

# Nauvoo Observed

William Mulder

Nauvoo was a city of Saints and strangers, a coexistence, we may remember, that marked the holy commonwealths of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay as well. The Prophet, confident that even those who came to scoff might stay to pray, welcomed all the world to Nauvoo. For the Saints, Nauvoo was to be a refuge; for strangers, a retreat. The twin symbols of its sacred and secular character were the temple and a hostelry, the Nauvoo House, which were conceived, planned, and constructed in tandem. James Sloan, a lawyer and immigrant convert from Ireland, who served for a time as city recorder (despite his uncertain spelling ability), speaks of the Temple and the Nauvoo House in the same breath in an 1842 letter to a cousin in Detroit: "There is a Nauvoo House now erecting, for the reception of Strangers. It is Cellar high of Stone, the rem[ainin]g 3 or 4 Stories will be Brick, roofed as the temple [will be]."<sup>1</sup> The Prophet made completion of the Nauvoo House particularly urgent and, in his usual combination of the visionary and the practical, gave the enterprise the twin force of revelation and incorporation as the Nauvoo House Association, with stock to be sold at fifty dollars a share.<sup>2</sup> More than one traveler took humorous satisfaction in observing that Joseph Smith was not only President of the Church and mayor of the town, but also its hotel keeper!

Meanwhile, the Prophet and Emma played host at the Mansion House, by all accounts a grand establishment, which was claimed to have the largest stable in Illinois, large enough to accommodate seventy-five horses. By the beginning of 1844, putting up all and sundry—paying guests as well as indigent Saints—proved too great a burden; consequently, the Prophet, pressed by debt and harassed by lawsuits, rented the Mansion and stables to Ebenezer Robinson, who planned to run them as a public house, with three rooms

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reserved for the Prophet and with board provided for his family and his horses.<sup>3</sup>

Through all Nauvoo's vicissitudes, the hospitable intent persisted until the death of the Prophet, the revocation of the city charter, and the movement to drive the Mormons from the city. These events made strangers objects of suspicion and targets of the "Whistling and Whittling Brigade,"<sup>4</sup> a group of Nauvoo men and boys who followed outsiders around like bird dogs until the strangers left town. Hospitality, perforce, had turned to hatred, a sorry decline from the city's original vision as a gathering place where Saints and strangers alike could engage in productive labors while awaiting the Millennium.

In the initial euphoria of that vision, Nauvoo found itself ideally situated. Nauvoo was a frontier town, a river town, enjoying—and risking—all the social and economic implications associated with such an area. In a decade of rapidly expanding traffic up and down the Mississippi River and accelerated change in the West, the river was both a dividing line and a mediator between wilderness and civilization. Nauvoo on the east bank and Montrose in the "Half-Breed Tract" on the west bank epitomize the connection. It is no surprise that Indian chiefs and tribal dignitaries were among the visitors to Nauvoo; at one time forty Sac and Fox Indians crowded into the council room where they encamped for the night.<sup>5</sup> Another time Chief Keokuk and about one hundred chiefs and braves of the Sac and Fox Indian Tribes called on the Prophet, who escorted them with the band playing to the grove, where he preached about the Book of Mormon and its promises to them. Keokuk said "he had a Book of Mormon at his wigwam." Then he continued, "I believe you are a great and good man; I look rough, but I also am a son of the Great Spirit." "Good food" and "a specimen of their dancing" followed this exchange.<sup>6</sup>

As Robert Flanders has said, "Nauvoo in the early and mid-forties was a prime attraction to the Mississippi River tourist traffic, and the Prophet and the Nauvoo Temple were objects of particular interest."<sup>7</sup> Dennis Rowley, who has given the fullest economic picture of Nauvoo as a river town, indicates the extent of that traffic: "[In the lead trade] an average of ten steamers a week passed by or stopped at Nauvoo during the spring, summer, and fall months," besides smaller craft and "other steamers carrying furs, Indians, lumber, . . . military supplies, and soldiers. . . . By mid-1843, four or five steamboats a day stopped at Nauvoo."<sup>8</sup> The daily entries



in Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* frequently record river arrivals—official delegations, unnamed but notable persons, whole companies of Saints from England who had come by way of New Orleans and St. Louis, and excursion parties. The entry for July 4, 1843, notes the arrival of three steamers with eight hundred to a thousand “visitors and Saints” who had come from downriver—St. Louis, Quincy, and Burlington—for the holiday celebrations.<sup>9</sup>

“On my way up the Mississippi”—so begins many a travel narrative, sometimes with Nauvoo as a passing attraction on the itinerary, but just as often with the “City of the Mormons,” a reference much used in the press, as destination. Throughout its brief life, Nauvoo in its splendid setting on a great bend in the river, rising from the flats to a “city set upon a hill,” enjoying all that this phrase connotes in biblical and American history, drew instant admiration. Even the dour Rev. Henry Caswell exclaimed that the view of the winding Mississippi from temple hill was “truly grand.”<sup>10</sup> In 1844 Josiah Quincy from Boston rhapsodized that “the curve in the river enclosed a position lovely enough to furnish a site for the Utopian communities of Plato or Sir Thomas More.”<sup>11</sup> It is a pity that Charles Dickens traveled down the Ohio in 1842 to where it joined the Mississippi only to turn back at St. Louis. Had he seen Nauvoo as his contemporaries were seeing it, he might have changed the tone of his caustic *American Notes* in which he calls the Mississippi “an enormous ditch . . . choked and obstructed everywhere by huge logs and whole forest trees.” He was glad to leave the Father of Waters, “dragging its slimy length and ugly freight toward New Orleans.”<sup>12</sup>

The popular Mississippi panoramas painted on endless rolls of canvas which toured the country in the 1840s invariably included a prospect of Nauvoo. Henry Lewis, for example, an English carpenter and self-made artist who came to St. Louis in 1836, undertook “*a gigantic and continuous painting*” (italics in the original) of the river, which was called “a great national work.”<sup>13</sup> In 1848 he built a “floating studio,” a platform about 8' by 11' laid on two fifty-foot canoes fastened by beams, rigged with a square sail and a jib, and equipped with oars. From the top of his cabin he had a vantage point for sketching. For our purposes, his journal entries for 1848 are as interesting as his paintings. As John Frances McDermott recounts in *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi*,

At sunset on the twenty-ninth of July the sketching party stopped at the “celebrated city” of Nauvoo. Lewis immediately “hurried to take a look at the temple and see it by sun set.” He was much



impressed: "Taking into consideration the circumstances under which it was built, it is a wonderful building and considering too that it is of no particular style it does not in the least offend the eye by its uniqueness. . . . It bears a nearer resemblance to the Bysantium or Roman Grecian style than any other altho' the capitals and bases are entirely unique still the cornices are grecian in part."<sup>14</sup>

