

A well dug by the LaCroix family gives so much water that John LaCroix believes it to be connected to an underground lake.

Mary Eleanor Logan

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: February 25, 1924

Interview on November 22, 2001, in her home by Jayson Edwards

Jordan Whiting also present

Q. [Jayson Edwards] This sure is a nice place.

A. [Mary Logan] Yes. I like it very much here.

Q. How long have you lived here?

A. About four or five years. I used to live in a house back there, [points north] I decided that I was getting past the age of wanting to mow lawns. I figured since my grandchildren would be gone in a few years—and they are moved away now—I would sell that place and move down here.

Q. Did you live on a farm, or was it a small lot?

A. It was a small house with a big yard.

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

A. All my life. I would say that because, except for four years that were spent in Minnesota at college and three years at Macomb teaching school, I have lived in Nauvoo.

Q. What did you teach in school?

A. Would you believe Latin and Spanish?

Q. Really?

A. Yes. I was a Latin major in college. When I moved back to Nauvoo, there wasn't a need for Latin or Spanish teachers because they didn't offer that program in their schools, so I fell back on my minor, English.

Q. Are you a first-generation Nauvoo resident?

A. No, I am at least third-generation here. My dad's mother and father were both born here in Nauvoo. So that would be third-generation there. It's the same way on my mother's side. Some of her people go back all the way to the Revolutionary War era in Philadelphia. Afterwards they moved east here.

Q. Do you have Mormon background?

A. No, not at all. The only thing that would connect us to them is through my mother's great-grandparents. They were going to come here to Nauvoo to join the Mormon Church. They got here just as the Prophet was assassinated, and the wars were going on, and the people were fighting amongst themselves—and they wanted no part of it. [chuckles] So they moved to Quincy. After the Mormons left here, they returned and bought a farm east of town near the Mormon pioneer cemetery. They were scared off by all the fighting going on.

Q. Where does your father's side come from?

A. They came here with the Icarian group.

Q. And your mother's has revolutionary roots? Is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Did your father migrate here from Texas with the French Icarians?

A. No, they were living in New Jersey. They heard about the Icarian thing here, and it sounded real good to them

—a dream that everyone could share and share alike. They came here and found out it wasn't exactly share and share alike. Human beings can't share and share alike.

Q. They had a lot of struggles.

A. That's right. They came in 1849, and by 1856 it had pretty well fallen apart.

Q. So they ended up staying here anyway?

A. Yes, they stayed here.

Q. Could we get specific with the names?

A. Their name was Baxter. He, his French friends, and the Germans who were already living here decided that the soil of Nauvoo was much like that of France and Germany. They started planting grapes, which started the grape industry here. By the 1880s Nauvoo was one of the biggest growing grape places in the Midwest. There were six hundred acres of grapes right here within the city limits. Can you believe that? There were forty of these old-time wine cellars built with an arch entrance and lined with stone or brick on the inside.

Q. I've found one just south of the temple a ways. Some of it is built with temple stones.

A. Right. A lot of them used the stone from the temple to build them. There is also one behind the Lutheran church, but I think it's barred. There's one in the state park, as well as the Nauvoo Bakery—which is pretty well preserved.

Q. Were they built for the Icarian wine or the German beer?

A. A little bit of both, I think. The bigger ones were for beer and the smaller ones were for the wine—I don't know why the difference though. The cheese factory, which is north of here, used to be a big brewery.

Q. When did the cheese factory start here?

A. Around 1936. It's interesting, because that was a brewery, and of course because of the Prohibition in 1919 they had to close down. In the 1930s a man working at Iowa State University knew about these abandoned wine cellars. He was experimenting making bleu cheese from cow milk rather than goat's milk. He came over and rented the brewery and a couple of wine cellars to age the cheese in—and it took off. It's very famous cheese now.

Q. I know; it says “world famous cheese” right on the label.

A. It is; you can buy it anywhere you want to. A few years ago they had a contest to determine the best bleu cheese. They beat out Roquefort, France. Ours was chosen over it.

The Rhode family from Iowa started the bleu cheese here. They recently sold it to ConAgra. I don't know what ConAgra means—something agriculture—and they now own it all.

