



1-1-1992

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Recommended Citation

Jeffress, MeLinda Evans (1992) "Mapping Historic Nauvoo," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol. 32 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol32/iss1/17>

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Mapping Historic Nauvoo

MeLinda Evans Jeffress

Nauvoo the city beautiful could also be termed, by those trying to trace maps of the city's homes and buildings, as Nauvoo the city enigma. The early platting map of 1839, which plats Commerce and the main area of Nauvoo, and the 1842 platting map by Gustavus Hills, which shows the town's intended development, dividing the city into farm areas, blocks, lots, and streets, are a beginning aid to those working with historic Nauvoo. However, there appear to be no maps contemporaneous to the period from 1839 to 1846 that cite the placement and ownership of homes and businesses and trace divergences from the city's early plans.¹ This loss has been felt again and again by historians, archaeologists, and restorationists as they have worked to re-create the unique atmosphere and grasp the historic context of Nauvoo.

In the last thirty years as Nauvoo Restoration Inc. has restored, reconstructed, and refurbished many of the city's streets, buildings, and homes, modern maps reflecting this work have been included in recent publications. Those maps have enhanced the mental imagery of Nauvoo the city and of the events which took place in its early years. However, in many of the recent maps, some place-names differ from map to map, coastlines move up and down, and of course the city seems to grow as sites are discovered and identified.² In addition, Nauvoo presents a challenge to those tracking the multiple sites of businesses and homes.

The cartography of early Nauvoo also falls into difficulty when the nature of an American frontier town of the nineteenth century is taken into consideration. Americans moving west hoping for inexpensive land or income opportunities would cause surges of population in newly formed towns. Cities burgeoned with people long before the streets and sidewalks were constructed and land use

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designated.³ This population pattern often meant the actual city differed from its intended design.

In many ways Nauvoo followed the same pattern: Joseph Smith and city planners used their plat maps in an effort to develop the perfect, beautiful city; however, as Donald Enders pointed out in his article “Platting the City Beautiful: A Historical and Archaeological Glimpse of Nauvoo Streets,” “the actual laying out of streets never could keep pace with the city’s expansion.” Although the city was well designed much of it remained only a “paper town” and changes in the original widths of lots, streets, and sidewalks occurred without documentation beyond city council minutes and petitions.⁴ The 1846 plat map shows extensions of the city which were planned but never built and lots which were planned to hold one home or business now accommodating several buildings as the city attempted to meet the needs of the many new converts who poured into the area from Great Britain.⁵ Many of the early residents purchased several lots of land and became landlords to those who were incoming. Unless there is additional documentation, one cannot know on which piece of property the owner resided.⁶ Thus the population explosion between 1839 and 1844 changed much of the look and expectations of what Nauvoo was to become.

The burgeoning population of early Nauvoo holds several ramifications for today’s attempts to map the city. The changes in lot distribution from sole ownership to subleasing or to sales of parcels within the lots often indicate simultaneous possibilities and further eliminate the use of plat maps as a source for an accurate portrayal of the property’s distribution.

Along with the questions about property ownership and usage, one must consider the many immigrants as well as returning missionaries who rented property while waiting to build their own homes. Outside of letters and mentions in diaries, very little information is available concerning the renter in Nauvoo; this gap, also, complicates the full documentation of a city where there was so much activity and movement in a few short years.

Whether renting, building, or simply upgrading their life-style, many of Nauvoo’s residents moved regularly. This activity can be seen when one traces the homes of many of the early settlers. Heber C. Kimball owned three homes; Brigham Young and John Taylor both owned two.⁷ Depending on the year under consideration—1839, 1841, or 1845—the location of these homes would be different, resulting in maps which are perfectly correct but appear inaccurate

because of their dating. Businesses also moved within the city; the *Times and Seasons* offices moved to three different locations and has been mapped in each of the different places, sometimes without mention of alternate sites.⁸

Traditions have also made accurate reporting of place-names difficult. After the exodus in 1846, Nauvoo was almost deserted. Those who returned to visit the area would look down streets, remembering their lives in the former busy town, and comment on how things had changed, on where they had lived, and on whom they had known.⁹ These exchanges between the original settlers and the next generation of Nauvoo residents became accepted knowledge throughout the area regarding who lived in various homes, what businesses filled the falling-down remains of buildings, and what the conditions in Nauvoo were like during its earliest years.

However, memories, even though sincerely recalled, may still be in error. Traditions resulted which occasionally were wrong. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle in *Old Mormon Nauvoo and Southeastern Iowa* affirm this fact as they describe the difficulty in relying on early photos of Nauvoo taken and labeled by B. H. Roberts: "Much of Roberts's site identification came from the town mayor, M. M. Morrill, a town resident of 1885. Some of his photographs are mislabeled because Roberts relied on local traditions concerning these sites instead of searching to verify the accuracy of the traditions."¹⁰ The inaccuracy of some of these reports has haunted many historians and restorationists as they have tried to unravel fact from fiction.

