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William Weeks, Architect of the Nauvoo Temple

J. Earl Arrington

The Nauvoo Temple¹ is well known to students of LDS Church history, but the structure's architect, William Weeks, has slipped into obscurity. Yet he deserves to be better known today, not that he was a great architect outside his group and time, but because he helped to translate the purposes and ideals of the early Latter-day Saints into architectural terms and because his work represented the zenith of temple-building activities during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith.²

THE EARLY YEARS

William Weeks' familial and architectural roots were in New England. His great grandparents and grandparents were born and

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¹The Temple, by the time the Saints fled from Nauvoo, was an impressive structure. A light gray limestone building, it measured 128 feet long by 88 feet wide and stood 65 feet high with an octagonal, four-tiered tower reaching to 165 feet. The four external walls were ornamented with thirty pilasters, each pilaster having a unique carved moon-stone as its base and a sun-stone as its capital. Two rows of large Gothic windows and two rows of small circular windows pierced the side walls. At the front and only entrance, three arched doorways led into the first-floor vestibule. Both the first and second floors had vestibules and large halls for mass meetings. Two upper half-stories provided offices and ordinance rooms, as did the attic. The basement housed an impressively carved baptismal font. Interior features included arched ceilings, pulpits, altars, curtains, circular stairways, painted scenes on walls, and intricate carvings and decorations throughout.

Architectural features are described in Don F. Colvin, "A Historical Study of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo, Illinois" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962) and Stanley Buchholz Kimball, "The Nauvoo Temple," *Improvement Era* 66 (November 1963):974-84. Excellent early depictions of the Temple accompany Stanley B. Kimball's essay, "Nauvoo" in *Improvement Era* 65 (July 1962):512-17, 548-51. Analysis of the Temple's architectural styles is found in Charles Mark Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences on the Salt Lake Temple" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1972). Recent archaeological work on the temple site is detailed in Virginia S. and J. C. Harrington, *Rediscovery of the Nauvoo Temple* (Salt Lake City: Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., 1971), and Jay M. Todd, "Nauvoo Temple Restoration," *Improvement Era* 71 (October 1968):10-16.

Commenced in 1841, the Temple was dedicated in 1846 while the Saints were deserting Nauvoo. Within a decade it was ruined and levelled by fire, vandalism, tornado, and scavengers of building materials.

²Some surviving architectural sketches of various parts of the Nauvoo Temple, drawn by William Weeks, cited hereafter as Nauvoo Temple Drawings, are preserved at the Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereinafter cited as Church Archives.

reared there, as were his parents, James, Jr., and Sophronia Weeks. William was born in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on 11 April 1813. When his father migrated to the Middle West, twenty-two-year-old William "came down the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, landed at Chicago in the year 1835 with his father's family."³

William was part of a family of builders. He early acquired skills in the New England traditions of architecture from his father, with whom he worked until he was twenty-one years old. His father, "an architect or at least a builder," also taught his skills to another son, Arwin L. The brothers Arwin and William were close both personally and professionally.⁴ As a young man, William may have participated with Arwin in some early building activities in the East and the South.

Family traditions say that William, who had the urge to travel as a young man, was converted to Mormonism while in the Southern States. Being "raised a Quaker, as were his father's family," William departed from his family background by joining with the Saints in their gathering centers. Apparently he was in Missouri when the Saints were driven out and then spent about a year in Quincy, Adams County, Illinois. There, at age twenty-six, he married Caroline M. Allen on 11 June 1839, in a ceremony performed by Elder Abraham O. Smoot (a Southern convert and later father of Utah Senator Reed Smoot). Caroline, ten years her husband's junior, was born in Tompkins County, New York, on 16 April 1823. Their union lasted more than half a century and produced eleven children, seven of whom died at very young ages. Their first child was born in Quincy in late 1840.⁵

The new family unit soon became part of the infant city of Nauvoo. The Weeks' Nauvoo home still stands today, located at

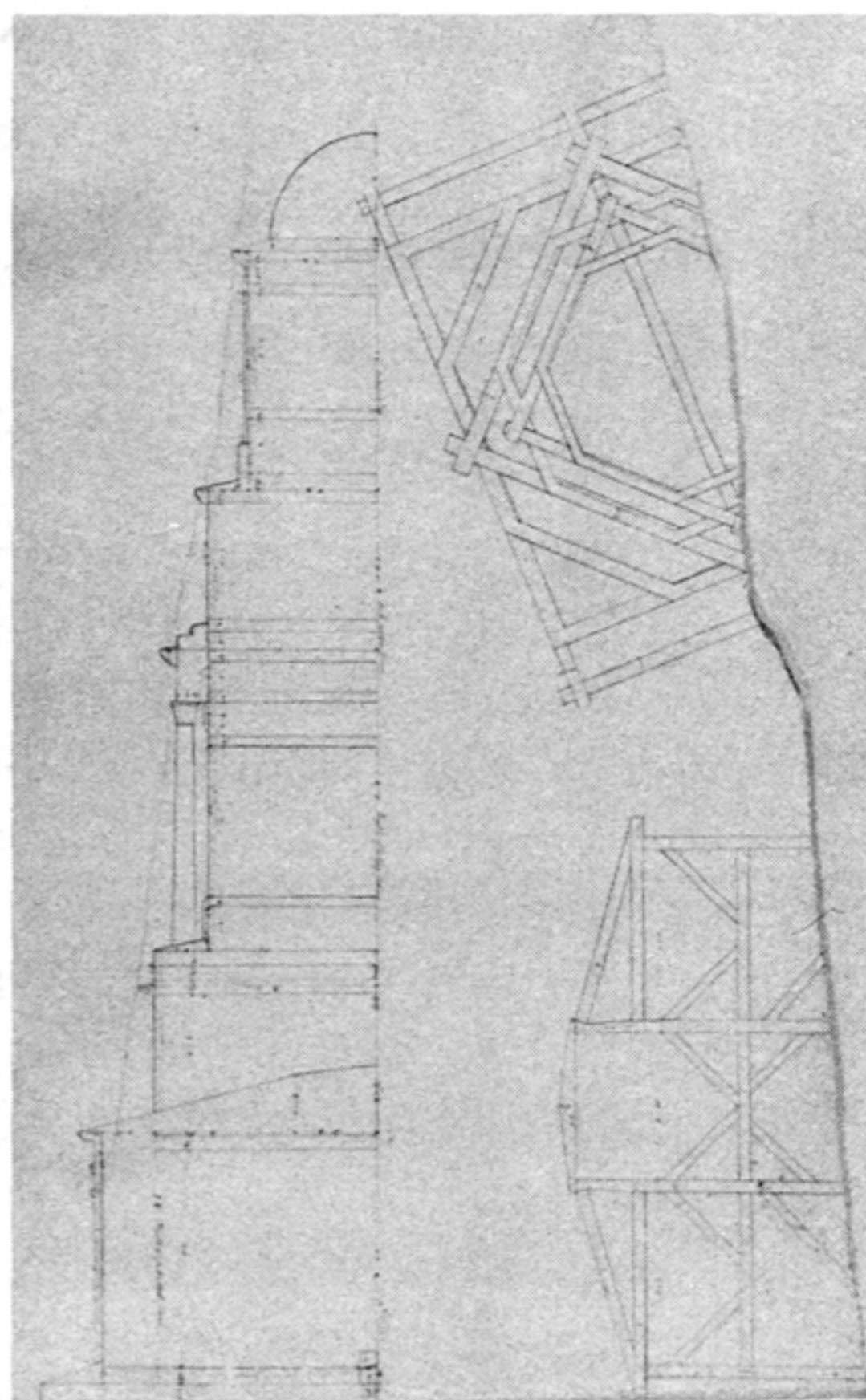
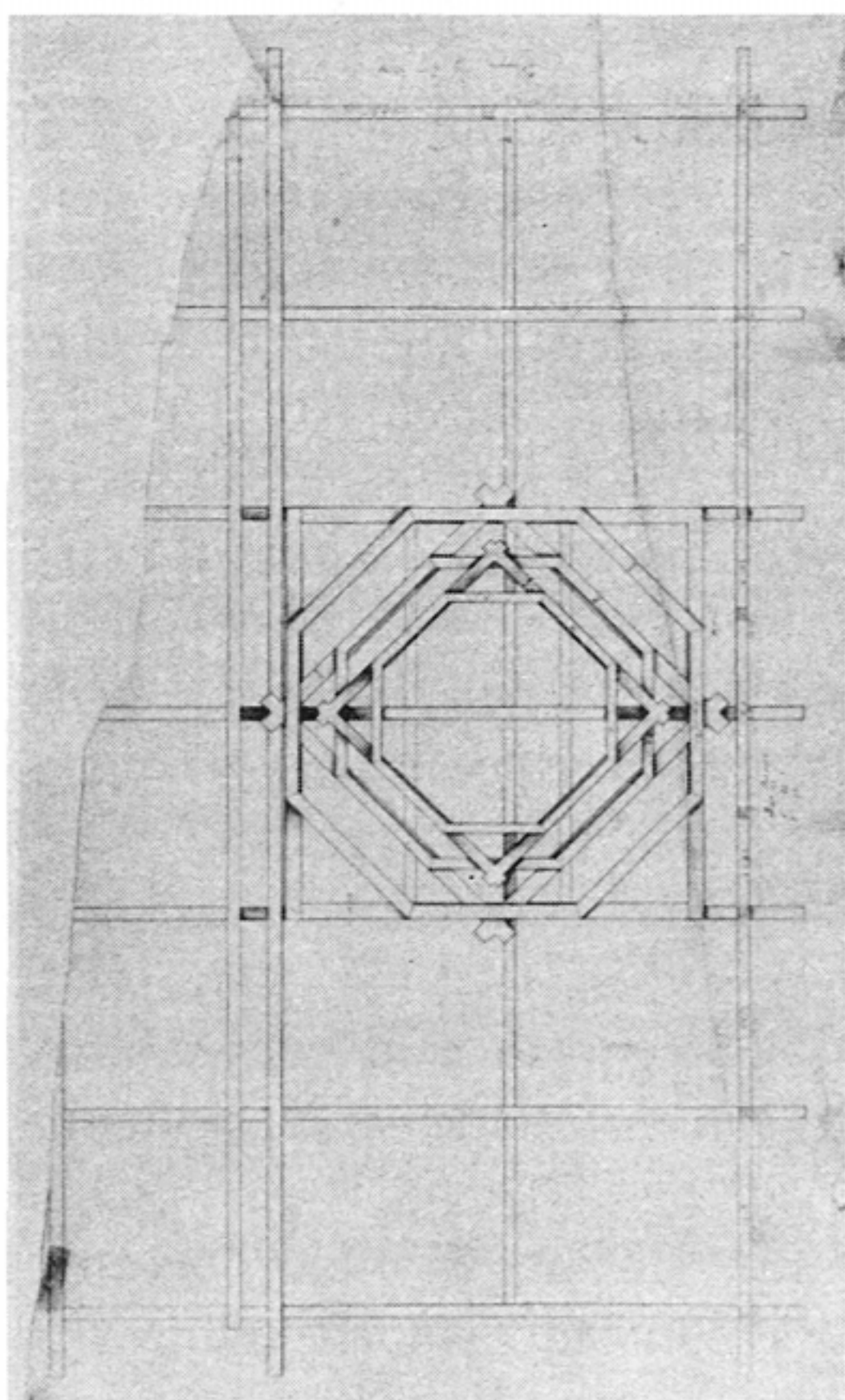
³Robert D. Weeks, "Genealogy of the Family of George Weeks," MS, p. 300; Patriarchal Blessing Records, MS, 9:564, Church Archives; Kimball, "Nauvoo Temple," p. 974; Caroline F. Griffin (a daughter of William Weeks), "The Life History of William Weeks," MS, p. 1; F. M. Weeks (a nephew of William Weeks) to author, March 1932. The Weeks' family manuscripts cited in this article are in the author's library.