Q. Have the cheese and wine industries been the biggest thing in Nauvoo as you have lived here?

A. Probably. The cheese factory employs the most people: seventy to a hundred.

Q. As I have been talking to people, I always want to get an idea of what attracts them to Nauvoo.

A. It's interesting because if you don't work at the cheese factory—and the winery is family owned and operated until grape harvest time, in which anyone who wants to earn a little pocket money can help pick the grapes—you either have to have your own business or work out of town.

Q. What did your family do as you were growing up?

A. They had a winery. They were one of the original families to start one back in the 1850s, and they reopened it after Prohibition. It is the oldest winery in Illinois.

Q. That was the Baxter family?

A. Yes.

Q. Now your mother, what was her family name?

A. Kelly. They were Irish.

Q. Now they were the ones who came here and fought during the Revolutionary War—do I have it straight?

A. Yes.

Q. After they settled here, what did they do?

A. Here they were farmers.

Q. How far was their farm from town?

A. The Faulkner side of the family, who came from Pennsylvania, farmed out by the Mormon cemetery. The Kellys were about nine miles east of here, out in Rock Creek Township.

Q. What's the relationship between Faulkner and Kelly?

A. Inter-marriage. A Kelly married a Faulkner, or vice versa—so it's connected there.

Q. As a third-generation Nauvoo resident, how have you found living here?

A. I liked it. At times it gets a little boring.

Q. I can't imagine that.

A. [chuckles] In the winter times. But for the kids going to school there is plenty to do—you know, ballgames and school activities. If you want a life of partying and games, it's not in Nauvoo.

Q. What do you like most about this area?

A. The quietness. Little or no crime. My kids could walk to school in the morning and then walk home in the afternoon. We'd leave our doors unlocked during the day, as well as our cars just sitting out in front—nothing happens to them.

Q. Has that been the same through all the changes? Even recently with the influx of people here due to the LDS Church?

A. It's always been the same, it hasn't changed at all. You know the Mormons are good people; they don't go around damaging people's properties and so on.

Q. That's good to know. We get a lot of different views about it from people in or around the community, regarding the rise in population. A lot of people don't like it, and a lot of people do.

A. It doesn't bother me. I think I am going to look forward to it; I like things going on. I like things going on at the Academy. We didn't have that before. I like to see the tour people come in. It helps our economy.

There are some things I don't like about being in a small town. We don't have a good mechanic in town anymore. If something goes wrong with my car, I have to get it to Fort Madison or somewhere like that.

Q. But then you can't drive it over there because the car doesn't work anyway.

A. That's right. Of course there is the issue with hospitals. I like the Fort Madison hospital better. We don't have a Ben Franklin or a five-and-dime-type store here. If you want to go buy some yarn or some needle and thread or stationery, you have to go to Wal-Mart. I miss the mechanic the most, because if I want to get my air checked in my tires, no one in town does it. 'Course, I'm lucky I have a grandson that comes home every once in a while that does all this for me. I'm luckier than most women here.

Q. Are there any other challenges living in Nauvoo?

A. Well, city politics, you know. We have a lot of people that don't like the way things are going. They blame it all on the city council. A lot of it's your own making. If you want to improve it, get out and work and improve it.

Q. You kind of seem like the kind of person that makes the best out of any situation.

A. You know, you're here in this earth, and if you don't like it then get out of the kitchen—or however the saying goes, [laughs] I enjoy Nauvoo very much—I always have. I like the river. My only regret is that this place

doesn't overlook the river. But then I probably wouldn't do anything for anybody, I'd sit and look at the river. Have you enjoyed the river much? Do you get to enjoy it?

Q. Sometimes we go down there at night and just skip rocks. In our literature class we read *Huck Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*—and it was fun to just sit and read, especially because they were based at the same river.

A. You haven't been here long enough to see it when it gets angry.

Q. No.

A. It gets rough awfully fast. We got caught out in the river years ago. We were above Burlington in a boat. My son happened to look up at the sky and said we better get to shore—those are cumulous clouds coming in. We barely made it to shore and had to turn the boat over and get under it to protect us. It gets very angry in a very short time. Don't trust it.

