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The University of Nauvoo, 1841–45

Susan Easton Black

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A number of new sources reveal little-known facts about the University of Nauvoo. These facts provide unique properties and greater clarity to our understanding of the role of the university. This article will explain these facts and show why the university was established in Nauvoo, describe its structure from 1841 to 1845, and analyze its effectiveness and role in the city.

Establishing a University in Nauvoo

The Lord commanded the early Saints to “teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77). The reason was so that the Saints “may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God” (v. 78). The Lord also admonished the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers to learn “of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass” (v. 79).

Hoping to implement these directives, Joseph instructed his followers early on to establish private schools to educate the children of the Church. In response, Latter-day Saints in Ohio opened their homes, shops, and barns for academic instruction. Eliza R. Snow taught the basics—reading, writing, and arithmetic; Orson Hyde taught English grammar, oration, and writing; and M. C. Davis opened a singing school. W. W. Phelps asked subscribers of *The Evening and*

the Morning Star to lose “no time in preparing schools for their children” in Missouri.¹ Oliver Cowdery responded by opening a school in what is today Kansas City.² John Corrill opened a school on the corner of Union and Lexington streets in Independence. By 1836, Latter-day Saints had built a large schoolhouse in Far West. Helen Mar Whitney recalled that it was superior to “the ones built by gentiles of my native town.”³ In this facility and others like it, teachers such as Mary Elizabeth Lightner, Erastus Snow, Zenos H. Gurley, and John Murdock taught spelling, writing, reading, and geography. As for Joseph Smith, he started the School of the Prophets for men in Kirtland. Instruction in his school focused on Church doctrine and the gospel message of salvation. Thus most children growing up in Latter-day Saint homes learned “things which are at home, things which are abroad” while their fathers learned “the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God” (D&C 88:78, 79).

The lack of unity in an educational process driven by age and gender was riddled with problems in Ohio and Missouri. Many men struggled with the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic while being taught truths of eternity. Children struggled to understand the basics of the gospel, as their disinterest in Church matters later revealed, yet they could readily recite the times tables. The need to combine temporal learning with religious education that “all may be edified” (D&C 84:110) was apparent, but the answer was slow in coming.

It was not until the Latter-day Saints settled in Commerce, Illinois, that Joseph proposed an educational program that combined the learning of this world with the learning of a better world. By establishing a more complete educational opportunity for his followers, Joseph believed that his “people whose minds [are] cultivated and manners refined by education” would have “great and precious enjoyments that [the] ignorant [would] not.”⁴ Such a belief butted against established educational practices in Illinois. Educating one child in six was the standard of state-sponsored education at the time. The reason was that surviving on the land “was too pressing to allow children the luxury of ‘idle’ hours at school.”⁵

Such reasoning was unacceptable to Joseph. He held that all men and women, youth and adults, had the right to an education. His belief was shared by John C. Bennett, who was well versed in educational matters before the two men had become acquainted. Bennett had petitioned the state legislatures of Virginia, Indiana, and Ohio to incorporate medical schools and universities. Granted, in a few cases he petitioned legislators without the knowledge or support of the princi-

ples he professed to represent, but he was familiar with the legal process of creating a state-sanctioned university. For example, in December 1832 he pushed through the incorporation of Christian College in New Albany, Indiana, without the support of Alexander and Thomas Campbell, the very men he claimed to represent. The college was founded, and Bennett was appointed its chancellor even though the Campbells heard “nothing of this project until it was consummated.” Being called “a false brother, a person of no solid learning, and of very bad morals” did not stop Bennett from moving onto another state with another college plan.⁶ The following year, he lobbied the Ohio legislature for a university in Franklin County and later for Willoughby Medical University. By 1838 he had established at least six schools in various Midwest localities, and critics dubbed him a “getter up of colleges” and a “diploma peddler.”⁷

With this checkered background, it is surprising that Joseph found Bennett a useful man. “He is a man of enterprise, extensive acquirements, and of independent mind, and is calculated to be a great blessing to our community,” said Joseph.⁸ At first, Bennett proved to be a blessing to the community of Saints. He arrived in Commerce in September 1840 and boarded with the Smith family for the next thirty-nine weeks. At an October 1840 general conference, Bennett was appointed to a committee to draft a bill that would incorporate the city of Nauvoo. He was also appointed to be a “delegate, to urge the passage of said bill through the legislature.”⁹ Bennett accepted the appointments and, after the bill was drafted, joined Almon W. Babbitt in Springfield for the December convening of the Illinois legislature. As a lobbyist, Bennett renewed his acquaintance with Whig and Democratic legislators, including Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. The bill to incorporate Nauvoo moved quickly through both houses of the legislature with little discussion or debate. The bill was signed into law on December 17, 1840, by Governor Thomas Carlin. The law, known as the Nauvoo Charter, granted the city of Nauvoo several rights, including the right to establish a university—the first city university in the state of Illinois.¹⁰