Genealogical data about the Weeks families include the following: William's great grandfather, William Weeks, was baptized in 1762, married in Massachusetts, and had a son, James. This grandfather James married Deborah Luce in 1786, and they had seven children, including James, Jr., the father of the Nauvoo Temple architect. James, Jr., married Sophronia Fisher and their children were Arwin L., William, Samuel, and Jane.

⁴To show their mutual affection, each named a son after the other. Cherished among William's descendants is "a book of drawings" which was a present to William from Arwin. (Griffin, "Life History of William Weeks," pp. 1-3; C. W. Weeks to author, 29 February and 28 April 1932; C. F. Griffin to author, 25 April 1932.)

⁵C. F. Griffin to author, 17 April 1932; J. M. Weeks, "Obituary of William Weeks"; C. W. Weeks to author, 29 February 1932.

Young and Partridge streets in the upper or northern part of the city.⁶ In Nauvoo, William was ordained an elder in the priesthood. Some contemporary reports have confused his religious status and frequently have labelled him a gentile architect, an idea refuted by both LDS Church records and family tradition.⁷ During the Weeks' six years in Nauvoo four more children were added to the family, but four of their five children also died there.⁸



Two of William Weeks' Temple Drawings.

Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

⁶David E. Miller, *Westward Migration of the Mormons, with Special Emphasis on the History of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1963), p. 307; "Historic Nauvoo," Salt Lake City: Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., 1964.

⁷T. Edgar Lyon to author, 5 October 1964.

⁸Weeks' family records, in possession of author. The children of William and Caroline Matilda Allen and their places and dates of birth and death are

Ammon	Quincy, Ill.	18 Oct. 1840	Nauvoo	11 Nov. 1845
Delight	Nauvoo	8 Nov. 1841	Nauvoo	9 Nov. 1841
Laura L.	Nauvoo	1 Dec. 1842	Nauvoo	30 Aug. 1843
Sophronia	Nauvoo	15 Feb. 1844	Nauvoo	1 Mar. 1844
Arwin L.	Nauvoo	8 June 1845	Council Bluffs	18 Apr. 1847
*Rossena	Council Bluffs	28 Jan. 1847	Long Beach, Calif.	19 Oct. 1923
Julia	Fond du Lac, Wisc.	13 May 1849	Marion, Iowa	4 Apr. 1852
William	Provo, Utah	21 Feb. 1853	Salt Lake City	3 Dec. 1853
Caroline F. Griffin	Salt Lake City	15 Feb. 1855		1 Aug. 1937
Franklin W.	Los Angeles	9 Oct. 1859		

*Although LDS records show two other names for Rossena (Asanah and Kophenah), there is no evidence two children were born rather than one.

TEMPLE ARCHITECT UNDER JOSEPH SMITH

Among priority building projects planned for the new city of Nauvoo was a temple. Just a few years earlier the Church had constructed its first temple in Kirtland, and plans for a Missouri temple had yet to be implemented. On 31 August 1840 Joseph Smith announced at Nauvoo that "the time has now come, when it is necessary to erect a house of prayer, a house of order, a house for the worship of our God, where the ordinances can be attended to agreeably to His divine will."⁹

That fall a temple building committee was appointed, and a site was soon selected atop a prominent knoll overlooking the majestic Mississippi River less than a mile away.¹⁰ It was "the spot which I have chosen for you to build it," according to a revelation to Joseph Smith. That same revelation, dated 19 January 1841, required the Saints to gather to Nauvoo to "build a house to my name" where new ordinances could be revealed and practiced, including baptisms for the dead.¹¹

Construction plans for the Temple were called for, and William Weeks' plans won immediate acceptance in competition with other drawings. William's nephew, F. M. Weeks, recalled William's telling him that Joseph Smith "advertised for plans for a temple. [William] said several architects presented their plans, but none seemed to suit Smith. So when he went in and showed his plans, Joseph Smith grabbed him, hugged him and said 'you are the man I want.'"¹²

An architect of the Greek Revivalist school, William became general superintendent of the Temple's construction. But his designs and labors were subject to approval, modification, or rejection by the temple building committee, Church leaders, and ultimately by the Prophet himself. According to the January revelation, the Lord said: "I will show unto my servant Joseph all things pertaining to this house."¹³ Later Joseph told William he had "seen in vision" the appearance of the Temple, and this vision influenced his treatment of William's plans.¹⁴

⁹Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1932-1951), 4:186; hereafter referred to as *HC*.

¹⁰Todd, "Nauvoo Temple Restoration," pp. 12-13.

¹¹Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921), 124:26-44. Hereafter referred to as *D&C*.

¹²F. M. Weeks to author, 7 March 1932.

¹³*D&C* 124:42.

¹⁴*HC*, 6:197; Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences," p. 9.

From the beginning, Joseph was generally considered the chief architect of the Temple. The Saints fully believed that Joseph received the structural pattern through a vision. Visitors and friends also gave him credit for the Temple plans; for example, Charlotte Haven wrote from Nauvoo in 1843 that the Temple has "its origin with Joseph Smith."¹⁵ That summer the *Burlington Gazette* reported that the rising Temple was "the conception of the prophet, General Smith."¹⁶ The editor of the *Pittsburg Gazette* reported that the Prophet told him: "I am not capacitated to build according to the world. I know nothing about architecture and all that, but it pleases me; that's the way I feel."¹⁷ In the spring of 1844 Josiah Quincy visited Nauvoo and left with the impression that the Temple was "presumably, like something Smith had seen in vision."¹⁸ About that same time Edward Stiff wrote that the Temple architecture was "the result of the fertile brain of Gen. Smith."¹⁹ A *St. Louis Gazette* reporter "learned from the lips of the Prophet himself, the style of architecture is exclusively his own."²⁰

Similar reports reached readers around the nation. In September 1844 the *Southern Literary Messenger* reported the Prophet "to have been the architect who planned the building."²¹ The *New York Sun* credited "the Mormon prophet" as being the man who was "in the blaze of this nineteenth century . . . to build a city, with new . . . orders of architecture."²² Major J. B. Newhall of Iowa was told that the Temple was "Jo Smith's order" of architecture.²³ Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois gained the impression from Mormons themselves that their temple "was commenced without any previous plan; and that the master builder, from day to day, during the progress of its erection, received directions immediately from heaven as to the plan of the building," a view expressed in early published histories of Illinois.²⁴ In 1852 Lieutenant

¹⁵*Overland Monthly* 16 (December 1890):620.

¹⁶*Burlington Gazette* quoted in *New York Tribune*, 15 July 1843, p. 3.

¹⁷*Pittsburg Gazette* quoted in *Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette* 40 (19 October 1843):1.

