

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?

A. [Ken] I was employed as elementary principal here.

Q. How long were you the principal here?

A. Twenty-seven years.

A. [Karolyn] He also was the superintendent of the schools here.

Q. You must know Dave Knowles.

A. He hired my husband, and then Mr. Knowles moved to Streeter. He came back and was in charge of the Hancock County Mental Health Center. He then hired me, so we both worked for Dave Knowles.

Q. Karolyn, did you work for the school district too?

A. No, I worked for the Mental Health Center.

Q. How long have you been retired?

A. I retired in '93, and Ken retired in '94.

Q. How many children do you have?

A. [Ken] Two.

Q. Where do they live?

A. [Karolyn] Our older son is married and lives in Dallas City—not far from here—and he has two little girls.

Our younger son is not married, and he lives in Rochester, New York.

Q. Where did your ancestors come from?

A. I am from the Springfield, Illinois, area. My ancestors migrated there from Kentucky, England, and so on.

A. [Ken] I grew up in the northeast corner of this county. My ancestors moved there in 1835. Q. Ken, why did your ancestors move into this county?

A. I assume many came west at that time, pursuing greater opportunity.

A. [Karolyn] Mine came from Kentucky, and they came to Illinois because the state offered better farming.

Q. What attracted you to Nauvoo?

A. [Ken] This was my first opportunity with this school district to be an administrator, so I took it. We like the area, and I don't think we would have moved out of the state. I don't believe we would have moved into Chicago or St. Louis.

A. [Karolyn] We are both small-town people. We love to visit the city, but we don't want to live there.

Q. How did you two meet?

A. [Ken] I was teaching in west central Illinois, and Karolyn took a position there as a beginning teacher.

Q. What attracts you to this area? Why did you retire and remain in Nauvoo?

A. [Ken] I think that we have been here long enough. All of our friends and our acquaintances with the Church live here. We have been involved here for a long period of time and have many ties here. We like being in a small city; we wouldn't want to move into a larger area.

Q. How close-knit is the community in Nauvoo?

A. [Karolyn] We moved here as outsiders, and I felt that we had to prove ourselves. We are not outsiders anymore—when we first moved here I did have somewhat of a feeling that we were. It wasn't a difficult problem. Ken having the position that he did, he was not always loved by everyone.

Q. What faith are you affiliated with?

A. Methodist.

Q. I have visited the Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Community of Christ congregations here in Nauvoo. Those congregations were very friendly.

A. So is ours. We are a family—a church family. It's a smaller church here in Nauvoo. You are more than welcome to attend our church.

Q. I would like that. Do the denominations here get together in a community effort to improve the area?

A. Yes, there is a good effort here. It wasn't going on when we first moved here thirty-four years ago. But I would say in the last twenty years they have tried to develop a strong ministerial association with all the pastors and ministers from all the churches in Nauvoo.

They do have a community Bible school where a committee reviews all the material. It's generic, so it will not offend anyone. We have a large group of children that attend.

Every other year there is an Easter production put on by the Nauvoo Ministerial Association, and it is quite productive. With the choir, orchestra, cast, and crew, it involves a couple hundred people or more. They do a Thanksgiving service. That goes from church to church. They will also do a Good Friday, when each church takes a turn. The association also has World Day of Prayer. This is to give everyone maybe not a better understanding, but appreciation of the other congregations. There is a strong effort to have the churches work together.

Q. Is the LDS faith apart of the Nauvoo Ministerial Association?

A. Yes, the LDS are a part of it. They attend Bible school. I think that in Nauvoo, it is a special effort with the LDS to continue with that. It is my understanding you don't always do this in other communities, but in Nauvoo there is an understanding for the need of harmony.

Q. Have you observed any prejudice in the area? Perhaps as a superintendent you have seen it in your schools?

A. [Ken] I don't recall that we have ever had any problems where a particular denomination or belief is singled out.

Q. What are traditions in the community? I went to the pumpkin walk for Halloween. How long has that been going on?

A. [Karlolyn] Spooky Trail was started by the librarian and Durell Nelson. You all know Durell.

Q. [Cara Cahoon] He owns the fudge shop?

A. Yes. And Durell is quite an artistic individual, and they started the Spooky Trail—in existence for five years. They had difficulty getting people to clean and carve pumpkins. John McCarty is another talented individual that works with the pumpkins. This is the first year that they brought back the Spooky Trail where they incorporated people dressed in costume and the storytelling to the children. That is one of the neatest things that Nauvoo does.

