



Architectural Drawing No. 2 of Nauvoo Temple, drawing, 1842 or 1843, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is a second preliminary or proposed architectural drawing of the Nauvoo Temple by architect William Weeks. This drawing has some significant changes from the earlier proposal: star stones, star windows, and a boxlike front attic section along with an octagonal tower capped by an angelic weather vane.

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In less than ten years from its founding, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had built a temple in Kirtland, Ohio, and, if not deterred by persecution,

CHAPTER TWO A SIX-YEAR BUILDING PROGRAM

would have built on two sites dedicated in Missouri. It is therefore not unusual that the Saints would direct their thoughts toward constructing such a building as they began to settle in Illinois. The first printed mention of a temple to be erected





in Nauvoo dates to 1 August 1840. A communication from the First Presidency of the Church declared that “the time has now come, when it is necessary to erect a house of prayer, a house of order, a house for the worship of our God, where the ordinances can be attended to agreeably to His divine will, in this region of the country—to accomplish which, considerable exertion must be made, and means will be required.”¹

A site was selected on the east bench, the highest elevation in the city. It was a striking loca-

Several plans for the building were submitted by various individuals, only one of which was satisfactory to the Prophet—the drawing of William Weeks. Weeks, a recent convert to the Church, had been an architect and builder in New England prior to coming to Nauvoo. When he came and showed his proposed plans, “Joseph Smith grabbed him, hugged him and said, ‘You are the man I want.’”³ He was appointed as official architect and supervised the work during most of the construction period.

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tion. Plans and decisions were carried into formal action at the October 1840 general conference in Nauvoo as the Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the necessity of building a “House of the Lord” in Nauvoo and presented the matter to Church membership for approval. “Whereupon it was Resolved: That the Saints build a house for the worship of God, and that Reynolds Cahoon, Elias Higbee, and Alpheus Cutler be appointed a committee to build the same.”²

William Clayton, who served as a secretary to Joseph Smith and whose journal became known as the “History of the Nauvoo Temple,” reports that less than ten days following the October conference approval of the project, the “brethren commenced to open a quarry to dig the stone for the building. Brother Elisha Everett was the man who struck the first blow.”⁴ On 15 January 1841 the First Presidency declared that “the Temple of the Lord is in





progress of erection here,” explaining that the building would be constructed so that all functions of the priesthood could be exercised. It was to be a place where instructions from the “Most High” would be received and from Nauvoo go forth to distant lands.⁵

Construction of the building was given divine confirmation, and the steps taken thus far were approved in a revelation issued by the Prophet on 19 January 1841. A more detailed account of the design and functions of the

commandment from God to build the temple and hasten its completion (D&C 124:26–44).

1841: ORGANIZING AND MOVING FORWARD

From the beginning Albert P. Rockwood and Charles Drury, both skilled stoneworkers, were in charge of crews working in the quarries.⁶ Work was slow at first, with only one day in ten being spent on the project. As spring arrived in 1841, work picked up momentum. Employment of regular hired hands to labor on

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proposed structure was now made clear. The temple was to contain a baptismal font for performing baptisms in behalf of the dead. It was to be a place where God could restore that which was lost, where sacred ordinances could be revealed unto his people—“even the fulness of the priesthood.” The Prophet was to be shown all things pertaining to the building, and it was to be erected on the spot that had been selected previously. From that date on, the Church was under

the project gave a new consistency to the effort. This consistency was later aided by division of the city into ten wards, with each ward crew working once every ten days.⁷

The foundation was laid out by the temple committee in February 1841. The work began with the digging of the basement.⁸ During the first week in March, workers began laying stones for the basement walls.⁹ William Clayton reported that “by the 6th day of April walls



were sufficiently high at the corners [at ground level] to lay the cornerstones, and notwithstanding the extreme poverty of the church everything moved on rapidly and prospects looked very cheering and pleasing.”¹⁰ It should be noted that most likely only the four corners had been trenched out at that time; indications are that the center of the basement and the sides had not yet been excavated. This is borne out by the report of Norton Jacob, a carpenter who helped build the Nauvoo Temple. He explained that “not much had been excavated then except about the corners where trenches had been sunk to the depth of the intended basement and filed with rough walls so as to receive the corner stones.”¹¹

Church members eagerly awaited the annual conference of 6 April 1841. The Saints had been gathering to Nauvoo for several days in anticipation of this event. A very special conference, it was to begin with the ceremony of laying the cornerstones of the temple. As the day arrived, an estimated ten thousand people were present to witness the

festivities. Commencing at 7:30 A.M., sixteen companies of the Nauvoo Legion paraded in general review. Following the review, a procession was organized and moved forward to the temple block, arriving there at noon. At the temple site, generals of the Nauvoo Legion, their staffs, and distinguished visitors took

up positions inside the center of the foundation. Ladies were seated next, just inside the foundation walls. Immediately behind and outside the walls stood the gentlemen, behind them the infantry, and in the rear the cavalry. Superior officers, speakers, architects, and other dignitaries were conducted to the stand located at the southeast or principal cornerstone. With the site fully enclosed,

the services were ready to begin.¹²

The chorus, led by B. S. Wilber, began the meeting by singing a hymn from the new hymnbook. Next came an address to the assembly by President Sidney Rigdon. His oration, lasting more than one hour, was followed by another hymn by the choir. Then came the lay-



Figure 2.1 Nauvoo Temple from Hill's Map of Nauvoo, drawing, 1842, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is the earliest known sketch of the Nauvoo Temple by its architect, William Weeks. It was printed on Gustavus Hill's map of Nauvoo (see Figure 1.1).



ing of the principal or southeast cornerstone. By order of the First Presidency, the architects lowered the stone to its place, and Joseph Smith pronounced the benediction: “This principal corner stone in representation of the First Presidency, is now duly laid in honor of the Great God; and may it there remain until the whole fabric is completed; and may the same be accomplished speedily; that the Saints may have a place to worship God, and the Son of Man have where to lay His head.”¹³