On the following day, Lewis explored the interior of the Temple and called on Joseph Smith's widow, who, though married to "a man by the name of Bideman . . . is always call'd the widow Smith." Lewis describes her as "a remarkably fine looking woman I should judge of some 35 or 40 years of age with a strongly mark'd tho' kind and intelligent face on whose surface are the marks of much care and suffering." Lewis adds that she "supports herself and family by keeping one of the largest and best hotels in the place and seems to be doing a thriving business." Lewis sketched "Nauvoo from Above" and drew the detail of the molding and cornice of the Temple as well as a view of the baptismal font in the basement. "Nauvoo and the Mormons," says McDermott, "were still 'news.'"<sup>15</sup>

In 1849 *Graham's Magazine* reproduced an engraving of "The Mormon Temple at Nauvoo" from yet another Mississippi panorama, John Rowson Smith's depiction of "nearly four thousand miles of American scenery" extending over four miles of canvas.<sup>16</sup> An 1848 pamphlet describing his leviathan panorama says the artist passed over "many small towns, as Bloomington, Oquawka, Clarksville, Quincy, Warsaw, &c. as they would prove uninteresting to the mass, and present no peculiarities," but he made the most of Nauvoo, "a Mormon City, and settlement, now deserted," which he regarded as "one of the finest locations for a town upon the river. . . . The great Mormon Temple stands out conspicuous. [Or 'stood,' for a footnote adds that 'on the 9th of October (since this pamphlet was prepared for the press) this splendid edifice was entirely destroyed by fire.']" Smith took his pictorial travelog to England and the Continent and showed it by invitation at Balmoral, where Queen Victoria herself got a glimpse of the Mormon city and the Temple, which Smith called "the finest Building in the west."<sup>17</sup>

Nauvoo was one of those towns suiting Smith's educational and scientific purposes: he intended his panorama to be a document of historical value. "In America," he wrote, "the country itself is ever on the change. . . . Where the forest now overshadows the earth, and affords shelter to the wild beast, corn fields, orchards, towns, and villages will give a new face to the scene, and tell of industry



and enterprise. . . . There will be . . . mansions in the place of huts, and streets where the foot path and deer tracks are now only visible.”<sup>18</sup> In its prime, Nauvoo epitomized the promise. An early visitor writing to the *Alexandria Gazette*, an account reprinted in the *Quincy Whig* on October 17, 1840, described Nauvoo’s beginnings: “No sect, with equal means, has probably ever suffered and achieved more in so short a time. . . . Around this place as their centre, they are daily gathering from almost every quarter; and several hundred new houses, erected within the last few months, attest to the passing traveller the energy, industry, and self-denial with which the community is imbued.” The correspondent found the Prophet indignant that President Van Buren could do nothing for the redress of Mormon grievances “lest it should interfere with his political prospects in Missouri. *He is not as fit,*” said the Prophet, “*as my dog, for the chair of state;* for my dog will make an effort to protect his abused and insulted master, while the present chief magistrate will not so much as lift his finger to relieve an oppressed and persecuted community of freemen, whose glory it has been that they were citizens of the United States.’

“You hold in your hands,” the visitor ventured, “a large amount of political power, and your society must exert a tremendous influence, for weal or woe, in the coming elections.’

“Yes,” said the Prophet, “I know it; and our influence, as far as it goes, we intend to use.”<sup>19</sup> That determination would cast a long shadow over Mormon relations with their neighbors.

What was happening at Nauvoo aroused the curiosity of many, whose opinions, formed through hearsay and the press, were as various as their dispositions to believe or disbelieve. The Saints’ reputation ran a twofold hazard—disrepute in Missouri as trouble-makers and the disrepute by association of the early settlers of Hancock County, Illinois, who were “in popular language hard cases.” Said Governor Thomas Ford, on whom no love is lost in Mormon memory: “Rogues will find each other out, and so will honest men.” It was the governor’s view that the Mormons also were “hard cases.”<sup>20</sup> But as the Mormon refugees began to arrive from Missouri, the citizens of Quincy kept an open mind and were initially sympathetic. As early as February 27, 1839, the Democratic Association of Quincy resolved “that the strangers recently arrived here from the state of Missouri, known by the name of the ‘Latter-day Saints,’ are entitled to our sympathy and kindest regard, and that we recommend to the citizens of Quincy to extend all the kindness in



their power to bestow on the persons who are in affliction." The association further resolved "to explain to our misguided fellow citizens, if any such there be, who are disposed to excite prejudices and circulate unfounded rumors; and particularly to explain to them that these people have no design to lower the wages of the laboring class, but to procure something to save them from starving."<sup>21</sup>

The town of Warsaw was a different matter; its citizens harbored prejudice motivated by jealousy of Nauvoo's rising eminence. Thomas Sharp of the *Warsaw Signal* (scorned as Tom-ass in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*) baited the Mormons from the beginning, even after he sat at the Prophet's table. Some outsiders, on the other hand, like landholder Horace R. Hotchkiss, tied their fortunes to Mormon success and out of a concern for their own investments wished them well. "Of course I feel an interest in the prosperity of Nauvoo," Hotchkiss once wrote the Prophet, "the more so, certainly, as their pecuniary interest is identified with my own."<sup>22</sup>

Within a year of the *Gazette* correspondent's optimistic account, the Honorable Stephen A. Douglas, then justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois and judge of the Fifth Judicial Court, visited Nauvoo with Cyrus Walker of Macomb. They were astonished at the improvements that had been made. At the meeting ground, Judge Douglas thanked the citizens of Nauvoo "for conferring upon him the freedom of the city" and praised their location, their improvements, their enterprise, and their industry. Nauvoo found these officials a refreshing change from those in Missouri.<sup>23</sup>

Ambiguities abound in the accounts about Nauvoo, particularly in descriptions of the Prophet, the city's chief attraction. Visitors were not prepared for a populist prophet whose vernacular speech differed strikingly from the formal eloquence of his published revelations. To assess such a religious leader was difficult. He was minister and magistrate, storekeeper, innkeeper, and landlord, as well as a man who worked his farm, who wrestled with members of his congregation, who could take an assailant by the throat, and who could never eat, his wife said, without his friends. Memorable glimpses abound in the accounts of those who came to see and judge the Prophet for themselves.

