



*The plaque on the statue Woman by Dennis Smith reads "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . . Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come" (Proverbs 31:10, 25). (Photo by Richard B. Crookston.)*

# MONUMENT TO WOMEN MEMORIAL GARDEN



SUSAN EASTON BLACK

*The 1970s was the decade of the woman. It was also a life-changing decade for me, as I was invited to teach part-time in the College of Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University in 1975. The decision to accept the invitation meant changing my career path from the study of women's psychology to Latter-day Saint history. It also meant joining a conservative, male-dominated faculty in Utah and leaving the liberal culture that permeated the University of California's educational system. The transition proved difficult for me until Richard Cowan extended a hand of friendship. For thirty-eight years, Richard and I worked across the hall from each other in the Joseph Smith Building on the Brigham Young University campus. On a daily basis, I watched Richard interact with students and faculty in a kind manner, even when he disagreed with a position they expressed. Through his reserved and dignified comments, Richard taught me a better path to follow in the workplace. It is an honor for me to present this essay to my esteemed colleague in remembrance of the early days of our friendship. It is my hope that readers of this essay will recall the volatile atmosphere of the 1970s and discover anew the hopes and dreams entwined in a monument designed to portray the God-given role of womanhood.*

**N**ever before or since the decade of the 1970s has so much been said or written about women's role and place in American society. Traditionalists trumpeted woman's role as unchanging: like her mother, grandmother, and female ancestors for millennia, the ideal woman was a mother, nurturing the rising



Dennis Smith, *Courtship for Eternity*. “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). (Photo by Richard B. Crookston.)

generation in the home.<sup>1</sup> Feminists labeled the traditional role as stereotypical, confining, and demeaning. Feminists demanded professional opportunities for women and put forward the Equal Rights Amendment, which stated “equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex,” as a solution to problems that had vexed women for centuries in the nation. Within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, strident voices were heard on both sides of the ERA even after Church leaders had labeled the proposed amendment as a danger to the time-honored moral values that safeguarded womanhood and the sanctity of the family.<sup>2</sup>

By March 1973, thirty of the thirty-eight states needed to ratify the ERA had voted to legalize the proposed amendment. Utah, Arizona, and Nevada, each with a dense population of Latter-day Saint women, sat on the fence, waiting for a clear mandate from their populace.<sup>3</sup> With only 28 percent of Latter-day Saint women in these western states “taking advantage of the Lord’s program for the sisters [the Relief Society],”<sup>4</sup> the First Presidency of the Church expressed concern that without Latter-day Saint women speaking out against

passage of the ERA, the proposed amendment would become law and place the moral climate of womanhood in jeopardy.

In this period of moral uncertainty, Belle Spafford,<sup>5</sup> general president of the Relief Society from 1945 to 1974, confided in President Spencer W. Kimball that the Relief Society monument placed in Nauvoo on July 26, 1933, “adjacent to the foundations stones of the Joseph Smith store in Nauvoo” had “deteriorated to the point that it needed to be replaced” and was “not a credit to Relief Society, to the Church, to the Nauvoo Restoration efforts, or to the great worldwide woman’s movement.”<sup>6</sup> Spafford hoped that her successor would replace the old monument with a larger monument erected “in honor of the organization of the Society . . . on land as nearly adjacent to the Nauvoo Temple Square as possible.”<sup>7</sup>

President Kimball asked Barbara B. Smith,<sup>8</sup> newly called Relief Society general president in 1974, if she were “interested in undertaking a project to promote such a monument.” Smith was interested and viewed a larger monument depicting the traditional values of womanhood as needed to counteract the ever popular ERA movement taking root in the nation.<sup>9</sup> Wanting artistic input on the monument, Smith turned to Salt Lake sculptor Florence Hansen, who had studied under Avard Fairbanks, a professor of sculpting, at the University of Michigan.<sup>10</sup> Hansen sculpted a clay model of a woman dressed in pioneer attire with a tablet on her knee and an arm extended around a child and gave it to President Smith, who presented the clay model to President Kimball. When Kimball asked “if the model provided the representation [they] wanted,”<sup>11</sup> Smith explained to him that a woman with a child only partly represented women’s work. President Kimball then advised her to ask other artists to submit clay models and ideas that more fully addressed and honored the role of womanhood.<sup>12</sup>

On November 19, 1975, at the Relief Society Building in Salt Lake City, several artists presented their works or ideas for a monument to women before a selection committee consisting of Bishop John H. Vanderberg, Elder Mark E. Petersen, Elder Thomas S. Monson, and the Relief Society general board. Florence Hansen wrote, “I prayed for assistance in giving an intelligent presentation of my pieces. I

have such a hard time speaking. My gift of expression is with my hands. The right words seem never to be there. But today my tongue was loosed, my voice came out clear, and I felt that my prayer had been answered.”<sup>13</sup>