President Rigdon then stated: “May the persons employed in the erection of this house be preserved from all harm while engaged in its construction, till the whole is completed. . . . Even so, Amen.”¹⁴ Following this, services were adjourned for one hour. Upon reassembling, they proceeded to lay the remaining cornerstones, each with appropriate ceremony. The second cornerstone, the southwest corner, was laid under the direction of the President of the high priesthood and his council. President William Marks pronounced the benediction. Third to be laid was the northwest corner. This was superintended by the High Council with a benediction by Elias Higbee. The fourth or northeast cornerstone was laid under direction of the bishops; Bishop Newell K. Whitney pronounced the prayer.¹⁵ Services were then declared to be closed, and the crowd dispersed to their homes and lodgings. Music in addition to the choir had been provided by a military band directed by Captain Duzette of the Nauvoo Legion.¹⁶

Work on the temple picked up momentum during the remainder of the year. By July plans

had been made by the committee to erect a baptismal font in the basement of the building.¹⁷ William Clayton reported that the font was to be located at the east end of the building and was to be made of wood. William Weeks, the architect, drew a sketch of the proposed font, and the plan was accepted by Joseph Smith. On 8 August Weeks commenced laboring on the project with his own hands. On 11 August he began carving the twelve oxen which were to support the font. After a few days he turned the work over to the carpenters. Elijah Fordham, who had earlier been miraculously healed through the ministering of Joseph Smith, took over as principal carver. Work on the font was finished in a little over two months, and on 8 November 1841 it was dedicated and put to use.¹⁸

William Clayton cites another interesting event as taking place on 25 September 1841, when “a deposit was made in the southeast corner stone of the Temple.”¹⁹ Samuel Miles, a convert from England who helped construct the temple, was present on the occasion and indicated that perhaps two hundred persons had assembled to witness the event.²⁰ Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, who lived just one lot beyond the street on the north side of the temple, describes clearly what took place: “One day I looked over toward the temple and saw a large crowd gathered with some two or three women present; so I thought I would go over. I put on my bonnet and shawl and made my way over. Brother Joseph was there and seemed busily engaged over something. Finally, he looked up



and saw us women. He said for the brothers to stand back and let the sisters come up. So they gave way, and we went up. In the huge chief corner stone was cut out a square about a foot around and about as deep lined with zinc, and in it Brother Joseph had placed a Bible, a Book of Mormon, hymn book, and other church works along with silver money that had been coined in that year. Then a lid was cemented down, and the temple was reared on the top of this."²¹

This event is often confused with a nearly identical deposit in the Nauvoo House cornerstone which took place just a few days later, on 2 October 1841. Some have felt that there was no such deposit in the temple

but only in the Nauvoo House. There is no available evidence to further clarify the matter, and therefore it is possible that very similar deposits were made in each building just one week apart. The walls of the temple were not very high at the time, and the southeast corner could have remained accessible for such a deposit. Further information may in time surface to either corroborate or disprove observations of the above witnesses.

As winter 1841 began the foundation was laid, and the walls of the basement story were nearly completed.



Suitable low-cost timber was not available in Illinois, so in September the temple committee participated in the purchase of lumber mills in Wisconsin to provide lumber for the building (see more about this in chapter 3). This action became a great boon to construction of the temple as well as to the construction of other buildings in Nauvoo.²²

As winter 1841 began the foundation was laid, and the walls of the basement story were nearly completed. The greater portion of work in the basement had now been accomplished. The wall on the south side was up to the water table (about 5½ feet high), and part of it had been laid. This water table course of stone marked the separation of the foundation and the main wall above it. The structure remained in this condition until the spring of 1842.²³

To facilitate the project, most stakes of the Church were dissolved except those in the vicinity of Nauvoo and a few others in Illinois. Church members were asked to gather to Nauvoo and areas nearby to assist in building the temple. Further stimulus was given when it was announced that no general conferences of the Church would be held until they could be held in the temple.²⁴ In December 1841 some two or three hundred elders of the



Figure 2.2 Architectural Drawing No. 1 of the Nauvoo Temple, drawing, 1842, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is the earliest known preliminary or proposed architectural drawing of the Nauvoo Temple by architect William Weeks. There is good evidence to conclude that the gabled roof design and the large, elliptical arched window as shown in the attic section of this drawing were utilized in the completed east or back end of the building.



Church who had offered to go on missions were called instead to accept work missions, providing labor on the temple. These were the first of many labor missionaries who served without pay and assisted in erecting the building.²⁵

1842: STEADY PROGRESS

During the winter of 1841–42, as many as one hundred men were engaged in quarrying rock for the temple walls.²⁶ They were assisted by numerous other workmen who hauled stone to the building site. On 21 February the Prophet dictated a letter to the “brethren in Nauvoo,” observing that they needed a more equal distribution of labor on the part of the tithing hands: “A super abundance of hands one week, and none the next, tends to retard the progress of the work; therefore every brother is requested to be particular to labor on the day set apart for the same, in his ward. . . . The captains of the respective wards are particularly requested to be at the place of labor on their respective days, and keep an accurate account of each man’s work, and be ready to exhibit a list of the same when called for.”²⁷ A report published in the *Wasp* on 23 April 1842 cites the progress being made: “We passed by the Temple, and was delighted at the prospect that here presented itself. A scene of lively industry and animation was there. The sound of the polisher’s chisel—converting the rude stone of the quarry into an artful shape—sent forth its busy hum: all were busily employed—the work was fast progressing.”²⁸