¹⁸Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896), p. 389.

¹⁹*The Prophet* (New York), 1 June 1844, p. 2.

²⁰*St. Louis Gazette* as quoted in *The Deseret News*, 30 September 1857, p. 234.

²¹*Southern Literary Messenger* (Richmond, Vir.), September 1844, p. 536.

²²*New York Sun* quoted in *HC*, 6:3.

²³*Burlington Hawkeye* (Iowa), 12 February 1846, p. 2. (Credit is due the editor, J. Tracy Garrett, who generously gave the writer access to the old files of his paper in 1931.)

²⁴Thomas Ford, *A History of Illinois from Its Commencement As a State in 1814 to 1847* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs & Co., 1854), p. 404; see also Alexander Davidson and Bernard Stuvé, *A Complete History of Illinois from 1673 to 1873* (Springville: Illinois Journal Co., 1874), p. 516; and Grace Humphrey, *Illinois: The Story of the Prairie State* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., 1917), p. 136.

J. W. Gunnison heard in Utah that the pattern for the Nauvoo Temple was given to Joseph by his angel, that all the details were explained orally, and that "a Gentile architect was employed to draft it by dictation."²⁵ Such a view found expression in public literature of later years,²⁶ and Mormon writers today still declare that "Joseph Smith witness[ed] the Nauvoo Temple before they started to lay the foundations of that beautiful building."²⁷

Evidently Joseph outlined the general type of building features desired, leaving it to William to draw up the practical plans and to have them implemented. "There is little doubt that Weeks added some decorative elements," says one student of LDS temple architecture, "but his major contribution seems to have been detailed structural renderings clarifying the [Joseph] Smith concept." Once a set of drawn plans had the Prophet's approval, William usually had full authority to proceed with the construction work without interference from officials or workmen. Temple plans remained general and fluid, no complete plans being presented at any one time.²⁸

William's skill as an architect is clearly seen in his few surviving Temple drawings, which are mostly preliminary sketches. Among these are three depictions of the Temple's exterior showing progressive changes, no doubt made at the Prophet's request. The first, illustrating Gustavus Hill's "Map of the City of Nauvoo," depicts a classical, free-standing peristyle temple dominated by a massive, square, stone Gothic tower, a triangular pediment, and engaged pilasters. The second drawing shows a change from a square to an octagonal tower of stone and wood, with the triangular pediment still there. The third drawing replaces the classical triangular pediment with a rectangular one, calls for an all-wood tower, puts half-circle windows in the pediment, and adds five-pointed star-stones and rows of small, round windows to the walls. The constructed Temple itself showed even further changes from these drawings, including square windows in the upper pediment instead of half-circle ones and altered shutters in the tower windows. Changes in Temple details, from first drawings to final building, were dramatic.

²⁵*Westminster Review* (London), January 1853, p. 214.

²⁶*Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (New York), April 1853, p. 612; Ellen E. Dickinson, *New Light on Mormonism* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1855), p. 101; Harry M. Beardsley, *Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1931), p. 224.

²⁷E. Cecil McGavin, *The Nauvoo Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1953), p. 6.

²⁸Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influence," p. 9.

William's surviving drawings also include pen-and-ink and pencil sketches for circular stairways, pediment star-stones, circular windows, archways, a pulpit, frameworks for the four-tiered tower and for ceilings, a facade featuring an all-seeing eye, a wall plan for stonecutters, pilaster decorations, a baptismal font, and some interior decorations and furnishings. Also surviving are designs of features for other buildings, including a projected armory and the Nauvoo House.²⁹

A ground plan must have been worked out and drafted in some detail during the latter part of 1840 so that initial preparation of the grounds could commence that fall. Joseph publicly stated in early 1841 that the Temple "is expected to be considerably larger than the one in Kirtland, and on a more magnificent scale."³⁰ The Kirtland Temple, built between 1833 and 1836, was in many ways the prototype of the Nauvoo Temple, its form and proportions being followed, though the temple at Nauvoo was on a considerably larger scale. The January 1841 revelation provided some details of design and function to be included in the new temple, such as a font for performing baptisms for the dead.³¹

Stone quarries were located and initial excavating commenced at the temple site. While quarry work proceeded slowly that winter, in February the foundation was laid out by the temple committee and digging of the cellar commenced. By March, cellar walls were started and foundation stones were being set. The walls were high enough by 6 April for a special cornerstone laying ceremony.³² William was present, he marched in the parade, and he then helped lower the first cornerstone into place.³³

Work escalated during the remainder of 1841. By July plans were drawn up for a baptismal font in the basement, and in August "President Smith approved and accepted a draft for the font, made by Brother Wm. Weeks." William worked on the font with his own hands and did initial carving on the wooden oxen supporting the wooden font, oxen "copied after the most beautiful five year old steer that could be found in the country." Their horns "were formed after the most perfect horns that could be

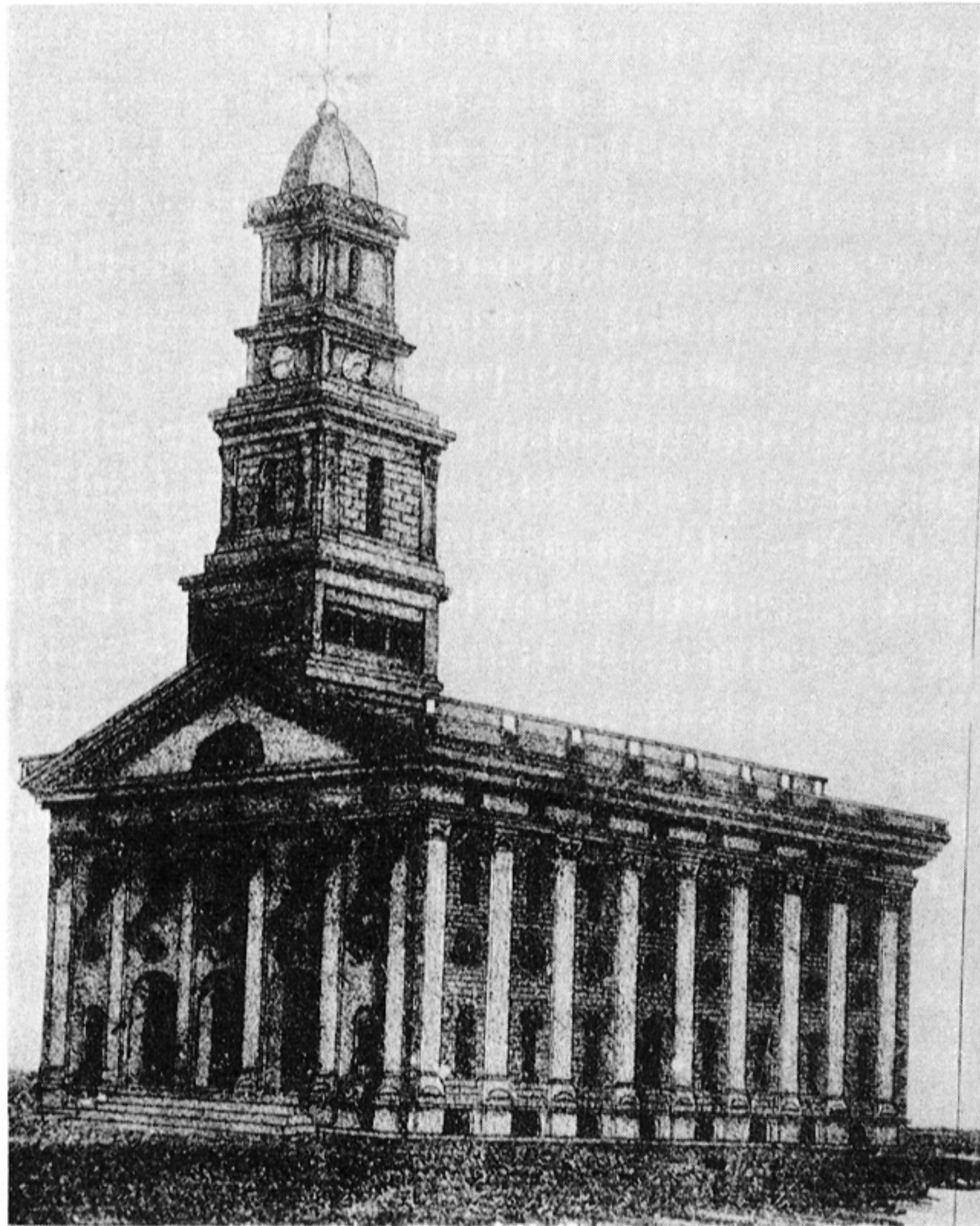
²⁹Nauvoo Temple Drawings.

³⁰*Times and Seasons* 2 (1 January 1841):259-60.