The attention and imagination of committee members was captured by the idea presented by sculptor Dennis Smith.<sup>14</sup> Smith, a graduate in fine arts from Brigham Young University and a former student of the Academy of Denmark,<sup>15</sup> envisioned a two-acre monument honoring womanhood. He spoke of a “garden setting with brick walks and flowing circles” that unfolded “the story of woman’s journey toward perfection” and portrayed the “ever-widening circles of her service and influence.” Within the garden, Smith envisioned twelve statues—one “heroic-sized” and eleven “over-sized”—portraying important phases of womanhood. He believed that the statues in this garden setting would evoke “a simple, sincere, and somewhat reserved sentiment rather than over-worked sentimentality.”<sup>16</sup>

Elder Petersen of the selection committee suggested that Smith be commissioned to create eleven pieces of the monument and Florence Hansen be commissioned to sculpt the pioneer woman and child.<sup>17</sup> His suggestion was unanimously accepted by the committee, and on December 24, 1975, the sculptors were notified of the decision. Hansen “let out a YA-HOO!!” She felt “grateful to be part of such an important project, even though [her] contribution to the monument was to be only one of the twelve statues.” Smith was likewise enthusiastic but concerned about his ability to complete eleven statues in the two-year time frame suggested by the committee. Nevertheless, on January 29, 1976, contracts between the sculptors and the Relief Society general presidency were signed with a feathered pen as photographers captured the moment on film. On February 4, 1976, Smith and Hansen received priesthood blessings to help them portray in bronze the traditional role of womanhood. Of her blessing, Hansen penned, “My fears gave way to peace and assurance that if I put in the necessary time and effort and kept in tune, I would receive the help needed to work beyond my present capabilities.”<sup>18</sup>

As Smith and Hansen were beginning to ply their craft, Relief Society leaders circulated directives throughout the world announcing that the monument was to be a permanent reminder that “the woman in the contemporary world is not far removed from the woman of an earlier era. Her dominion is different. Woman’s place shifts, and crosscurrents may confuse and cloud. But whether gentling a modern wilderness or stepping forward bravely beside a handcart, each woman raises her own signposts on a unique yet universal journey.”<sup>19</sup> Directives also announced that the monument was to be completed and dedicated on March 17, 1977, the 135th anniversary of the organizational meeting of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.

The announced March 1977 date proved unrealistic from the start. First and foremost, the sculptors could not be rushed in their artistic endeavors. They contended that the creative result would be hampered when constrained within a forced deadline. Second, the funding vital for the success of the two-acre monument was expected to come from Relief Society sisters throughout the world; but for a sisterhood struggling to pay tithing, fast offerings, and budget funds in the 1970s, an additional contribution was out of reach for most. Third, the selection of the appropriate site for the monument took not only time but approval of the First Presidency. Then there were issues of laying sod and planting flowers, shrubbery, and trees mature enough to adorn a two-acre garden in time for the dedicatory services and the building of brick circles to depict the eternal roles of womanhood.

## The Artistic Endeavor

Smith and Hansen were asked to sculpt traditional images of women at a time when “modernism, avant garde, and abstractionism were pushing the boundaries of art” to abstract forms.<sup>20</sup> With few contemporary sculptors to give them advice, the Utah-based artists relied on each other to critique their statues as they plied their craft in the basement studio of Smith’s home located on the edge of Dry Creek in Alpine, Utah. The studio was not the professional environment that most sculptors demanded. Hansen wrote of Smith’s children wandering “in and out of the studio at will. He likes to have them around



him as he works. Their problems are his.”<sup>21</sup> Yet the artists’ attempt to form statues that depicted the traditional role of womanhood moved forward. “You trim and cut words or clay, until what is left says everything,” said Smith. To him, the statues were like a poem that “transcends the literalness of the immediate impact. . . . It was like writing a sonnet. Working with other people and meeting with other minds in the creative process imposed limitations on his vision, much as the strict rhyme and rhythm of the sonnet form control of a poet’s expression.”<sup>22</sup> As for Hansen, the more she worked on her statue *Teaching with Love*, the more she realized that the grand purpose of the monument was to “portray to the world the stand our Church takes concerning women; to honor women and their contributions to society; and to heighten women’s aspirations.”<sup>23</sup>

As the March 1977 deadline neared, an unexpected request by “the brethren” for a statue of Joseph and Emma Smith was presented to the artists.<sup>24</sup> Dennis Smith declined the commission due to his pressing obligation to complete eleven statues. Hansen accepted the commission but in her journal lamented the additional workload:

What a challenge Dennis and I both have—to complete our work in two years! Even though I have only two to do, (Joseph and Emma and ‘Teaching with Love’) my research will take a lot of time, as will commuting to Dennis’ studio. I must also attend to the needs of my home and family. And Dennis certainly has his challenge, with eleven pieces, but a man can spend his full time at the work because it’s his livelihood.