Section 24 of the charter reads, “The City Council may establish and organize an institution of learning within the limits of the city, for the teaching of the Arts, Sciences, and Learned Professions, to be called the ‘University of the City of Nauvoo,’ which institution shall be under the control and management of a Board of Trustees, consisting of a Chancellor, Registrar, and twenty-three Regents, which Board shall thereafter be a body corporate and politic, with perpetual succession

by the name of the ‘Chancellor and Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo.’”¹¹

Joseph said of the university component of the charter, “We hope to make this institution one of the great lights of the world, and by and through it, to diffuse that kind of knowledge which will be of practical utility, and for the public good, and also for private and individual happiness.”¹²

Structure of the University

On February 3, 1841, the first meeting of the Nauvoo City Council was held in Joseph Smith’s office. At the meeting, the council voted to establish the “University of the City of Nauvoo.” According to council minutes, the university was to be a self-governing entity that would provide educational opportunities for adults and children in Nauvoo. The university was charged with all education in town—university, seminary or secondary, and common schools.¹³ Supervision of the three educational levels was given to a chancellor, registrar, and board of regents. Later, other administrative officers—trustees, wardens, directors, and examiners—were added. Seventy-seven men served in an administrative function in the University of Nauvoo. In retrospect, the top-heavy administration had too many leadership layers to successfully implement all administrative directives. Ideas generated at a low level of the vertical structure were slow to reach the top officials of the hierarchy.

The city council appointed Bennett as university chancellor and William Law as registrar. The council selected and appointed twenty-three men from its ranks to serve on the board of regents, among whom were Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, William Marks, Samuel H. Smith, Daniel H. Wells, and Newel K. Whitney.¹⁴ This multitier governing body was autocratic and operated in a strict line of authority. It also had uncontested power of perpetual succession.

On February 9, 1841, just six days after being appointed, members of the board of regents met at Joseph Smith’s office. There the board established laws and ordinances necessary for the welfare of the university, its officers, its faculty, and its students. The laws and ordinances were in compliance with the laws of the state of Illinois and the U.S. Constitution. On February 22, 1841, the city council transferred to the chancellor and board of regents all rights pertaining to educational matters in Nauvoo, except the right to appoint future members to the board. When the city council concluded that all legal rights pertaining to education in town had been successfully passed to the chancellor and

his board, education at three levels (university, seminary, and common school) was authorized to begin.

University level. In August 1841, the first session of higher education began in Nauvoo. Classes were held in a loosely knit upper- and lower-university campus. On the upper campus, classroom instruction was given in private homes and in public structures such as the Concert Hall and the Nauvoo Temple. On the lower campus, private residences and the more public Masonic Hall, Seventies Hall, and Joseph Smith store were used as places of learning.¹⁵ Several adults participated in university classes, although a record of their attendance has not been preserved. The absence of records suggests that attendance was not a requirement for university enrollment.

Professors Orson Spencer, Sidney Rigdon, Gustavus Hills, John Pack, and Orson Pratt taught at the university. Of these learned professors, Pratt was the leading scholar. Historian Hubert Bancroft referred to Pratt as “a man of pure mind and a high order of ability, who without early education and amidst great difficulties had to achieve learning as best he could, and in truth has achieved it.”¹⁶ Under Pratt’s guidance, more so than under chancellor John C. Bennett and later chancellor James Kelly,¹⁷ university instruction followed a liberal arts curriculum. Pratt taught mathematic courses such as arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, geometry, conic sections, surveying, navigation, and differential calculus. He also presented lectures on astronomy, chemistry, foreign languages, and philosophy. Rigdon taught English literature, language, rhetoric, and Mormon history. Hills lectured on the science of music and the sacred art of singing by using Parker’s *Encyclopedia of Music* and Lowell Mason’s *Manual of Instruction*.¹⁸ And Spencer, a graduate of Union College and Baptist Literary and Theological Seminary of New York, taught foreign languages.

For their university instruction, professors received a modest salary.¹⁹ Salary was not based on the number of students attending classes, as was the salary of common school teachers. Professors received a percentage of the taxes levied against property owners in Nauvoo. As for textbooks and other scholastic necessities, students bore the expense. Although the fees varied from fifty cents to ten dollars per course, few students purchased the requisite texts or other classroom necessities.²⁰

Matriculating students did not receive a university degree for successfully completing course work, because a curriculum leading toward graduation was never developed. The university did, however, grant honorary degrees to nonstudents. Among those so honored was Professor Orson Pratt, who was awarded an honorary master of arts degree.

