he is quite good. It would be interesting to see if he could do it.

Brittany says

How I Came To Read This Book: Back when the Olympics were held in Salt Lake City, my mom thought it'd be a good time for me to learn about Utah's relationship with the Mormon religion / culture. And thus, she gave me this book.

The Plot: This is a book that unveils the history of Mormonism (and a shaky one at that) combined with a fascinating true life murder / terrorist mystery, when several seemingly randomly selected people are the victims of bomb attacks. The story then threads together the history of Mormonism with a historical artifacts collector named Mark Hoffman, who finds shady documents linked to Mormon history and sells them back to the church to keep them quiet.

The Good & The Bad: This is a great piece of nonfiction writing - definitely a book where it's amazing to read it's true! The total insanity of the Mormon religion (at least in how it's outlined here) makes it almost as laughable as Scientology, and really sheds light on this bizarre faction of society. Also, the unwinding mystery of who launched the bomb attacks - and what on earth they have to do with Mormon history and religion (and Mark Hoffman's blackmailing of the church) makes for a surprising page turner.

The Bottom Line: A nonfiction book that's so insane, it's unbelievable.

Anything Memorable: Just the link between me reading this book around the Salt Lake City Olympics.

50-Book Challenge?: Nope.

Shawna says

I love reading about Mormon hypocrisy. I've read "Under the Banner of Heaven" and all the books written by plural wives and lost boys that lived under Warren Jeff's insane regime. This book is another great read if one is interested in that subject. It is about a Mormon document dealer who forged supposedly bombshell letters and scripts in order to embarrass the church. The Mormon hierarchy went through all kinds of gymnastics to purchase and bury these controversial documents. One quote from the leader of the church, 'just because something is true does not mean it needs to be broadcast.' Oh really?

The only quibble I have with this book is that it described one of the prosecutors in the Hofmann case as having prosecuted "serial killer Ted Bundy." Making it sound like this guy nailed Bundy for being a serial killer. When in fact, in Utah, Bundy was only convicted of (relatively) minor kidnapping charge and due to serve 2 to 15 years for the crime. Then Utah allowed him to be extradited to Colorado where Bundy escaped twice to kill more. So knowing this little tidbit it makes me wonder what other details were hyperbole.

There is also an episode of American Justice based on this case. Check it out if you can't get your hands on this title.

Rhonda says

Journalist writing this true crime story sets it up so that the reader gets the impression that the Mormon Church is behind bombings in Salt Lake City in the 1980s that left people dead. We learn late in the book that the bombings are the work of a delusional Mormon acting independently who is solely responsible for the violence, so a little bait and switch action that was somewhat off-putting to me.

And the build up and implications about all these alleged documents that completely contradict the Mormon Church teachings turn out to be forgeries so that also feels like a big build up in one direction and a sudden shift of gears. I get it, that's what happened and that's how it happened. Somehow I felt misled by the author and it left a sour taste in my mouth. Maybe it's supposed to?

In any event, it is disgraceful that the leaders of the Mormon Church worked behind the scenes to hide these documents when they believed they were real. Their dishonesty and corruption is enough to leave even the most jaded soul disgusted and disillusioned.

It is also impressive that this guy had the talent and ingenuity to falsify all these historic documents and that he was successful for so long.

So overall a good read, albeit somewhat dissatisfying too.

Erik Graff says

My wife's aunt married a Mormon elder, a bishop, a professor at Northwestern, and he persistently tried to convert me, emphasizing the socialistic practices of his community. It didn't work, but it did pique my interest in the faith.

One of the many books I read about Mormonism was this exposition of what had been items in the press during the eighties. The background, something I hadn't known, was that in fact there were two Mormon churches surviving from the days of Joe Smith's murder, a third located in Michigan having died out. The Utah branch, the biggest and most successful, exists in competition with a smaller midwestern branch located in and around Missouri, the church adjudicated as the authentic one during property disputes between factions after the murder and the one Joe Smith's wife belonged to. The story of the Mormon murders is basically about the competition between these sects, the dubious history of the early church and the way these factors were exploited by unscrupulous antiquities dealers. It reads well and is packed with information and scandalous secrets.

Jack Waters says

Nicely paced and pretty exhaustive -- the research is well-done. I've been obsessed with this story for years since a few tendrils of the story cast a shadow on my own life: my aunt and uncle were friends and business partners with both of the bomb victims, and as fate would have it, my family was living with my aunt and uncle during the bombings as we prepared to move to Arkansas. News helicopters and bomb squads were sent to our home. I was a mere 2.5 years old so I don't have a firsthand memory of it myself. Mark Hofmann was a twisted genius and the whole story is mind-boggling.

Jen says

I found this book at a second hand book sale, so had no idea what to expect. It was extremely well researched and, considering the monumental amount of information covered and incredible degree of complex knowledge required to collate all those facts, it still held my interest and was an extraordinarily "readable"

book.

Jeanette says

Too much information about the Mormon church, too many documents that may or may not be true, and way too many ancient document dealers vying for these documents. Greed seems to be the driving force on the evil deeds that take place.