A man’s work necessarily takes precedence over other needs. He has a wife to keep interruptions from him, to care for the children, to keep up his clothes, to prepare his meals—in short, to *enable* him to work. But a woman artist is caught in the middle of both worlds. A woman artist is the wife trying to fulfill her family’s needs. She must take the interruptions. No one frees her for her creative work. It simply must be sandwiched in. But I’m dedicated to doing my best, grateful that I don’t carry Dennis’ overwhelming load.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of unforeseen obstacles and challenges, with classical music filling the air of the studio, the artists worked to complete their commissioned statues.



*Dennis Smith, In Her Mother's Footsteps. This statue, along with the other statues in that set, was made to represent the influence a woman has in the family setting. (Photo by Cody Bell, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)*

It was not until winter of 1978 that the statues had taken form, with only a few details left to correct. It was then that the sculptors turned their attention to designing the exact placement of the statues in brick eternal circles and to finding scriptural verses that lent support to their artistic renderings. The artists envisioned the statue of Joseph and Emma Smith with a small engraved plaque reading “All



I shall have to give to the poor, I shall give to this Society” placed in the first brick circle.<sup>26</sup> The centerpiece of the second circle was to be the heroic-sized *Woman* with a small plaque reading “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . . Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come” (Proverbs 31:10, 25).<sup>27</sup> Four supporting statues surrounding *Woman* were to represent talent,<sup>28</sup> knowledge,<sup>29</sup> prayer,<sup>30</sup> and compassion.<sup>31</sup> At the entrance of the third circle would be the statue *Courtship for Eternity* with a small plaque that read “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). Statues in the third circle were to represent a woman’s influence in the family setting—*Joyful Moment*,<sup>32</sup> *In the Family Circle*,<sup>33</sup> *In Her Mother’s Footsteps*,<sup>34</sup> *Preparing Her Son*,<sup>35</sup> and *Teaching with Love*.<sup>36</sup> In the fourth circle, the statue *Fulfillment* was to depict an old woman reviewing her life, confident that “her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her” (Proverbs 31:28).

As a whole, the thirteen statues in the garden setting were to convey to society at large God’s plan for womanhood or, as the Relief Society general presidency said in a formal statement prepared for the press, “The deeply significant figures are not only a pleasure to the eye, they are an enduring statement about women, a vision of the divine potential of the daughters of God, which we want to share with the world.”<sup>37</sup>

## Funding Needed

The Relief Society general presidency’s desire to share their vision of womanhood with the world proved near impossible as failure to collect necessary funding threatened to halt work on the monument. President Barbara Smith felt that if she “did not get at least 50 percent of the money . . . during the first six months of our drive, we would never raise the entire amount.” Publicity efforts were bumped up to encourage “each woman in the various Relief Society units” to contribute “to the monument and send in the money.” Despite such efforts, Smith lamented, “We did not have 50 percent of the necessary

funding by the end of the first six months.” Funding for the monument was at a plateau until President Kimball asked President Smith, “When I go on my tour of the Latin American countries and to the Far East, would you like me to encourage the women to send in their contributions for the Garden of Monuments?” Smith expressed gratitude for President Kimball’s interest in the monument and later said, “When our prophet made the request, the sisters could not wait to participate. We felt that we were witnessing a miracle as the money came in, and we soon had all we needed for the project.”<sup>38</sup> By March 1978 the funding necessary to complete the monument was in place.

The names of contributors are listed in volumes titled *Nauvoo Monument Contributions Stakes* (ten volumes), *Nauvoo Monument Contributions Memorial* (three volumes), and *Nauvoo Monument Contributions Missions* (one volume) and are housed in the Nauvoo Lands and Records Office. Perusal of the holographic volumes reveals that 99.4 percent of the contributors were female and that male contributors donated funds in memory of significant women in their lives. For example, in the Whittier First Ward of the Whittier California Stake, Brother Redding contributed funds in memory of Rintha Redding, his mother.<sup>39</sup>

## Selecting a Site

With funding in place and the statues all but done, Barbara Smith and Edythe K. Watson, a Relief Society board member, traveled to Nauvoo to select a site for the monument. J. LeRoy Kimball, president of Nauvoo Restoration Inc., suggested several sites in the historic city before assuring Smith and Watson that “the Lord [will] inspire you and help you to make this monument one that the whole world will want to see.” After days of walking around restored Nauvoo, Smith selected a two-acre site located behind the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center in what she believed was the heart of Nauvoo.<sup>40</sup>