A law degree (LLD) was granted to editors John Wentworth of the *Chicago Democrat* and James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Weekly Herald* for printing favorable editorials about Mormonism.²¹ James Arlington Bennett of Arlington House in New York, an influential lawyer and friend of Church leaders, also received an honorary degree.²²

The board of regents selected Vinson Knight, Daniel H. Wells, and Charles C. Rich to raise subscriptions or funds for the construction of multiple university buildings. These men met together often as the Finance and Construction Committee of the university.²³ Unfortunately, they did not gather the funds needed to build the university campus.²⁴

Seminary level. Seminary was the secondary level of education in the University of Nauvoo (grades nine through twelve). Joseph N. Cole and his sister Adelia were appointed directors of seminary instruction by the board of regents. As such, the Coles had responsibility for the seminary building, located one block northwest of the Nauvoo Temple on Wells Street, and had responsibility for classes taught in the brick structure. In addition, during the summer of 1843, the Coles taught in Joseph Smith’s redbrick store, as evidenced by an advertisement in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*:

NAUVOO SEMINARY

Mr. Joseph N. and Miss Adelia Cole, would respectfully inform the citizens of Nauvoo, that they have opened a school in the large and convenient room, in the second story of President Joseph Smith’s store, on the corner of Water and Granger streets, on Tuesday the 11th inst. [July] for the instruction of male and female . . .

TERMS OF TUITION

Reading, writing, and spelling	\$2.00
English Grammar & Geography	2.50
Chemistry and Natural Philosophy	3.00
Astronomy	4.00

A quarter will consist of twelve weeks or sixty-five days, and no allowance will be made for absences unless prevented from attendance by sickness or by special agreement.²⁵

In addition, the Coles supervised secondary faculty, who were expected to follow the curriculum prescribed by the board of regents. This curriculum was fashioned after that used in New England secondary schools. It included Latin, Greek, English grammar, writing, math, bookkeeping, and geography, as well as religious topics.²⁶ The number

of students receiving secondary instruction is unknown because attendance rolls naming faculty and students were not preserved.

Common school level. Common schools (first through eighth grades) in the University of Nauvoo were held in each Nauvoo ward (a ward being a political division).²⁷ Under the supervision of the board of regents, trustees, and secondary directors, a curriculum was selected, exams were administered to potential teachers, and teacher competency certificates were issued. The board appointed twelve wardens, three from each of the four political divisions in town, to administer common school instruction. The first of many school wardens was selected on March 1, 1841, at the board's second meeting.²⁸ At the meeting, the board authorized wardens to start open-enrollment common schools in their respective wards. It is believed that this authorization was motivated by a First Presidency message: "Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopal, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans, and all other religious sects and denominations whatever, shall have free toleration, and equal privileges, in this city."²⁹ To ensure that open enrollment was maintained, wardens visited classrooms, checked attendance records, and certified whether the teacher-generated holographic records were correct.³⁰

Becoming a schoolteacher at a common school was no small matter.³¹ From 1842 to 1845, only thirty-five teachers passed the competency exam and received a teaching certificate. The following certificate shows that applicant Lovinia Whipple was competent to teach certain subjects:

Certification
State of Illinois
County of Hancock:

We certify that having examined Lovinia Whipple, the teacher above named, we find her duly qualified to teach a common school in the following branches to wit, reading, writing, geography, English grammar, and arithmetic. Given under our hands and seals this day the first of March, 1844.

Norton Jacobs
William W. Lane³²

The certification process was not uniform. The application of Charles Wesley Wandell reveals more than his competency in certain subjects. It shows that meetings were held by inspectors of schoolteachers:

State of Illinois
County of Hancock

We certify that at a meeting of the employers of Charles Wesley Wandell the above named Teacher, held at the school-house in Warsaw street, near Parley street, Nauvoo, township six north range nine west, in the county of Hancock State of Illinois, pursuant to notice on the eighth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty four, we were duly appointed trustees of said school, that we have performed the duties of such trustees by visiting said school, and superintending.

