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Guest Editor's Prologue

Truman G. Madsen*

When Josiah Quincy visited Nauvoo in its munificent prime he was accompanied by Charles Francis Adams. Adams' diary impressions, kept by his own instructions in a vault for a full century, are less complimentary to Joseph Smith and the City than were Quincy's. Ascribing "cool arrogance" to Joseph's comments on the Chandler mummies, he yet marveled that the Mormons had built well under grinding opposition, and marveled more that such opposition could occur in a country committed to freedom of religion.

This incident symbolizes a feeling that lingers around the record of the rise and fall of Nauvoo: the impression that around every corner is still an untold story and that once these pieces are fitted together we will see a pattern that no history so far has fully grasped, in spite of the imaginative fictionalizing by Samuel Taylor, the archaeological reconstruction by the two churches committed to restoration of the city, and the focus on the civil and political externals in such a work as Robert Flanders'.

With this issue of BYU Studies we launch an effort in that direction.

A newly discovered historical treasure from that towering literate figure of Mormondom, Eliza R. Snow, is presented here under the editing of Maureen Ursenbach. The journal is in some respects more tantalizing in what it doesn't say than in what it does, and the entries (June 1842 to April 1844) omit, as it were, the first and third acts of the Nauvoo drama. But for the careful student there are fresh insights here into the sensitivities of this remarkable woman, her brother, Lorenzo,

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and into the struggle with writs and rights in the daily life of Joseph Smith.

In Dr. Kenneth W. Godfrey we have some illuminating samples of how major books on major events in Nauvoo have missed the concrete meaning of everyday life. He suggests that for all that has been published in some sixty volumes we have so far been least articulate where we should have been most: what made Mormon life different from life in other American communities? And what was its vitality and moving power? Dr. Godfrey projects some new bearings for research on these lines.

Letters are landmarks in biography and history. Letters of John Taylor and his wife Leonora are here presented by Ronald K. Esplin. These provide us an intimate closeup of the near-epidemic of sickness, chills and fever and death that stalked the Saints in 1839, not only among those at home but also those determined to serve on missions. They show also how they became reconciled to separation and what was common but also rare in their faith in God.

Nauvoo restorationist, Dr. T. Edgar Lyon, shows how the Mississippi was not only a land separation but also a doctrinal divider; how it distinguished those who knew the deeper doctrinal insights from those who were still living within the framework of the Kirtland era. And through Joseph Smith came clarification and refinement but also revolutionary disclosures especially on the nature of the Holy Ghost, the primacy of free will, new perspectives on the fall and destiny of man, the blending of spiritual and temporal, baptism for the dead, the higher ranges of the priesthood, the erection of the temple in its full-blown ceremonial patterns, the establishment of celestial and plural marriage, and finally the doctrine of eternal progression as rooted in the King Follett discourse. This and more came within the seven years the Saints were in Nauvoo and much of it in the last two years of the Prophet Joseph Smith's life.

James L. Kimball, Jr., approaches one of the paradoxes of Nauvoo city, its somewhat unprecedented but also thoroughly American charter. Nauvoo thus became "a government within a government." Ironically this "wall of protection" became a barrier that provoked heavy-handed opposition. And one wonders if the Nauvoo Legion (is there a scholar interested?)
arose from similar American motivations and, by the same irony, did not protect or even intimidate but in the end, only antagonized.

What can a Mormon community do when its legal defense-mechanisms are wiped away? Thurmon Dean Moody pulls together the journal descriptions of one effective resort. And now we see clearly the meaning of a curious phrase in the literature of Nauvoo that people were "whistled out" of the city. This organized form of restraint, usually involving young men, was a kind of intelligence agency and a junior posse. Suspicious characters and would-be troublemakers often found themselves vexed and their plans vitiated.

Here also is a preview of Stanley Kimball's forthcoming biography on the monumental counselor to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Heber C. Kimball was "one of the triumvirs" of the first generation of the Church and the builders of Nauvoo, and his special gifts in the missionary outreach, in counsel, and in loyalty were high-water marks for the Saints then as they are for us now. This portrait is especially helpful in deepening our grasp of the life-impact of three controversial facets of the Nauvoo kingdom—the establishment of Masonic lodges (on which further articles are in preparation), the beginnings of plural marriage, and the meaning of the temple.

Finally, James Allen and Malcolm Thorp unite resources to trace in a coherent way what heretofore we have had only in biographical snippets—the unique mission of the Twelve to Britain. Utilizing available journals of the leaders involved as well as manuscripts of the converts, they relate the entire effort to the situation in Britain and especially to conditions of the working classes in mid-nineteenth century England.

Because the Nauvoo period is characterized by a great number of gathered and seasoned Latter-day Saints and is the climactic period in Joseph Smith's ministry, and because there was a conscientious and official effort to keep records, minutes, and up-to-date history, one would expect rich eyewitness source materials on crucial events. In fact, we often have only the anatomy of events in Nauvoo. They cry out for detail, for flesh and blood clarification—for the record of the immediate impact on the lives of the Saints. Thus, for example, the following events need closer and closeup recovery:
The establishment of the Nauvoo Legion.
The origins of celestial and plural families.
The involvements and eventual defection of John C. Bennett, William and Wilson Law, William Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and information concerning their later lives.
The establishment of the Relief Society.
The establishment of the Masonic Lodge.
The relationship of the Kirtland and Nauvoo temples.
The activities of the Twelve in 1844.
The "rolling off" of the keys of authority on the Twelve prior to April conference, 1844.
The reaction of the Saints to the King Follett discourse.
The Prophet's plan to go West, and the actual factors leading up to the martyrdom.
The mantle experience and succession of Brigham Young.

During the next four years we will be preoccupied with these questions. We plead for a careful search and research effort to find letters, diaries, artifacts and memorabilia, and even word-of-mouth folklore to pad out our understanding of these and other crucial issues in the Nauvoo era.