An optimistic article in the *Times and Seasons* of early May declared that work was progressing

rapidly and that all workers were strenuously exerting themselves. The report went so far as to predict that the building would either be enclosed or the top stone raised upon it by the next fall.²⁹ Work on the walls did not get under way until late spring, and what was done was meager until the arrival of William W. Player in June. Coming from England with the intent of working on the temple, Player commenced his labors on 8 June 1842. An expert in his trade, he served as principal stone setter from this time until the last stone was laid on the temple. William Clayton records that Player spent some time regulating the stonework that had already been done. Then on 11 June he set the first plinth on the southwest corner.³⁰ “During the summer he lost two weeks work having to wait for plinths, which they were cutting. The work progressed but slowly during this season, having but one crane, but the delay arose through the stone not being cut fast enough. By the fall, however, he got all the stone laid round as high as the window sills, and all the window sills, as well as the large sill on the East Venetian window. He had also 2 courses of pilaster stones on the plinths all around.”³¹ On 4 August the first raft of lumber arrived from the pineries in Wisconsin.³² As other rafts arrived during October and November, an article in the *Times and Seasons* described what became a common practice as men and teams responded to requests for hauling lumber. “A cheering assemblage of waggons, horses, oxen and men . . . began with zeal and gladness to pull the raft to pieces and haul it up to the Temple,” where “a large assemblage of





carpenters, joiners &c. . . . succeeded in preparing the lumber and laying the joists.”³³

The work of framing the floor joists for the main floor was completed in October.³⁴ Also, in late October the temple committee, under instructions from Joseph Smith, proposed that a temporary floor be laid so the Saints could meet in the temple for worship instead of at the grove. Work on the temporary floor began the following day. By Friday, 28 October 1842, the floor was laid and seats fixed ready for meeting. The first meeting in the incomplete building, a worship service, was held on Sunday, 30 October 1842, with the building filled to capacity.³⁵

Work on the temple, which had been steady all year, slowed only in late summer due to a temporary lack of funds. By the time winter arrived, the walls were four feet high above the basement story. Here they remained until spring, as stonecutters continued work in the quarries, preparing stones for use during the next year.³⁶

1843: DELAYS AND PROBLEMS

Information on the work done in 1843 is fragmentary and incomplete. An annual conference of the Church was convened on the temporary floor of the first story on 6 April. It was attended by a large assembly with many coming from Iowa, crossing on ice over the frozen Mississippi. On this occasion the temple walls are described as being from four to twelve feet above the first floor.³⁷ Construction during the spring was considerably delayed by the illness of Brother Player and the necessity of fixing run-

ways for the crane. This crane and others added later were used for lifting and moving large wooden beams and heavy stones as they were put in place in the building. Work on the walls was again begun by Player on 21 April and continued steadily until the start of an early winter.

Additional problems delayed the project as misunderstandings developed between the temple committee and the architect. The problem was resolved by the Prophet, who stated, “I gave a certificate to William Weeks to carry out my designs and the architecture of the Temple in Nauvoo, and that no person or persons shall interfere with him or his plans in the building of the Temple.”³⁸

On 8 June 1843 Elias Higbee, a member of the temple committee, died in Nauvoo after a short illness.³⁹ This vacancy was not filled until October, when Hyrum Smith, a brother of the Prophet, was appointed to the position. He served in this capacity until his death in 1844.⁴⁰

As work slowed in the fall due to a lack of teams and provisions, a call was issued for greater exertions, declaring that if these embarrassments were removed, walls could be completed the next year.⁴¹ As work ended for winter, walls were up as high as the arches of the first tier of windows all around the building.⁴²

1844: RENEWED DETERMINATION

On New Year’s Day 1844 a progress report on the building was published in the *Times and Seasons*: “Considering the many improvements that have been made, and the difficulties in many instances under which the committee have had to



labor, the Temple has made great progress; and strenuous efforts are now being made in quarrying, hauling, and hewing stone, to place it in a situation that the walls can go up and the building be enclosed by next fall.”⁴³ In early spring, construction of a second crane commenced. It was rigged during the month of March, and on 11

April Brother Player again started work on the walls.⁴⁴ Payment of tithes slacked off considerably in the spring, and some workmen went for weeks without pay. Charles Lambert, who began work at this time, reported that “many of the most skillful workmen had left to find employment elsewhere, that it looked for a time as if the work would have to cease unless more funds could be collected.”⁴⁵ Response

to a call by the Prophet for more funds enabled the work to go forward. In June seventy-five to one hundred stonecutters were laboring in the workshop beside the structure, either hewing or laying stones for the temple.⁴⁶

June and July were months of grave crisis for the Church. Persecution had been increas-

ing in Illinois, causing the Church and its leaders considerable difficulty. In June mob action and violence struck what was considered by some to be a fatal blow. On 27 June 1844 Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered by a mob at Carthage, Illinois. They were being held in protective custody pending a

hearing on charges of treason against the state of Illinois.⁴⁷ Following their martyrdom, all work on the temple was suspended as workmen ceased their labor, standing guard over the building to protect it from threatened violence.⁴⁸ Not only did work on the temple cease, so did donations toward its erection. Disturbed by the death of their leaders, members were uncertain as to what their future

course might be. On Sunday, 7 July, a decision was made to resume work on the building and to finish it as speedily as possible.⁴⁹ The following day work began. No food was available to supply needs of workers and their families, yet in spite of this condition workers pitched in, putting their trust in God.



Figure 2.3 Architectural Drawing No. 2 of Nauvoo Temple, drawing, 1842 or 1843, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. This is a second preliminary or proposed architectural drawing of the Nauvoo Temple by architect William Weeks. This drawing has some significant changes from the earlier proposal: star stones, star windows, and a box-like front attic section along with an octagonal tower capped by an angelic weather vane.



As the Twelve Apostles assumed the role of Church leadership, Brigham Young as President of the Twelve became the leader and chief force in pushing the temple to completion. Calls for provisions went out; members opened their hearts, and means poured in to sustain the project. A renewed spirit of dedication took hold of workers and Church members as work went forward. Two large rafts of lumber had recently arrived in Nauvoo from the pineries, and men were liberal with their teams, hauling timber to the temple, where it was secured in a few days.