We the undersigned inspectors of Teachers of common schools in the city of Nauvoo Hancock County, in the state of Illinois do certify that at a meeting held for that purpose at the house of Sidney Rigdon, we have examined Charles W. Wandell and find him of sufficient learning and ability and in other respects well qualified to teach a school in the several branches of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and grammar,—

Given under our hands at Nauvoo the 3 day of February 1844

Inspectors of Teachers of Common Schools

Sidney Rigdon
Joseph M. Cole³³

A teacher who possessed such a coveted certificate was guaranteed employment in Nauvoo. Parents knew that such a teacher had received approval from two local trustees, three wardens, two examiners, two inspectors, and twenty-three members of the board of regents. What they did not know was that many of the schoolteachers were self-taught. Perhaps the teachers' lack of formal education was the reason that curriculum decisions were made by the board. The board claimed that all young students should learn languages—Greek, Latin, Spanish, and French—along with reading, writing, arithmetic, oration, and philosophy. Therefore, the board advised teachers to use these specific texts for classroom instruction:

Town's Spelling Book.
Town's Introduction to Analysis.
Town's Analysis.
M Vickar's Political Economy for Schools.
Help to Young Writers.
Girl's Reading Book, by Mrs. Sigourney.
Boy's Reading Book, by Mrs. Sigourney.
Bennett's Arithmetic.
Bennett's Book Keeping.
Kirkham's English Grammar.
Olney's Geography.³⁴

Noticeably missing from the prescribed list is a history text. Board members believed history immortalized the worst men and failed to recognize praiseworthy men; thus they omitted it from the curriculum.³⁵

Teachers did not appreciate the board's approach to curriculum, the omission of history, or the textbook list. Teachers met on September 2, 1843, at the Nauvoo Seminary to discuss what they believed was a rigid, stagnant curriculum.³⁶ To these teachers, science, grammar, literature, music, foreign languages, orthography, composition, oratory, chemistry, geography, and even history had a place in the common school curriculum.³⁷ At the meeting, the teachers also discussed the possible effects of hiring more female teachers. The board paid female teachers one-half to two-thirds the salary of their male counterparts. Regents proposed that more female teachers were needed to meet the challenge of educating every child in Nauvoo; teachers believed the proposal had more to do with salary than with children.³⁸ Although many disgruntled comments were expressed, the suggested curriculum was adopted, and more women were hired to teach the children.

With teachers in place, sessions at the common school level began. During the first days of instruction, classrooms were crowded, as evidenced by attendance records. A simple system of "P" for present and "A" for absent showed their attendance. At first, four common school buildings in each ward, along with private homes, vacant offices, and barns, were filled with eager youth. Perhaps teacher James Monroe said it best: "I have now about a dozen in each school. Several other individuals wish to get their children in my school, but I could not take them."³⁹ In Monroe's schools and others in town, backless benches, writing tables, a teacher's desk, and a fireplace or stove were all the furnishings budgets would allow. Maps, globes, and charts were uncommon luxuries; teachers had to improvise visual aids or do without.

Scarcity of resources, segregated instruction (boys and girls were seated on opposite sides of the classroom), and strict discipline too often curbed youthful enthusiasm for classroom instruction.⁴⁰ Recitation of long lists such as names of states or capitals or "lists of tables, including apothecary weights, avoirdupois weights, troy weights, long measures, square measures, land measures and Federal and English money" frustrated more than one student, as did oral exams in front of the class.⁴¹ To keep interest in education alive, teachers awarded an illustrated paper certificate to successful students. The certificates, sold in large quantities to teachers, were valued by young students, who had few personal possessions.⁴² For students who failed to earn a certificate, attendance became an issue. "This A.M. my scholars seemed to have

forgotten their interest in their studies and the necessity of industry and I was almost ready to despair,” recalled Monroe. “By a little wholesome severity in keeping them after school, I regained all I had lost and I think lost none of their love.”⁴³ Not all teachers were as successful as Monroe. W. S. Hathaway, after thirty-five days of instruction in 1843, had seventeen students drop out of his school. Twelve new students entered, but over the next several weeks, seven more left. Only three children remained under his tutelage for the entire 117-day term. Their last names were Hathaway, of course.⁴⁴

Unfortunately for Hathaway and other teachers at the common school level, salary was based on the number of students enrolled and the number of days these students attended class. Teachers were required to submit a “written schedule,” or attendance roll, to a designated warden. The schedule listed the teacher’s name, the township and range of the school location, the names of students enrolled, the daily attendance of students, the cumulative days students attended school, and the salary due for instruction rendered. Several written schedules have been preserved and transcribed. Schedules reveal that 1,439 students attended common schools between 1841 and 1845. Most of the students’ names do not appear on any other record or database compilation of the Nauvoo period.⁴⁵

Abstract of Schedules for University of Nauvoo, 1844 (6N 9W)