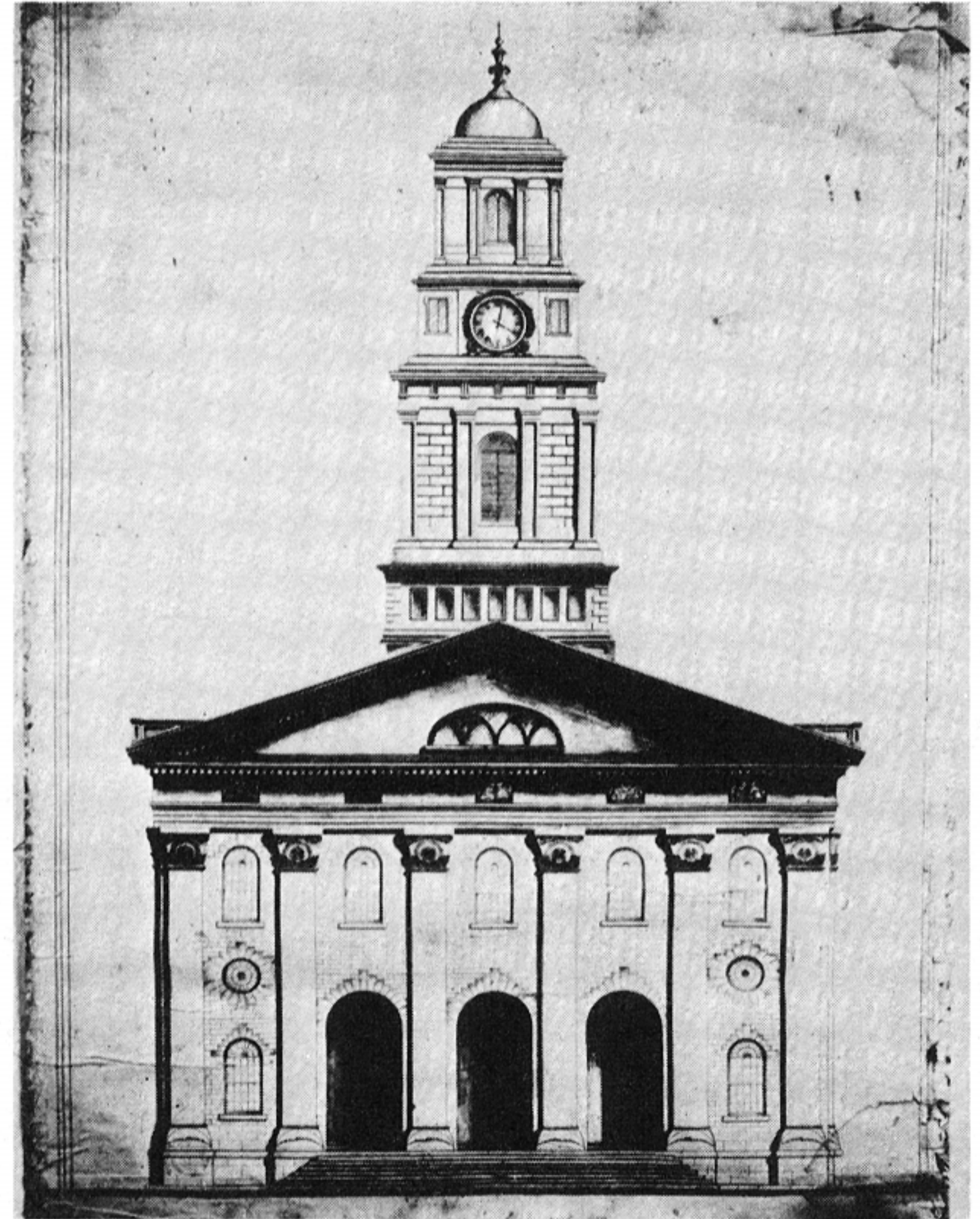
³¹D&C 124.

³²William Huntington Diaries, 1840-1841, MS, *Miscellaneous Mormon Diaries*, 17 vols., 16:12, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record* 8 (June 1889):860; and Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1899), p. 22.

³³*Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo) 2 (15 April 1841):375-77; and HC, 4:326-31.



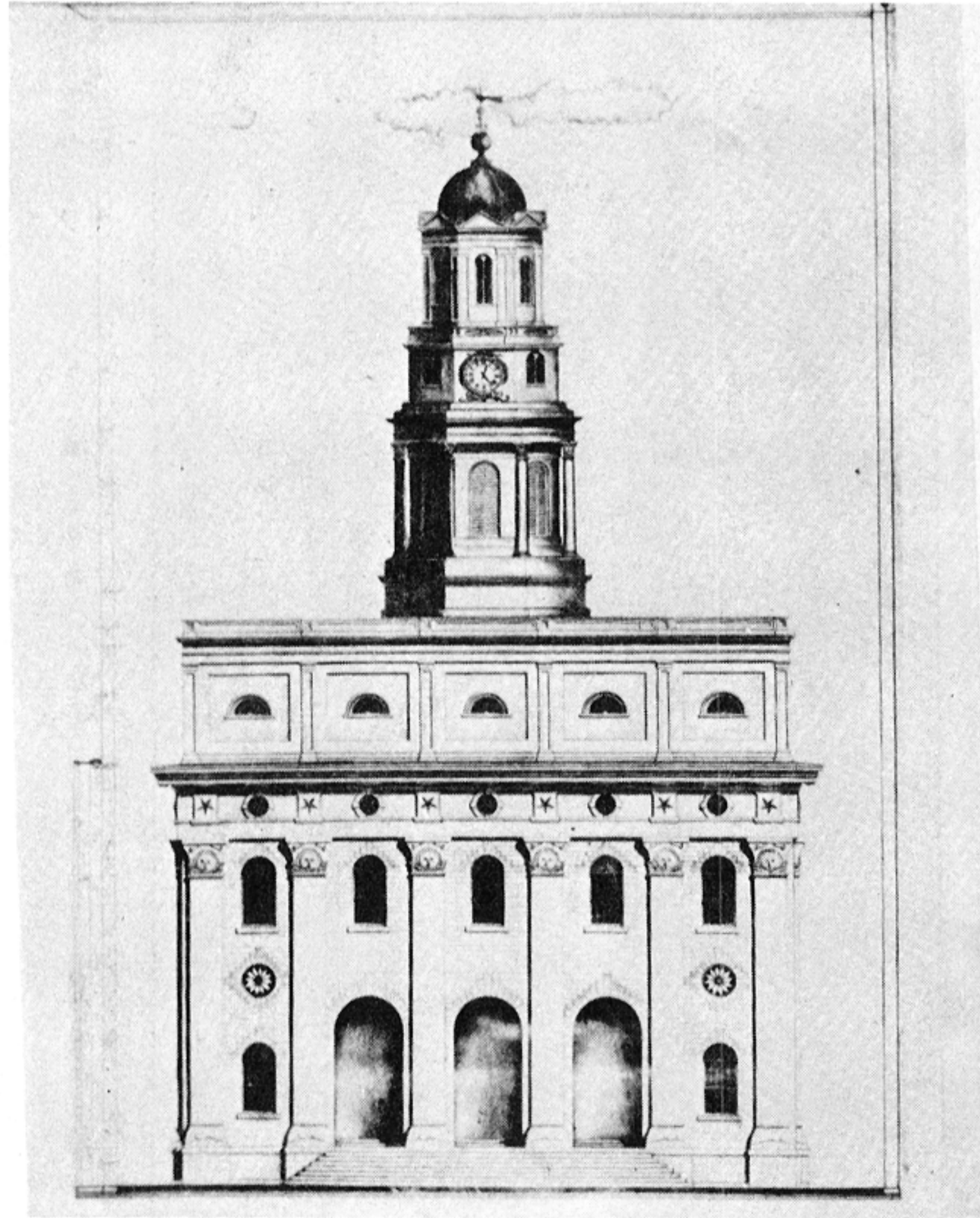
First known drawing of the Nauvoo Temple.