About the middle of July the female members of the LeHarpe and Macedonia branches of the Church offered to collect funds for building an additional crane. Anxious to see the building progress more rapidly, they raised 194 dollars before the end of the month, which was more than enough to do the job. The committee put the carpenters to work, and on 3 August the new crane was put into operation on the north side of the structure.⁵⁰ Work now moved ahead with great speed, and on 23 September the first capital stone, or sun stone, weighing about two tons, was placed in position on the walls of the temple.⁵¹ Due to threats of arson, President Young appointed four watchmen to keep watch over the temple at night. This practice continued from 26 September until the Saints left the city.⁵²

While attempting to raise one of the sun-stone capitals on 25 September, a near fatal mishap occurred. Clayton reports that they had started to raise the stone when the crane fell over in a tremendous crash. Someone had failed to fasten the guy wires. The crane was damaged

considerably and barely missed some of the workmen as it fell. However, it was repaired and back in use in a few days.⁵³

Crews continued to set the capitals, hoping to complete the task before winter set in. The last of the thirty capital stones was set in place on 6 December 1844. It had been raised halfway when the blocking of the tackle broke, making it impossible either to raise or lower the stone. After some difficulty, workmen were able to make repairs, and the stone was placed on the wall at 12:40 P.M. Clayton reported that it seemed as if the Lord had held up the winter until this important work could be accomplished. Two hours after the stone had been set, a brisk snowstorm commenced, and by nightfall four inches of snow covered the ground.⁵⁴

Early in December, it was decided to employ carpenters during the winter. On 16 December 1844 the carpenters commenced their activities. They were to prepare timbers so they would be available for immediate use upon completion of the stonework. Fifteen persons were selected by the architect for this type of steady employment. The south side of the lower story was weather boarded around, and a shop was made ready.⁵⁵ A letter from W. W. Phelps written on Christmas Day was printed in the *Times and Seasons*. It stated that the temple was up as high as the caps of the pilasters and that the inside work was going forward as fast as possible.⁵⁶

1845: SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Twelve Apostles published an epistle in the *Times and Seasons* of 15 January reporting



progress on the temple. They stated that the temporary wooden font had now been removed and would be replaced by one made of stone. Work on the new font would begin as soon as the stonecutters had finished cutting the last stone for the walls of the building. It was further reported that they anticipated that all the stones would be cut by the start of spring and that great numbers of carpenters, masons, and other workmen were daily engaged in the building's erection. The plan was to rush the work forward, enclosing the building and preparing to commence endowment ordinances in the

fall (these are explained in chapters 4 and 5).⁵⁷ The desire to complete the temple as early as possible occupied the attention of all in Nauvoo.

On 24 May 1845
the Saints assembled for the laying of the capstone.



On Wednesday, 12 March, Brother Player again renewed work on the walls. Under his supervision, by the close of the month they had put up the last trumpet stone.⁵⁸ Church authorities decided to put all their help on the temple to build a drain for the font, to build a wall on the south side of the tem-

ple block, and to keep the cranes going.⁵⁹

On 16 March President Young expressed some displeasure at the project's slow progress and issued a renewed call for greater effort. He reported that the stonecutters and joiners were at work and that the joiners had far exceeded their expectations during the winter. The lumber was reported to be holding out, and there was no lack of provisions. Men were asked to rededicate themselves to the task at hand, and a call for four hundred men was issued.⁶⁰ On the following day, "one hundred and five extra laborers and about thirty teams commenced work" in response to the request of their leader.⁶¹

On 1 April the *Times and Seasons* reported that a trench about 6 feet wide and 6 feet deep was being excavated around the temple block to enclose an area of 6 to 8 acres. The trench would be filled with stone and an iron fence built on it for the security of the temple and tabernacle. This work was performed by the public hands, or tithing workers.⁶² The same issue of the *Times and Seasons* reported: "The work on the Temple goes on as fast as possible, and, in fact, the anxiety is so great to labor upon this great house of the Lord, that the committee frequently have to set men at other work. . . . There never was so great union in the city before."⁶³

