

About that time somebody run up and told him that I was a descendant of Joseph Senior and Lucy Mack, and that I was a recent convert to the Church. His mind is real sharp, and I told him, ‘T’m a descendant of Katharine.’”

He kind of turned around and looked at me awhile and said, after a short moment’s pause, “I want to welcome you back.” We visited a little while about this and that. Then he had to go and meet the governor. I got my picture taken while I was standing there.

Q. Do you have any final comments?

A. Only that I really enjoy having you students come to Nauvoo and visit my store and become acquainted with me. We both learn something every time. You people are real fortunate to have Brother Dahl as your leader down there and your teachers. I haven’t got acquainted with your teachers because they’re all new this semester. The old timers that have been here are great, and I’ve got real acquainted with them. They come up and use my library once in a while. You’re all welcome to do it. That’s the way it works. We’re all here to get along and love each other and learn a little more. Thank you.

Edward J. Newton

Burnside, Illinois

Birthday: March 31, 1945

Interview on November 8, 2001, at the Joseph Smith Academy by Jeff Johnson Jessica Titckett also present

Q. [Jeff Johnson] Thank you for letting us take time to interview you, Mr. Newton. Tell me where you were born and little about yourself.

A [Ed Newton] I was born March 31,1945, in Sacred Heart Hospital in Fort Madison. Iowa. My family home was in Powellton, Illinois, which is seven miles east of Nauvoo.

Q. Is that where your mother is from?

A. Yes, that’s my mother’s family farm. Her great-grandfather, Henry Thornber. was born in Lancashire, England. He was converted to Mormonism there. He and his mother and sisters came over here. His older sister, Margaret, and her husband, Abraham Shaw, were already here.

Q. Do you know any interesting chronicles your ancestors recorded in their journals on their way to America?

A. I don't know of any journals, but there are family stories. Henry's wife, Lucy Ellison, came with her family because they had all converted over there. Lucy's parents were Matthew and Jane Ellison; they settled in the country too—close to Adrian, Illinois. The story about Henry Thornber was that he supposedly worked as a bodyguard to Joseph Smith when they were working on the temple. He and his wife lived on Chandler Hill, which is by a cemetery—the Mormon cemetery down the hill over there.

Q. Is it east of Nauvoo?

A. Yes, on the back street. They lived there, and I don't know any more than that. That branch of the Ellison family did not go west to Utah.

Q. Did they remain here in this area?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know why they didn't leave?

A. The only reason I know is that Grandma Lucy worked for a family out by Carthage, Illinois. I think there may have been anti-Mormon people, and she decided not to go. She wanted to escape the troubles in Nauvoo. There were bad feelings and struggles then. She moved seven or eight, nine miles out into the country—I don't know where, but at least eight miles. They lived east of Powellton about a mile most of their life.

Q. Are any of your ancestors buried in the Mormon cemetery?

A. I'm not aware of any. They are buried in the Thornber Cemetery, which is just across the creek from where we live.

Q. How does this story relate to your father's family?

A. My father's family came here—on his dad's side—after the Civil War. His mother's side came in the 1850s. Most of them came from Ohio—both sides did. Now on my mother's side, besides the Thoniber branch, her grandmother came from Chester County, Pennsylvania. Two of her grandmother's sisters married Mormons. One went to St. George, Utah, and the other one—and the other one I'm not sure. His name was Solon Foster—married Sarah Downing. I am not sure about the others. We have, however, communicated with some relatives in Idaho.

Q. Have you ever been to Utah?

A. Oh, yes. I don't remember exactly when it was. Some relatives of the Ellisons—Letha and Haws Durfey, from American Fork, Utah—came back here and served as missionaries. They got to know my parents well. Letha's maiden name was Taylor, and her father's name was Lorenzo. They are descendants of John Ellison, who was my great-great-grandmother's older brother. He and his wife came over to the United States a year before my great-great-grandfather came.

Q. Now you mentioned earlier about a man who was the bodyguard to Joseph Smith. Can you tell me more about that?

A. Henry Thomber. I don't know any more about that. I just read it in the family history books.

Q. How long have you lived in the Nauvoo area?

A. I lived here until I went to college. I graduated from high school in 1963, and then I went to MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, until 1967. After that I went to Madison, Wisconsin, and did graduate study there. Then I quit school in 1971, but I stayed there until 1982 when I moved back to Nauvoo.