On March 22, 1842, the *Advocate* of Columbus, Ohio, published a Mason's estimate of Nauvoo and the Prophet. The correspondent, who signed himself simply "An Observer, Adams County," wrote, "I had supposed, from what I had previously heard, that I should witness an impoverished, ignorant and bigoted



population, completely priest-ridden, and tyrannized over by Joseph Smith, the great prophet of these people. . . . On the contrary, I saw no idleness, no intemperance, no noise, no riot. . . . With the religion of these people I have nothing to do; if they can be satisfied with the doctrines of their new revelation, they have a right to be so. . . . I protest against the slanders." This observer attended the installation of the officers of Nauvoo's new Masonic lodge and commented, that "never in my life did I witness a better-dressed or a more orderly and well-behaved assemblage," which he estimated at over five thousand. He stayed three days and enjoyed the hospitality of "the celebrated Old Joe Smith," whom to his surprise he found "instead of the ignorant and tyrannical upstart . . . a sensible, intelligent, companionable and gentlemanly man. . . . He is a fine-looking man about thirty-six years of age, and has an interesting family." "The temple and Nauvoo House, now building," he wrote, "will probably in beauty of design, extent and durability, excel any public building in the state, and will both be [en]closed before winter"<sup>24</sup>—again, temple and hostelry symbols of Nauvoo sacred and secular.

The following July, a phrenologist, a Mr. A. Crane, informed the editor of the *Nauvoo Wasp* "that a large number of persons in different places [had] manifested a desire to know the phrenological development of Joseph Smith's head. I have examined the Prophet's head," wrote Crane, "and he is perfectly willing to have the chart published." Crane marked the chart to show the development of the Prophet's "much-talked-of brain, and let the public judge for themselves," he said, "whether phrenology proves the reports against him true or false." Amused, the Prophet allowed the *Wasp* to reproduce Crane's analysis of his "Propensities," "Feelings," "Sentiments," "Perceptives," and "Reflectives"—to use the language of the popular science of the day. "Amativeness," under "Propensities" on the chart, judged the Prophet to have "extreme susceptibility" and to be "passionately fond of the company of the other sex." "Mirthfulness" under "Reflectives," rated high: "wit, fun, mirth, perception and love of the ludicrous." "I give the foregoing a place in my history," wrote the Prophet, "for the gratification of the curious, and not for [any] respect [I entertain for] phrenology."<sup>25</sup>

In the fall of that year, 1842, the *New York Herald* published a letter from James Arlington Bennett, a "counselor at law" (not to be confused with the renegade John C. Bennett), who defended Joseph against accusations of having plotted the assassination of ex-Governor Boggs of Missouri. James, calling himself a friend of



Joseph Smith and “the friend of all good Mormons, as well as other good men,” expressed regret that the quarrel between the Prophet and John C. Bennett had “found its way to the public eye.” James looked “at the history of past ages [to] see the force of fanaticism and bigotry in bringing to the stake some of the best men. . . . Smith, I conceive, has just as good a right to establish a church, if he can do it, as Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Fox, or even King Henry the Eighth. . . . From what I know of the people,” he wrote, “I fully believe that all the real, sincere Mormons would die sooner than abandon their faith and their religion. . . . It is the best policy, both of Missouri and Illinois,” he concluded, “to let them alone,” and he hoped ex-Governor Boggs would withdraw his demand for the Prophet.<sup>26</sup>

But with curiosity and concern by now on a national as well as local level, such advice could not be heeded, and the affairs at Nauvoo generated a crescendo of news and opinion. Some thirty-eight papers in the region alone, according to Cecil Snider’s study of the press in Illinois and contiguous states,<sup>27</sup> devoted thousands of columns to notices, correspondence, editorials, charges and counter-charges, and memorials and proclamations expressing extremes of feeling and opinion before the showdown between Mormons and anti-Mormons in 1846. As lawyer Sloan put it in the days of the Missouri troubles, “This driving and Mobbing business you must have got some knowledge of through the public Papers, if not otherwise.”<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile all kinds of travelers continued to visit Nauvoo—tourists, journalists, ministers, officials, artists, merchants, and foreigners. Among the visitors from abroad was Mr. W. Aitken, from Ashton-under-Lyne in England, a schoolteacher who dedicated his book *Journey up the Mississippi River, from Its Mouth to Nauvoo, the City of the Latter Day Saints*<sup>29</sup> to “the Working Classes of England” so that any “who [had] embraced the new doctrine of Mormonism should know the real condition of their friends in the city of Nauvoo.” He was sure they would “repent if they ever [tried] the experiment of going to Nauvoo.” Aitken, to begin with, declared himself to be “no friend to emigration” generally and found the lure of Mormonism only a particular instance of the evil. His slender narrative, published in 1845, describes his misadventures, which began when he reached the mouth of the Mississippi on November 5, 1842, after six weeks on the Atlantic. By then several companies of Saints from England had arrived in Nauvoo—two hundred in 1840, twelve hundred in 1841, and sixteen hundred in 1842, a substantial three thousand for Mr. Aitken to worry about. Aitken,



who tarried in St. Louis to teach school, noted that St. Louis had sent aid to a company of suffering Saints on their way from Illinois. Nauvoo's coming troubles can be understood in broader context in the light of his remark about American politics in general: "The demon of party spirit rules with the bitterest rancour; that the dearest interests of the nation are sacrificed among its ravings; and its pestilential influence is seen and felt from one end of the land to the other." Further, addressing Americans at large, he charged that "the spirit of speculation, the demoniac ravings of party, intolerance and schism, have broken up your banks, depreciated your money, destroyed confidence, ruined the opulent, beggared the labourer, and manacled your commerce." Shades of Mrs. Trollope! But the material history of the Mormons assumes, in Aitken's vitriolic diagnosis, the significance of paradigm.

After six months as a teacher in St. Louis, Aitken proceeded to Nauvoo. His account is full of vivid details about the steamboat passage and life along the river, from mosquitoes to flatboats. He pores over a map and, in the tradition of intrepid British travelers, soaks up all the information he can about the river. I emphasize his detailed and concrete reporting because, with allowance for his native bias, it compels credibility when he makes his findings at Nauvoo, which, to be sure, he does not see with the eye of faith. His observations serve his anti-emigration prejudice and his desire to bring his countrymen and women to their senses.

In a walk about the city, he observed the progress on the Temple and the Nauvoo House, those inseparables, both being built by labor tithes. Aitken had no respect for the Prophet, "a tall stout muscular man with large features" who in conversation "swore like a fishwife," and no patience with the Prophet's mother and her Egyptian mummies; however, he found Joseph's wife "a fine-looking woman." Aitken saw "wretched cabins everywhere" and, searching for "the English portion of the city," found the immigrant converts living in "huts of the meanest description." Encountering a young couple from Bolton on the verge of despair, he encouraged them to seek a job and a new life in St. Louis. At the printing office, he bought *Joseph Smith's Story* and a Book of Mormon and on the way back to his lodgings visited "Looking Glass Prairie." "Alas!" he exclaimed, "that the beauties of nature should be sullied by superstition. . . . I left the 'holy city' with most unholy thoughts."

