

Q. The dedication will bring a lot of tourism.

A. I think after the first two or three years, when the dedication is over, once everybody gets here and they have seen the temple finished, it'll slow down. It won't stop, but it'll slow down. I don't foresee much traffic past the parking ramp. We get a lot of traffic anyhow because of the hotel. I don't think we're going to see much more in here; I don't think they'll come farther than the parking ramp. If they do, they do; that's what the street's for, and we will cope with it.

Q. Are you going to go to the open house?

A. I sure will.

Q. Do you have tickets?

A. I don't need one, they tell me. I asked Mr. Prince, and he said, "You don't need one—you're already on our list." I said, "What list?" I'm on the list to go when the city council and the past city council are invited.

My uncle was raised right down over the hill. His family and him all want to come down and go through the temple—they live in Rockford, which is northwest of Chicago, about 240 miles from here. They all want to come down. It's Nauvoo. He was born and raised here. Then he went to the Second World War, came home, and moved to Rockford. Him and his family want to come down and go through.

So it's not just Mormon people that want to come and go through the temple, others too. A young girl that is a teacher at the high school—her husband is a farmer out by Adrian, and they want to come. I showed her a piece in the Fort Madison paper that was in there Friday, so she's going to get on the Internet and get tickets. The local people are going to get to go first, and they won't have to have tickets. We'll probably get two opportunities to go. And I'm anxious to go through the temple.

[The construction workers say] they will take Barb and I anytime I want to go. But I hate to bug them while they're working. And Mr. Prince said he would take me through. But he works all day the same as I do; he needs time for himself. And I know he puts in lots of hours. He's one of the most wonderful men I've ever worked with. He's a great man. You have a professor that I have a high respect for: Larry Dahl. He's neat. I like him a lot. I mow his yard for him. But I think he's a very neat man. I think a lot of him. I always hate to see summer come when they [BYU students] leave, and I'm always glad when they come back. I really enjoy them.

Dean Gabbert

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: July 23, 1922

Interview on November 15, 2001, in his home by Tyler Dahl

Diana Johnson and Joella Peterson also present

Q. [Tyler Dahl] How long have you lived in Nauvoo?

A. [Dean Gabbert] We moved here to stay in 1985. We owned the land before we moved here.

Q. Where did you spend most of your life?

A. Fairfield, Iowa.

Q. Were your ancestors from this area?

A. Basically. My grandfather was a blacksmith, and my other grandfather was a farmer, so they led a plain southeast Iowa life.

Q. Where did you work?

A. At the Fairfield Ledger, a daily paper. I began working there in high school, and when I retired in 1985, I was the editor. It was the only place I ever worked.

Q. What attracted you to this area?

A. I have always been interested in the Mississippi River. When I was a Boy Scout (1934–35) I went to Camp Eastman—between here and Hannibal—and stayed near the river for the first time. This whole area has a lot of history.

Q. What do you like about living in this area?

A. I like the river, the peace and quiet, and you're out in the woods so you're not too far away from the main city.

Q. What events in the community have you enjoyed while living here?

A. I have been active in a few groups, including the Nauvoo Historical Society. My wife and I are members of the Presbyterian Church, and River Boat Buffs. Its headquarters are in Keokuk. It's a group of river buffs—my wife says “nuts” [laughs]—who are interested in rivers and riverboats.

Q. How many members are in that?

A. They only meet twice a year. They have a fall meeting in Keokuk and a spring meeting in any other river town. There are about 120 members.

Q. What is your main interest in the river?

A. Keokuk has a Coast Guard, which I have several stories about.

Q. What kind of stories?

A. Keokuk Coast Guard has responsibility for the upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers and administers six river tenders. I have been on about nine boats doing stories for the Waterways Journal, a weekly magazine published in St. Louis. It is strictly river stories.

Q. What did you do with the Nauvoo Historical Society?

A. I have been on its board and edited the newsletter. As the members get older they can get less accomplished. It doesn't get the new members it needs, though.

Q. What are the challenges about living here on the river?

A. Not many challenges. It's just an ordinary small town. Sometimes you can't get out of here in bad weather—if it's snowing or something. All our children and grandchildren live in Fairfield, Iowa, sixty miles away. It is nice to have them close by. Sometimes they seem too close.

Q. Did the flood affect the property?

A. Not really. We have a nine-foot bank down to the river, and the water was just getting level with the grass, but it closed our road for about three weeks. We had to go about a quarter of a mile and up the hill, right up to Jack Hamman's barnyard.

