

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY: REST FOR THE SAINTS

Gloria and Alyn Andrus—Volunteer Faculty in Nauvoo

Editor's note: This is from letters by Gloria and Alyn. While they did not intend publication, we think readers will enjoy learning about conditions in Nauvoo and sharing the Andruses' excitement about the Nauvoo Temple and the city.

We hope you are able to see pictures of the reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple on one or more web sites (some sites are listed below). Actually, the wording on the front of the temple says that this temple was begun on April 6, 1841. That inspires me each time I pass the temple and glance up at it. What a thrilling day it was for those of us in Nauvoo when the statue of Angel Moroni was hoisted into place. I'll let Alyn's journal entry describe the day:

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On Friday, September 21, 2001, Gloria and I saw 'another angel fly in the midst of heaven' to the top of the Nauvoo Temple. Along with many other people we watched a huge crane hoist Moroni's gleaming gold-colored statue to its designated place on the tower high atop the temple. As it was positioned facing west toward the Mississippi River and beyond that to the Iowa plains across which the Saints traveled many years ago, chimes in the tower were heard for the first time. The timing was perfect; the effect was stunning and moving. Brigham Young predicted when the Saints evacuated Nauvoo in 1846 that they would one day return (Crockett, 'The Nauvoo Temple: A Monument of the Saints,' *Nauvoo Journal*, Fall 1999). Moroni's statue high above the temple is a beautiful and obvious reminder of that prediction and its fulfillment. Besides, it is a reminder of the passage of scripture in *Revelation 14:6* which says: 'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Significantly, that passage was fulfilled when Moroni delivered plates of gold to Joseph Smith on September 21, 1827. The hoisting of Moroni's statue to its exalted position on the temple commemorates this important event in history.

The temple is a beautiful building, at least to Gloria and me. It is a replica of the original temple built by the Saints in the early 1840's, except its building materials are modern. Whereas the Saints used limestone quarried from north of the temple site about a mile, the modern temple is constructed of concrete from base to top. On the outside, concrete walls are lined with limestone facing quarried in Alabama, cut in Idaho Falls, and tooled in Utah. Limestone blocks are held in place by means of metal plates bolted to the concrete. In size (rounded off to the next highest number), the temple measures 53,600 square feet. By comparison,

the Idaho Falls Temple measures 87,000 square feet. In its display of moonstones, sun stones, and star stones, it compares with the Salt Lake Temple.

Around the base are moon stones. Sun stones surround the temple higher up. At the top of the temple are star stones. My students asked me what all these stones mean. I told them I didn't know what Joseph Smith had in mind exactly, but in *Corinthians*, Paul the Apostle compares the sun's glory to the Celestial Kingdom, the moon's glory to the Terrestrial Kingdom, and the stars' glory to the Telestial Kingdom. Now, in *Doctrine and Covenants* 76, we learn that those who inhabit the Celestial Degree of Glory enjoy a 'fullness of God's glory' and the presence of 'God and his Christ' (verses 56 and 52). Those who inhabit the Terrestrial Degree of Glory 'receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the Father' (verse 77). And finally, those who inhabit the Telestial Degree of Glory receive ministrations of the Holy Spirit through the Terrestrial Degree (verse 86).

The Nauvoo Temple occupies a prominent spot on the bluff overlooking lower Nauvoo. However, the view from the river is restricted by St. Mary's Monastery (now owned by the LDS Church). We think the Monastery will have to go, inasmuch as the Church wants its temples to be prominent in view as a symbol of salvation for mankind.

In one source we've read: "The land on which temples of this dispensation are to be built must meet certain standards. Foremost, it must have an elevation so the structure would provide an imposing view. Saints took seriously the Biblical admonition not to hide light under a bushel. God's temple, they rationalized, deserved an impressive location" (*The Kirtland Temple: A Historical Narrative*, Roger D. Launius, 36-37). Thus we see that temples need to be located conspicuously to point the way to Exaltation, to remind us continually of the strait gate and narrow path that we read about in *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:22-24.

Shortly after we arrived here, I met one of the nuns from the monastery next door, Sister Denise. Alyn and I visited St. Mary's recently for a tour of the chapel with her. She is a delightful lady and very knowledgeable about the history and workings of the monastery in Nauvoo. She came to the monastery at age 19, and has been here for 49 years. The chapel itself could be considered gaudy in the Mormon world, but we thought the art work was quite good. At one point in our visit, Sister Denise mentioned, rather pensively, that they all wonder what "you [meaning our church] will do with our chapel." Incidentally, Sister Denise and 15 other nuns live in the Parley P. Pratt home (which is the building we see out our apartment window); a rather large cross sits at the apex of the roof.

Mentioning the Pratt house reminds me of the jump in real estate prices in Nauvoo with the announcement of the rebuilding of the temple, similar to the real estate prices which came with the announcement that Ricks would become BYU-Idaho. The current owner of the Hyrum

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Smith home and farm on the northeast outskirts of Nauvoo is asking \$2.5 million. The Pratt home is also for sale; at least it was, we understand. One of our current faculty members is a descendant of Parley P. Pratt. When asked if he wanted to buy the old family home, he replied that he would if they would sell it for the amount the original Parley received—\$900. The Catholic parish (an old cathedral with bell tower) stands immediately south of the Pratt house, on the site where Orson Pratt had his home.