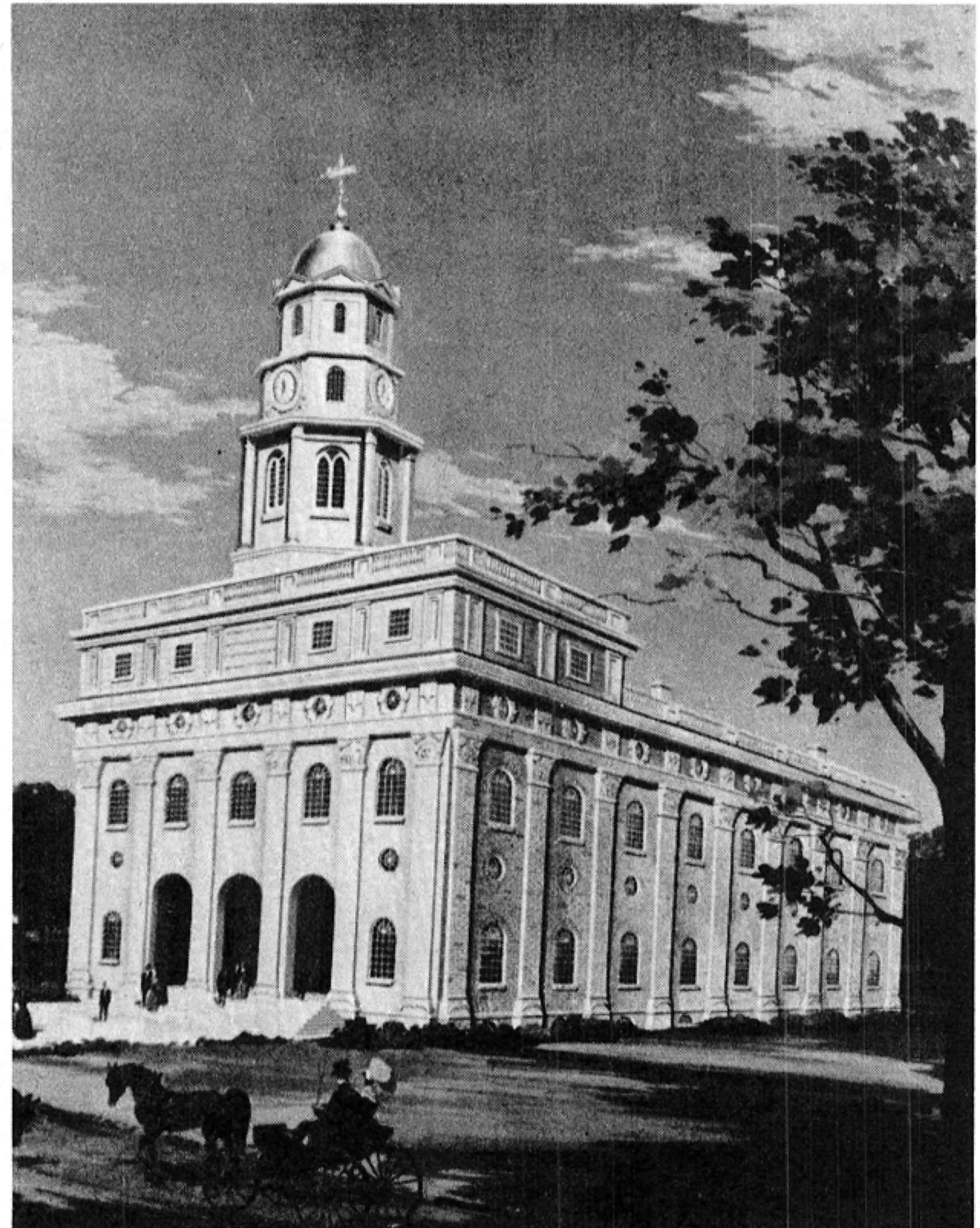
Second temple drawing shows change to octagonal tower.

Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

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Third temple drawing shows change to rectangular pediment.



Artist's rendering of completed Nauvoo Temple.

Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

procured." Other craftsmen finished the oxen in a little over two months, and the font was dedicated on 8 November, by which time most of the basement work was finished. The Prophet judged the finished oxen to be "an excellent striking likeness of the original." William's first plan called for four front steps for entrance to the font, but this number was later doubled.³⁴

Temple building dominated Nauvoo's activities for the next few years. Stakes and wards were reorganized in order to better provide laborers for the project. Building missionaries were called. Large work crews extracted stone from the quarries, cut and prepared timber in Wisconsin pineries, and hauled building materials to the temple site. The Temple walls slowly climbed heavenward during 1843 and 1844.

Joseph continued to directly supervise the temple project. One report in 1843 says that "plans for laying a temporary floor in the temple during the fall were made at the suggestions of the prophet," and an 8 November report that year said Joseph was making plans for pulpits and examining materials for them.³⁵ At a conference concerning the Temple wall, Joseph "gave a certificate to William Weeks to carry out my designs and the architecture of the temple in Nauvoo, . . . [which stated] that no person or persons shall interfere with him or his plans in the building of the temple."³⁶

One architectural detail, involving windows, perhaps best illustrates the working relationship between the Prophet and the architect. On 5 February 1844, instructions were given "in relation to the circular windows designed to light the offices in the dead work of the arch between stories." William at first believed that "round windows in the broad side of a building were a violation of all the known rules of architecture, and contended that they should be semicircular—that the building was too low for round windows." But he was overruled, for Joseph "would have the circles, if he had to make the Temple ten feet higher than it was originally calculated." Joseph expected good effects from round windows in lighting the Temple, so his final instructions to William were that "I wish you to carry out *my* designs. I have seen in vision the splendid appearance of that building illuminated, and will have it built according to the pattern shown me." Round

³⁴Jenson, *The Historical Record*, 8:861–62.

³⁵HC, 6:67.

³⁶Journal History of the Church, MS, 12 April 1848, Church Archives.

windows therefore were used in the structure, giving basis for the belief that the height of the building was increased over that specified in the initial plans. There was also compromise by making upper circular windows smaller than the lower ones so that they would fit satisfactorily into the metopes of the entablature.³⁷

Weeks made measured drawings for the pilasters, the chief outside wall ornament. In the natural construction of the pilaster system Joseph exercised his influence also. The stone bases, with their moon carvings, were mostly in place by January 1843. For the capital stones the plans called for a "round face and two hands, holding and blowing a trumpet, to represent the sun."³⁸ These faces were being carved by the spring of 1844. An observer noticed that "the countenance was of the negro type." When one of the stonecarvers asked President Smith, "Is this like the face you saw in vision?" he replied, "Very near it, except . . . that the nose is just a thought too broad."³⁹ But when reminded that it would be seen from a distance, he acknowledged, "Very true, it will do, it will do very well."⁴⁰

Joseph likewise had a voice in choosing the lightning rod over the steeple of the Temple and the angel supported on it. According to tradition, the Prophet rejected a lightning rod at first because "if God, who now holds the lightnings in his hands chooses to direct a thunderbolt against those solid walls and demolish the building, it is his affair."⁴¹ But he evidently changed his mind, for architect's drawings show first the lightning rod over the steeple, without the angel, and then the angel on the weather vane.

It is hard to determine when and if interior plans were drawn by the architect. Reports indicate some indecision about the matter during the troubled times for the Church in early 1844.⁴² A new idea was proposed, that there be a tabernacle for the congregation to serve more adequately one of the dual functions of the Temple. One visitor was skeptical as to whether or not the Temple would ever be finished "on the plan originally contemplated." During April another visitor learned that "the interior plan is yet

³⁷HC, 6:196-97.

³⁸*Overland Monthly* 16 (December 1840):620.

³⁹Quincy, *Figures of the Past*, p. 389.

⁴⁰Kimball, "Nauvoo Temple," p. 984.

⁴¹*Nauvoo Rustler*, 10 March 1891, p. 2. There has been some doubt that the angel ever topped the Temple spire as intended. Colvin, in "Mormon Temple at Nauvoo," however, cites witnesses who say they saw the angel in place atop the Temple.

⁴²*New York Tribune*, 3 February 1844, p. 3; *Missouri Republican*, 30 April 1844, p. 2; *New York Weekly Tribune*, 8 June 1844, pp. 7-8.

undecided upon, or rather, the Prophet has not received a revelation in regard to the interior arrangements." In June the Prophet informed others that the Temple's "interior structure and arrangement . . . had not been decided on—(he did not tell me, 'had not been revealed to him,' as he did to many others)—and indeed, he was by no means certain, he should erect the edifice externally in accordance with the plan proposed and published."⁴³

TEMPLE ARCHITECT UNDER THE TWELVE TO 1846

Within months after Joseph Smith's martyrdom in June 1844 the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles assumed leadership of the Church and into their hands passed the fate of the temple project. They, with Brigham Young as quorum president, directed that the Temple be completed as planned. While some factions protested, the great majority of the Saints continued to support the temple project under the leadership of the Twelve.

But some question arose as to whether or not the Twelve would carry out the temple plans as "envisioned" by the slain Prophet. Some later opponents to Elder Young's leadership circulated the belief that he radically changed Joseph's plans. Dr. J. F. Weld, an old citizen of Nauvoo, ventured the belief that "the plans were materially altered from the original draft, whether by revelation or not we are not informed."⁴⁴ In protest against Brigham's leadership, Joseph Smith's son and namesake later headed The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He voiced his conviction "that after the death of Joseph Smith, the plans and specifications were altered; and that such parts as were nearly completed were not so completed in accordance with the original design," although he admitted that "of this we cannot testify, never having seen the original drawings, nor read the specifications." His statement, first made in 1872, was repeated in 1897 and 1904;⁴⁵ and the belief that Joseph's temple plans were unacceptably altered still persists among members of the RLDS Church.⁴⁶

The Twelve claimed decision-making authority and the right to receive revelations for the Church, but they did not use that

⁴³*St. Louis Gazette* as quoted in *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 12 June 1844, p. 1; and *St. Louis Gazette* as quoted in *The Deseret News*, 30 September 1857, p. 234.

⁴⁴Newton Bateman, et al., eds., *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Hancock County*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Co., 1899), 2:861.

⁴⁵*True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, 1 January 1872, p. 18; *Journal of History* 3 (April 1910):161; *The Saints' Herald*, 17 February 1904, p. 146.