After receiving the First Presidency’s approval for the site, Otis Hamilton was appointed to oversee volunteer laborers who laid sod; planted trees, shrubbery, and flowers; and created brick pathways and circles. An editor of the *Nauvoo Grapevine* described the work of Hamilton



*Dennis Smith, Joyful Moment. This statue was one of the most expensive in the collection. (Photo by Cody Bell, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)*

and the volunteers as weaving “brick walls, spacious lawns, flowers, shrubs and trees . . . into the two-acre memorial in a simple pattern consistent with the mood of historic Nauvoo.”<sup>41</sup> When the statues were uncrated and carefully placed on the brick circles, the monument was complete.

## Dedicatory Events

Nearly 7,200 Latter-day Saint women gathered in historic Nauvoo on Tuesday, June 27, 1978—the anniversary of the martyrdom of

Joseph and Hyrum Smith—to attend the dedicatory services of the Monument to Women Memorial Garden, the largest monument of its kind in the world. This was the largest gathering of Latter-day Saint women in Nauvoo since the days of Joseph Smith and his wife Emma. Due to the large number of women in the small town of Nauvoo, Relief Society leaders admonished all to “remember that large numbers of people and limited facilities can cause problems [and] to be patient and thoughtful with one another in all situations, so that this might be a rewarding and spiritual experience for all concerned.”<sup>42</sup>

Although June 27, 1978, was a “miserably hot day,” the women in Nauvoo were excited to be there, for each knew that she was a part of history in the making. They had come from every state in the union and across the sea to see the bronze Latter-day Saint answer to questions raised by feminists and proponents of the ERA. News reporters from across the country clamored to interview Church leaders, the women on the street, and the gifted sculptors. “I had to be out in the Garden most of the day in the sun,” wrote artist Florence Hansen. “I enjoyed the interviews at first, then realized these were cameramen and newspaper people from all over the country. I panicked. I wanted desperately to represent my church in an intelligent manner and I’m afraid I’ve failed.”<sup>43</sup>

In the evening of June 27, an invitation-only banquet was held for honored guests and Church leaders in the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center. At the banquet, remarks were made by President Kimball and President Smith.<sup>44</sup> As these two leaders stood side by side, many remarked that this was the first time since Joseph and Emma Smith spoke in old Nauvoo that the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Relief Society general president were in town at the same time. President Kimball read a statement from the First Presidency about the important message portrayed by the bronze statues that graced the garden: “To all who visit the Monument to Women at Nauvoo, we commend the vitally important messages so impressively portrayed by the inspiring sculptures and their beautiful surroundings. May this monument encourage men, women and children everywhere to better understand the divine destiny of families,

and singular opportunities given women through the gospel program. May this monument increase our appreciation for each noble woman who devoted her intelligence, compassion and spirituality to the fulfillment of the unique calls given her by the Lord.”<sup>45</sup>

Barbara Smith expressed her hope that “every woman seeing these bronze figures will see herself stepping into the future, confidently, with her head held high, knowing that there is within her the capacity of eternal progression and the strength to meet whatever life has to offer.”<sup>46</sup> Former general president of the Relief Society Belle S. Spafford, who had envisioned a larger monument to the Relief Society in Nauvoo than the one placed in 1933, said, “It is now my hope that those who may pass this way in the days ahead shall be rejuvenated in mind and spirit and favorably influenced by what they see.”<sup>47</sup>

After the remarks, honored guests were invited to tour the garden before attending an outdoor musical production entitled *Because of Elizabeth* performed on the grassy hillside in front of the Nauvoo Stake Center. The production, staged as if the actors were residing in Nauvoo in the 1840s, was a dramatic musical rebuttal to the ERA, as throughout the production, traditional motherhood and sisterhood were heralded as the answer to societal ills. When the main character, Elizabeth, said to her daughter, “There will always be problems to solve, but as long as there are people, there will be those who come forward to solve them,” the audience applauded loudly as if the link between the problem (ERA) and the solution (Monument to Women) were obvious.<sup>48</sup> When the production ended and the honored guests had retired for the evening, Florence Hansen entered the garden. She recalled, “I had the garden all to myself. Lights illuminate the statues at night. As I visited with each one, my soul lifted in prayer. I thanked my Creator for the great privilege of being part of this legacy to future generations—this unique Monument to Women.”<sup>49</sup>