Q. [Jessica Tuckettj What did you study?

A. I studied French literature.

Q. [JJ] What has been your main employment in this area?

A. I have worked in an antique store in Bowen, Illinois. Since I have lived here, I stay with my parents for half of the week in Powellton, and the rest of the week is in Bowen. I am not married, but I have three brothers that all live in this area. Anyway, my father's family came from Ohio and settled in the Colusa area. So on both sides we've been here for a long time.

Q. Since you have lived in this area for a while, what are some of the challenges residents encounter living in this area?

A. Challenges? Oh, I don't know. I suppose it's the challenges that come with living in a smaller town. I lived in

Madison, Wisconsin. You have to drive a long ways to do several different things. For cultural things you always have to drive a longer ways. My aunt said she had to drive twenty miles round-trip just to get groceries, and that's not unusual.

To me, they're not really challenges so much. Maybe the roads aren't plowed as soon in the country as they would be in town. It's just something you grow up with, and you expect it.

Q. What do you think makes Nauvoo an attractive place for people to live?

A. I think it's beautiful scenery, and right here on the Mississippi—which is something we have always taken for granted, living here. People rave about the river road being beautiful, which it is. And of course, small town, friendly people. For me the main attraction is my family—I moved back here to be closer to them.

Q. Is that what matters for you?

A. That's why I moved back.

Q. As you know, one of the first groups to settle this area in 1839 was the Mormons. They came here under the direction of their prophet, Joseph Smith. After a couple of years, they started to have a lot of conflicts with their neighbors—things like the *Warsaw Signal* and a lot of mob movement. Why do you think there was a conflict between the groups?

A. I think they were scared of the power they were going to have in influencing their lives and maybe changing things. It might be similar in some respects to what people are afraid of today with people coming back and building the temple. What's going to happen to Nauvoo, and how's it going to change? Part of it is the mind-set of small town people—they're afraid of change. I'm a little bit like that. Some of it is my English heritage. Then some of it is people who stir up trouble because they're afraid of that power, or jealous of it, or for whatever reason they stir up trouble. Some of it is how people at that time communicated. They didn't have radios and TVs. They had newspapers, and that's how they got their ideas, and that one newspaper was inflammatory. But anytime there's a difference of opinion . . .

Q. Ultimately the Saints just couldn't fight it anymore, and they had to leave because their lives were at stake.

A. Sure, sure. And of course, Joseph and his brother were killed too. That was quite a blow.

Q. And a lot of people thought that if they killed Joseph Smith and his brother, that would be the end of the Mormon movement, but we're here today, so they didn't do a very good job. Do you think that the same feeling from back then holds today?

A. I think there is some fear of what's going to happen. I don't know how well founded it is or anything. I don't really have much to do with Nauvoo nowadays. We don't take the paper. My brothers have children that go to school and might have a better idea about some of those things.

Q. Do you remember what the Nauvoo flats area was like twenty or thirty years ago?

A. Sure. My mother's cousin, Preston Kimball—do you know who that is?

Q. Sort of.

A. He was a lawyer here in Nauvoo, Preston Kimball, and he was my mother's second cousin. There's a house down here on the flat where some of the missionaries live now. It's a white house, and it has stainedglass windows in it—it's close to the Sarah Kimball house. We used to come there to visit family. I remember that kind of thing, We've gone to the Mansion House and the Homestead and things like that on tours when people came to visit. We always came to Nauvoo to go to the state park.

Q. I am sure you have seen the temple. How do you feel about the Mormons rebuilding the temple?

A. I don't have any problem with it. I think it's really very good. It will be good economically for Nauvoo.

Q. How will it be good economically for Nauvoo?

A. It will bring tourism and lots of tax dollars, I mean as far as I know. I don't have any problem with it. I am very interested in historic preservation. It's a reconstruction of a very historical place. Some people say that they'd rather just have that nice garden there. But the decision was made, and I have no problem with it.

Q. I think people will appreciate the temple more when they go through the open house. Do you have any plans to see the temple at the open house?

A. Yes, we're going through in May. We've got some tickets through some friends of ours.

I heard one time that they have different days that different towns will go through, but I don't know about that.