Q. From your knowledge of the history of the area, do any individuals stand out in your mind as making a significant contribution to the city?

A. Sure. I don't know if you know Florence Ourth; she is a member of the Reorganized Church [Community of Christ], and her roots go way back. She's a great lady. When she tells about viewing the remains of Joseph and Hyrum, it is so impressive.

Q. What is your knowledge of the Mormons living in and being forced out of Nauvoo?

A. A few books have really impressed me. John Hallwas, an English teacher at Western Illinois, wrote a book called *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War*. John Hallwas spoke here last week at the historical society—he didn't speak on the exodus though. As he was studying an instance or conflict, Mr. Hallwas went to old newspaper files that are available—but the newspapers in the 1840s were not always concerned with giving a balanced picture of the events. John was sure to get two sources to make sure he quotes both Mormon and anti-Mormons correctly. He writes so you are left to draw your own conclusions.

Q. After you read *Cultures in Conflict*, what are your views on the Mormon persecution?

A. The Mormons were right sometimes, wrong sometimes. It depends on the situation. The Mormons grew so fast they began to be a shield for the wrong kind of people. One of the things the book points out is the natives accused the Mormons of stealing cattle. Because there were so many people moving in, the Church could hardly feed the immigrants and did steal in some instances. That was the way in the West—the whole country was really in turmoil.

I got the impression from other books that Nauvoo was granted its own city-state status. It had its court system and basically removed the laws that affected most towns. As the population grew, all the crooks, bad guys, and scallywags figured out they could come to Nauvoo, and if they expressed interest in the Church, they would be granted protection if they lived here. So if the sheriff was looking for Joe So-and-so, who had umpteen charges against him, the Mormons would hide him. The citizens were skeptical that the law enforcement had the right documents. So Nauvoo was harboring undesirable people.

Q. Where did you get that information?

A. Oh yes, [walks to bookshelf] *Kingdom of the Saints*.

Q. What do you know about the Warsaw Signal?

A. Thomas Sharp was certainly the leader of the anti-Mormon forces. I think the Mormons were looked on as suspect, a bit like Muslims, because they had different ideas. People began to look for faults to reinforce their prejudice, and this led to the turmoil. I think what happened was truly inevitable. The Mormons showed great strength after Joseph Smith was killed by not retaliating. Carthage was evacuated twice because they thought that Nauvoo would rebound and come attack the city.

Q. With the perspective we have, what are your feelings on that portion of history?

A. Certainly it is unusual. The town grew so rapidly during that frontier period that law and order, which was out there somewhere, was very thin. They didn't have any public relations, that's for sure, so it was easy for the surrounding towns to suppose they did wrong.

I think people were afraid of them. They saw the Mormons as a group that would vote as a mob, which candidates could use as a lever in political matters. When you have five or six thousand people voting, it is easy to swing an election. I think the Mormons encouraged that idea. When they left here, they owned the land but knew the other citizens would take the homes they had built and maybe do something bad to the temple.

Q. Have you done research on the river and boating during the 1840s?

A. Yes, a little bit. The Mormons always had an idea of building a dam. At one point it called for a canal down Main Street, because it connects the two rivers. The original Keokuk dam is where it is because of the Des Moines rapids, which were impossible to pass over in the summer because the mean depth was twenty-five inches. Boats could only pass during high water in the spring. The Mormons wanted to build a dam and flood the rapids.

Q. When was the dam begun?

A. Building started in 1867 and finished in 1877. The dam was started in June 1913.

Q. Are you familiar with the Icarians?

A. A little bit. Unusual people. Pure communist—they shared the work and shared the goods. An Icarian man was an architect, and he designed the Illinois State capitol and did such a good job Iowa hired him to do theirs.

Q. Did he do anything around Nauvoo?

A. He built a church in Keokuk. I can't think of his name. Have you been to speak with Lillian Snyder?

Q. [Diana Johnson] Yes, I have.

A. She is something else.

Q. [TD] What about the role of the wine industry?

A. You would have thought the wine would have come from the French, but really it was the Germans who brought the grapes. I don't know how many came for the grapes. I have gathered a lot of info on Nauvoo and realized there was no railroad coming up to Nauvoo, so when the grape harvest was at its peak, growers shipped two hundred railroad cars of grapes and wine across the river.