When I was young, a little kid, we went swimming in the river up above Sycamore Haven, a housing development up there. There was a place up there called the Argo Bay swimming pool. It had a sand beach and clear water. We learned how to swim in the river. You wouldn't want to go out in there now and swim.

We also had the ferryboat landing, where the Mormon pastime park is now. We had a ferryboat there. Our greatest thing to do as kids was to spend time riding that ferryboat on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, any afternoon rather. We could ride across and back the river for five cents. It was fun!

Q. Were there things to do on the boat, or did you just sit there and look out on the river?

A. Oh, they had a nickelodeon. He always had it. We girls would get on it and dance, and he'd put the money in for us. We probably drank a lot of Coca-Cola, but it was a good way to spend an afternoon.

Q. When did the ferryboat operate—was it all through the year, or just in the summer?

A. During the summertime from April to November.

Q. What years did it operate?

A. When I was growing up, it was from 1926 through the early 1940s. An ice jam took and tore the boat apart in 1942.

Q. What was the name of the boat?

A. *City of Nauvoo*. There's a picture up there. [points to a picture on the wall]

Q. Do you remember the name of the pilot?

A. Yes. Les Reibold. His family had owned the boat for years and years. It could hold, oh, four or five cars—to carry them across. In fact, that's the way the farmers got their grapes over to the railroad station in Montrose. They would fill their trucks or wagons full of grapes and take it over there, put it on the train, and it would go to northern markets.

Q. That must have been fun to ride.

A. It was!

Q. As you've lived here, what opportunities have you had with civic or community work?

A. I get involved very much with Icarians. I am a descendant, so I belong to it. I also belong to the American Legion Auxiliary of Women. My biggest thing was tourism. We have a tourist center uptown, and I volunteered there for years. I would go down and work one afternoon a week. I also am a step-on guide that would go with tour buses that came here who wanted a tour. I get on the bus and take them around while showing them all the places—it's lots of fun.

Q. You must know a lot of history.

A. Oh, I know a lot of history. When we were little, we had friends that would come and visit, and the biggest thing we would do was walk to the winery, which is out at the southwest part of town, and then we would walk to the Mormon places that were open. At that time, all the time I was growing up, none of the restoration had gone on. It was just the Joseph Smith Homestead and the Mansion House. We would walk down there and then to the ferryboat and ride across and back, then walk back home. I can't imagine teenagers wanting to walk like that today, but we didn't have a choice. Families didn't have a lot of cars. You had one family car, father used it for his transportation, and the kids walked.

Q. We've asked a lot of people that live in the area what their knowledge is about the Church and its relationship to Nauvoo. What is your perspective on them and the Church in relation to Nauvoo.

A. A lot of them don't know very much—they just know what their great-great-granddad told their great-grandfather. A lot of it is a mixed-up view, depending on whether or not they were anti-Mormon, or whether they didn't care. It garbled, you know.

My grandfather played with Emma Smith's grandson. He knew Emma Smith very well and thought she was a tremendous woman.

Q. What was your grandfather's name?

A. Cecil Baxter. He was born here in 1860. His mother died when he was about three years old. He happened to be the same age as, I think, Alexander Smith. It was Joseph Smith's grandson.

A. Was Alexander the son of Joseph Smith III?

Q. What kind of stories do you think he heard about Emma?

A. I don't know. He would just say, "I'm not going to listen to that! I knew her, and she was good to me." They always had cookies and milk. They would go there after school. On the way they always fought; they would have a wrestle. And then they would go in the house and have cookies with something to drink.

My mother's people live nine miles out in the country—they knew nothing about Nauvoo. There was no telephone in those days. They had their own little school.