A Mr. Cowan from Shokoquon, twenty miles upriver from Nauvoo, was of a different mind. On February 10, 1843, the inhabitants



of the town delegated him to go to Nauvoo and petition that “a talented Mormon preacher take up his residence with them.” They would find him a good house and give him support, “with liberty for him to invite as many ‘Mormons’ to settle [there] as may please to do so.”<sup>30</sup>

Within a month of Cowan’s mission, the Rev. Samuel A. Prior, a Methodist minister, gave an account of his visit positive enough to be circulated in *Times and Seasons*. Prior confessed that he had “left home with no very favorable opinions of the Latter-day Saints.” He had expected to “witness many scenes detrimental to the Christian character, if not offensive to society.” In Nauvoo he heard the Prophet, “that truly singular personage,” preach to a congregation that had waited “in breathless silence” for his appearance. Prior was disappointed to find in Joseph Smith “only the appearance of a common man, of tolerably large proportions.” In explicating a biblical text, the Prophet “glided along through a very interesting and elaborate discourse.” He was, Prior concluded, “a workman rightly dividing the word of truth.” Prior himself was invited to speak in the evening and found the “large and respectable congregation paying the utmost attention. Afterwards, Elder Smith arose and begged leave to differ from me in some few points of doctrine, and this he did mildly, politely, and effectively; like one who was more desirous to disseminate the truth and expose error, than to love the malicious triumph of debate over me.”

When the reverend made his rounds of Nauvoo, he looked for evidence of the city as “the very sink of iniquity . . . the refuse of society” and for traces “of that low prostitution which I had so often heard charged upon them.” But he found Nauvoo “one of the most romantic places” he had visited in the West. “The buildings, though many of them were small and made of wood, yet bore the marks of neatness which I had not seen equalled in this country.” He could imagine himself, he said, in Italy at the city of Leghorn, which the location of Nauvoo resembled. He found the place “alive with business.” Here and there “a tall, majestic brick house” gave testimony to the “genius and untiring labor of the inhabitants . . . who in two or three short years [had] rescued it from a dreary waste to transform it into one of the first cities in the West.”<sup>31</sup>

Such admiration and astonishment, bordering on cant, but heightened by the sharp contrast between what they saw and what they had expected to see, runs like a refrain through the travelers’ accounts in the early 1840s.



An inside outsider tarrying in Nauvoo at the time Reverend Prior exuded his encomiums was Charlotte Haven of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, who arrived in the city by stage from Quincy on December 23, 1842, wrapped in a buffalo robe and buffalo moccasins. She stayed a year, living with a brother and his wife Elizabeth and becoming a lively member of the city's gentile minority, which she called "our little society." She must have been an attractive young woman, for in a series of letters to her family she describes many balls and socials to which she was invited. When she passed by the Temple on her first walk through the city, she said, "I verily believe every man at work cutting stone laid down his tools and gazed at me as I passed."<sup>32</sup>

Charlotte's first impression of the city was that it was "a collection of houses and hovels," but she was "enchanted with the delightful western view" from her brother's "little five-room cottage," which she set to work furnishing with some rag carpets from Quincy and a "hit and miss" carpet in "every shade of fade" from a "sad-faced" woman weaver. Charlotte's descriptions of Mormon material culture were usually either pejorative or satirical, expressing the bias of a genteel Gentile not used to frontier hardships. She wrote that she imagined herself enduring "the experiences of Western life . . . so vividly portrayed in Mrs. [Caroline] Kirkland's *New Home, Who'll Follow?*" which she had read the summer before. She had Christmas dinner with a Dr. Wild, a bachelor also from New Hampshire, with a practice at LaHarpe, some twenty miles east of Nauvoo, and Judge Emmett, another non-Mormon who had become a fixture in her brother's house and a constant companion when she ventured out, because the Mormon men in the community "look so rough and strange, dress so queerly and stare so." Some followed and asked her when she had come from the Old Country—"meaning England, for at least a third of the Mormons," she reported, "are English." A young English girl did, in fact, join the household as a domestic after Charlotte's sister-in-law had tried out a local girl, who told her, "I ain't used to living only in one family and eating with them, and I would just as lives you would get another girl."

Charlotte's spirited letters overflow with descriptive details of the city, its surroundings, and its inhabitants, now numbering fourteen thousand and scattered over a wide area. She describes the architecture of "the celebrated Mormon temple"—which had reached the first tier—in minute detail, with special praise for the



baptismal font “supported upon the backs of twelve oxen beautifully carved in wood . . . to be overlaid with pure gold.”

One wintry Sabbath, accompanied by the judge, she attended a preaching at the Prophet’s house, having been given a ride in a large horse-sled with a little straw on the bottom and crowded with men and women “eager to hear their beloved leader.” “Such hurrying!” she wrote. “One would have thought it was the last opportunity to hear him.” The house was so full the windows were opened “for the benefit of those without who were as numerous as those within.” She found Joseph Smith “a large, stout man, youthful in his appearance, with light complexion and hair, and blue eyes set far back in the head, and expressing great shrewdness, or I should say, cunning. He has a large head and phrenologists would unhesitatingly pronounce it a bad one, for the organs situated in the back part are decidedly the most prominent. He is also very round-shouldered.” Charlotte expected to be “overwhelmed by his eloquence” but was disappointed in his “loud” and “coarse” discourse relating all the incidents of his journey from Springfield, where he had been on trial for one of the Missouri charges. Now, released on habeas corpus, he amused his audience and “excited them to laughter.” “He is evidently a great egotist and boaster,” Charlotte reported, “for he frequently remarked that at every place he stopped going to and from Springfield people crowded around him, and expressed surprise that he was so ‘handsome and good looking.’ He also exclaimed at the close of almost every sentence, ‘That’s the idea!’”

Charlotte heard that Mrs. Joseph Smith “wished to become acquainted with us and had been expecting to honor her with a call.” (It was etiquette for newcomers to make the first call on old residents.) Accordingly, Charlotte and the judge called on the Smith family, who lived in the “Old Town by the river,” a mile walk from the Haven cottage. “They seemed pleased to see us and urged us to pass the afternoon.” Charlotte thought Sister Emma “very plain in her personal appearance, though we hear she is very intelligent and benevolent, has great influence with her husband and is generally beloved.” Emma said very little, “her whole attention being absorbed in what Joseph was saying. He talked incessantly about himself. . . . I did not change my opinion about him, but suppose he has good traits.”

Some weeks later, the Smiths returned the call. The Prophet and Lady and youngest son drove up in a “handsome carriage drawn by two fine dripping bays [it had been raining]. . . . Mrs. Smith was pleasant and social, more so than we had ever seen her before, and



we were quite pleased with her,” but Charlotte still considered Emma’s husband “the greatest egotist I ever met.” The afternoon passed pleasantly, and “by uniting parlor and kitchen tables we contrived to seat all at supper and to find room for the good things we had prepared. When Mrs. Smith proposed returning home, her lord was disposed to remain longer, and remarked that it was ‘like leaving Paradise.’” “I thought,” wrote Charlotte, “his idea of Paradise was very different from mine.”