Q. What caused the decline over the last few years?

A. Prohibition sort of knocked it out after World War I. The business started up again after Prohibition was lifted, but there was legislation on the wine business.

Q. In the last interview you mentioned the Rheinbergers. What was their role?

A. The Rheinbergers, who came from Liechtenstein, had a vineyard that still exists in the state park. It is undoubtedly the oldest in Illinois in terms of continuous production. The state now takes care of it, and it is public property, so anyone who wants to pick grapes can. Rheinberger never tasted the wine he produced, so he had his wife do all the sampling to make sure it was a good bunch.

Q. What about the bleu cheese?

A. Well, somebody had a secret recipe to make bleu cheese out of conventional cow's milk, because the cheese in Europe was made out of goat's milk. Part of the process is aging. They didn't have refrigeration, so someone figured out that Nauvoo had good wine cellars, some sixty cellars.

Q. How many still exist today?

A. There are probably a dozen or so still around on private residences and such. There is one at the state park, in the house there—the house that looks like a pioneer home—and one at the bakery.

Q. Do you know where there are any others?

A. There are probably a few that are run down, just in the trees.

Q. What do you think the city could do to improve industry in Nauvoo?

A. One thing I think they should do is rebuild the Maid of Iowa—a steamboat owned by the Mormons—and take people out on half-hour rides and have dinner and such there.

Q. Do you think Nauvoo Restoration would provide for that?

A. Sure, they are always looking for ways to better the community. [Excerpts from “Ghosts on the Mississippi” lecture by Dean Gabbert, November 20, 2001, given at the Joseph Smith Academy]

There are a few people here that have heard this before, and that puts pressure on me not to bore you with the same stories again. I am here to tell you about ghosts on the river—some people and others boats. To be truthful, I am still looking for my first ghost, but when I let my imagination run a little bit I run up with all kinds of fascinating people who have connections with this part of the river. I got my first taste of the river at Camp Eastman some sixty years ago and have been hanging around most of my life, and the longer I am here the more I learn.

I am going to pass up some of the better known ghosts to tell you of a few lesser known. First, Captain William F. Davidson—the only riverman I know who is famous for his prayers—was the head of the Keokuk Northern Line, a fleet of steamboats between St. Louis and St. Paul. He had prayer meetings on all his boats, and passengers were encouraged and crews were required to attend. I’ll read you the conclusion of his most famous prayer:

“O Lord, help the poor as they struggle down life’s path. Give to every poor man a barrel of pork, flour, salt, and pepper.”

Then he blurted out, “Oh, hell no, that is too much pepper!”

Nauvoo’s first steamboat was the *Maid of Iowa*, built in 1842, in Augusta, Iowa, on the Skunk River. The original captain and part owner was Dan Jones. In 1853 he took the boat to New Orleans, Louisiana, and picked up a boat full of immigrants—it was a hard trip. It took five weeks to get to Nauvoo. Also in 1843 the boat was in ferry service from Nauvoo to Montrose. As Jones hit financial troubles, the Prophet Joseph Smith purchased half interest, about two months before his death.

The Mormons were interested in a dam to eliminate the Des Moines rapids, which restricted the area to travel. There was also a canal proposed to run on Main Street river to river. The most durable riverman was James

Gifford, who came to Nauvoo in 1847. At age ninety-five he was the subject of a 1923 feature story in the *Nauvoo Independent*. In 1850 he married Scvilla Durphy, who was raised by Emma Smith, and the wedding was held in the Mansion House. Nauvoo had at least nine ferryboats, and Captain Gifford built or operated most of them. His favorite spot was called Mormon Springs, located between Niota and Princeton, Illinois, and included a cold spring, which still runs today in an apple orchard.

In 1880 he purchased the land and built a home there. Many people called him the Patriarch of Mormon Springs. Jim Webb, who is here tonight, is a great-nephew of that man.

The *Western Engineer* was the first steamboat to make it as far as Keokuk in 1820. It went no further because of two huge factors. One was the Des Moines rapids, extending from the mouth of the Des Moines River to Montrose and Nauvoo. It was called “eleven miles of pure meanness”—and called some other things that weren’t printed. The second was about a hundred miles upstream, the Rock Babbitts from Rock Island to the village of LeClaire, Iowa, about seventeen miles down the Rock River. Between Nauvoo and the Des Moines River, the Mississippi dropped twenty-two feet, which made for swift water running over solid rock. The average depth of the rapids was a little less than twenty-five inches, and less than that in the summer.