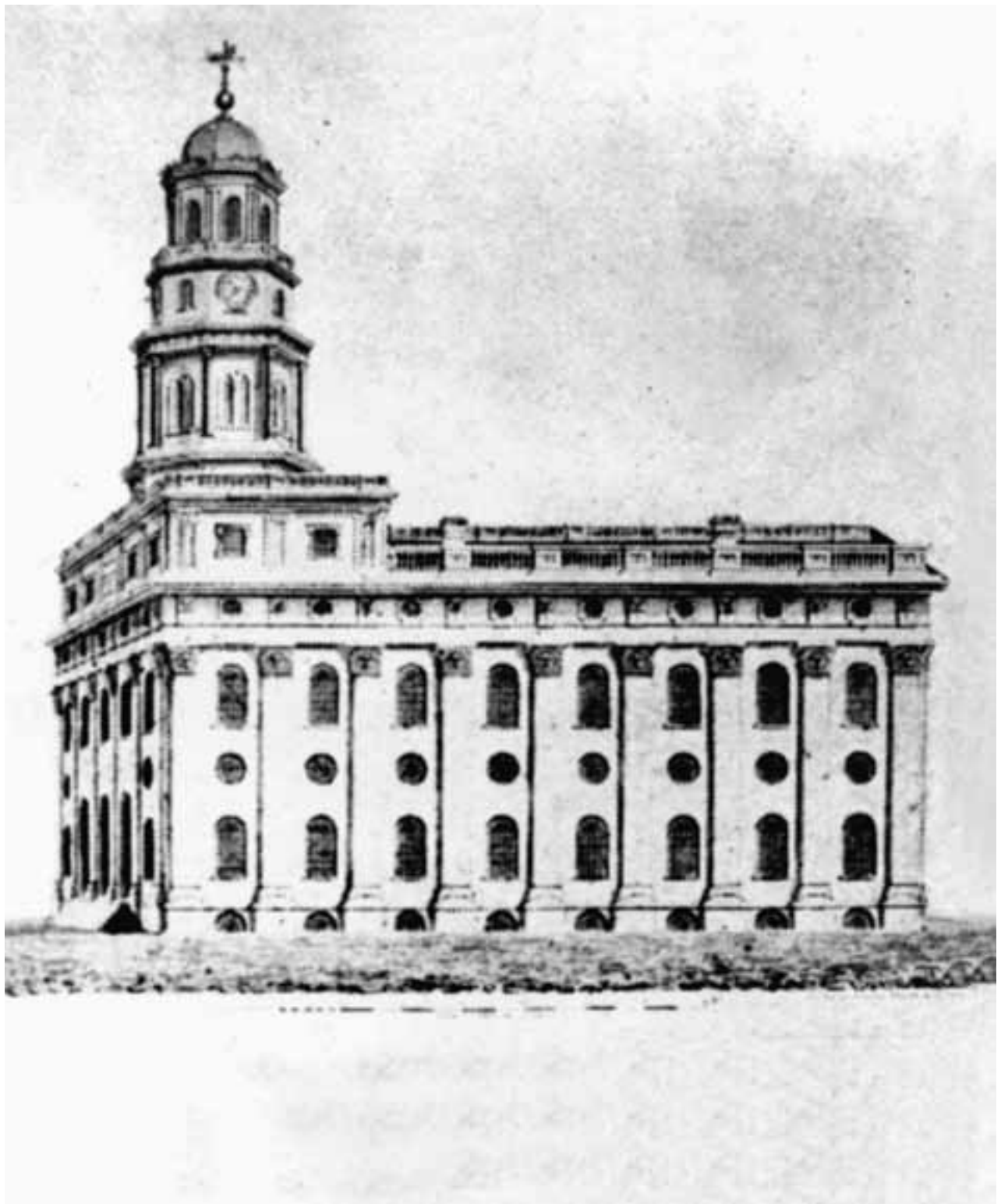


Figure 2.4 The Mormon Temple, drawing, early 1846, Edward Everett, LDS Church Archives. For two days Edward Everett studied the building, taking measurements and doing preliminary sketches of the temple. Note the angelic weather vane at the top of the steeple.

A regular guard was still in service at the temple to protect it from enemies of the Church. On the night of 2 April the police caught a man entering the structure and severely beat him in the process of capture. The temple committee and others were quite upset by the guard's actions and protested

to Hosea Stout, who was in charge of security. Feelings on the issue were calmed after explanation of the circumstances and the orders under which the guard was operating. Following this investigation, President Young approved the police action and requested that the guard be continued.⁶⁴ The Church continued efforts to complete the building, while at the same time

enemies were massing in an effort to drive all Latter-day Saints from the state. Continued threats of violence and mobbing of outlying Mormon settlements were to result in less than a year's time in a mass exodus to the wilderness of the West. Use of guards for protection of Church property had become a necessity.

A conference of the Church convened at Nauvoo on 6 April 1845 and lasted four days. It was reportedly attended by about twenty-five thousand people,⁶⁵ which seems to be a somewhat exaggerated figure.

On Monday, 21 April, Brother Player put up the first star stone on the southeast corner of

the temple.⁶⁶ The top of this stone was fifty-five feet from the ground. As the rest of the star stones were placed, they added significantly to the beauty of the building.⁶⁷ Walls were then complete in readiness for laying the final stone.

On 24 May 1845 a large number of Saints assembled at the temple to witness the laying of the capstone on the southeast corner of the building. The

hour was purposely early so Church leaders could attend unmolested by marshals. The time appointed for gathering was 5:45 A.M. Church leaders in attendance were Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Willard Richards, Amasa M. Lyman, George A. Smith, John E. Page, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt (all members



Figure 2.5 *The Nauvoo Temple, engraving, date unknown, Vizetelly, LDS Church Archives. This engraving is believed to have been produced by an individual surnamed Vizetelly in the late 1840s or in the 1850s.*



of the Twelve); Newel K. Whitney and George Miller (the presiding bishops and trustees in trust); Alpheus Cutler and Reynolds Cahoon (temple committee); William Clayton (temple recorder); John Smith (patriarch); and several members of the Nauvoo Stake high council.⁶⁸

A brass band under the direction of William Pitt was arranged in a circle a short distance from the corner. The band began the program by playing “The Nightingale.”⁶⁹ At eight minutes past six, William Player spread the mortar, and the stone was lowered into place. President Young stepped onto the stone and by beating on it with a large mallet fitted it precisely into position. The stone was pronounced set at 6:22 A.M. The band then played the “Capstone March,” composed especially for the occasion by Brother Pitt.⁷⁰ Heber C. Kimball described the scene: “The singers sang their sweetest notes, and their voices thrilled the hearts of the assemblage; the music of the band, which played on the occasion, never sounded so charming.”⁷¹ President Young then remarked, “The last stone is now laid upon the temple and I pray the Almighty in the name of Jesus to defend us in this place and sustain us until the temple is finished and we have all got our endowments.”⁷² This was followed by the entire congregation shouting three times in unison, “Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna, to God and the Lamb, Amen, Amen, and Amen.” President Young concluded by saying: “So let it be, Lord Almighty.” He then dismissed the workmen for the day, admonishing the people to hallow the day and spend it giving thanks to God.⁷³

The congregation was now dismissed, and the Saints returned to their homes. As they began to leave, the band continued to play, and John Kay stood on the stone singing “The Capstone Song,” composed by W. W. Phelps. Though the morning had been very cold, members had been warmed by the services and the realization that the walls were now complete.⁷⁴

On 28 May the carpenters began raising the timbers for the attic story of the building.⁷⁵ By the middle of June, the roof was nearly on, and on 26 June workers laid the first stones for the new baptismal font.⁷⁶ On 27 June President Young wrote a letter to the editor of the *Millennial Star* in England. In it he reported progress on the structure as it then stood:

The frame-work of the roof is on the building, and the next week the brethren expect to put on the shingles; the frame work around the foundation of the tower is all up, and the first timbers for the tower itself were raised this day. The new stone font is mostly cut, and the first stone was laid to-day at about four o'clock. We expect in about five or six weeks the attic story of the Temple and the font will be all finished and ready for dedication, and just as soon as they are ready we shall dedicate them. We have all the timbers for the temple on the ground, and above one hundred thousand shingles for the roof. The lead for the eaves and tin for the dome of the tower are also bought. . . .