Charlotte’s year in Nauvoo proved to be an eventful one, and her letters are filled, at one end of the spectrum, with the happenings of daily life, “significant trifles” Willa Cather would call them, and at the other end, with news of great portent.

Her reports of daily life include the birth of a “fine healthy little boy” to Elizabeth, her sister-in-law, who had “two experienced Mormon women with her all day [who] kept up one continual stream of talk about their peculiar religion, quoting scripture from Genesis to Revelations. I never,” wrote Charlotte, “heard so much Bible talk in all my life before. . . . ‘From all such, good Lord, deliver us.’” Among the Gentiles, Dr. Higbee, she wrote, was “the most at leisure, not having a single patient and not likely to have, as the Mormons perform wonderful cures by ‘the laying on of hands.’” She relented in her judgment of the rude shelters that dotted the new farms on the prairie when she remembered Mormon destitution after the flight from Missouri: “We cannot wonder that they have no fitter dwelling-place and so few of the comforts of life.” She acknowledged that “better and more substantial buildings are fast being erected in city and country. . . . If let alone and persecution ceases,” she felt sure, “this absurd religious doctrine will surely die a natural death.”

Mail in Nauvoo came twice a week, and Charlotte’s letter and papers from home were “smilingly” handed to her by Sidney Rigdon, postmaster, with whose family of five daughters she spent some pleasant evenings and at whose home she attended “the only party in this Holy City,” a party that began at three in the afternoon. She found Mrs. Rigdon peeling potatoes near the stove and the “venerable Elder behind it, dressed in his Sunday best suit, the highest and stiffest shirt collar and a white neckerchief with ends flowing over his shoulders.” The party turned out to be a quilting bee, and Charlotte joined “eight belles of Nauvoo” around the frame with “needle, thread, and thimble,” unable to get a word out of her sister quilters except “Yes, Marm . . . no, Marm” until one of them timidly whispered to her, “We talk in the evening.” They quilted until six,



when the door to the living room was thrown open, and they sat down around a table extending the length of the room and ate a “substantial supper [of] turkey, chicken, beef, vegetables, pies, and cake.” After supper the girls retired to the other room and placed themselves like wallflowers until the gentlemen came in to be formally introduced. Then all seemed “more joyous,” Charlotte wrote, with singing, dancing, and merry games, to which Charlotte contributed fox and geese (“which was in vogue with us ten years ago”). At nine o’clock, they went into “a second edition of supper,” after which the games were “renewed with vigor.” Charlotte and the judge left at ten, but the party did not break up until midnight.

Charlotte had the five Rigdon daughters to tea. “They seem kind-hearted, sincere girls, but so hard to entertain,—with no ideas! We had a candy-pull to get some life in them.”

Besides their interest in her social life, the Saints, Charlotte assured her family, also took an interest in her spiritual welfare: they sent her a Book of Mormon, the Book of Covenants, and Parley P. Pratt’s *The Voice of Warning* and invited her to attend prayer meetings, which she discovered were conducted like the Methodist ones she had attended in New England. She described the Book of Mormon as ending in “a sort of Kilkenny Cat battle” and found the Book of Covenants “a jargon of nonsense, mingled with directions for church government.” When she learned about baptism for the dead, she felt sympathy for “these poor Mormons [who] are constantly being baptized as a duty to release their ancestors or friends from the tortures of purgatory.”

Charlotte considered Sidney Rigdon “the most learned man among the Latter Day Saints.” He had intelligence and a courteous manner. And he spoke grammatically. She found him so far above the Prophet in intellect and education that she had no doubt that Rigdon was the “chief aid in getting up the Book of Mormon and creed.” She admired Rigdon’s library—“a good student’s collection,” she called it—with “Hebrew, Greek, and Latin lexicons and readers, stray volumes of Shakespeare, Scott, and the works of Irving.”

One night in March, Charlotte observed a bright comet streaking from east to west. The Patriarch interpreted it as a “sword pointing to Missouri” and predicted a war in which the Missourians would be exterminated. With better weather, she watched the Nauvoo Legion parade on the plain between her house and the river and, in May, witnessed the installation of the new Masonic Lodge, at which Sidney Rigdon gave a “brief but very fine address.”



Charlotte missed none of the curiosities Nauvoo afforded, such as the Egyptian mummies kept by the Prophet's mother. She also saw a half dozen thin pieces of bell-shaped brass that had been dug up from a mound a few miles south of Quincy. The Prophet found the engraved figures on them similar to Book of Mormon characters and evidently thought that by the help of revelation he would be able to translate them. "So," Charlotte quipped, "a sequel to that holy book may soon be expected." And she heard about the peep stone, which the Prophet now discounted, although, she was told, "many of the English and Scotch, when becoming anxious about their friends across the ocean, with implicit faith consult the Peep Stone."

In May and June, Charlotte could rejoice in the blossoming prairie: "The prairie flowers are to me an object of untiring interest, their beauty and variety a constant surprise." She found even the sod fences surrounding some farms looking "far more beautiful and rural than the New England stone walls or zig-zag rail fences." In June she received a proposal from a Mr. Heringshaw, who would make her his wife "as soon as I am a Saint," a proposal she mocked with "What stronger inducement could I have?"

Charlotte's letter of July 2 moved dramatically from the beauties and pleasures of the Nauvoo countryside in summer to a startling announcement that "great events have . . . transpired, throwing our little City of the Saints into the greatest commotion and excitement." The Prophet, who had been visiting friends in Rock Island, had been arrested "by a band of Missourians." Hyrum Smith, whose preaching, wrote Charlotte, "consisted mostly of low anecdotes and boasting of the strength of the church," read the dispatch aloud to an assembly meeting in the grove, and "every man, woman, and child were on their feet in an instant, pressing toward the platform, and it was with difficulty that he could quiet them." Charlotte related that "the whole city seemed to be in arms, guns and pistols firing, swords glistening in every direction like a sudden outburst of 4th of July, men, women, and children, gathering in groups talking loud and warlike." On her return from her brother's store in the evening, Charlotte was halted three times by armed sentinels. The following day, however, she saw Joseph brought home in triumphal procession, with Emma in the van wearing "white nodding plumes, followed by a half mile of the populace in every wheeled vehicle that could be mustered, drawn by horses and oxen." Charlotte and her gentile brethren themselves joined the procession, she in a buggy, the men in a large wagon with "Peace and Harmony" displayed on



one side. "The Prophet," she reported, "was quite overcome with emotion, even to shedding tears at this unexpected show of sympathy from his non-followers."