Robert E. Lee came to Keokuk in 1837 to survey the river—the first of three. He recommended blasting the rock to add depth, but no money was appropriated. Lightering—using smaller, lighter, more shallow raft boats to traverse the rapids—became a new popular business over this stretch of rapids. Big boats would unload at Montrose, then head back north. A boat coming up from the south was to pick up the cargo (the northbound boats went to Keokuk or Warsaw). Many times when the river was too low they would have to move over land. It made commerce in the area rise but also prices.

James Wilson came up with the solution: build a lateral canal along the Iowa side to bypass the rapids. Work began in 1867 and took ten years to build. The canal began at Keokuk and ran seven and six-tenths miles north to Nashville, Iowa (now called Galland). It was three hundred feet wide and five feet deep and had three locks, with a total lift of fifteen and a half feet. This was the biggest public works project ever undertaken in Iowa at the time. At the time the workforce exceeded one thousand men. There was, of course, no dynamite, so all the blasting that was done was with black powder. According to the Civil War veterans, there were periods when it sounded like the Battle of Gettysburg.

The workforce was mainly Irish and Swedish immigrants: it was said when they weren’t working, they were drinking or fighting or both. The work camps were strewn from Keokuk to Montrose.

The steamer *Northwestern* passed through the canal in 1877. The electric dam was completed in 1913, the first on the Mississippi—there are now twenty-seven locks and dams on the river. The dam widened the river two to four times than its original width. We have charts that existed before the dam, and you can see the growth; the widest part then compared to four miles (in the widest part) now.

In 1911 Captain John Streckfus had a new idea. Instead of a packing boat and carrying passengers and freight, have an excursion boat with live music for dancing. It was an instant success. The Streckfus Company had four boats, including the JS, the Capital, and the JS Deluxe, some of which could hold up to fifteen hundred passengers. Competing companies quickly sprang up. It continued pretty constantly until World War II. Afternoon excursions were popular, but at eight at night the moonlight excursion was very popular. It didn’t matter the weather or state of the moon. Fares averaged about fifty cents.

One of the Streckfus boys was in charge of the music, Captain Joe. Joe knew that it was the music that brought in the money, so he wanted only the best. Incidentally, they are known to have brought Dixieland music up north. Captain Joe could not allow improvisation. There were two tempos—seventy beats per minute for foxtrots, ninety for one-steps. If you didn’t adhere, your stay was short. He had problems with a few of his musicians. One was too shy to get up and sing; his name was Louis Armstrong. In 1919 Joe fired a 16-year-old for not being able to read music; his name was Bix Biederbeck.

The most popular excursion boat in Nauvoo was called the *City of Nauvoo*, which operated for fifty years. It was

built at Rock Island and was in service between Nauvoo and Montrose on April 14, 1886. The ferry carried all of the town's mail, coal, and other supplies, because there was no railroad. In harvest time the ferries would carry between 150 and 200 carloads of grapes to the railroad in Montrose.

After the Second World War, the *City of Nauvoo* began to show its age. Only a few people wanted to ride, and nobody could be found to operate it. L. E. Rhincbold called it quits at the end of the 1942 season.

We worry about mayflies on this part of the river. Certain times of the year they become overwhelming—they don't bite or sting, but there are a lot of them. In river biology the first thing they tell you is that those mayflies are the mark of a healthy river—that should make you feel a little better when they swarm all over you. It is true that in St. Louis you can't find one, no matter how hard you look; it is the same way in the Quad Cities.

Lucille Gano

Keosauqua, Iowa

Birthday: December 16, 1929

Interview on October 4, 2001, in her home by Heidi Tice

Jessica Smith also present

Q. [Heidi Tice] How long have you lived in the Nauvoo area?

A. [Lucille Gano] I grew up in Milton, which would probably be considered in the vicinity of the Nauvoo area. And then I lived in Salt Lake City for six years. My first husband and I went out there in 1953. I was out there for six years.

Q. You joined the Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] there?

A. Yes. I knew very little about the Mormons before I went out there. But I wanted so much to go back to church. Then the missionaries came, and they could answer some questions that I could never get answered before when I was younger. So almost right away I knew the Church was true, but we went to church for two years before we became members. I was baptized in the basement of the Tabernacle.

Q. Do they still do baptisms down there?

A. I'm not sure.

Q. After living in Salt Lake City, did you come back to Iowa?