We are building a stone wall round the Temple-block, eight feet high and about five feet thick at the base, the wall on the north side is nearly built, the most of the woodwork for the tem-



ple is finished, all the window-frames and sashes are made, and the glaziers are ready to set the glass, which we expect here in a few days, the frame and ornamental-work of the tower is all ready to be put up, and the whole is far on the way of completion.⁷⁷

As July closed, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* reported that when completed, the building would measure 158½ feet from the ground to the top of the steeple and that of this 130 feet were already raised.⁷⁸ On 13 August the paper reported: “The



On Sunday, 5 October 1845, the Church held its first general conference in three years. It became the only general conference ever held within the temple after its enclosure. The structure was now fully enclosed, windows were in, and temporary floors had been laid. With temporary seats and pulpits erected, the building was ready to receive the thousands of members who attended this first session of the conference. Services were opened by President Young, who offered a prayer of dedication, “pre-

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gies of the Saints, their
ness of enemies seeking their

Neighbor has been delayed a few hours, in order to say that *the last shingle* has been laid upon the roof of the Temple. The roof is now completed, and, the sash and window frames having been made ready, the house of the Lord may be considered ‘enclosed.’⁷⁹ The dome and cap of the temple tower were raised on 23 August.⁸⁰ A letter from Brigham Young to Samuel Brannan written 15 September declared that as of that date the attic story and steeple were nearly complete.⁸¹

senting the Temple, thus far completed, as a monument of the Saints’ liberality, fidelity, and faith—concluding, ‘Lord we dedicate this house and ourselves to thee.’⁸²

While the temple was being rushed to completion by the united energies of the Saints, their zeal was matched in part by the bitterness of enemies seeking their removal from the state. Due to threats and repeated mob violence, the fall of 1845 became not only a time of great





activity in an effort to complete the temple but also a time to stock provisions, prepare wagons, sell property, and make preparations to leave. The decision had been made to leave in the spring for the wilderness of the West.⁸³

Following general conference, worship meetings were held in the temple each Sunday. This procedure lasted but a short time, being interrupted on 9 November as workmen started removing the floor of the first story to put in new timbers. The original sleepers put in at the

large main room of the east attic story for heating, and on the twenty-ninth workers laid carpets on the main floor of the attic story and in several rooms on the side.⁸⁶ This portion of the building was pushed to completion preparatory to administering endowment ordinances to Church members.

On 30 November 1845 the attic story was ready for use. In services held that morning by several Church authorities, President Young dedicated this portion of the building.⁸⁷ The

rushed to completion by the united energy was matched in part by the bitter-removal from the state.

commencement of the structure had rotted.⁸⁴ This had probably resulted from three years of exposure to the elements prior to enclosing and roofing the building. Until other rooms could be prepared and the new floor put in, all large meetings were held outside the temple.

By 22 November plasterers finished their work in the attic story.⁸⁵ They were followed by the painters, who put on the last coat of paint by 26 November. Two stoves were put in the

next few days were spent in arranging rooms for endowment ordinances, which began on 10 December 1845.⁸⁸ This completed portion of the structure remained in almost constant use as long as the Church remained in Nauvoo.

Without question, 1845 was the most productive period of temple construction. It was a period of great accomplishment, and the year closed with work continuing at a rapid pace. The floor of the main hall on the lower story



was nearly finished, and the pulpits were arranged for installation.⁸⁹ The temple was now in constant use for sacred ordinances, fulfilling the primary purpose for which it had been erected. By 29 December one thousand persons had received endowment ordinances in the temple.⁹⁰

1846: COMPLETION, DEDICATION, AND EXODUS

New Year's Day of 1846 proved to be no holiday for temple workmen; it was instead a day of continued activity. Brigham Young announced, "The plasterers have commenced to plaster the arched ceiling of the lower hall, the

By 29 December 1845
one thousand persons
had received endowment
ordinances in the temple.

floor is laid, the framework of the pulpits and seats for the choir and band are put up; and the work of finishing the room for dedication progresses rapidly."⁹¹

On 7 January 1846 a new altar was put to use for the first time in performance of sacred temple ordinances such as eternal marriages and sealings. This altar, about 2½ feet high, was covered on the sides by white linen, with scarlet damask cushions on its top. It was located in Room 1 of the attic story.⁹²



An interesting progress report on the temple was published 15 January in the *Times and Seasons*: "January, thus far, has been mild, which, in the midst of our preparations for an exodus next spring, has given an excellent time to finish the Temple. Nothing has appeared so much like a 'finish' of that holy edifice as the present. The attic story was finished in December, and if the Lord continues to favor us, the first story above the basement, will be completed ready for meeting, in the month of February. The Font, standing upon twelve stone oxen, is about ready, and the floor of the second story is laid, so that all speculation about the Temple of God at Nauvoo, must cease."⁹³

On 24 January "a general meeting of the official members of the Church" met on the newly laid floor of the second story to consider plans and preparations for an early exodus. At that meeting a committee was selected to dispose of property of both the Church and its members.⁹⁴ A crew of workers was asked to remain behind to finish the first story and prepare the building for dedication. Other members were busily engaged in packing and preparing for the journey ahead. As the month closed, another interesting feature was added to the temple. A weather vane (the angel) was put into place on the tower of the

City of Joseph February 13. 1846

I, William Weeks, by the authority vested in me
 by Joseph Smith and his Councillors ^{of the Twelve} do appoint Truman
 Angell to be my successor as Superintendant over the finishing
 of the Temple & Nauvoo House in the City of Joseph according
 to the plans and designs given by me to him - and no person
 or persons shall interfere with him in the carrying out of these
 plans and designs.

William Weeks Architect

I wish Bro. O. Angell to concur & the company
 of the Temple & Nauvoo House

Nauvoo Feb 13 1846

Brigham Young

Figure 2.6 (Above) Letter Appointing Truman Angell, letter, 1846, William Weeks, LDS Church Archives. As the Saints began to leave Nauvoo in February 1846, William Weeks was asked by Church leaders to accompany them in the exodus to the West. Truman Angell was asked to remain behind in charge of completing the temple and preparing it for dedication. This letter is an official letter of appointment from William Weeks, the temple architect, and is cosigned by President Brigham Young.