Teachers' Names	No. of Days	Apportionment \$ Cts [Cts = cents]	Ratio 6929 mills [mill = 1/1000 U.S. dollar]
Hannah Holbrook	7352	30	04 Paid
E. Grant	1074	4	38¾ Paid not certified
M. M. Patterson	3467	14	16½ Paid
Jesse W. Fox	851	3	47¾ Paid not certified
Louisa Pratt	1652	6	75 Paid
Huldah Barnes	1566	6	40 Paid
Sarah Phelps	1495	6	10¾ Paid
Eli B. Kelsey	9176	37	49¼ 5.50 Paid in full
W. S. Hathaway	3016	12	32¼ Paid
Charles H. Bassett	559	2	28½ Paid
Mary Pierce	2599	10	62 Paid
Jesse Haven (2)	4255	17	38½ Paid

Teachers' Names	No. of Days	Apportionment \$ Cts [Cts = cents]	Ratio 6929 mills [mill = 1/1000 U.S. dollar]
Maria L. Brown	1746	7	13½ Paid
David M. Hard	567	2	31½ Paid not certified
Maria Kempton	898	3	67 Paid not certified 367
David Candland	1832	7	48½ Paid
D. G. Luce	1051	4	29½ Paid
Hannah Tupper	1254	5	14½ Assigned to J. Holbrook
Mary Wilsey	1417	5	79 Assigned to J. Holbrook
Randolph Alexander	154		63
James M. Monroe	916	3	74¼ Paid
Nancy Goldsmith	1045	4	27 Paid J. L. Robinson
Caroline Bullard	3514	14	35¾ Paid
Howard Coray	1399	5	71½ Paid
D. G. Luce	1886	7	70½ Paid
E. Grant	1154	4	71½
J. M. Cole and A. B. Cole	5822	23	78¾ Paid
C. W. Wandall	1904	7	78 Paid
[Total]	63,621	259	97
Commission		5	31
		265	28 C. Robisen SC.

Abstract of Schedules for University of Nauvoo, 1844 (7N 9W)

Teachers' Names	No of Days	\$	Cts Ratio 6929
Howard Coray	942	6	52¾ 652¾ Paid
R. Alexander	328	2	27¼
Jesse Havens	278	1	99½ Paid (7.8)
L. A. Shurtliff	3526	24	43 Paid
Lucy Groves	9643	66	81 3 Paid in full
Wm S. Hathaway	3081	21	34¾ \$17 Paid in full
[Total]	17,799	123	33
		2	52

To ensure that teachers were not overpaid, school schedules were meticulously reviewed by trustees and wardens. These administrators presented a written verification of the schedule's accuracy to the board of regents, suggesting payment for instruction rendered. One example is that of teacher Abigail Abbott:

We certify that we as trustees of said school have examined the within and foregoing schedule and find the same to be correct and that the scholars at the dates of their attendance were residents of Township 7 north of Range 9 west of the fourth principal Meridian, that the compensation of said teacher is one dollar and fifty cents per scholar.

Witness our hands and seals this 31st day of December, A.D. 1842

Elias Higbee (signed)
Charles C. Rich (signed)⁴⁶

Trustees and wardens were expected to recommend to the board a reduction in pay for teachers who had poor student attendance.

Analyzing the University Structure

Joseph Smith was not alone in orchestrating the intricate and unique school system in Nauvoo. Bennett was also a pioneer of the innovative and encompassing educational system. Records show that he had a key, if not central, role in writing the Nauvoo Charter, which authorized a university system in Nauvoo. Bennett, with his history of petitioning state legislatures, proved to be an asset in pushing forward the university in Nauvoo, the first city university in the state of Illinois. As Nauvoo mayor, Bennett oversaw the university and saw it become, albeit briefly, a self-governing entity supported by taxation. He also saw the university effectively provide educational opportunities for adults and children in town. As the first chancellor of the university, Bennett guided administrators and teachers alike. He ran an autocratic governing body as a leader of education in Nauvoo.

When Bennett's character flaws were discovered, James Kelly was appointed by the board to take his place as chancellor. Kelly's role was more elusive than Bennett's. Kelly did not draft a bill for an educational program or lobby a legislature. The administrative structure Bennett put in place sufficed for him. As Kelly and other administrators implemented Bennett's school structure, success at all three levels of education was apparent. Adult scholars were taught by five competent professors in an upper and lower campus. A liberal arts curriculum with a sprinkling of astronomy, chemistry, foreign languages, and philoso-

phy brought education to new heights in Nauvoo. Although there was never a college curriculum leading to graduation, the university successfully combined the things of this world with those of a better one. As for seminary instruction, the Coles constituted the entire program. They oversaw the building, the New England curriculum, classes, and students. The Coles made sure that studies of this earth were mingled with studies of eternity.