The harmony was too good to last. In September, Charlotte wrote her "dear friends at home" that "a few of the elders put their heads together and whisper what they dare not speak aloud." A missionary returned from England "bringing with him a wife and child, although he had left a wife and family here when he went away. I am told that his first wife is reconciled to this at first unwelcome guest to her home, for her husband and some others have reasoned with her that plurality of wives is taught in the Bible, that Abraham, Jacob, Solomon, David, and indeed all the old prophets and good men had several wives, and if right for them, it is right for the Latter Day Saints. Furthermore, the first wife will always be first in her husband's affection and the head of the household, where she will have a larger influence. Poor, weak woman!" Charlotte could not believe that Joseph (she was by now calling him by his first name) would ever sanction such a doctrine. She predicted that should the Mormons "engraft such an article on their religion, the sect would surely fall to pieces, for what community or State could harbor such outrageous immorality? I cannot think as meanly of my sex as that they could submit to any such degradation."

In politics, Charlotte and her gentile friends feared that Joseph had staged a ruse in declaring that the prophetic mantle had fallen on Hyrum. When Joseph was "in the meshes of the law some Whig politicians had come to his aid and he had pledged to support them in the coming state elections. . . . Now," wrote Charlotte, "he wants the Democratic party to win, so Hyrum is of that party, and as it is revealed for him to vote, so go over all the Mormons like sheep following the bell sheep over a wall." "Nauvoo," she wrote, "with 15,000 inhabitants, has a vote that tells in the State elections, and all summer politicians, able men of both parties, have been here making speeches, caressing, and flattering."

Amid all this excitement Charlotte had further news: with her brother's family she was moving from "our little cottage" to "our new brick house, a block beyond the Temple. Business is coming up that way." In her last surviving letter, dated October 15, 1843, Charlotte reported that "brother Joseph Smith had recently opened a house called the Nauvoo Mansion, and to celebrate the occasion gave a public dinner—one dollar per couple." Charlotte attended, and she



attended a Mormon wedding “for time only” and a dance at the Masonic Hall. But despite the good times, often occasions for her mockery, she longed for home, especially since Judge Emmett had gone East. “You can’t think how I miss him, and it is uncertain whether he returns—indeed,” she concluded, “Nauvoo is no place for rational people, and you must not be surprised if we should go also.” She left Nauvoo unshaken in her determination that “in no way” could she become a Mormon. But her letters testify that she had the time of her life in Nauvoo, and I suspect the Mormons missed their saucy gentile neighbor.

Chance brought two Boston Brahmins to Nauvoo in the summer following Charlotte Haven’s departure. Josiah Quincy, son of a former mayor of Boston and soon-to-be mayor himself, stopped over on May 14, 1844, along with his cousin Charles Francis Adams at the urging of a Dr. Goforth. Dr. Goforth, a fellow steamboat passenger headed for Nauvoo to promote the election of Henry Clay, persuaded them to see for themselves “the result of the singular political system which had been fastened upon Christianity, and to make the acquaintance of his friend, General Smith, the religious and civil autocrat of the community.” Assured they could get a good bed for the night at Nauvoo, Quincy, forty-two years old, and Adams, thirty-seven, went ashore.<sup>33</sup>

The “good bed” proved to be in “an old mill which had been converted into an Irish shanty.” They made the best of it, and, as Quincy recorded in his journal, “having dispossessed a cat and a small army of cockroaches of their quarters on the coverlet, we lay down in our dressing-gowns and were soon asleep.” The next morning, with “the rain descending in torrents and the roads knee-deep in mud,” the Prophet’s own carryall, drawn by two horses, called for the visitors. Quincy decided later that they owed “the alacrity with which [they] were served to an odd blunder which had combined [their] names and personalities and set forth that no less a man than ex-President John Quincy Adams had arrived.” At the tavern, as Quincy called the Mansion House, they were met by “a man of commanding appearance, clad in the costume of a journeyman carpenter when about his work. He was a hearty, athletic fellow, with blue eyes standing prominently out upon his light complexion, a long nose, and a retreating forehead. He wore striped pantaloons, a linen jacket, which had not lately seen the washtub, and a beard of some three days’ growth. This,” Quincy guessed, “was the founder of the religion which had been preached in every



quarter of the earth. . . . A fine-looking man" was Quincy's instinctive reaction. But in his opinion, "Smith was more than this, and one could not resist the impression that capacity and resource were natural to his stalwart person. . . . [He] seemed endowed with that kingly faculty which directs, as by intrinsic right, the feeble or confused souls who are looking for guidance."

Quincy and Adams spent the day in the constant company of the Prophet, who after breakfast changed into a broadcloth suit and gave them a personal tour of the city, including a visit to the temple site and to Mother Smith's "curiosities," a demonstration sermon, a debate with a Methodist minister, and a running dialogue about religion and politics. In his journal, Quincy recorded his impressions in "ten closely written pages" which years later formed the basis of his chapter on Joseph Smith in *Figures of the Past* (1883), a chapter that seeks to strike a balance between so much that Quincy found "puerile and even shocking" in the Prophet's conversation during the course of the day and "the impression of rugged power that he gave." To Quincy, "the Prophet's hold upon you seemed to come from the balance and harmony of temperament which reposes upon a large physical basis. No association with the sacred phrases of Scripture could keep the inspirations of this man from getting down upon the hard pan of practical affairs. . . . Joseph Smith was accustomed to make his revelations point to those sturdy business habits which lead to prosperity in this present life."

In their political discussions, the Prophet "talked as from a strong mind utterly unenlightened by the teachings of history." He "recognized the curse and iniquity of slavery, though he opposed the methods of the Abolitionists." Quincy found Joseph's plan for the nation to pay for the slaves from the sale of public lands "farsighted and statesmanlike." The Prophet denounced the Missouri Compromise and held that the number in the Lower House of Congress should be reduced because "a crowd only darkened counsel and impeded business." Thinking of the Missouri persecutions, the Prophet argued that the power of the president should be increased to "have authority to put down rebellion in a state without waiting for the request of any governor, for it might happen that the governor himself would be the leader of the rebels." "The man," concluded Quincy, "mingled Utopian fallacies with his shrewd suggestions."

Quincy discovered that the Prophet had "a keen sense of the humorous aspects of his position" in holding high office in both church and state. "It seems to me, General," I said, "that you have



too much power to be safely trusted to one man.' 'In your hands or that of any other person,' was the reply, 'so much power would no doubt be dangerous. I am the only man in the world whom it would be safe to trust with it. Remember, I am a prophet.' The last five words were spoken in a rich, comical aside, as if in hearty recognition of the ridiculous sound they might have in the ears of a Gentile."

Quincy found the Prophet equally shrewd and humorous in explaining his commission as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion and of the state militia: "Now, on examining the Constitution of the United States, I find that an officer must be tried by a court-martial composed of his equals in rank; and as I am the only lieutenant-general in the country, I think they will find it pretty hard to try me."

Quincy found the Prophet "well-versed in the letter of the Scriptures, though he had little comprehension of their spirit." He seemed to know Hebrew better than Greek and could recite texts glibly. The Prophet delivered an impromptu sermon at Dr. Goforth's urging, a performance having "the fluency and fervor of a camp-meeting orator." His discourse was "besprinkled with cant phrases or homely proverbs. 'There, I have proved the point as straight as a loon's leg,' 'The curses of my enemies run off from me like water from a duck's back,'" and, wrote Quincy, "forcible vulgarisms of a similar sort."