It's very interesting that some of our branch of the Thomber family became RLDS (Community of Christ)

people. Several of that family became that. And my great-great-grandfather Henry Thomber, his sister married Richard Lambert, and they were RLDS and they lived out in that country' too. There was a little church out there in the country, an RLDS church.

Q. Are you affiliated with any denomination?

A. Our family was Presbyterian.

Q. Is that common here?

A. I have three brothers, and they have all gone to other churches now that they're married. One is a Catholic, one is a Lutheran, and one is [in another] Christian church.

Q. Is there any room for the Mormons?

A. No, none that I know of. [chuckles]

Q. Maybe someday?

A. I don't think so. [laughs] My mother always said she was glad to visit her Mormon relatives, but she was one to stay Presbyterian.

Q. I have had the opportunity to go to some of the other church services in the area—Catholic, RLDS. There is quite the variety in Nauvoo.

A. Sure. Our family is with the Appanoose Faith Presbyterian Church, just south of Niota—it's a country church. It's about five miles from our home, but we always went there.

Q. Have you had the opportunity to serve on any civic position or worked in the government?

A. No, I haven't.

Q. What do you think are some of the other thoughts and feelings of other individuals about the things that have transpired in the last few years with the Mormons rebuilding the temple and the restoration of the Nauvoo flats? Do you know of any other thoughts and feelings people might have with that?

A. I really don't have much idea. I mean. I have heard people say that they don't like it; I've heard other people say they think it's a wonderful thing for the community. I think some people are afraid of the power they feel the Mormon Church has and what they're doing—they're wondering what it's going to do to the town. Those kind of feelings. But other people are very gung-ho on what they're doing.

Q. Well, there's no prophet here that they can run out.

A. Oh, no, I don't think it's that kind of feeling—they're just wondering what's going to happen. But that happens anytime there's change.

Q. What do you see in the future for Nauvoo?

A. I really don't know. I've just heard people talk about wondering if this is going to change the small town atmosphere—whether things will change, whether there will be a major influx in population, whether a lot of Mormon people will move back here because of it, or whether they'll be coming to visit as tourists. I haven't heard a whole lot of talk.

Q. So, what would you like to see for the future of Nauvoo, Mr. Newton?

A. Well, I don't really have much an opinion about that. I hope that it will be able to encompass all the heritages that have been here. On my mother's side her mother's family was Swiss Austrian people, and they settled here in Nauvoo in Appanoose Township. One name was Siegrist, and they're the ones that lived out in the country. And then there were the Klingelmullers, and they lived by the Nauvoo cemetery. That background is part of what Nauvoo is, and I think it's good to be able to keep that. I hope that everyone can live here happily.

Q. Like one big happy family?

A. Well, I don't know about that, [laughs] I hope that it's peaceful. There's still people in parts of Hancock County who still have strong anti- Mormon feelings because of what happened in the past. That happens, and I think that's where some distress comes from too. But that's just part of dealing with life.

Q. Can you tell me any childhood memories growing up in this area?

A. We used to come to Nauvoo to do some shopping, and of course I went to school here before the Nauvoo-Colussa consolidation. I went to a country grade school for four years, and then that closed and I came to school in Nauvoo. Of course I remember when the temple square still had some of the Icarian buildings there and also the parish hall, which was where the Catholics had their gymnasium, and then there was the parochial school, which was built out of the old temple blocks.

Q. Are you familiar with the wine industry?

A. Yes, a little bit.

Q. Do you have any memories of that?

A. No, not specifically. My mother was very temperate and antidrinking—not that there weren't people in our family who drank and things like that. But my mother was very anti-drinking, and we did not drink in our house.

Q. From what I hear, the wine industry was a very large part of Nauvoo's economy.

A. I remember the winery, and we've gone through it.

Q. Do you know what brought on the decline of the wine industry? Do you know why we don't see the prominent wine society like they had in the '50s and '60s?

A. I really don't know what the reason was—whether it was the competition or they weren't able to sell. I know they used to sell a lot of grapes just as grapes—ship them out of here. I don't know why the wine. You will have to interview some of the people like the Baxters.

I will tell you one story. My dad's father grew up in Pontoosuc Township, which is right here in Hancock County. My brother told me that Grandpa Newton said that they knew of one instance in the family where supposedly—this is in the 1840s—the Mormons had come out and taken some of the cattle. Now, that's all hearsay; I don't personally have any memories of anything like that. Any of these kind of stories get pretty far out.

