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FOREWORD

On August 13, 1998, I was in Arizona helping my daughter prepare for the birth of her first baby and my first grandchild. Just as we were leaving for the hospital, I received a call from John B. Robinson, chairman and coordinator of the local temple committee, asking if I would serve on the committee, which was then being organized by Elder Eran A. Call of the Quorum of the Seventy. Brother Robinson could not disclose my role on the committee at that time. I later received material indicating that I had been called to be the historian, responsible for writing the temple's history as well as preparing the contents for the temple's cornerstone. It wasn't until I arrived home three weeks later and began to immerse myself in the project that I fully realized the magnitude of this responsibility. I was so excited and humbled by this opportunity.

Though the temple groundbreaking had preceded this calling by five months, I had already been keeping some notes and taking pictures because of my love for historical events and my excitement for the temple. Later with an official responsibility, I had a lot of catching up to do.

Living just down the hill from the construction site, I easily made several trips a day to the temple, capturing precious moments on film and gathering information.

Before long I was completely caught up in the spirit that encompassed the temple site. It was impossible to stay away. From the resulting stacks of pictures and volumes of notes, it was difficult to select those to include in my original two-volume history and much more difficult to select items for this much smaller book.

Member involvement was incredible. At any time on any given day, men, women, and children, both young and old, flocked to the temple site, contributing their time and effort in any way possible to build the house of the Lord. One would see families, students, missionaries, and members from both the Juárez and Dublán stakes all working their hearts out. The spirit of service and sacrifice for the temple was contagious. As the time for the open house and dedication drew near, more and more members arrived to assist; even those visiting in the area were anxious to help.

As the temple neared completion, I could hardly keep my emotions in check. Whether sitting at my computer, interviewing those involved in the project, or working at the temple site, I was often overcome by the sacredness and spirit of the endeavor. I do not think I have ever shed as many tears as I did while typing this history. It embodied so much service and sacrifice and so many strong feelings of reverence and love. Never have I experienced such a special strong spirit of unity. The Spirit of the Lord was truly directing all aspects of the work. This was an amazingly wonderful calling. I will never forget the experiences and feelings of building the Lord's house in our little community.

As with almost any endeavor of lasting significance, this history is a result of the combined efforts of many individuals who have contributed in their own way. I greatly appreciated their cooperation as I took pictures and gathered information. My only regret is that I was not able to capture each special moment and give proper credit to all who so richly deserved it.

I especially appreciated the help and support of my husband, Kent; my daughter and son-in-law, Gina and Nathan Henderson; Marvin and Gay Longhurst; Debbie Spilsbury; David Wills; Chad Call; Meredith Romney; and Bruce Wallace. Special thanks must be given to the Longhursts for providing the beautiful aerial pictures, which add a perspective to the construction that cannot be achieved by any other

means. At times I felt very inadequate and overwhelmed, but with the support and encouragement from my family and others and with guidance from Heavenly Father, I was able to give this project my all.

I deeply appreciate the support of the Religious Studies Center in publishing this book and Richard Cowan's inspiration in conceiving the idea for it and doing it in such a great manner. He has been so wonderful, patient, and kind as we have worked together.

Above all, thanks to the wonderful Saints of the colonies, past and present, whose faith and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ have sustained them through trials and helped them persevere in love, bringing us all to this glorious day when a temple of the Lord has been erected in our midst. Their lives and dedication to the Lord and His kingdom are the real story of this temple's construction. From this time forward, may that beautiful sacred sanctuary continue to be an outward symbol of our innermost love and devotion for the Lord and of His love for us.

I will be forever grateful for this opportunity to have served. Preparing the contents for the cornerstone box and compiling this temple history have truly been a great blessing and have given me many wonderful experiences and memories. I am so thankful for our beautiful temple and the opportunity to serve there.

Virginia Hatch Romney
Colonia Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico

My interest in temples probably began during my youth in Southern California. I felt a special spirit when participating in our stake's excursions to the St. George and Mesa Arizona temples. Years later, as a member of Brigham Young University's religion faculty, I published *Temples to Dot the Earth* in 1989 and pioneered a new course on Latter-day Saint temples during the early 1990s. I therefore was quite excited with the explosion in temple construction at the end of that decade.

During a trip to the colonies in northern Mexico in 2006, I had the feeling that I should write a history of the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua México Temple unless one had already been done. This was where President Gordon B. Hinckley received his inspiration for the small temples which would dot the earth at the dawning of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the construction of this temple was truly unique. While most Church building projects in recent years have largely excluded local members from participating because of liability concerns, the Saints in the colonies were intimately and extensively involved in building their temple. Therefore, this story certainly needed to be told.

Upon arriving in the colonies, I learned Virginia Romney had been assigned to compile a history of the temple's construction to be inserted into the cornerstone. Meredith Romney, who was stake president at the time of the construction and who became the temple's first president, affirmed that Sister Romney did a "bang-up job." We were shown a copy of her 450-page, richly illustrated manuscript, which filled two large loose-leaf binders. When I met Virginia in person, I could feel her enthusiasm for this project. As we discussed our desire to publish her history, we decided to work together. I hoped my background in Latter-day Saint history and my experience in writing would help me prepare Virginia's excellent material to be published as a book.

As we have worked through this history at BYU, we were amazed at the obvious effort Virginia Romney had expended to gather the very thorough account of the temple's construction. Through her own writing as well as the numerous firsthand statements from participants, it was easy to feel the special spirit that characterized this unique community-wide temple-building project. The story of building this temple

is noteworthy because it reflects a new chapter in the history of temple construction. While the erection of some recent larger temples had required up to five years, these smaller temples would be completed in just one year. Therefore, I had the difficult task of reducing the amount of information in preparation for the publication of this account. I also sought to add some background insights where appropriate to put the story of the temple into a broader context and reveal its significance more fully. Still, the basic narrative in this work is Virginia's.

In addition to expressing gratitude for the privilege of working with Virginia Romney, I would like to give thanks to those at BYU who have helped me with this project. I appreciate the administrators of Religious Education and the Department of Church History and Doctrine who have supported this project through research funding and other resources. I particularly would like to extend thanks to my research assistants and student secretaries Michael Cannon, Tyler Nebeker, Michelle Ensign, and Adrienne Lee, who have been especially helpful in preparing the written manuscript and numerous photographs. The personnel of Religious Education's Faculty Support Center, particularly Patty Smith and Heidi Smith, have also helped in preparing the written manuscript. Finally I would like to express appreciation to Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, R. Devan Jensen, Kristin McGuire, Brent Nordgren, and Joany Pinegar of the Religious Studies Center, who have provided valuable encouragement and advice along the way and have brought this project to successful publication. Without all this help, this work would not have been possible.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the privilege of having been involved in this project. Latter-day Saints often speak of divine assistance to early Church members and admire their devotion and sacrifice. It is easy to see these same ingredients in the building of the jewel of Colonia Juárez.

Richard O. Cowan
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