Quincy found the Temple a "grotesque structure . . . with all its queer carvings of moons and suns." He found "the city of Nauvoo, with its wide streets sloping gracefully to the farms enclosed on the prairie . . . a better temple to Him who prospers the work of industrious hands."

Josiah Quincy could not know it, but in another month his visionary, self-confident host would be dead. Forty years later, looking back on his visit to Nauvoo, Quincy began his portrait of the Prophet with a speculation and ended with a confession. "It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: *Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace of their descendants. . . . If the reader does not know just what to make of Joseph Smith, I cannot help him out of the difficulty. I myself stand helpless before the puzzle."



Josiah Quincy was not on the scene when, on June 7, three weeks after he and Adams had left Nauvoo to continue their western journey, the first and only number of the Nauvoo *Expositor* appeared, and the City Council ordered it destroyed as a nuisance—the copies seized, the type pied, and the press broken up, an act which, however lawful under the provisions of the Nauvoo Charter as Joseph Smith the mayor interpreted it, ran counter to profound American convictions about the right to dissent. The dissenting editors had denounced the Prophet's high-handedness and alleged immorality, demanded the unconditional repeal of the city charter "to correct the abuses of the unit power," and announced the organization of a reformed church.<sup>34</sup> They fled to Carthage, the county seat, breathing vengeance. They swore out a warrant for the Prophet's arrest, listing the grievances which pitted not only Mormons against anti-Mormons but also Mormons against Mormons: freedom of the press, polygamy, and political dictatorship. Feelings ran high and another war of extermination seemed imminent, with Carthage and Nauvoo poised and fearful of marches on each other. It was no time for visitors or leisurely reporting. The county and state newspapers, filled with charges and counter-charges and rampant speculation, carried on a war of words. Letters from Nauvoo were full of alarm. On June 16, 1844, Isaac Scott, already uneasy in his faith, wrote to his wife's parents, Calvin and Abigail Hall of Sutton, Massachusetts, the startling news that Joseph Smith had taught a strange doctrine that now was breaking the Church and the community wide open: "Because of the things that are and have been taught in the Church of Latter Day Saints for two years past which now assume a portentous aspect, I say because of these things we are in trouble. . . . There is a report that a mob is coming to Nauvoo."<sup>35</sup>

The "portentous aspect" became grim reality with the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Prophet and Patriarch, and the pressure was on to drive the Mormons from Illinois as they had been driven from Missouri. With the death of the Prophet, Nauvoo, now a city divided against itself, lost its chief attraction for travelers. But the inhabitants went on, amid anxieties about the future, impelled by the need to finish the Temple and prepare for yet another move, another start somewhere in the West. By the time grass grew and water ran, Nauvoo had become a vast wagon-making shop. Visitors like as not were bargain hunters, for Nauvoo was a city for sale, and gentile creditors and Mormon-haters were ready to foreclose. The



*Warsaw Signal* wanted to erase all Mormon memories, to “change all the names introduced among us by the Mormons.”<sup>36</sup>

In the aftermath, a Philadelphian wrote Nauvoo’s most moving epitaph. Thomas Leiper Kane, the son of federal judge John Kintzing Kane and brother of Elisha Kent Kane, the Arctic explorer, was only twenty-four when a Mormon elder, Jesse Little, called on Kane’s father. Little was en route to Washington to acquaint the government with the plight of the Mormons and to seek permission to raise a Mormon battalion for the expedition against Mexico. Young Kane, already something of a humanitarian, immediately dropped his law clerkship and headed west to give what help he could. He carried with him President Polk’s orders to General Stephen W. Kearney at Ft. Leavenworth to raise the requested battalion. On his return east in the fall of 1846, Kane visited the temporary settlements in Iowa, and on the banks of the Mississippi, he came upon the camps of the refugees most recently expelled from Nauvoo. Crossing the river, he walked about the deserted Mormon capital, an experience he drew on when he gave a lecture before the Pennsylvania Historical Society in 1850 on “The Mormons,” a classic in the literature of western travel.

He first saw the city from a distance “glittering in the fresh morning sun.” We follow him from the landing at the wharf:

No one met me there. I looked and saw no one. I could hear no one move; though the quiet everywhere was such that I heard the flies buzz, and the water-ripples break against the shallow of the beach. I walked through solitary streets. The town lay as in a dream, under some deadening spell of loneliness, from which I almost feared to wake it; for plainly it had not slept long. There was no grass growing up in the paved ways; rains had not entirely washed away the prints of dusty footsteps.

Yet I went about unchecked. I went into empty workshops, rope-walks, and smithies. The spinner’s wheel was idle; the carpenter had gone from his workbench and shavings, his unfinished sash and casing. Fresh bark was in the tanner’s vat, and the fresh-chopped lightwood stood piled against the baker’s oven. The blacksmith’s shop was cold; but his coal heap and ladling pool, and crooked waterhorn were all there, as if he had just gone off for a holiday. No work-people anywhere looked to know my errand. If I went into the gardens, clinking the wicketlatch loudly after me, to pull the marigolds, heartsease, and ladyslippers, and draw a drink with the water-sodden well-bucket and its noisy chain; or, knocking off with my stick the tall, heavy-headed dahlias and sunflowers, hunted over the beds for cucumbers and love-apples—no one called out to me from any opened window, or dog sprang forward to bark an alarm. I could have supposed the people hidden in the houses, but the doors were



unfastened; and when at last I timidly entered them, I found dead ashes white upon the hearths, and had to tread a-tiptoe, as if walking down the aisle of a country church, to avoid arousing irreverent echoes from the naked floors.

On the outskirts of the town was the city graveyard; but there was no record of plague there, nor did it anyway differ much from other Protestant American cemeteries. Some of the mounds were not long sodded; some of the stones were newly set, their dates recent, and their black inscriptions glossy in the mason's hardly-dried lettering ink. Beyond the graveyard, out in the fields, I saw, in one spot hard by where the fruited boughs of a young orchard had been roughly torn down, the still smouldering embers of a barbecue fire, that had been constructed of rails from the fencing round it. It was the latest sign of life there. Fields upon fields of heavy-headed yellow grain lay rotting ungathered upon the ground. No one was at hand to take in their rich harvest. As far as the eye could reach, they stretched away—they sleeping too in the hazy air of autumn.<sup>37</sup>

Like Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," Kane's tone, language, and imagery befit his mournful subject. We can hear the last toll of the bell in one other western traveler who spent a "Summer in the Wilderness" and stopped in Nauvoo that same year. Charles Lanman, after taking in the desolation of the deserted city, climbed the belfry of the Temple, not yet destroyed, and, looking westward beyond the river, "could just distinguish a caravan of exiled 'Mormons' on their line of march to Oregon and California. . . . When I went forth from out the massy porches of the . . . Temple, to journey deeper into the wilderness, I felt like one awakened from a dream."<sup>38</sup>

As we read, we dream again of the Nauvoo that was and always will be in these remembered views and in our imagination.<sup>39</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>James Sloan to Andrew T. McReynolds, cited in "Mormon Nauvoo in 1842," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 46 (Autumn 1953): 314.

