

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders

REFERENCE: Stiltsoe, L. and Roberts, A. D., *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, Signature Books Inc., Salt Lake City, UT, 1988, 556 pp., \$17.95.

Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders is a well-written discussion of the Mark Hofmann bombing murders that took place in Salt Lake City in October of 1985. The authors have sorted through a wealth of interviews, police reports, court transcripts, news stories, and historical documents to craft their account of Mark Hofmann's intricate web of forgery and deceit that culminated in the pipe bomb killings of two people. The narrative is well paced and very readable. While directed primarily at the general reader, this book should be of interest to those in forensic science fields, particularly document examiners, homicide and fraud investigators, and attorneys. The appendix by Mr. George J. Throckmorton, giving a forensic science analysis of 21 Hofmann documents, is especially interesting with its discussion of the techniques used to expose the Hofmann forgeries.

The book covers the facts of the case and the biographies of the principal players in a detailed manner. For readers unfamiliar with the Mormon church and its culture, a concise description of Mormon history and beliefs early in the book would have been helpful in understanding how Mark Hofmann played upon the insecurities and desires of the church and its scholars in his forgeries. The authors do a good job of portraying the tensions and undercurrents that complicated the investigation and prosecution of a case which was so intimately associated with the predominant and pervasive religion in the community. In a case where charges of bias were rife, the authors have maintained a sense of balance.

While not as sensational or titillating as some other books on this case, *Salamander* is a complete and balanced account of a complex investigation into a unique and fascinating case of forgery, fraud, and murder.

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