Q. It was a lot of fun for us.

Q. [AW] I was impressed. I wish my town did something like that back home.

A. Chamber of Commerce does an Easter activity. At Christmas there will be a Christmas walk. All of the businesses will have tea, hot chocolate, and cookies. Santa Claus will be here and have a party for the kids.

Q. What are some of the challenges of living here?

A. Being in a small community, we don't have all of the job opportunities, cultural opportunities, medical opportunities that you would find in a larger city.

A. [Ken] Right now a big challenge for us is the change. We are not accustomed to change or the rate of change that we are experiencing now. It is frustrating, and it is something we have to get accustomed to. Change was very slow and gradual for us, and now it is overwhelming.

Q. I think so too. I have noticed that while running on the small roads in Nauvoo, construction trucks would push me off the road. I've noticed that Nauvoo has a hard time handling the influx of traffic.

A. [Karolyn] The road construction has been an inconvenience. The detours are not something I am accustomed to.

A. [Ken] It is getting better. A lot has already been taken care of, and you can see that the final product is coming along and that improvements have been made. If we have the influx of tourists that they keep saying we are going to have, I'm not sure that the changes will be enough.

Q. Have you served in any civic offices?

A. No.

Q. What type of service organizations do they have in the area?

A. There's the Lions Club.

Q. From your knowledge of the history of the area, what groups or individuals stand out as having made a significant contribution to the growth of Nauvoo?

A. Excluding what is happening now, the Germans.

Q. [CC] When did the Germans come to the area?

A. They followed the Icarians. At the time, a small group came to what was virtually a ghost town. They prospered and encouraged family and friends to move here too. Today, most Nauvoo residents' ancestors came from the Germans. The reason that Nauvoo is a close-knit community is that you don't pass through Nauvoo. It has never changed. People come to Nauvoo for a reason—because the city is out of the way.

Q. Mormons came to Nauvoo in 1839 under the direction of Joseph Smith. What is your understanding of the conflicts between members and nonmembers that led up to the exodus in 1846?

A. If I were living in Hancock County at that time, I would have been apprehensive also. I think you are aware of the fact that the Mormons had considerable political clout. As a result to that, members got certain privileges that were not necessarily available to the rest.

The Nauvoo charter could tell anyone whether or not they could come into Nauvoo or if one could apprehend someone running from the law. I do know that there were a lot of non-Mormons that considered Nauvoo a haven when they were in trouble with the law. Because the authorities in Nauvoo could not meet the demands of arresting these fugitives or kicking them out, the people in surrounding communities got the impression that Mormons were pushovers.

They had the Nauvoo Legion.

Q. Many considered the Nauvoo Legion a threat?

A. Yes. If there was an armed group that was bigger than any other group around, what would you think? People knew, according to rumor, that if you had trouble with the law, then go to Nauvoo and they would take care of you. They would keep you from being charged and keep you from being arrested and tried. I don't know if that was always the case.

Q. Have you heard of any ways the Mormons may have provoked non-Mormons?

A. I didn't hear anything when I was growing up. I don't remember hearing any references to the Mormons in the history classes that I took in high school. It wasn't until college that I began to become aware of Nauvoo's past. I knew about Joseph Smith establishing the Church.

Q. I have heard that some of the crime and theft in the area was being blamed on the Mormons. Have you heard similar stories?

A. [Karolyn] No, I don't know any of those stories. My husband is a native of Hancock County, but I don't think people talk about why things happened or how they happened at that time. At least I have not been a part of such conversations. People I talk with are more concerned about what is going to happen with our roads, sewers, and so on. I don't know any interesting stories to tell you either. I am interested in antiques, and people will come in and want to buy something old from the Mormon era. There isn't anything, though, and if there is, it is museum quality.