Q. What city was that in?

A. Powelton. They lived midway between Powelton and Ferris. Powelton today is nonexistent. When you walked to Carthage you probably went pretty close to it. There is a sign that one of the farmers put up which reads, "Downtown Powelton"—there's nothing there though. [laughs] Today all that Ferris has is a bank and a general store—that's all. They are small towns that fell by the wayside,

Q. So the Kellys, your mother's side, had no interaction with the Church?

A. That's right. They lived nine miles out, and the only time when they would come to Nauvoo would be for church—they were Catholics, obviously with a name like that. In fact, one of my uncles claims that during the fall of 1846, he would walk into Nauvoo and work on the temple in the wintertime when this farming was in a still—then he'd walk home. He needed the money. I can't imagine him being paid very much, to ride a horse nine miles there and then ride nine miles home—but that's a different era.

Q. What trade did he have to help build the temple?

A. I imagine he was just a carpenter or a roustabout—help to lift the stones, or whatever they did.

Q. What religion came down to you?

A. Catholic.

Q. How are the feelings between the religious groups as you have been here?

A. Years ago when I was growing up, it was kind of rough. They just didn't get along. Then we had a Catholic priest come in that was just a jewel of a person. He would get people working together. It's a very good relationship right now. On every other Easter, all the churches come together and put on a pageant, which is held at the St. Joseph's Academy—oh, I mean the Joseph Smith Academy. I have a hard time with this. I grew up with St. Mary's Academy. It used to be there, the Catholics provided the place of entertainment, the Methodist minister was the director, the Mormons has a choir, and we all work together—and it's still going on. Now, instead of the Catholics furnishing the place now the Mormons do. We work together good. In a small town you have to work together; you have to work together. How do you like living in Nauvoo?

Q. I love it here. I'm from a pretty big city—so living here you get a little taste of how the other side lives. It's very peaceful. I love the history here.

A. There's so much history here. You know, we were a big Indian village at one time. There's a home about three miles down the river that has been the same family since the 1830s.

Q. Is that the Moffitts?

A. Yes. Blackhawk visited them at their house, and so on. On the north part of their house is the original log cabin.

Q. Tell me a bit about the 1960s, when the Church started to come back and start the restoration. How did the town feel about it?

A. Some of them didn't like it. Some of the liked it because they were paying big bucks for property. [chuckles] It just depended on who you talked to—whether they liked it or they didn't like it.

Q. You personally?

A. I thought it was going to be exciting—I'm a history buff though. I knew they would restore these homes. I kept a scrapbook on what the flats looked like before and during the restoration.

Q. Overall it seems like you are pretty friendly towards the LDS Church—the town in general.

A. That's right; I am. For the town—it just depends on whom you talk to. Some of them are really enjoying the lectures that are going on at the Academy—others say, "I wouldn't go to that." It all depends on whom you talk to.

Q. Do you usually try to make it to most of them?

A. I go to most of them and take my friends. I usually have a carload when I come.

Q. Let's jump back a hundred and something years when the Mormons left Nauvoo. What is your understanding of why they came, and why they had to leave?

A. I think it was mostly political. Nauvoo was a big city of about fifteen thousand people. All the rest of Hancock and Lee County, Iowa, were just bitsy little towns. Secondly, they feared that the vote of Nauvoo would be the vote of Hancock County—and probably the vote of Illinois. If there were fifteen thousand people living here and they voted as a bloc, they could sway the election.

They also feared the militia drilling everyday down at the hundred-acre field (we would call it that, I don't know what the technical name of it is). They saw these armed men, and they feared them.

There were also rumors of polygamy being practiced. They didn't like that. Then in 1844, when Joseph Smith announced he was a candidate for president of the United States—that just crumbled the cookie. We can't have that. Eighteen forty-four through 1846 were pretty desperate days here, I think. There were a lot of skirmishes going on—and the people of the area blamed the Mormons for it all. They didn't realize that this is the end of the frontier, across the river was the wild woolly West, unsettled.

All the horse thieves and opportunists came to Nauvoo, and if it got too hot, all they needed was a canoe and they were home free—they were out of here! I think the Mormons were blamed for a lot of things that really didn't happen. Rather, it happened, but they weren't the cause of it.

Q. Your family came after all this though, right?

A. It was all gone by that time. Three or four years ago they had the reenactment of the exodus. It was very exciting! the Mormons had it all planned—and even the weather cooperated, the temperature dropped so low that we had a sheet of ice all over. They brought in sand because they were going to walk down to the ferryboat landing. I went with them—a bunch of us decided to go. We bundled all up; I wore my thermal underwear, I had my son's big thermal jacket on, and a wool hat. I was still cold. I told the elder who was in charge here that I didn't see why you had to get the weather to agree with you too. [laughs] It was very cold.