The biggest flaw in the University of Nauvoo was found at the common school level. Even though education was based in Nauvoo wards, this did not ensure religious instruction. Extant records do not show that the gospel was being taught at the elementary level. Instead, common school instruction was much like the instruction given to elementary-age children in large eastern cities within the United States.

Another failure of the University of Nauvoo rested with the administrators, who had been charged with providing all education for adults and children in town. Private schools sprang up in Nauvoo between 1841 and 1845. Teachers in the private schools prided themselves on being out of the administrative realm of the University of Nauvoo. These teachers did not receive a certificate or verification of ability from the board of regents. However, that did not matter to the majority of private school teachers. Fifty-three such teachers ignored the exam and certification process, yet boasted of superior qualifications and received parental funds, not public funds, for educating youth in subscription or private schools. Unlike teachers with predetermined salaries in common schools, these educators received between seventeen and twenty-five cents for each subject taught. The cost of instructing “one student taking just the basic five subjects—reading, writing, geography, grammar, and arithmetic—was approximately a dollar each week, or twenty cents per day.”⁴⁷ Private schools were not bound to teach the same subjects or use the same curriculum as common schools. Thus, instruction of elementary age children varied in Nauvoo.

The University of the City of Nauvoo was a grand experiment in education. Its demise was the natural by-product of a city being transformed. Blacksmiths, carpenters, and wheelwrights were on call day and night in 1845, and so were their offspring. Every available space, from the shop to the parlor, was used to assemble boxes, covers, wheels, and harnesses for the coming exodus. Common school buildings, the Nauvoo Seminary, and the university campus were no exceptions. Of necessity, education halted. Administrators, teachers, and students were asked to prepare wagons. Nearly fifteen hundred

wagons were ready for the westward trek by Thanksgiving of 1845, and another two thousand were partially completed by midwinter.

Unfortunately, the preparation time for building wagons was shortened by harassment and vehement threats against the Nauvoo community. Brigham Young advised Latter-day Saints to leave Nauvoo in February 1846. In obedience, the Saints traveled on flatboats, old lighters, and a number of skiffs as they fled the city and crossed the Mississippi River to Iowa. It appeared to many that an entire community was moving west. However, this was not true, especially when viewing the whereabouts of the administrators, teachers, and students of the University of Nauvoo. Of the 77 known administrators, only 44 (57 percent) followed Brigham Young to Iowa. Of the 35 known common school teachers, only 21 (60 percent) followed Young westward. Of the 53 known private school teachers, only 24 (45 percent) ventured westward. Of the 14,390 known students, only 785 (51 percent) found a haven with the Latter-day Saints in the Rockies.

Whether those associated with the university eventually joined the westward migration or drifted elsewhere, the University of the City of Nauvoo closed. New settlers moved into town and occupied the shops and homes that were once the property of the Saints. These settlers knew little of Mormons and even less of the school structure that had once flourished in town. These new settlers, like their predecessors, wanted educational opportunities for their children but struggled to find competent teachers. The *Hancock Eagle* noted the academic void in Nauvoo: "SCHOOLS: We are requested to call the attention of Teachers to the fact that a good school is much wanted in this place; and should a competent person think proper to establish one at this place, he would probably be extensively patronized."⁴⁸

Conclusion

Little evidence suggests that the progressive educational system established in Nauvoo, in a state where public education was in its infancy, had any effect on future educational opportunities in the town.

However, for the westward-bound Latter-day Saints, the University of Nauvoo had a long-lasting effect. The university became a reference point, an inspiration for future educational goals. It is not surprising that vestiges of the Nauvoo educational system were implemented in Utah Territory or that the words of Brigham Young given on December 11, 1854, before the legislative assembly of Utah sound familiar:

The subject of *Education* has probably received as much attention in this as in any other as newly settled State or Territory. In almost all the Wards and Districts, good School Houses have been erected, and Schools maintained a part of the year, but I feel that sufficient attention is not paid to the selection and examination of teachers, or the manner of conducting Schools. Although the Board of Regents, have doubtless by their influence aided much, and are still extending their influence and exertions in a general way to advance the cause of education, yet at this moment, there is not a *Parent School* for the instruction of Teachers—a Mathematical or High School where the higher branches are taught.⁴⁹

Latter-day Saints, who founded the University of Nauvoo, believed in being more perfectly instructed “in theory, in principle, and in doctrine” (D&C 88:78). They actively pursued education in “things both in heaven and in the earth” whether in Nauvoo or in the Rockies (D&C 88:79). RE