On Wednesday, June 28, a downpour of rain occurred moments after 2,500 women had taken their seats inside a block-long, yellow-striped tent erected for the dedicatory services.<sup>50</sup> Excitement filled the tent as President Kimball and Barbara Smith took their places on the stand. After introductions were made, Bethine C. Church,



wife of Idaho senator Frank Church, read a letter from U.S. first lady Rosalynn Carter: “Women have traditionally led in devotion to human needs and concerns. . . . [I salute] the Relief Society for its long history of leadership in putting women’s talents and courage to work for the good of the community.” Norma W. Matheson, wife of Utah governor Scott M. Matheson, then extended greetings from the people of Utah. Illana D. Rovner, assistant deputy to Illinois governor James R. Thompson, remarked, “The state of Illinois lost its greatest resource when the Mormons, having suffered persecutions, left in 1846–47. Please come back. We need you.” Rovner then read a certificate of appreciation from Governor Thompson to the Relief Society for creating a memorial garden to women in Nauvoo and an official proclamation designating June 28, 1978, as Nauvoo Monument to Women Day in Illinois.<sup>51</sup>

Speakers at the dedicatory services included President Spencer W. Kimball, Elder Ezra Taft Benson, Elder L. Tom Perry, and Elder Bruce R. McConkie. President Kimball admonished women “to take care of the family,” and Elder Benson “underscored



*Dennis Smith, In the Family Circle. Onlookers are captured in this memorable moment of a child learning to walk, protected and encouraged within the family circle created by the arms of her parents. (Photo by Richard B. Crookston.)*

the need for women to ‘temper the home and marriage relationship with compassionate and loving influence.’” Elder Perry spoke of the Nauvoo Temple as once being the center of town and declared that “today a new centerpiece is added to give honor to women.” Elder McConkie described today’s women as “Rebekahlike, to be guides and lights in the family unit and to engineer and arrange so that they lead in the way that will bring about salvation in the Father’s kingdom.”<sup>52</sup> The dedicatory prayer was read by President Kimball. “We are very grateful, our Heavenly Father, for the statues that have been so artistically produced and for this park to keep us in permanent memory of the beauty of the people and the sisters and the gospel of Christ,” he said. “We ask thee to bless this property [park] and all that pertains to it as we now dedicate it for thy use and for the value that it can bring to thy kingdom. And we dedicate it unto thee . . . [in] the memory of thy Prophet, Joseph Smith, Junior, who founded and was the leader of thy people at this important stage of their spiritual existence. . . . In the name of thy Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.”<sup>53</sup>

At the close of the three dedicatory services held June 28–30, women spontaneously sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” as President Kimball was escorted out of the tent. His parting remark was that this had been “a day of fulfillment.”<sup>54</sup> The women were then encouraged to exit the tent and were reminded of an informal reception to be held at the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center in the afternoon where they could greet Church leaders and artists and be entertained by dancers and strolling musicians. For those wanting mementos of the dedicatory events—such as a small box engraved with a replica of the Joseph Smith Store on the lid, the soundtrack of *Because of Elizabeth*, postcards of the thirteen statues, or a souvenir program of the dedicatory services—order forms were available in the visitors’ center. Order forms for purchasing replicas of the women statues in porcelain, crystal-like glass, or bronze were also available. The cost for a bronze statue of *Woman* was \$600, but \$50 for the same statue in porcelain. The most expensive statues were *Joyful Moment* and *Fulfillment*, which sold for \$1,600 each in bronze.<sup>55</sup>

On July 6, 1978, at a meeting of the Relief Society general board with Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy and advisor to the Relief Society present, many expressed confidence that the dedicatory event had been a tremendous success. Elder Wirthlin said, “When you think of 7200 women and others who traveled [to Nauvoo] from far-distant parts of the earth, it’s remarkable that all arrived and came home safely, which indicates to me that the Lord was with us, that He wanted Nauvoo, I think, to be a great success, one that will help Relief Society, help the women of the Church and of the world.” Similar expressions followed, each glowing with praise. No one at that July 1978 meeting suggested that the dedicatory services of the Monument to Women Memorial Garden was an isolated event and not a lasting historical statement or that the monument would have little effect on the issue of women’s equality or on proponents of the ERA.<sup>56</sup> But such was the case.