Q. How many people were here for that?

A. Oh, a tremendous amount! They had a big tent down by the ferryboat landing that was heated. We could sit there and listen to the Pitt's Brass Band. They had a hard time because their lips were so cold. I was amazed at the number of Mormons who came with their very small children to take the walk. Of course, the Coast Guard would not let them cross the river on the ice—they said it was too dangerous. Because it wasn't allowed, they gave the farewell here and they went by car to Montrose and started again. It was very interesting.

Q. Did you get to see any of the activities with the temple when they broke ground and started construction?

A. Yes, I went to the groundbreaking. I went to the dedication where President Hinckley came and saw him up there give a speech. I am very active in Nauvoo tourism, and they had seats for that, you know—VIP seats. [chuckles] President Hinckley also came here to dedicate the exodus marker down by the river. Of course, the governors of Utah and Illinois were here. It was a big thing right down at the ferryboat landing. It was very interesting.

Q. How do you feel about the temple being rebuilt?

A. I think it's great. It's great. What a beautiful building! Are they going to tear down the south half of the academy?

Q. I'm not sure, and I don't think they are sure yet, either.

A. I think they will, for the view of the river.

Q. Can you think of any other stories regarding your family and their relation to the Church?

A. No, not now—I don't think so. He [Baxter] lived in the 1860s and there wasn't much else for a boy to do then. It was amazing because he lived uptown, near where the trailer court is today, and Joseph Smith's boy lived way down at the Joseph Smith place—that's a long way to go!

Q. But if they were good cookies, it's worth the travel.

A. [Laughs] I think a lot of it was having a kind person around him when they were missing their mother. I imagine they met at school.

Q. Was that just the school up there?

A. No. Then there was a school hall at the Seventies Hall. The other one was south of the Hotel Nauvoo—I don't know which one he would have gone to.

Q. Was the Seventies Hall an elementary school, or was it all [grades] together?

A. Elementary. I think the high school was only a two-year high school for a long time. I don't know where it was.

Q. What is your understanding of the anti-Mormon newspapers and the role they played in the persecution towards the Saints?

A. Well, the Warsaw paper was very anti-Mormon. The Nauvoo paper—I don't know about it, they don't have any records of it—the Nauvoo one would have been for the Church, of course. But the Hancock County one—whoever got there with the most protests, most fights, or the most money—I don't know which. I think a lot of it was political. They were afraid of what would happen if the Mormons took control.

Q. Do you think a lot of them knew about what the Mormons actually believed?

A. I don't think they knew that. It didn't matter much. This was the end of the frontier—it was a pretty rough-and-ready territory.

Q. How about now? Do you think there is still a lot of fear in people?

A. I don't know whether its fear or they just don't want their small-town atmosphere changed.

Q. I can understand how it is.

A. Yes.

Q. How do you think Joseph Smith was viewed back in the 1840s by non-Mormons, and how do you think people see him now?

A. Well, that I really don't know. I think back then he was a leader—he had a lot of charisma. He could charm them, and I think that they followed him. Now, I don't know—I just think that he was a good leader of people. He'd have to be to lead them through New York, Vermont, clear through Ohio, down to Missouri—and went through all of it, and come across here and build a town. Not an easy thing to do.

Q. What do you think the future of Nauvoo holds?

A. I don't know, I am looking forward and hope I live long enough to see it become what it's going to be.

Q. What would you like to see happen, personally?

A. Keep it about like it is now, but bring in some more interesting stores—I don't like to go out of town to do my little shopping.

Q. We need to get a Ben Franklin's in here.

A. A Ben Franklin or five-and-dime store, as we used to call them.

Q. [Jordan Whiting] What do you think about when the temple is being dedicated and all the people come?

A. I think we are going to have slugs of people. I just hope the town can handle them, and we can provide them enough to eat.