Notes

1. “Common Schools,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, June 1832, 2.
2. The schoolhouse was named the Colesville School. It was built in the Troost Park Lake about twelve miles west of Independence (see Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* [Salt Lake City: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939], 17).
3. The schoolhouse also served as a town hall and courthouse (see *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri* [St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1886], 120–21).
4. On January 12, 1841, Joseph Smith made this statement at the Amos Davis home in Nauvoo (Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps., *The Words of Joseph Smith* [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], 62; spelling modernized).
5. George W. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 237. In 1824 Joseph Duncan introduced “An Act Providing for the Establishment of Free Schools” in the Illinois General Assembly. The act required townships with fifteen families or more to support a free school for at least three months every year. The act was approved on January 15, 1825, and repealed in 1828. The reason given for the repeal was that “there was still strong feelings that no one should have to pay taxes for the education of the children of other men” (Robert Gehlmann Bone, “Education in Illinois before 1857,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 50, no. 2 [Summer 1957]: 124).
6. Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Donald Q. Cannon, *Joseph Smith and the Nauvoo Legion in Illinois, 1841–1845: America’s Mormon Militia* (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark, 2010).
7. Andrew C. Skinner, “John C. Bennett: For Prophet or Profit,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois* (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995), 249–66.

8. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 4:270.

9. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:205; see also Joseph Smith, “Minutes of the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held Nauvoo, Hancock, Illinois, October 3, 1840,” *Times and Seasons*, October 1840, 186. Other committee members were Joseph Smith and Robert B. Thompson. Flanders claims that “Bennett had already been at work on the charter and probably had it completed before the conference met” (Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975], 96).

10. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:239–45.

11. “An Act to Incorporate the City of Nauvoo,” Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:243–44; see James LeRoy Kimball Jr., “A Study of the Nauvoo Charter 1840–1845” (master’s thesis, University of Iowa, 1966); Edward Jeffs Brandt, “Some Characteristics of the Charter and Ordinances of the City of Nauvoo, Provo, Utah” (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1970).

12. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, “A Proclamation to the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Times and Seasons*, January 15, 1841, 274.

13. On Monday, February 22, 1841, the city council advised, “Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Nauvoo, That all matters and powers whatever in relation to common schools, and all other institutions of learning, within the City of Nauvoo, be, and the same hereby are transferred from the City Council of the City of Nauvoo, to the Chancellor and Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo” (“City Ordinances,” *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1841, 336; see also Paul Thomas Smith, “A Historical Study of the Nauvoo Illinois, Public School System, 1841–1845” [master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969]; Arthur Clark Wiscombe, “Eternalism: The Philosophical Basis of Mormon Education” [EdD diss., University of Colorado, 1963]).

14. For members of the board of regents, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:293. The fourteen members of the city council of Nauvoo were also members of the university administration (see Don Wallace McBride, “The Development of Higher Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” [PhD diss., Michigan State College, 1952]).

15. “Orson Pratt, Professor of Mathematics and English Literature in the University of the City of Nauvoo,” *The Wasp*, September 17, 1842, 23.

16. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah, 1540–1886* (San Francisco: History Company 1889), 146. Pratt charged five dollars a term for attending his university classes (see “General Orders,” *Times and Seasons*, August 16, 1841, 517).

17. The board of regents selected Dr. James Kelly, an alumnus of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, to replace John C. Bennett as chancellor. Kelly was a leading scholar of philosophy. The selection of a chancellor from Europe for the Nauvoo University was in keeping with the pattern of early American universities. Kelly received the unanimous vote of the regents (see Calvin V. French, “Organization and Administration of the Latter-day Saint School System of Free Education, Common School through University at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840–1845” [master’s thesis, Temple University, 1965], 42; see also “President of the University,” *Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1841, 320).

18. Lowell Mason, *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music, for Instruction in the Elements of Vocal Music, on the System of Pestalozzi* (Boston: Carter, Hendee & Co., 1834); see also “The University of Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons*, January 15, 1842, 666.

19. Common school education was supported by taxation (see “An Act to Incorporate the City of Nauvoo,” *History of the Church*, 4:239–45).

20. A city council raising money for a secondary school and university was an unknown practice in Illinois at this time. In 1845 the General Assembly of the state of Illinois granted the state school commissioner the right to sell land and use the proceeds from the sales to support common schools (see Charles Scofield, ed., *History of Hancock County* [Chicago: Munsell, 1921], 2:817).

21. “James Gordon Bennett,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1842, 652–53.

22. In a letter addressed to James Gordon Bennett, General James Arlington Bennett of the Arlington House acknowledged the University of Nauvoo for awarding him an honorary degree (see Walter Wayne Smith, ed., *Journal of History* [Independence, MO: Herald Publishing, 1922], 15:276).

23. See “Elections by the Chancellor and Regents of the University. School Wardens for Common Schools,” *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1841, 335.