Figure 2.7 (Next page) Crossing the Mississippi on the Ice, tempura on muslin, c. 1865, C. C. A. Christensen. Courtesy Brigham Young University Museum of Art. All rights reserved. In the late 1870s, Christensen painted his panoramic murals. This section depicts Church members leaving Nauvoo in February 1846 as they crossed the frozen Mississippi on the ice.







temple at 9:00 A.M. on 30 January.⁹⁵ The topmost point of the temple was now finally in place.

On 4 February 1846 the Latter-day Saints began driving their heavily laden wagons toward the Mississippi. One of the routes taken was down Parley Street, which came to be known as the “street of tears.” Coming to the river, the Saints crossed by skiffs and flat-bottom ferryboats to the plains of Iowa. The exodus from Nauvoo had begun. A second interesting development was taking place early that morning at the temple. Here could be seen a number of persons busily removing articles of furniture, stoves, carpets, pictures, and other furnishings. These items were to be taken west with the exiles or sold to finance the journey.⁹⁶

Five days after beginning the exodus, exiles looking back across the river witnessed an alarming scene as smoke and fire issued forth from the roof of the temple. The fire started at 3:30 P.M. and burned nearly half an hour. The cause of the blaze was an overheated stovepipe, which ignited clothing drying in the attic story. It was put out by a bucket brigade. Damage was to the roof and was not extensive, but it necessitated repair. The area covered by the fire was in the west end of the main attic section. “It burned from the west stovepipe from the ridge to the railing, about sixteen feet north and south, and about ten feet east and west on the north side. The shingles on the north were broken in several places.”⁹⁷ Thomas Bullock reported on 17 February: “The burnt part of the roof of the Temple was this day relaid and covered over with lead.”⁹⁸



Considerable excitement took place on 22 February 1846, when some Saints crossed back over the river from Iowa to join those still in Nauvoo in meeting for the first time on the new floor of the first story. A large crowd gathered for these services, and the great weight of this group caused the new truss floor to settle nearly to its proper position. President Young reported the incident as follows: “While settling, an inch-board or some light timber underneath was caught and cracked, the sound of which created great alarm in the congregation and some jumped out of the windows, smashing the glass and all before them; . . . others ran out of the doors and many of those who remained jumped up and down with all their might crying Oh! Oh!! Oh!!! as though they could not settle the floor fast enough, but at the same time so agitated that they knew not what they did. I attempted to call the assembly in order to explain the cause of the settling of the floor, but failing to get their attention I adjourned the meeting to the grove. I went below, examined the floor and found it had hardly settled to its designated position.”⁹⁹

As reported in the *Warsaw Signal*, damage to the building was between five hundred to a thousand dollars.¹⁰⁰ Since no structural damage was reported, injury to the building probably came in the form of broken windows, etc., caused by the frightened congregation.

Though many Church members were leaving the city daily, the crew at the temple continued its work of completing the first story of the building. The first story was plastered, and



joiner work was completed on 22 April 1846. On the following day the building was swept out so the work of painting the lower story could begin in preparation for the temple dedication.¹⁰¹ Workmen continued at their jobs day and night, and the painting was completed on Thursday, 29 April. The next day workers were busy sweeping out rooms and making final preparations for the dedication, which was to take place privately that night and publicly on 1 May, the day following.¹⁰² With the temple now dedicated and construction ended, workmen settled for their final wages. They then either traveled west to join the main body of Church members on the prairies of Iowa or departed on missions to spread the message of the restored gospel.

The major portion of the construction had been under the direction of the temple committee and the architect, William Weeks. Brother Weeks departed Nauvoo early in 1846. Following his departure, Truman O. Angell, who later served as architect for the St. George and Salt Lake Temples, was placed in charge. He supervised final completion of the lower story according to the design of Weeks and remained to see the building dedicated.¹⁰³ The struggle of building a house to God had now drawn to a close. Undertaken by a people in destitute circumstances, the Nauvoo Temple had with considerable sacrifice and toil risen stone upon stone, a symbol of the faith and devotion of its builders.

Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:186.

2. *Ibid.*, 4:205.

3. J. Earl Arrington, "William Weeks, Architect of the Nauvoo Temple," *BYU Studies* 19, no. 3 (spring 1979): 340, 359, as told to Arrington on 7 March 1932 by F. M. Weeks, who was well acquainted with his uncle William Weeks and was the family member who wrote his uncle's obituary. He claimed that William Weeks had personally told him of this experience.

4. Journal of William Clayton, "History of the Nauvoo Temple," 4, LDS Church Archives. William Clayton was appointed as official temple recorder for the Nauvoo Temple on 7 October 1842. As part of his journal he wrote or included a history of the Nauvoo Temple. He summarized events prior to his appointment and recorded events as they transpired following his call to office. This portion of his journal has been placed in one unpublished handwritten document of one hundred plus pages and is also on microfilm in the LDS Church Archives; also, Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:229; also, Diary of William Huntington, 12, typescript, 1952–53, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

5. *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 January 1841): 274.

6. Journal History, 31 December 1844, LDS Church Archives.

7. Diary of William Huntington, 12; and Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), 22.

8. Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 857–58.

9. Diary of William Huntington, 12. He explains: "I was one who assisted in laying the first stone that was laid





in the bottom of the foundation of the temple.” This was on 8 March 1841.

10. Journal of William Clayton, 6.

11. Norton Jacob, “The Life of Norton Jacob,” 5, typescript, 1937, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

12. *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 April 1841): 375.

13. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:329.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 4:329–31.

16. *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 April 1841): 377.

17. *Ibid.*, 1 July 1841, 455.

18. Journal History, 8 November 1841.

19. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 857, quoting the writings of William Clayton.

20. Samuel Miles, “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (15 March 1892): 174.

21. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, as quoted by Carol Cornwall Madsen, *In Their Own Words* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 252. Madsen explains that Nancy Tracy may have confused this with a nearly identical occurrence at the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House just one week later (2 October 1841) when similar deposits were made there. The additional observations of William Clayton and Samuel Miles, combined with the fact that Nancy Tracy lived very near the temple, lends credence to the accuracy of her report. It is very likely that nearly identical deposits were made in cornerstones of both the temple and the Nauvoo House. The walls of the temple were not high at the time, and it is entirely possible that this corner was left at this level in anticipation of such a deposit. No further documentation has been found yet on this issue.