⁴⁶S. A. Burgess to author, 19 May 1932 (Mr. Burgess is a historian for the RLDS Church); Reta Latimer Halford, "Nauvoo—The City Beautiful" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1945), p. 192.

authority to radically change the temple plans. Elder Young said on 8 August 1844: "The foundation is laid by our prophet, and we will build thereon; no other foundation can be laid but that which is laid."⁴⁷ A week later the Twelve informed the general Church membership that "the city of Nauvoo and the Temple of our Lord are to continue to be built up according to the pattern which has been commenced, and which has progressed with such rapidity thus far."⁴⁸ The apostles not only stated publicly their intentions to adhere to the same plans and policies of the first prophet, but they also set in motion again the same machinery to carry them into effect. They retained the temple building committee and continued the employment of William Weeks "as architect and draughtsman."⁴⁹ Years later, in Utah, Brigham Young gave full credit for the Nauvoo Temple to "their martyred prophet, who designed the same."⁵⁰

Like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young overshadowed the architect in terms of making final architectural decisions. Some adjustment to personalities and to the unstable internal and external problems plaguing the Church led to some difficulties among the temple planners.⁵¹ In October 1844, Brigham met with "Brother Weeks, the architect, at the temple office," to explain William's relationship to the building committee "in order to avoid some difficulties." Another such meeting occurred 2 December. In December the Twelve agreed "to employ fifteen persons steadily as carpenters and that the architect be authorized to select such men as he has confidence in—Men who are well qualified to do the work that is wanted." That season William and his master workmen were "constantly at hand to direct the operations" and to exhibit and explain the building to special visitors.⁵² Also about this time Brigham publicly complimented William Weeks, stating that the pilaster ornament, then nearing completion, was "an evidence of great skill in the architect and ingenuity in the stonecutters."

Plans called for completing the exterior wall work during the spring of 1845, including the circular windows on both mezzanine floors, windows about whose design Joseph Smith had been so adamant. On 8 February a letter published in *The Prophet* stated:

⁴⁷HC, 7:240–41.

⁴⁸HC, 7:250.

⁴⁹An extract from William Clayton's Journal in Journal History, 31 December 1844, p. 12.

⁵⁰*The Deseret News*, 21 August 1852, p. 4.

⁵¹Journal History, 28 October, and 2, 5, 16 December 1844; *New York Express*, 7 November 1844, p. 2.

⁵²*The Prophet*, 30 November 1844, p. 3.

“The Architect considers that all the stone will be cut and finished within six weeks.”⁵³ A month later William again met in council with Elder Young and others, when plans for a font drain and “a wall on the south side of the Temple block” were discussed.⁵⁴ In mid-May Brigham Young “wrote a letter to the architect, directing him to place a stone in the west end (front) of the Temple with the inscription ‘Holiness to the Lord’ thereon.”⁵⁵ A week later William took part in the capstone ceremonies.⁵⁶

The previous December William had organized some carpenters and directed them in constructing the roof enclosure and interior work.⁵⁷ William’s third temple plan, calling for a row of semicircular windows for the rectangular pediment, was overruled in favor of rectangular windows.⁵⁸ While William’s name appears infrequently during the busy months of 1845, he is mentioned as a guide for prominent people touring the Temple in August,⁵⁹ and in October he attended a musical concert given in his honor in Nauvoo.⁶⁰

His duties remaining heavy during 1845, he organized and assisted stonecarvers in sculpting ornamental stonework for the interior, including the stone baptistry that Elder Young had requested to replace the wooden sculpture. On 6 June 1845 William met with the Twelve to discuss the work of replacing the wooden baptistry with a stone one. This idea generated rumors that the Twelve were departing from Joseph’s ideas. In July, Brigham Young explained

that Brother Joseph did not tell them all things at once, consequently you may expect to hear and see many things you never thought of before. One thing is that we have taken down the wooden fount that was built up by the instructions of Brother Joseph. This has been a great wonder to some, and says one of the stonecutters the other day, “I wonder why Joseph did not tell us the fount should be built of stone.” The man that made that speech is walking in darkness. He is a stranger to the spirit of this work, and knows nothing.⁶¹

Then the new leader revealed for the satisfaction of the Saints that “Brother Joseph said to me with regard to the fount, . . . ‘we

⁵³Heber C. Kimball to William Smith in *The Prophet*, 8 February 1845, p. 2.

⁵⁴HC, 7:383.

⁵⁵HC, 7:411.

⁵⁶Jenson, *The Historical Record*, 8:869–70.

⁵⁷Journal History, 16 December 1844, p. 1.

⁵⁸Excerpt from Heber C. Kimball’s Journal in Journal History, 6 June 1845, p. 1.

⁵⁹*New York Herald*, 6 September 1846, p. 1.

⁶⁰*The Contributor* 1 (June 1880):196.

⁶¹*Times and Seasons* 6 (1 July 1845):956.

will build a wooden fount to serve the present necessity.'” Brigham, himself a carpenter, wanted a stone font “that will not stink and keep us all the while cleansing it out,” one with an inviting pool for the sacred baptismal rites. Using hyperbole, he reminded the Saints that “This fount has caused the Gentile world to wonder, but a sight of the next one will make a Gentile faint away.”⁶²

Elder Young instructed William concerning the new font, to be patterned after the old wooden baptistry, though fashioned from stone. William had considerable part in making the new creation, according to a favorite family tradition. F. M. Weeks heard his uncle William relate how the baptistry plans called for

twelve life-sized oxen made out of solid stone; they were to stand in a circle, their heads outward, their hind parts together. On top of their backs was to be a large solid stone bowl for baptismal purposes. He said they advertised for stonecutters. Some of the best in America came. They said no one could cut those oxen out; he told them it could be done. So he took a chisel and a mallet and cut one out just to show them it could be done, and yet he was not a stonecutter.⁶³

William’s daughter Caroline recalled hearing that as the work proceeded, “The stone masons could not form the eyes of the oxen, so father borrowed their tools and formed the eyes himself.”⁶⁴ However, she and F. M. Weeks might be confusing the stone baptistry project with the wooden one.

Disturbed conditions plaguing the Church made it necessary that work schedules for finishing and furnishing the interior be flexible, especially schedules for the rooms needed for giving the endowment. Earlier, in 1842, there had been suggestions that “the upper story of the Temple will, when finished,”⁶⁵ be used for the ritual purposes. But at the beginning of 1845 Brigham Young decided that “upon each side of the font there will be a suite of rooms fitted up for the washings” and also “in the recesses, on each side of the arch, on the first story.”⁶⁶ Later that year Brigham set the objective of “getting on the roof and finishing some rooms”⁶⁷ for the rites, and by December the attic hall and side

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³F. M. Weeks to author, 7 March 1932.

⁶⁴C. F. Griffin to author, 25 April 1932; Griffin, “Life History of William Weeks,” p. 1.

⁶⁵John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), p. 191.

⁶⁶*Times and Seasons* 6 (15 January 1845):779.

⁶⁷History of Brigham Young, MS, 17 April 1854, p. 56, Church Archives.

rooms had been prepared and furnished to accommodate the priesthood officials as they engaged in giving the endowment.⁶⁸

Visitors in mid-1845 thought it would be a long time before the Temple "is finished in the style contemplated."⁶⁹ Pressures to rush completion of the edifice led to the appointment of a builder named Enoch Reese to help supervise work on the Temple,⁷⁰ either because leaders felt William was not moving the project along fast enough or because William needed assistance due to his own increased work load.

In April 1843 Architect Lucien Woodworth was asked to help provide the Twelve with a draft of the exterior and interior of the Nauvoo House.⁷¹ However, Lucien Woodworth had failed to comply, and the Twelve turned to William Weeks for help. On 9 August 1845, George A. Smith noted that "the trustees of the Nauvoo House, in company with Brother William Weeks, architect, went to the foundation of the Nauvoo House and took a measurement for the plan. Mr. Lucien Woodworth seemed offended, although he had been repeatedly requested to take the plan, but had failed to do it." Brigham Young then proposed a meeting to "inquire into the matter." Nauvoo House trustees finally agreed "to hire William Weeks to draw plans and we would pay him for it." George A. Smith went "to the foundation of the Nauvoo House and assisted William Weeks in taking further observations concerning the building."⁷²

But Brothers Woodworth and Weeks had been wedged apart, so Elder Young called another meeting to "adjust the difficulties" between the architects. The presiding apostle there decided that William "should assist Lucien Woodworth in drawing the plans, as the trustees of the Nauvoo House did not consider Mr. Woodworth competent." The solution was no solution, for on 12 August Brother Woodworth "stated to Bishop George Miller and Mr. Weeks, that he would have nothing to do with the Nauvoo House unless he could have control of all things pertaining to the building." His statement, put into writing, was taken up and considered in official councils where it was "agreed to tell Mr. Woodworth that we could dispense with his services." William then be-

⁶⁸*Times and Seasons* 6 (1 December 1845):1050.

⁶⁹*St. Louis Reveille* 2 (14 July 1845):419.

⁷⁰Miller, *Westward Migration of the Mormons*, p. 308.

⁷¹HC, 5:369-70.