Q. Do you hear of these stories in school, or were they passed on through your mother or father?

A. Like I said, that was the first time I had heard of something like that. I knew there were stories about it in my father's family—but in school, no. There was nothing anti-Mormon taught in school.

Q. Do you know how your father's family received those stories about how the Mormons were horse thieves?

A. Our family is not very political, and they don't talk a whole bunch about those things. My dad might know, but I don't. There was never a strong anti-Mormon feeling in my family.

Q. In school did they teach the history of Nauvoo regarding the Mormon settlement?

A. Just very general things. I don't remember anything specific. I remember from what I learned from when we came to visit the sites here: the Homestead or the Mansion House or like the Old Nauvoo house—those kinds of sites that were tourist sites. My mother was interested in family history, and some of the families that we were studying were related to Emma Smith's family, Joseph's wife. We learned about Mormons also through my parents visiting Utah. Of course, I like history to begin with. Also, people like Ida Bloom who wrote Nauvoo histories—I read those kinds of stories.

In our family, there was no strong anti-Mormon feelings. Not like there would be, like I've heard about them in Plymouth.

Q. You said you visited Utah. Can you tell me about that?

A. We visited Salt Lake—it must have been in the '50s. I remember the big tabernacle. I also remember getting in the Great Salt Lake and not being able to sink.

Q. I have lived in Utah my whole life, and I have never done that.

A. You see, it's like you take it for granted.

Q. Have you gone swimming in the Mississippi River?

A. Oh, yes. [laughs]

Q. Is there anything else we can talk about?

A. I don't know anything about people's feelings towards Mormons. I am not married, and I don't have any children in school. I don't hear a lot. And I don't socialize with a lot of people.

My brother might. He was talking about some of the troubles with the city council and permits. But to me, that's petty and not worth talking about. I don't like to get involved with squabbles. But those are the kinds of things that—I think it happened in the nineteenth century—little rumors get started, and everyone tells their own story, which can cause friction. But that's part of life and how society works. Why people have troubles is because people don't go to the source.

Q. Yeah, "I heard it through the grapevine."

A. Do you know that used to be the name of the paper here in Nauvoo, the *Grapevine*? [laughs] In the 1980s.

Q. [Jessica Tuckett] Would you prefer living in a community like Nauvoo or in Madison, Wisconsin, where you went to school?

A. I prefer living here. Of course, part of it is my family. I sort of came home to help look after my parents. My mother died in 2000. My dad is going to be ninety-one, and he has macular degeneration, so he's legally blind. My brothers and I, we stay with him every night and see that he gets food. I'm really interested in living in this community.

Sometimes I worry, but I don't think it's going to become an urban area because there aren't resources for industrial expansion.

Q. I don't think the Mormons have the intention of making Nauvoo a thriving city. I think the temple and what they're doing down here on the flats is just about all they're going to do.

A. I visited one time with a Mrs. Hemphill who works over at the volunteer office. She knew someone whose family was Lamb, and that's one of our family names too. There was an Abel Lamb who led a soap factory in Nauvoo in the 1840s. But there is no connection with them; there's lots of people with the name Lamb in the United States.

Q. So there was a soap factory in Nauvoo in the 1840s?

A. I don't know what it was called. Abel Lamb was the owner.

Q. Were they Mormons?

A. Yes. This lady at the volunteer office where they coordinate all the volunteers who work on the temple—there's a lady there . . . she's here helping with coordinating the people who volunteer. I went and visited with her one time.

Q. Do you want to do any volunteer work for the temple?

A. No, not really. I don't have much time myself, [laughs] I don't get the things done that I need to. I would like to work for a historical society, but I don't seem to have time. I'm sorry that I don't have any more information or stories to tell you.

Q. Do you want to make a last comment or tell a story for the record?

A. No, I don't think I have any more.

Ken and Karolyn Nudd

Nauvoo, Illinois

Ken's birthday: October 17, 1939

Karolyn's birthday: August 13, 1942

Interview on November 6, 2001, in their home by Andrew Wahlstromi Cara Cahoon also present

Q. [Andrew Wahlstrom] How long have you lived in Nauvoo?

A. [Karolyn Nudd] Thirty-four years.

Q. Thirty-four years for both of you?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did you come to live in Nauvoo?