Within and without The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the ERA debate raged on. Four months after the dedication of the monument in an October 12, 1978, letter addressed to “General Authorities, Regional Representatives, Stake Presidents, Mission Presidents, Bishops, and Branch Presidents in the United States,” the First Presidency stated:

With the nation facing the prospect of continuing debate on the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, we take this opportunity again to bring to your attention our position on this important question. . . . While the enactment or rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment must be accomplished by recognized political processes, we are convinced that because of its predictable results the matter is basically a moral rather than a political issue; and because of our serious concern over these moral implications, we have spoken against ratification, and without equivocation do so again. . . . Because of our serious concern, we urge our people to join actively with other citizens who share our concerns and who are engaged in working to reject this measure on the basis of its threat to the moral climate of the future.”<sup>57</sup>

Hundreds of Latter-day Saint women heeded the prophetic call and participated in conferences and rallies, using their time, talents,



*Dennis Smith, Teaching With Love. This statue portrays the idea that any skill is best taught through loving guidance. (Photo by Richard B. Crookston.)*

and means to oppose the ERA. Contrary to various news reports, Latter-day Saint women who did not agree with such tactics were not threatened or denied Church membership. Yet foul play was called by proponents of the ERA, who failed to see the proposed amendment as a strike against morality and the traditional family. At the October 1980 general conference of the Church, held over two years after the monument was dedicated, negative shouts were heard from women when President Marion G. Romney said, “It is proposed that we sustain President Spencer W. Kimball as prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, by the same sign [a call of ‘no’ from several in the congregation].” Rushing to the podium, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “President Romney, it appears that there are three negative votes. This is to advise those so voting that they may

meet with Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve following this session. Thank you.” President Romney said, “Thank you,” and the voting continued.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

The grand and glorious Monument to Women Memorial Garden, one of only two Church-funded projects in Nauvoo (the other being the reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple), has gone unnoticed by succeeding generations of Latter-day Saint women. What Barbara B. Smith had believed was the heart of Nauvoo and the best site for the monument is now a distant corner of Latter-day Saint restoration efforts in the historic town. The statues are tucked away out of sight, the brick circles are cracked, and the landscape is so overgrown that the statues cannot be seen from the parking lot of the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center. There is not a missionary standing in the garden to remind visitors of the ERA or of the Latter-day Saint response to it. Although the bronze statues still look new, few visitors to historic Nauvoo discover them. Latter-day Saint women today are as unfamiliar with the monument as they are with the proposed ERA. Like so many of our imprints of the present, the monument is largely forgotten. The angry ERA debates that so permeated the volatile decade of the 1970s are rapidly becoming vestiges of the past. A new generation grapples with other societal issues that threaten the home, and so it will be from decade to decade. Few, if any, look to a forgotten garden nestled in Nauvoo for the answer.

As I embrace the future with all of its unknowns, I pause to remember the Monument to Women Memorial Garden and my opportunity to represent BYU at the dedicatory events. I saw firsthand the work of Belva B. Ashton of the Relief Society general board and her committee of sixteen stake Relief Society presidents from Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois, and their work on programs, tickets, information sheets, and maps with reference points to parking, chemical toilets, public telephones, food courts, shuttle service, and shuttle stops.<sup>59</sup> I watched D. C. Young and his crew of Nauvoo residents erect a block-long, yellow-striped tent and set up folding



chairs, a podium, a sound system, and lights. I saw other volunteers cover tables with checked tablecloths, erect yellow canopies throughout historic Nauvoo, and make food items available for crowds of women near Brigham Young's home, Lucy Mack Smith's home, and the Cultural Hall in historic Nauvoo. Like so many guests, I ordered porcelain statues of the monument to replace the "Relief Society glass grapes" of the 1960s that adorned my coffee table. I entered the two-acre monument and walked through what appeared to be a Norman Rockwell painting—a throwback to a gentler American society. It was a nostalgic remembrance of a simpler, more traditional time in American society, a time that resonated with my mother but not with me. However, the statue *Woman and Her Talents* captured my attention, for it depicts a woman in a short skirt plying her talent by sculpting a face. As I looked closer, I discovered that the woman was sculpting the same face depicted on the much older woman in the statue *Fulfillment* and realized anew that the woman of the present must prepare to become the woman of the future. Touched by a bronzed statement in historic Nauvoo, I began to mold my future much like the woman depicted in *Woman and Her Talents*. Today, as the woman in *Fulfillment*, I look back and remember family ties and a wonderful friend, Richard Cowan, and I express thanks and best wishes to him.

*Susan Easton Black is a professor emerita of Church history and doctrine, Brigham Young University.*

## Notes

1. See Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

2. See "The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue," *Ensign*, March 1980. The Equal Rights Amendment read "Section 1: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article. Section 3: This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification." See Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and*

*Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005); Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism between the Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); and Sharon Whitney, *The Equal Rights Amendment* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984).

3. At that time, there were 10,400 local Relief Society units in seventy countries, with a total membership of over 1,400,000. See “A Moral Issue,” 13–14; and “The Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints presents ‘Because of Elizabeth: A Musical Production honoring the Dedication of the Monument to Women,’” in author’s possession.