⁷²History of George A. Smith, MS, 9-12 August, 1845, Church Archives.

came architect for the Nauvoo House in addition to his temple assignment.⁷³

Early in 1846 William's architectural services terminated when he was called to join in the mass exodus of Saints leaving Nauvoo. Responsibility "to bring out the design and finishing of the Lower Hall" of the Temple was shifted to the shoulders of Truman O. Angell,⁷⁴ an assignment which Elder Angell said "was fully in my charge from then on to its completion." He previously had worked closely with the architect and knew the temple plans: his journal shows he was "appointed superintendent of joiner work under William Weeks." As he later recalled, "God gave me wisdom to carry out the architect's designs, which gave me the good will of the brethren."⁷⁵ William's personal reactions to his release and replacement are not known. On 13 February 1846 he did sign a note by which he officially appointed "Truman Angel to be my successor as superintendant over the finishing of the Temple & Nauvoo House in the City of Joseph according to the plans and design given by me to him." Brigham Young also signed the certificate.⁷⁶

UNFULFILLED PROMISE AS ARCHITECT

Before departing the city he had worked so hard to help build, William obtained a blessing from the Patriarch for the Church, John Smith. The blessing was full of promise for the thirty-three-year-old architect concerning his potential role in the then-uprooted Church:

Thine eyes shall be enlightened to behold the things of God, to discern the order of building cities, temples, and buildings of all kinds, after the order which God hath appointed that Zion should be adorned and ornamented in the last days. Thy name shall be known to the nations of the earth for thy skill and wisdom . . . learning, knowledge of architecture, and all useful arts and sciences.⁷⁷

Departing wintry Nauvoo in February 1846, Williams Weeks and his family were part of the first Iowa encampment and traveled near the front of the westward migration. Brigham Young

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Kate B. Carter, ed., *Heart Throbs of the West* 3 (Salt Lake City: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1939):67. Wendell Ashton, *Theirs Is the Kingdom* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), p. 61.

⁷⁵Autobiography of Truman O. Angell, MS, pp. 8-9, Church Archives.

⁷⁶Certificate, 13 February 1845, Truman O. Angell Correspondence, Johnson Family Collection, Church Archives.

⁷⁷Patriarchal Blessing Records, 9:564; Earl E. Olson to author, 29 March 1950; permission to quote from private family blessing was given by the Church Historian, Joseph Fielding Smith.

evidently wanted William in the vanguard so that the architect could commence plans for another temple as soon as they reached a permanent home. President Young's concern for William extended to his acting as William's adopted parent.⁷⁸

During the trek William's services were needed frequently. In September 1846, for example, the Twelve met in council with both him and Frederick Kesler to work out plans for a flour mill. They learned "that a good mill with water power, which would grind at the rate of a barrel of flour per hour, could be built for \$800; a horse mill could be built for \$500."⁷⁹ They then appointed William and Brother Kesler to build a water-powered mill, promising them every possible means needed. Near the end of 1846 the camp was getting its grain ground at "Weeks' mill."⁸⁰ William also contracted a flour mill for the Pottawatomie Indians that year. William and his family stayed at Winter Quarters that winter where he became a father again on 28 January 1847.

Two weeks later, according to one report, the Weeks and Kesler mill was in partial operation.⁸¹ Ten days later these two men (among others) were selected by the camp to build a rawhide boat for service on rivers in the West.⁸² In April, William was among Brigham Young's close associates who met to help organize the pioneering of the Rocky Mountains. Plans called for leaving some families behind "to plant and raise a crop and fit themselves out to come next season." But, counselled Brigham Young:

I want Bro. Wm. Weeks and F. Kesler to come on this season. Their families are small and they can take 15 months provisions and come on. Just as soon as I find the spot I want Bro. Wm. Weeks to dig deep and lay the foundation of the Temple for I intend by the help of my brethren to build a Temple unto the Lord just as soon as the Saints by a united exertion can complete it.⁸³

Accordingly, William and family were among the 1847 pioneers, entering the Salt Lake Valley in September in the Jedediah M. Grant Company. But despite promises given in his patriarchal blessing, and despite Brigham Young's expressed intention to have

⁷⁸Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences," p. 70; Ashton, *Theirs Is the Kingdom*, p. 61; *William Clayton Journal*, p. 52; *Journal History*, 4 July 1846, p. 1.

⁷⁹History of Brigham Young, 22 September 1846.

⁸⁰*Journal History*, 31 December 1846, p. 2.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 12 February 1847, p. 1.

⁸²Charles Kelly, ed., *Journals of John D. Lee, 1846-47 and 1859* (Salt Lake City: Western Printing Co., 1938), p. 101.

⁸³*Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

William build a Utah temple, the architect became openly disaffected with the Church during his first weeks in the Valley, if not sooner. Causes of his alienation are not known, although a nephew believed William left the Church because "he did not believe in polygamy." Perhaps the death of still another child in April 1847 at Council Bluffs—he and Caroline had buried five of their six children by then—blunted his taste for pioneering.⁸⁴

The first account of trouble came on 6 October 1847, when John Young, of the Salt Lake City High Council, reported "that William Weeks, Hazen Kimball, (A. W.) Babcock and Archibald Gardner have gone north with their families and were not considered by himself and President John Smith to be in good faith." Steps were taken to bring them back. After visiting them, the city marshal "reported that Brother Weeks and company said they would return and that all of them had made use of harsh remarks, 'did not like so much bondage, etc.'"⁸⁵ But when the dissidents had not returned a week later, the council sent the following report to Brigham Young, then on his way to Winter Quarters: "We take this opportunity to inform you that Brother William Weeks" and three other men

... with their families and teams started for Goodyear's without our knowledge or consent. As soon as we learned this fact we wrote them a brief letter, requesting them to return to this place immediately and dispatched it by Brother John Van Cott, our marshal, who delivered the same and they pledged themselves to return as soon as possible; their time is not yet out and we expect them shortly. Their minds are somewhat embittered and we shall do all we can to save them.⁸⁶

A ten-day wait brought no results, so on 24 October "John Van Cott was instructed to take nine men and bring in Weeks and company." Finally on 3 November the marshal reported that "Weeks and Kimball were encamped nearby." Rejoining the main settlement, the Weeks family wintered among the Saints.⁸⁷

But early in 1848 they left for the East. On 21 June John Smith wrote to President Young that "William Weeks, William Fields, Brother Sears and families have left the valley without consent to return to the states."⁸⁸ President Young, then traveling

⁸⁴J. M. Weeks, "Obituary of William Weeks."

⁸⁵Journal History, 6, 11, 13 October 1847.

⁸⁶Ibid., 14, 24 October 1847.

⁸⁷Ibid., 3 November 1847, p. 1.

⁸⁸Ibid., 21 June 1848, p. 3.

west, just missed meeting William,⁸⁹ as Thomas Bullock reported, near Ash Hollow, Wyoming:

On the opposite side of the river James, Field, Sears, Strodham, and Waters from the valley, with Mr. Rashian, an Indian trader, were camped. The four brethren were going back with their families to get a fit-out for the Pacific. . . . William Weeks had run away from Ash Hollow two days ago; he was afraid to see Brigham. In the conversation that ensued President Young told Field to tell Weeks, when he saw him, that he should have no peace of mind until he came to the valley and made restitution for the wickedness he had committed.⁹⁰

It was reported to John D. Lee that "fear Seased hold of Wm. Weeks, from the fact that he had made way with Team & a waggon that had been left in his care by Pres. B.Y."⁹¹

On 8 July Brigham Young sent a message to William "that the Saints could build a temple without his assistance, although he [Weeks] said they could not." At the October general conference of the Church that year, William and his wife Caroline were excommunicated from the Church. With him William took the original plans and records of the Nauvoo Temple, which the Church did not regain until the middle of this century. No doubt William's sudden departure contributed to the postponement for five years of the beginning of the Salt Lake Temple.⁹²

William and his family spent five years in the Midwest. Another child was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, in May 1849. Probably William visited his brother Arwin in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The Weeks lived for a time in Marion, Linn County, Iowa, where a child died in April 1852. The family then returned to Utah. Nauvoo expert T. Edgar Lyon indicates that William had attended Church meetings in Wisconsin and had returned to Utah repentant and rebaptized.⁹³

By November 1852, William was working on a sugar mill and a chapel in Provo. Caroline bore another child in February 1853 in Provo, but he died that December in Salt Lake City. A daughter, born in Salt Lake City in 1855, said that she had been christened

⁸⁹History of Brigham Young, 20 July 1848.

⁹⁰Thomas E. Bullock's "Camp Journal" as excerpted in *Journal History*, 8 July 1848, p. 1.

⁹¹Robert G. Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds., *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848-1876*, 2 vols. (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1955), 1:53.

⁹²Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences," p. 113.

⁹³Ibid.

in the Mormon Church in Utah. The recollection of one of William's sons that William did not return to Utah "for the purpose of joining the Church" therefore is apparently erroneous.⁹⁴

Believing as he did that the Church would need his temple building experiences after all, perhaps it was no accident that William was back in Utah in time for the Salt Lake Temple groundbreaking in 1853. However, though he remained in Utah for a few more years, his skills were not utilized. Truman O. Angell, named Church Architect in 1850, supervised the project. If William were disappointed at having no role in building the Temple, his regrets were not passed on to his family; at least his daughter Caroline was not aware of such a frustrated ambition in her father.⁹⁵

Caroline did recall hearing her father say that he "built a water wheel for Brigham Young's grist mill" in Salt Lake City, but she didn't indicate whether it was during William's first or second stay in Utah. She understood that "the builder of the mill could not build the wheel so it would not wallow in the water race. Father built the wheel so it would not wallow but sweep the race clean."⁹⁶

The family was in San Bernardino in 1857, possibly as settlers sent there by the Church. But when President Young called the Saints to return to Utah because of the prospect of a war, William stayed behind, remaining a California resident until his death. There is no record that he continued any affiliation with the LDS Church from then on, and his children evidently were not Mormons. Initially he worked in California as a carpenter; among other projects, he helped a Mr. Temple manage a gristmill at El Monte. But when the San Gabriel River rampaged and ruined the mill, William's building career seems to have ended.⁹⁷

He "bought cows and went into the dairy business," living in El Monte a total of ten years. From two Los Angeles grocers, Caxwell and Willis, he then bought 160 acres upon which the family established their "new home, which was in the vicinity now called Hollywood." Later he traded that acreage for a ranch at Green Meadow, about six miles from Los Angeles. There the family "was living on a farm in the edge of the city" in 1883 when William

⁹⁴William Weeks to Frederick Kesler, 29 November 1852, Western Americana, Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah; C. W. Weeks to author, 3 July 1931.