<sup>2</sup>See Doctrine and Covenants 124; and "An Act to Incorporate the Nauvoo House Association," in Joseph Smith, Jr., *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976) 4:301–2; hereafter cited as *HC*.

<sup>3</sup>*HC* 6:185. The ruins of the stable building itself, when excavated during the work of restoration, suggest it could accommodate closer to twenty-five horses; possibly there was additional room in corrals or wooden structures that left no remains.



<sup>4</sup>Thurmon Dean Moody, "Nauvoo's Whistling and Whittling Brigade," *BYU Studies* 15 (Summer 1975): 480–84.

<sup>5</sup>HC 6:402.

<sup>6</sup>HC 4:401–2.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 6.

<sup>8</sup>Dennis Rowley, "Nauvoo: A River Town," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 257–58.

<sup>9</sup>HC 5:490.

<sup>10</sup>Rev. Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo in 1842* (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1843), 8.

<sup>11</sup>Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston, 1883), excerpted as "Two Boston Brahmins Call on the Prophet," in *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*, ed. William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (New York: Knopf, 1958), 138.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Walter Havighurst, "Travelers' Tales by the Steamboat in the 1840s," *Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio Bulletin* 21 (January 1963): 7.

<sup>13</sup>John Francis McDermott, "Henry Lewis' 'Great National Work,'" in *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 85, 81. Also see Joseph Earl Arrington, "Panorama Paintings in the 1840s of the Mormon Temple in Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 202–10.

<sup>14</sup>McDermott, "Henry Lewis' 'Great National Work,'" 114.

<sup>15</sup>McDermott, "Henry Lewis' 'Great National Work,'" 114. A lithograph after Lewis's painting "Nauvoo from Above," the perspective, as in Lynn Fausett's mural, as seen from across the river, was included in *Das Illustrirte Mississippithal*, which appeared in Dusseldorf in 1854 and in a new edition printed in Leipzig and Florence in 1923. In 1967 the Minnesota Historical Society published a translation, handsomely produced, as *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated*.

<sup>16</sup>McDermott, "John Rowson Smith's 'Four-Mile Painting,'" in *The Lost Panoramas*, 50.

<sup>17</sup>McDermott, "John Rowson Smith's 'Four-Mile Painting,'" 55, 58–60.

<sup>18</sup>McDermott, "John Rowson Smith's 'Four-Mile Painting,'" 55–56.

<sup>19</sup>"Beginnings in Illinois," in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 113.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas Ford, *History of Illinois*, cited in Flanders, *Nauvoo*, 22.

<sup>21</sup>HC 3:267–69.

<sup>22</sup>The Hotchkiss letter, dated September 27, 1843, cited in HC 6:55.

<sup>23</sup>"Visit of Notable Persons to Nauvoo," HC 4:356–58, reproducing a letter from the Prophet to the *Times and Seasons*.

<sup>24</sup>HC 4:565–60.

<sup>25</sup>HC 5:52–55.

<sup>26</sup>HC 5:170–72.

<sup>27</sup>Cecil A. Snider, *A Syllabus on Mormonism from the Angle of the Press*, Newspaper Source Materials, 1838–48, typescript, 117 pp., Iowa City, 1933. Snider's collection of newspaper articles runs to thousands of typescript pages.

<sup>28</sup>Sloan to McReynolds, 314.

<sup>29</sup>W. Aitken, *Journey up the Mississippi River, from Its Mouth to Nauvoo, the City of the Latter Day Saints* (Ashton-under-Lynne, Enland.: John Williamson, [1845]), 1–56.

<sup>30</sup>HC 5:268–89.

<sup>31</sup>Cited in Elmer Cecil McGavin, *Nauvoo, the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1946), 84–85.



<sup>32</sup> "A Girl's Letters from Nauvoo," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (San Francisco) 16 (December 1890): 616–38. Several of these nine letters are excerpted in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*. The quotations that follow are taken *passim* from the *Overland Monthly*.

<sup>33</sup> Josiah Quincy, excerpted in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 131–42, from which quotations for the next few paragraphs are taken.

<sup>34</sup> *The Nauvoo Expositor* 1 (7 June 1844).

<sup>35</sup> Letters from Isaac and Sarah Scott to Calvin and Abigail Hall, *New England Quarterly* 9 (December 1936): 583–617, excerpted in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, 142–46.

<sup>36</sup> "Honor the Dead," *Warsaw Signal*, January 16, 1842.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas L. Kane, *The Mormons* (Pennsylvania Historical Society, 1850), excerpted in Mulder and Mortensen, *Among the Mormons*, as "Epitaph for Nauvoo," 195–201.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Lanman, "A Summer in the Wilderness," *Improvement Era* 18 (January 1915): 191–94.

<sup>39</sup> By design, my account closes on an elegiac literary note. The account rightly calls for a summary observation or two. Most observers seemed to be middle class and Victorian in their outlook, inclined to be condescending toward a community considered fanatical, radical, superstitious, ignorant, and lowly. Without question, the reporting of both fact and opinion was governed by particular sensibilities. Personal impressions are as much an index of the reporters' assumptions as of what is actually inherent in the scene. The accounts gain credibility when they corroborate each other, whatever color a predilection or prejudice may give their otherwise factual descriptions. For instance, accounts universally describe Joseph Smith as physically impressive, though the adjectives may vary ("handsome," "stout," "large," "athletic"), but the phrenological interpretations or the conclusions about a "cunning" or "shrewd" look are entirely subjective. Similarly, the accounts agree that the Prophet's public address and conversations were a mixture of biblical eloquence and frontier vernacular—vulgarism for some ears, charisma for others. Accounts agree that the Temple, for its time and place, was, in its physical dimensions, a "remarkable" or "splendid" building, although the aesthetic responses differ (some finding the symbolism strange, the carvings grotesque) as do speculations about the Temple's uses (a place of mysterious rites, a seraglio, a fortress). Again, descriptions of the city as a whole, whether approached from the prairie or the river, range from the romantic (its pictorial setting) to the realistic (its muddy streets and numerous small wooden dwellings). Desire and distaste slant the reports. Finally, Mormon theology in some accounts is given neutral exposition, the doctrines plainly stated, and in others given the colors of the observer's own aversions and animosities. Contemporaneous travelers' accounts are only one source of information about historic Nauvoo, but they are valuable as long as they are read with attention to both the particulars of the tale and the peculiarities of the teller.