Sometimes the very nature of mapping impedes a complete, definitive mapping record from becoming available. Maps are made for a purpose defined by the needs of those requesting them. Some of the maps of historic Nauvoo found in current publications show Nauvoo as it is today, complete with RLDS and LDS visitors centers and the local park.¹¹ Sites yet unnamed, placement of plaques, and even the fast-food drive-through may be part of the mapped record of Nauvoo in its restored setting. Other maps show only the various plats which were the basis for the town in 1842 plus its planned extensions in 1846 with no individual homes or buildings marked.¹² Some combine both past and present conditions, reviving early elevations that affect coastlines and placing the homes and buildings where they now sit in their restored condition.¹³

The map presented in this issue of *BYU Studies* was also created with a specific purpose. Our map of Nauvoo is intended to acquaint

our readers with the locations of the specific sites mentioned throughout the articles in this issue. Thus we have added both the Joseph Smith stable and the Pendleton Cabin. We have used the 1844–46 time period in determining placement. For example, we list the 1845 location of John Taylor's home and the *Times and Seasons* offices. These buildings were both purchased by Elder Taylor in 1844, and when the sale was final, he moved immediately into the home next to the printing office.¹⁴ These four locations have not appeared on many previously published maps.

The options and purposes for mapping are only as limited as the research and availability of the sites to be studied. Historic Nauvoo is still being re-created. The methodology and approach of the maps produced so far partake of the nature of beginning studies—they are meant more to familiarize readers with the city's known relationships and events rather than serve as a directory of historic Nauvoo. Time and further research into the development of the city will enable a more complete approach to the accurate portrayal of the many homes, buildings, and city structures that once existed between 1839 and 1846.¹⁵

NOTES

¹ Gustavus Hills, *Map of the City of Nauvoo*, 1842 (Nauvoo Restoration Inc., recopied 1965), copy located in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

² Dean R. Zimmerman, "Historic Sites," a map from *LDS Church History Atlas* (Salt Lake City: Church Educational System, 1975), 171; and Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:516. The two maps are a good comparison study of how additions in site identification and continued restoration change the mapping of Nauvoo.

³ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965), 73.

⁴ Donald L. Enders, "Platting the City Beautiful: A Historical and Archaeological Glimpse of Nauvoo Streets," *BYU Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 410, 411, 413.

⁵ Enders, "Platting the City Beautiful," 411–12.

⁶ The Nauvoo Restoration Inc. computerized index of land titles shows that many land owners of early Nauvoo held title to more than one lot. These records do not always confirm whether the owner subleased a home, had a business, or lived on the property.

⁷ Nauvoo Restoration Inc. computerized index of land titles.

⁸ Daniel Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1480.

⁹ E. Cecil McGavin, *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1946), 300-308.

¹⁰ Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, *Old Mormon Nauvoo and Southeastern Iowa* (Santa Ana: Fieldbrook Productions, 1990), 23. See also their article in this issue.

¹¹ "Historic Nauvoo," Nauvoo Restoration Inc. visitors map (Nauvoo, Ill.: Nauvoo Restoration Inc., 1988).

¹² Janath Cannon, *Nauvoo Panorama* (Nauvoo, Ill.: Nauvoo Restoration Inc., 1991), map prepared by Rowena Miller, 20.