4. “A Conversation with Sister Barbara B. Smith, Relief Society General President,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 8.

5. Marion Isabelle “Belle” Sims Smith Spafford, daughter of John Gibson Smith and Hester Sims, was born on October 8, 1895, in Salt Lake City. She married Willis Earl Spafford in the Salt Lake Temple. They became the parents of two children. Belle served on the Relief Society general board from 1935 to 1942, as second counselor to Relief Society general president Amy Brown Lyman from 1942 to 1945, and as the ninth Relief Society general president from 1945 to 1974. From 1969 to 1971 Belle was president of the National Council of Women. She died on February 2, 1982, in Salt Lake City. See Belle S. Spafford, “Oral History,” interviews by Jill Mulvay Derr, 1975–76, Church History Library; and Janet Peterson and Connie Lewis, “Making a Difference for Women: Belle S. Spafford,” *Ensign*, March 2006, 44–50.

6. The monument was placed on the site where Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo on March 17, 1842. The wording on the monument, “Keeping pace with the development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this society has become potent for benevolence, education, and progress among women,” proved disturbing to RLDS leadership in Nauvoo. RLDS president Israel Smith “ordered the marker removed from Reorganized Church property. . . . Wilford Wood carried out this directive for our Church, and the marker was placed on the Nauvoo Temple Square. Relief Society was not advised of this action at the time.” See Relief Society Memorial Monument at Nauvoo, prepared September 17, 1974, by Belle S. Spafford, for submittal to the First Presidency at the request of Elder Francis Gibbons, secretary. Lands and Records Office, Nauvoo, Illinois; Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 96.

7. Mark E. Petersen to the Relief Society presidency, October 30, 1974, Lands and Records Office.

8. Barbara Bradshaw Smith, daughter of Dan Delos Bradshaw and Dorothy Mills, was born on January 26, 1922, in Salt Lake City. Barbara married Douglas Hills Smith on June 16, 1941, in the Salt Lake Temple. They were the parents of seven children. From 1971 to 1974 Barbara served on the Relief Society general board. From 1974

to 1984 she was the Relief Society general president. Barbara worked extensively on family history and authored four books. She died on September 13, 2010, in Salt Lake City. See Barbara B. Smith, "Roots and Wings," devotional address, February 9, 1978, Marriott Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

9. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 97.

10. Florence Hansen designed small parts for Ford Motor Company and created molds for ceramic hobbyists in Salt Lake City. See "Florence Peterson Hansen," in *Monument to Women: Nauvoo, Illinois Dedicatory Services* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 28.

11. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 97.

12. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 97.

13. Dora D. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze: The Story of Florence Hansen and the Nauvoo Monument to Women*, 25. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

14. Dennis Smith was best known to the Selection Committee for his 1969 statues of *Adam and Eve* on display at the Temple Square Visitors' Center in Salt Lake City. See "Dennis Smith," in *Monument to Women*, 26–27.

15. Dennis Smith enrolled in a master's program at Brigham Young University, but after a year of study felt restless and discontent: "I found myself arguing with everyone in the department. I just wasn't happy. Underneath, I knew if I finished a master's I would end up teaching, and that scared me. I really wanted to be an artist." "Dennis Smith," in *Monument to Women*, 26–27.

16. "Dennis Smith," in *Monument to Women*, 27; Laurie J. Wilson and Longin Lonczynna, "The Nauvoo Monument to Women: A Photo Essay," *Ensign*, March 1977, 28–32.

17. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 98.

18. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze*, 27–28, 31.

19. "Woman, a Divine Dedication," in *Monument to Women*, 9.

20. M. Sue Bergin, "A Sense of Place, A Sense of Family: Artist Creates Sculptures for Denmark," *BYU Magazine*, Spring 2000, 56.

21. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze*, 41.

22. "Dennis Smith," in *Monument to Women*, 26–27.

23. Wilson and Lonczynna, "The Nauvoo Monument to Women," 28.

24. The "brethren" had suggested that the statue of Joseph and Emma be "heroic size." The Relief Society general presidency countered with the following rationale: Sister Florence Hansen had a "strong feeling that increasing the size of the figures might give the impression of trying to deify the Prophet Joseph and his wife. The Church is sometimes accused of this by nonmembers. Sister Hansen also feels that people identify better with the figures in their present size, which is somewhat larger than life size (about seven feet). . . . We recognize . . . the legitimate concern over emphasizing the importance of the

Prophet Joseph Smith, particularly in relation to his understanding of the place of women in the gospel plan. If this importance needs to be strengthened, we feel there are other alternatives to increasing the size of the actual figures." See Memorandum from the Relief Society general presidency to Elder Mark E. Peterson, April 26, 1977, regarding the Joseph and Emma statue, Lands and Records Office.

25. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze*, 30.

26. Minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, March 17, 1842, 13, Church History Library.

27. Of the statue *Woman*, Barbara Smith said, "I hope every woman that looks at that central figure sculpted in bronze will see herself stepping forward into the future, confidently, with her head held high, knowing that there is within her the capacity for eternal progression, the strength to meet whatever situations life has to offer, and the right to choose the direction of her life." Smith, "Roots and Wings," 7.

28. *Woman and Her Talents* portrays the thirteenth article of faith: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."

29. *Learning* portrays Doctrine and Covenants 88:118: "Yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."

30. *Prayer* portrays Alma 37:37: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."

31. *Compassionate Woman* portrays Proverbs 31:20: "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."

32. *Joyful Moment* portrays Psalm 127:3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."

33. *In the Family Circle* portrays Doctrine and Covenants 68:28: "And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord."

34. *In Her Mother's Footsteps* portrays Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

35. *Preparing Her Son* portrays Proverbs 6:20: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

36. *Teaching with Love* portrays Doctrine and Covenants 46:8: "Seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given."

37. "Message from the Relief Society General Presidency: A Vision of Potential," in *Monument to Women*, 3. "As we contemplated what the Relief Society's contribution to the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Church might be, we acted on several possibilities that emerged clearly," wrote Barbara Smith. "We had four full-sized, bronze replicas of the Nauvoo statues cast and placed in the plaza of the Church Office Building as a gift to the Church," Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 157.

38. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 99. See also Spencer W. Kimball, "Loving One Another," *Ensign*, November 1976, 127.

39. See the compilations *Nauvoo Monument Contributions Memorial*, *Nauvoo Monument Contributions Stakes*, and *Nauvoo Monument Contributions*

*Mission*, which are housed in the Lands and Records Office in Nauvoo, Illinois. The volumes list contributors alphabetically by stakes, wards, and districts, with no other biographical or identifying information. Lands and Records Office.

40. Smith, *Fruitful Season*, 100–101.

41. “Monument to Women Dedicated This Week,” *Nauvoo Grapevine*, June 29, 1978. See also “Travel,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1987; and Ida P. Kruse, “With all camps filled to capacity,” *Sonora News*, June 29, 1978.

42. “Courtesy,” in *Nauvoo Monument to Women Important Information*, in author’s possession.

43. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze*, 84.

44. Elder Harold B. Lee and Relief Society general president Belle S. Spafford were together in Nauvoo at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Nauvoo Visitors’ Center on May 24, 1969. See Relief Society Memorial Monument.

45. Message from the First Presidency, “Limitless and Eternal,” in *Monument to Women*, 1.

46. William Simbro, “Mormon Women honored in Sculptures,” *Des Moines Register*, June 25, 1978; and “A Monument to Womankind,” *Hawk Eye*, June 25, 1978.

47. Janet Brigham, “News of the Church: Nauvoo Monument to Women,” *Ensign*, September 1978, 75.

48. *Because of Elizabeth* was written and directed by Moana B. Bennett, with music by Larry Bastian and lyrics by Duane Hiatt. Rehearsals for *Because of Elizabeth* began in May 1978 with a cast and crew of 240 members of the Champaign Illinois Stake. Some 3,000 yards of material was used to create 500 costumes. Program for *Because of Elizabeth*; see “Outdoor Pageant,” in *Important Information*. In author’s possession.

49. Flack, *Testimony in Bronze*, 86.

50. Gerry Avant, “Nauvoo Park Honors Women,” *LDS Church News*, July 1, 1978; and Brigham, “Nauvoo Monument to Women,” *Ensign*, September 1978, 72.

51. “Illinois State Official hails achievements of Mormons,” *LDS Church News*, July 8, 1978, 3. See also Brigham, “Nauvoo Monument to Women,” 73.

52. Brigham, “Nauvoo Monument to Women,” 72–75.

53. President Spencer W. Kimball, dedicatory prayer, *Monument to Women*, Nauvoo, Illinois, June 1978, 1, 10–11.

54. Brigham, “Nauvoo Monument to Women,” 72, 75.

55. Nauvoo Monument to Women order form, in author’s possession.

56. Reports on the Dedication of the Relief Society Nauvoo Monument to Women by Members of the Relief Society General Board, July 6, 1978, Lands and Records Office.

57. First Presidency Statements on the ERA, October 12, 1978, in “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue.”



58. Marion G. Romney, "The Sustaining of Church Officers," in Conference Report, October 1980, 25.

59. For a listing of stake Relief Society presidents, see "Acknowledgments," in *Monument to Women in Nauvoo, Illinois*.