22. *Times and Seasons* 2 (15 September 1841): 543.

23. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 860.

24. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:443–44.

25. *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 December 1841): 626.

26. *Ibid.*, 2 May 1842, 775.

27. Journal History, 21 February 1842; also, *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 March 1842): 715.

28. *The Wasp*, 23 April 1842.

29. *Times and Seasons* 3 (2 May 1842): 775.

30. Journal History, 11 October 1842.

31. *Ibid.*; also, Journal of William Clayton, 22–23.

32. *The Wasp*, 30 July 1842.

33. *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 November 1842): 10; also, John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 191. Here Bennett explains that the portion of lumber needing additional finishing was prepared in two steam saw mills which were in operation in the city. *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 October 1842): 937, explains that two extensive steam mills had been put into operation that season. These may have been used to saw wood as well as in other manufacturing.

34. “Time Book C. for the Temple, Account Book 16,” 10, LDS Church Archives, Work by Carpenters and Joiners recorded by William F. Cahoon and Curtis E. Bolton. The Nauvoo Temple Committee, appointed at the October Conference of 1840, kept meticulous detailed records on all phases of construction relating to the Nauvoo Temple. These records, consisting of day-books, ledgers, account books, time books, and other financial volumes, were kept by Elias Higbee (of the temple committee), William Clayton (temple recorder), James Whitehead, John McEwan, and Curtis E. Bolton (clerks); as well as the Carpenters Time Book kept by William F. Cahoon. These volumes include accounts by Nauvoo Trustees, Bishops Newell K. Whitney and George Miller, as well as by Joseph L. Heywood, Almon W. Babbitt, and John S. Fullmer. The records also contain





detailed measurements of stones used in walls of the building as well as numerous pieces of wood used for pulpits, moldings, door and window frames, columns, and so on. They were a treasure trove of information to the architects who designed the reconstruction plans for rebuilding the Nauvoo Temple.

Never published, these records have been preserved for many years in vaults of the Church Office Building. During 1999 the records were all placed on microfilm (consisting of five complete reels of microfilm), making them available for detailed study. Years ago the author was able to access the original documents and has more recently accessed the microfilm copies.

35. Journal History, 23 October 1842.
 36. Ibid., 30 October 1842.
 37. Ibid., 6 April 1843.
 38. Ibid., 12 April 1843.
 39. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:420.
 40. Journal History, 10 October 1843.
 41. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:49.
 42. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 864.
 43. *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 January 1844): 392.
 44. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 866.
 45. Charles C. Lambert, "Reminiscences and Diaries, 1844–1881," 12, LDS Church Archives.
 46. Journal History, 12 June 1844.
 47. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:561–62, 602–22.
 48. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 866.
 49. Ibid.; also, Autobiography of William Adams, 1822–1894, 14, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.
 50. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 866.
 51. Journal History, 23 September 1844.
 52. Ibid., 26 September 1844.
 53. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 867.

54. B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period 2: Apostolic Interregnum* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 7:323–24; also, Journal History, 5 December 1844.
 55. Journal History, 16 December 1844.
 56. *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 January 1845): 759.
 57. Ibid. 6 (15 January 1845): 779.
 58. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 868–69.
 59. Journal History, 15 March 1845.
 60. Ibid., 16 March 1845.
 61. Ibid., 17 March 1845.
 62. *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 April 1845): 856; also, Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:399, 407.
 63. *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 April 1845): 846.
 64. Hosea Stout, *On the Mormon Frontier, the Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844–1861*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:32.
 65. Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 27.
 66. Journal History, 21 April 1845; also, Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 869.
 67. Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 869–70.
 68. Journal History, 24 May 1845.
 69. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:417.
 70. Ibid.
 71. Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes in Nauvoo after the Martyrdom of the Prophet and the Patriarch," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (15 April 1883): 169.
 72. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:417–18.
 73. Ibid.
 74. Ibid.
 75. Journal History, 28 May 1845.
 76. Ibid., 26 June 1845.
 77. *Millennial Star* 6 (1 September 1845): 91.
 78. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 30 July 1845.
 79. Ibid., 13 August 1845.





80. Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 27; also, “Time Book C.,” 33.

81. *New-York Messenger*, 11 October 1845.

82. *Journal History*, 5 October 1845; also, Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:456–57.

83. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:439–40.

84. *Ibid.*, 519; also, Jacob, “The Life of Norton Jacob,” 16, 18. Jacob describes that he “replaced the lower girders, they having lain four years in the weather and being exposed were so decayed as not to be safe.” He went on to explain: “Bro. Wm. Weeks the architect of the temple requested me this morning to go ahead and put in the truss timbers for the lower floor of the temple.”

85. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:531.

86. Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo and Incidents from H. C. Kimball’s Journal,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12 (15 June 1883): 10.

87. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:534.

88. *Journal History*, 10 December 1845.

89. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:546.

90. *Ibid.*, 556, 566; also, *Journal History*, 1 January 1846; also, Brigham Young, *The Journal of Brigham*, comp. Leland R. Nelson (Provo, Utah: Council, 1980), 118–19.

91. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:560.

92. *Journal History*, 7 January 1846. The location of Room 1 can be seen in Figure 8.18.

93. *Times and Seasons* 6 (15 January 1846): 1096.

94. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:573.

95. *Journal History*, 30 January 1846.

96. *Ibid.*, 4 February 1846; and Whitney, “The Last Chapter of Scenes in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 12 (1 November 1883): 81.

97. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:581.

98. Thomas Bullock, as quoted in Gregory R. Knight, “Journal of Thomas Bullock, 1816–1885,” *BYU Studies* 31,

no. 1 (winter 1991): 52.

99. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:594.

100. *Warsaw Signal*, 25 February 1846.

101. *Diary of Samuel Whitney Richards*, 1:16–18, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

102. *Ibid.*, 18–20.

103. Kate B. Carter, comp., *Heart Throbs of the West* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939), 3:67, quoting the journal of Truman O. Angell Sr., 3.