Q. Do you have any ancestors that were members of the Mormon Church?

A. No.

Q. What is your understanding of the role anti-Mormon newspapers played in stirring up animosity?

A. [Ken] The Church leaders were compelled to destroy a printing press from anti-Mormon literature. The destruction was unconstitutional. At this point I don't know how accurate it was. Contrary to whatever the Nauvoo charter said, Joseph Smith's authority as mayor did not supersede the Constitution.

Q. Tell me about the bleu cheese industry here in Nauvoo.

A. Bleu cheese is relatively a recent thing here in Nauvoo. I don't know how it came about.

Q. Tell me about the Icarians and the wine industry.

A. The Icarians started the wine industry, but the Germans came in and made a thriving business with it as they continued it. The Icarians were only here for a short period of time.

Q. Did the Icarians leave any legacy behind?

A. Some of them remained here. The Baxters are direct descendants of the Icarians. There are other small groups of families that can trace their heritage to the Icarians.

A. [Karolyn] Dr. Lillian Snyder is very involved in keeping alive the Icarian history. She is an older lady, and she was a professor of sociology at Western Illinois University. She is the one that built the Icarian museum we have here in town.

Q. What have you heard about people's thoughts and feelings about what the Mormons have done here in the past few decades, restoring many of the buildings down on the flats?

A. [Ken] One has to acknowledge that they have done an exceptional job with the restoration. When we first came here, the flats were rather dark and not a very inviting place.

A. [Karolyn] I also think that when the Mormons do something, they do it well. The tourists have kept Nauvoo's downtown from becoming a ghost town. Even over the years that we have been here, there haven't been as many empty storefronts here than you would see in other towns of similar size.

I run an antique shop, and tourists help there. We sometimes get the impression that the busloads are directed to the Mormon-owned businesses. I'm asked a lot by people coming in the store if I am a member of the Church or if they had any available discounts.

Q. Have you had the feeling from tourists that they might look at you and blame you for what happened to their ancestors 150 years ago?

A. [Ken] Yes, there are a few.

A. [Karloyn] I'll tell you of two incidents. We have a door open at the store. A girl walked by and asked if she could go into the store, and the mother said, "No, they are nonbelievers."

Another incident was where we basically were told that the Mormons were going to come in and throw us out like we did to Joseph Smith and his followers. Some of the members of the community fear that is what's going to happen. The numbers are going to be large enough that it wouldn't be so much a physical intimidation, but it will be political intimidation.

We have already had a controversy in voting for the last mayor election. One Mormon ran for mayor, and there was a group of people who wanted to vote. They had no permanent addresses. Many didn't want them to vote, feeling that it is unfair to be able to vote for someone who would not be serving you if you were to move out in a year anyway.

Q. What was your reaction to the announcement of the temple being rebuilt?

A. I didn't know what it was going to do to our town. Still don't. We all have a fear of the unknown. I'm thinking of what is it going to do with our taxes,

Q. What are some rumors you have heard regarding the temple?

A. I've heard that two blocks surrounding the temple are going to be bought up because they want the room surrounding the temple.

Q. Do you know what they would do to that land?

A. [Ken] We were told that this was common practice. Wherever the Church has a temple, they would create a two-block buffer zone.

A. [Karolyn] Another thing that is trying to be established is a truck route through Nauvoo so that the grain trucks are not going down Mulholland. The route would go through what is now restoration-owned land. Rumor has it that the NRI will then establish businesses along the truck route, and that is where the tourists will shop because they would be owned by Mormons. Then the concern is what would happen to downtown.

Q. Have you been in any contact with BYU students here?

A. We are used to students walking the streets here. They have been here for as long as I can remember.

Q. [CC] Was it an all-girls school before the Church bought it?

A. Yes, and in later years there were girls that had problems. That school was over a hundred years old. Good Catholic families would send their daughters to school here, but as time went on . . .

A. [Ken] In order for them to keep the doors open, they took students to build up the numbers.

A. [Karolyn] At one time there were some bad students here, ones that would run away and start fires. I haven't heard anything negative about the BYU students here.

Q. What would you like to see happen to Nauvoo in the future?

A. Maintain the small-town atmosphere—this is why I like it here. I don't know what is going to happen. Gossip normally will turn into concerns.

Q. Are there any other comments or observations you would like to make?

A. [Ken] No, I don't think so.

Florence Ourth

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: October 1 1906