24. The Finance and Construction Committee only raised funds to construct a common school building in each ward.

25. “Nauvoo Seminary,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, July 9, 1843, 3.

26. See Edward A. Krug, *The Secondary School Curriculum* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 25; Nauvoo School Records: Schedules of Common Schools in Nauvoo, 1842–1845, Church History Library, Salt Lake City. The Nauvoo School Records are incomplete. The records show thirty-two schoolteachers (sixteen males and sixteen females). For each teacher, tenure was brief (one- to six-week periods).

27. Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, “Truth Will Prevail,” *Times and Seasons*, January 15, 1841, 274–75.

28. On March 1, 1841, the city council divided Nauvoo into four wards: “All the district of country within the city limits, north of the center of Knight street, and west of the center of Wells street, shall constitute the first ward. North of the center of Knight street and east of the center of Wells street, the second ward. South of the center of Knight street, and east of the center of Wells street, the third ward. South of the center of Knight street, and west of the center of Wells street, the fourth ward” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:305–6).

29. “Ordinance on Religious Liberty in Nauvoo,” *History of the Church*, 4:306. Common schools did not equate to church schools; as defined by Christian educator Paul H. Vieth, “The church school is created by the church. It has no independent life of its own. It exists only within the total life and work of the church” (Paul H. Vieth, *The Church School: The Organization, Administration, and Supervision of Christian Education in the Local Church* [Philadelphia: Christian Education Press, 1957], 9).

30. See “Common Schools,” *Times and Seasons*, December 15, 1841, 632.

31. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 240.

32. Nauvoo School Records.

33. Nauvoo School Records.

34. “Common School Books Adopted,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1842, 652. The textbooks were purchased from the American Common School Society of

New York City. Ebenezer Robinson, publisher of the *Times and Seasons*, had exclusive rights to sell the books in Nauvoo (see Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2002], 196).

35. See Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 247.

36. An announcement of the teachers' meeting was printed on August 30, 1843, in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*: "The School teachers in the City of Nauvoo, both male and female, are requested to meet at the brick building northeast of the Temple called the Nauvoo Seminary, on Saturday, the second day of September at 2 p.m., for the purpose of taking into consideration the measure of establishing a uniformity of class books at the several schools and of promoting a greater concert of action among the teachers and inhabitants, and to transact such other business as shall lend to the general promotion of education" ("Notice to School Teachers," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, August 30, 1843, 3).

37. Many teachers believed that they were following the admonition of Church leaders: "The 'University of the City of Nauvoo,' will enable us to teach our children wisdom—to instruct them in all knowledge, and learning, in the Arts, Sciences and Learned Professions" (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, "A Proclamation to the Saints Scattered Abroad," *Times and Seasons*, January 15, 1841, 274).

38. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 246.

39. In addition to teaching youth, Monroe taught adult classes in the evenings. In those classes, he taught singing, theology, reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography, chemistry, philosophy, and astronomy. See James J. Monroe Diary, 117, Lovejoy Library, Microfilm Collection, Southern Illinois University, as cited in Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 242; D. Garron Brian, "Adult Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1965), 55.

40. This was not unlike school on the frontier or in early Utah. Maria Dilworth Nebeker recalled attending the first school in the Salt Lake Valley: "I attended the first school in Utah taught by my sister, Mary Jane, in a small round tent seated with logs. The school was opened just three weeks after our arrival in the valley" (Levi Edgar Young, "Education in Utah," *Improvement Era*, July 1913, 882).

41. John Jay Janney, *John Jay Janney's Virginia: An American Farm Lad's Life in the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. Asa Moore Janney and Werner L. Janney (McLean, VA: EPM Publishers, 1978), 54, as cited in Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 251.

42. Written exams and periodic reporting or report cards were introduced in 1845 in Boston, Massachusetts.

43. James J. Monroe Diary, 107, as cited in Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 242.

44. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 243.

45. The records appear in Susan Easton Black, Harvey B. Black, and Sarah Allen, *University of the City of Nauvoo* (Wilmington, DE: World Vital Records, Inc., 2008).

46. Nauvoo School Records.

47. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 241. Jesse Haven exchanged teaching for produce. In a *Nauvoo Neighbor* advertisement, Haven said, "All kinds of produce, store goods, and even money (bogus excepted) will be taken in pay." "Select School," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, November 27, 1844, 3. Such exchanges were typical on the western frontier.

48. "SCHOOLS—Nauvoo, Ill. 1846," *Hancock Eagle*, May 29, 1846, 3.

49. "Governor's Message," *St. Louis Luminary*, March 24, 1855, 1–5.