⁹⁵C. F. Griffin to author, 13 June 1932.

⁹⁶Griffin, "Life of William Weeks," pp. 1-2.

⁹⁷Ibid.; Hamilton, "Authorship and Architectural Influences," p. 113; C. W. Weeks to author, 3 July 1931.

had a chance reunion with his brother Samuel and family in a Los Angeles post office. When William and Caroline became too old to run the dairy, they rented the ranch and built a house at the Palms in Los Angeles County. This house was later traded for another home in the city of Los Angeles, where William lived until his death on 8 March 1900.⁹⁸

A nephew described the elderly William as being "a small man about five feet tall, wore whiskers under his chin which were white with age; had a large nose, gray eyes, of course his hair was white." A man of intelligence and ability, according to the family, he was also "a good provider in every way."⁹⁹ A daughter noted that

he was rather stern and seldom joked. We children were taught to mind and to help with whatever was to be done. He was "Father" and mother was "Mother." They lived together many years and celebrated their golden wedding. Father and Mother were fifty-fifty in everything.¹⁰⁰

Despite his separation from Mormonism, William remained "a great admirer of Joseph Smith."¹⁰¹ Daughter Caroline stated definitely that William "never returned to the Quaker Church. . . . Father always believed in Joseph Smith's church. They are called the Latter-day-Saints."¹⁰² She may have meant the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized in 1860 with Joseph Smith III at its head. RLDS records show that a William Weeks "joined the reorganization in its early days" but "was not prominent in church history." However, it is uncertain if this person were the same one as the Nauvoo architect.¹⁰³

As an architect, William worked on many projects in addition to the Nauvoo Temple. We do not know what specific buildings he designed and constructed prior to 1840, but he was definitely an experienced, capable builder by then. Besides the temple project at Nauvoo, he assisted with the architectural drawings for the Nauvoo House in 1845 and for an arsenal for the Nauvoo Legion.¹⁰⁴ A cherished family possession is "a drawing of a Masonic Hall, father's work," which the family describes as "Beautiful."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸Griffin, "Life of William Weeks," pp. 1-2; F. M. Weeks to author, 17 March 1932.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Griffin, "Life of William Weeks," pp. 1-3.

¹⁰¹C. W. Weeks to author, 3 July 1931.

¹⁰²C. F. Griffin to author, 13 June 1932.

¹⁰³S. A. Burgess to author, 19 May 1931.

¹⁰⁴Because the Nauvoo Legion disbanded in 1845, the building originally planned as its arsenal had to be used for another purpose upon completion.

¹⁰⁵C. F. Griffin to author, 17 April and 13 June 1932.

William was a Freemason for a time. Probably the drawing depicts the Nauvoo Masonic Temple, built at the same time the Nauvoo Temple was being erected. It still stands but has been modified so extensively that comparisons between it and William's plans are inconclusive. One report, unconfirmed, claims that the "first model of the [Nauvoo] map was drawn by William Weeks" in 1842.¹⁰⁶ Two years later *The Nauvoo Neighbor* carried an advertisement for "Weeks' patent Bee-Hive" for sale in the city, perhaps another creation of the Temple architect.¹⁰⁷

William's building career in the Far West during his later life never came close to equaling his earlier work in the Middle West. His role as architect in planning and erecting the Nauvoo Temple during his six years in Nauvoo proved to be his greatest achievement and the one for which he was credited and honored all the rest of his life by those who knew him. He regarded the Nauvoo edifice as his masterpiece; he took pride in displaying it while in Nauvoo, in discussing it with Mormons after the exodus, and in exhibiting his Temple drawings to friends and visitors in later years until his death in 1900.

His relatives have felt similar pride. In writing William's obituary, a nephew credited his uncle with being "the architect who planned the great Mormon temple at Nauvoo, Illinois, and superintended the construction of it."¹⁰⁸ William's brother Arwin, a builder all his life, "often mentioned his brother William of whose ability as an architect he was very proud."¹⁰⁹

But William's architectural potential was never fully realized. He might have built many Mormon temples after the Nauvoo one had he not left the Church. Truman O. Angell, who succeeded him as Church Temple Architect and who designed the first Utah temples, wrote that "I was chosen architect for the Church, the former architect, William Weeks, having deserted and left for the east; thereby taking himself from the duties of the said office."¹¹⁰ William's patriarchal blessing failed fulfillment by his own choice.

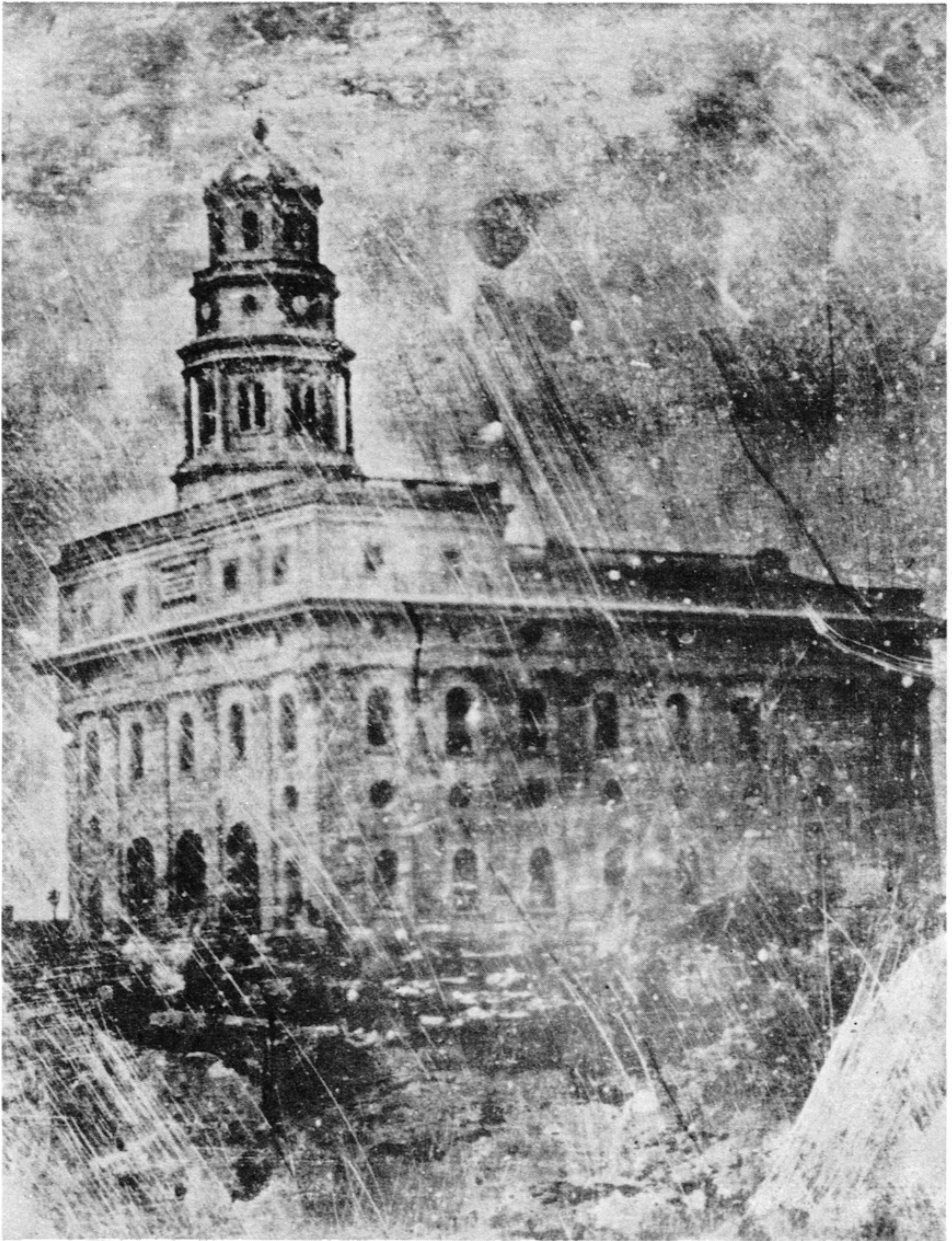
¹⁰⁶Hamilton in "Authorship and Architectural Influences" (p. 64) says William Weeks was architect of the Nauvoo Lodge.

¹⁰⁷*Nauvoo Neighbor* 1 (6 March 1844):3.

¹⁰⁸J. M. Weeks, "Obituary of William Weeks."

¹⁰⁹C. W. Weeks to author, 10 June 1931.

¹¹⁰Carter, ed., *Heart Throbs of the West*, 3:68; a discussion of Truman Angell's career can be found in Ashton, *Theirs Is the Kingdom*, pp. 64-125.



Daguerreotype of Nauvoo Temple ca. 1846.

Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department