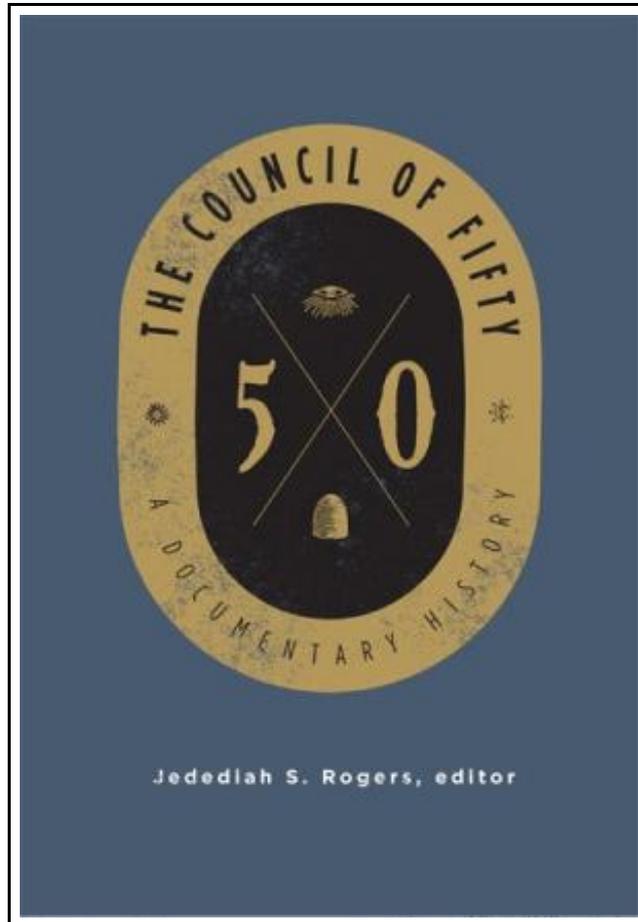


## The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History



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Signature Books, 2014. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Dust Jacket Condition: New. 1560852240 Brand New Book. ; Mormon leader Joseph Smith had an ambiguous relationship with the United States government. He was fond of the U.S. Constitution but distrusted democracy, even "republican forms of government," because people could as easily turn against you as stand by you. Instead, he voiced approval of "theocracy," the church president heading a council of Mormons and non-Mormons who would oversee secular matters. He put his idea into practice in 1844 in Illinois by creating the secret Council of Fifty, saying it would replicate the "councils of the gods" in heaven. His intent was to have an organization that would secretly supervise political campaigns and send explorers out in search of locations where the church could establish satellite colonies. As events unfolded, their scouting forays into Oregon and Texas proved useful when things fell apart in Illinois and they began looking for a new home base. In the Great Basin the council oversaw everything from water rights to the regulation of hunting and grazing during the first few years in the valley. The council later appointed a Committee of Seven to monitor the federal "Board of Registration and Election in the Territory of Utah" and to approve candidates for elections, typically only allowing one candidate per office. There was concern about what to do with serious law breakers. For instance, should criminals be executed publicly or would it instill more fear in would-be offenders to privately execute someone without announcing it. This would possibly make evil doers "tremble for fear it would be their time next." The council took a surprisingly cynical stance vis-a-vis native Americans. "This present race of Indians will never be converted [to Mormonism]," the minutes read. "It mattereth not whether they kill one another off..."



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