The Church is building about 25 buildings on the “flats” in which to house the 60-plus temple missionary couples who will be called to serve in the temple in six-month rotations. These units will house two, three, or four couples each. They are also, architecturally, “period” homes. It has been interesting to watch these being built. When finished, the Nauvoo flats will come a little closer to looking like they may have looked before the Saints were driven from their homes.

Back to Sister Denise: a group of Benedictine sisters came to Nauvoo in 1874 and established themselves across from the temple lot in the vacant Nauvoo Legion Arsenal. When they could afford to construct the building we now occupy, they built right around the arsenal in a semi-circle, then razed the arsenal. Sister Denise expresses that those remaining in the monastery realize their “ministry” here in Nauvoo is at an end. They will move to their new retirement home in Rock Island, Illinois, at the end of November.

One of our faculty members was recently visiting with the local Methodist minister. This minister told him that all of the churches in Nauvoo are losing membership except the Mormons. Cal Andreason, our Student Activities Director, attended the RLDS Sunday worship this past week; the entire congregation numbered only 25.

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The Church started buying property in Illinois in 1903. In that year, the Carthage jail was purchased by President Joseph F. Smith (son of Hyrum) for \$4,000. The site was put into the hands of a caretaker who rented it out until 1938. Starting in that year, action was taken to restore the jail as a shrine to the memory of Joseph and Hyrum, while at the same time opening it to visitors (*Nauvoo Fact Book*, Givens, 110).

Ramus is a small settlement just north of Carthage which we visited recently. Joseph Smith’s sisters Sophronia and Catherine lived in Ramus, and Catherine is buried there. One of Catherine’s descendants, Estel Neff, owns the local LDS bookstore. He was a member of the RLDS church before his baptism into the LDS church about four years ago, and he still wears his long white beard. His wife is a Methodist, but attends with Brother Neff occasionally.

Main Street in Nauvoo runs north and south. Because the “flats” in Nauvoo are on a peninsula, our Main Street is in the Guinness Book

of Records as being the only street in America which begins and ends on the same river.

Then there's an ice cream place on Mullholland Street which serves wonderful homemade ice cream. It's called Mrs. Ippi's Ice Cream. I pronounced the name several times before I caught on that it was really "Mississippi's Ice Cream."

On April 4, 1999, when the rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple was announced in General Conference, it is reported that Saints gathered in the Nauvoo Stake Center most irreverently shouted for joy; the tumult subsided into silence, and then sobs and sniffing could be heard. Membership in the Nauvoo First (and only) Ward on that day in 1999 was 170 members (membership is now over 300; attendance at Sacrament Meeting, including full-time missionaries and visitors, on 28 October 2001 was 717). Alyn's journal entry soon after we arrived in Nauvoo expresses his personal feeling.

One more entry I must make while it weighs on my mind. Buildings do not make communities. Restored buildings do not bring back communities that were once alive. Old Nauvoo is not found in its buildings, even in its new and rising temple; but the buildings, especially the temple, remind us of its people with their dreams and aspirations, their faith and commitment to God, and their willingness to sacrifice all they possessed, even the lives of loved ones and their own lives as evidence of that faith and commitment. They came to Nauvoo when it was nothing but a wilderness. They labored and gave all they had to give, their feeble energy and their lives, in making it a City Beautiful. Then in response to their prophet's call, they turned their backs on all their accomplishments and once again plunged into a wilderness where they would again give all they had to give, their feeble and fading energy and their lives, in another hegira and search for peace.

Luman Andros Shurtliff exemplifies the steely resolve and total commitment of which I write. He was a worker on the original temple who wrote in his personal history:

...my cloths was worn out and my family so destitute I thought I best stay at home and labor to get something before hand that I could leave my family comfortable in the fall. I had helped lay the foundation of our temple and now wished to do something more towards the building of it. We labored 10 hours in a day, day after day, on and in the water and at night go to the temple office to get something to take our families for supper and breakfast.... I had some milk from my cows and by putting it half water and then we could get corn or cornmeal we could live well for them times that is we could hull or boil corn and put that with milk and water and ate it sweetly and work ten hours on the temple.... And thank God that I and my family was thus blessed.... I had seen those that cut stone by the year eat nothing but parched or browned

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corn for breakfast and take some in their pocket for dinner and go to work singing the songs of Zion.

In a sense, the buildings of old Nauvoo, set in their river environment, help me to achieve the association with such stalwart people as Luman Shurtliff. Old Nauvoo reunites Gloria and me with our remarkable ancestors. It turns our minds and hearts to ‘the fathers’ and enables us to take from them strong faith and powerful commitment to do, according to their pattern, what God has given us to do. In the spirit of that pioneer pattern, I quote what Joseph the Prophet told his people in 1835:

When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do His will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek His face in vain.

May God strengthen us to endure to the end as He did those wonderful predecessors of ours, the Saints and citizens of old Nauvoo.

WEB SITES WITH NAUVOO TEMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS

www.deseretbook.com/nauvoo

www.ldschurchtemples.com (click on Photo Gallery)

www.ldstemplepage.org/newnauvoo.html

www.meridianmagazine.com (click on the article “Nauvoo: From the Outside In”)