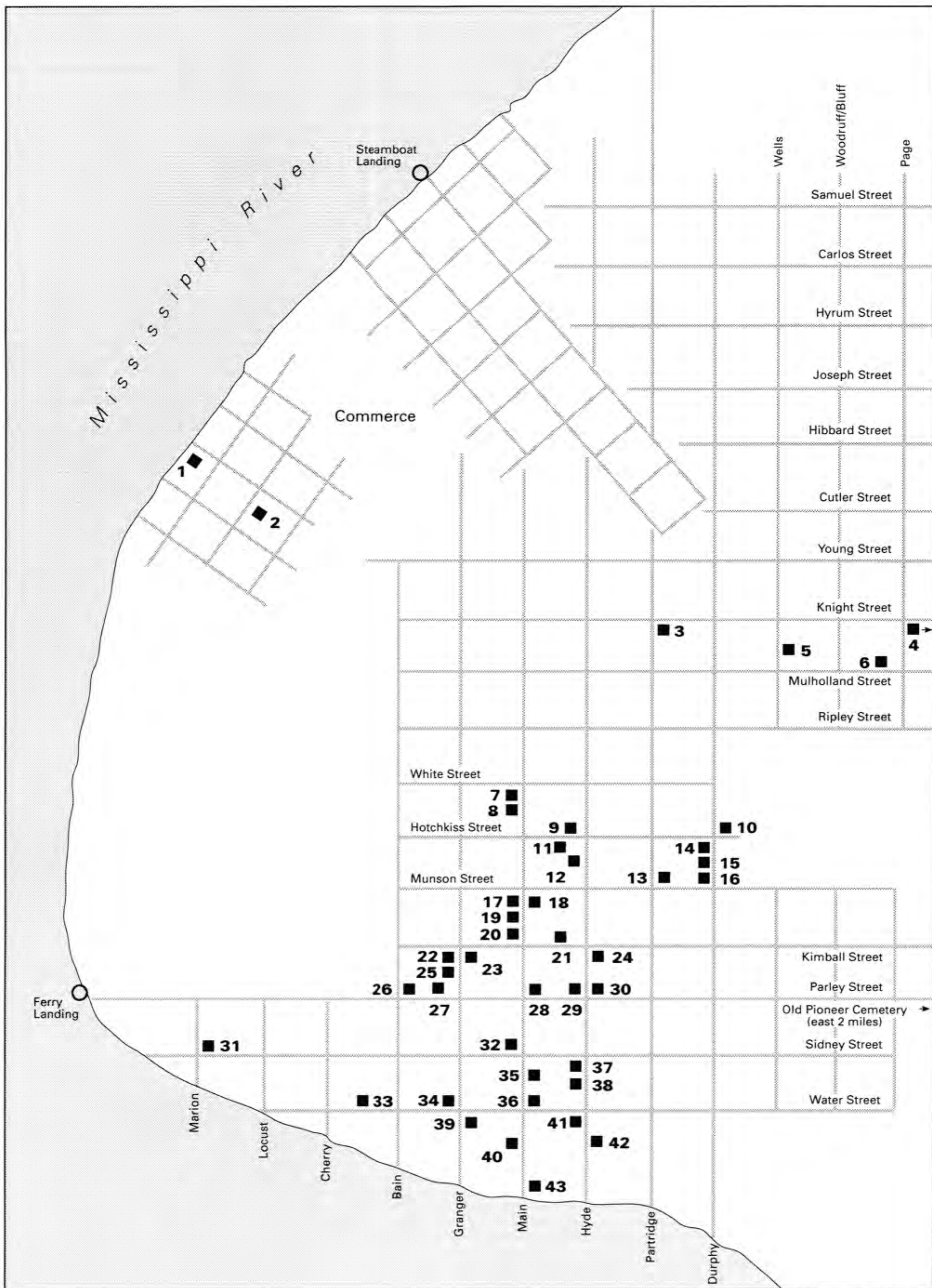
¹³ Jesse, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 516.

¹⁴ Holzapfel and Cottle, *Old Mormon Nauvoo*, 119.

¹⁵ I would like to thank several people who have helped with our Nauvoo map. Jeffery Cottle shared his research and time, Mary Isom of Nauvoo Restoration Inc. kindly did some extra research in Nauvoo, and Jeffery Bird of the BYU Geography Department lent his expertise and computers to draft our final copy.

City of Nauvoo: 1844–46 Sites of Historical Buildings and Streets

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1-Hiram Kimball Store | 22-Joseph Young Home |
| 2-Hiram Kimball Home | 23-Brigham Young Home |
| 3-Edward Hunter Site | 24-Joseph Noble/Lucy M. Smith Home |
| 4-Charles C. Rich Home
(Knight and Robison Street) | 25-Chauncey Webb Home |
| 5-Nauvoo Temple | 26-Seventies Hall |
| 6-Nauvoo Expositor Bldg. | 27-Blacksmith Shop |
| 7-Masonic Hall/Cultural Hall | 28-Daniel Butler Cobbler Shop
/General Store |
| 8-Scovil Bakery and Confectionery Shop | 29-Snow/Ashby Home |
| 9-Orson Hyde Home | 30-Joseph Coolidge Home |
| 10-William Clayton Site | 31-Wilson Law Home |
| 11-Lyon Home and Drug and Variety Store | 32-Masonic Hotel |
| 12-John D. Lee Site | 33-Arron Johnson Home |
| 13-Heber C. Kimball Home | 34-William Marks Home |
| 14-Wilford Woodruff Home | 35-Sidney Rigdon Home and Post Office |
| 15-Lorin Farr Home | 36-Mansion House |
| 16-Winslow Farr Home | 37-Hiram Clark Home |
| 17-Stoddard Home and Tinsmith Shop | 38-Theodore Turley Cabin |
| 18-Jonathan Browning Home
and Gunsmith Shop | 39-Red Brick Store |
| 19-John Taylor Home | 40-Joseph Smith Homestead |
| 20- <i>Times and Seasons</i> and
<i>Nauvoo Neighbor</i> Print Bldg. | 41-Joseph Smith Stable |
| 21-Pendleton Cabin | 42-Nauvoo Brick Brewery |
| | 43-Nauvoo House |



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