Q. [JE] You know what you need to do is, go get yourself a cooler, some ice, and some ice cream—Mormons love ice cream—and set up a little stand out in your yard.

A. Well, we have a city ordinance where not just anyone could do that—there is a fee for a license to do that. We've had to do that for Grape Festival, and out-of-towners would come in and set up their little booths—and it became too hard for the town to cope with it. The storekeepers uptown got angry because it was taking away their business. It stopped traffic as well, so we outlawed that, you have to have a permit now. The same thing happened during the *City of Joseph* pageant—out-of-towners were coming in. If only the locals did it the people wouldn't object, but they were not from around here. One group came in and started passing out anti-Mormon literature; that just blew it all. They don't come around anymore—they don't want to pay the fifty-dollar fee to set up the stand for a few days.

Q. Do you have any other comments or observations that you would like to make for the record?

A. Well i would have to say this, St. Mary's Academy used to be for high school girls. They were noise! They had radios going full blast all the time. Often at church it would get so loud the priest had to use a blow horn to ask them to turn their radios down—he would get so angry. You people are much more quiet—BYU students are much quieter. Of course, you are older.

Q. We appreciate the compliment; sometimes we can be a little noisy, though.

A. The girls were high school girls, and they were pretty rude at times—we've never noticed any rudeness by you students. You are pretty polite.

Q. We love the people here in town—everyone is so nice.

A. That's good. You'll meet some that won't be so nice, but the majority of them are very nice. But I guess that's true in any town you go to. [She retrieves scrapbooks and then explains the interesting parts]

Q. Did you know Dr. Kimball?

A. Yes, I knew him.

Q. What was he like?

A. He was a kind of a mover and a shaker—he got a lot of things done here. He built a beautiful home here, in which one of the key persons in the NRS [Nauvoo Restorations, Inc.] lives now—it's north of the restoration building.

Q. How did you know him?

A. He spend a lot of time here. He lived here, you know. He spent his summers here. He was the one that made sure that he would talk to different people.

Q. Did you go down and watch the progression on the flats as they were building them?

A. Oh yes. In fact, I've got a whole book on the rebuilding of the temple. I was in Dallas the Easter Sunday. I picked up the Dallas, Texas, paper—and the headline says “Mormons to Rebuild Their Temple in Illinois.” I knew right away it was Nauvoo—I got so excited!

Q. I remember when I heard about it, I was in the Missionary Training Center in Provo, on my way to go on my mission. He announced it during conference over satellite. My teacher in the MTC grew up here and was all excited.

A. What was his name?

Q. Spencer Barrows.

A. Yes, he dad was a dentist.

Q. He had gone to Vancouver, British Columbia, Chinese-speaking.

A. Oh my!

Q. I went to Toronto, Canada, Chinese-speaking—so he taught me how to speak Cantonese. But I was there when they announced it. I remember it.

A. I went to Catholic grade school, and it was in the southwest corner of the temple square. It had been built out of temple stone. Once, when I was in third grade, we were playing ball out in the field north of the building—right about where the temple is now. The ground gave way. Boy, I went down into the ground of the basement, something—I don't know. The nuns were frantic—they thought we were in a well, but there was no water. It was big! We were probably in the basement of the temple. They had to get a ladder to get us out, then they covered it all up. But the ground just gave way, and down we went.

Q. How far did you fall?

A. I don't think it was too far, probably from here to there. Eight or nine feet, I suppose.

Q. It must have been pretty scary for you.

A. I don't think I was scared. I probably just read *Alice in Wonderland*—and I was Alive. [laughs]

Q. Well, we will take these books back and look at them. I'm sure Larry Dahl will be interested in them and appreciate seeing them. He's found that a lot of the anti-Mormon feelings that people have in the area, or just information that they have, had originated from some weekly newspaper articles back in the early 1900s that slandered the Church—and just passed along through generations.

A. And as it passed from one generation it was added to or change—just like a lot of history. I was also a history major in college, and I found out a lot of the stories about George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were not true. A lot of the politics back then are just as bad as they are now.

John McCarty

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: December 2, 1959

Interview on November 24, 2001, in Outlaw Tee's Video Store and Print

Shop by Jayson Edwards