



THE NAUVOO TEMPLE



Let this house [temple] be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people (Doctrine and Covenants 124:40).

By Kimberly Webb

Imagine losing your house, your possessions, your money, and maybe even your loved ones. Then after traveling into another state by foot or wagon, the Prophet Joseph Smith asks you to help drain a swamp, build another city, and construct a temple there.

That is exactly what the Saints faced when they settled in Nauvoo, Illinois. They had lost almost all of their property in Missouri. They had endured illness, persecution, and poverty. After sacrificing to build a temple in Kirtland, and after failing to build a temple in Missouri, the Saints mustered strength to build another temple in Nauvoo.

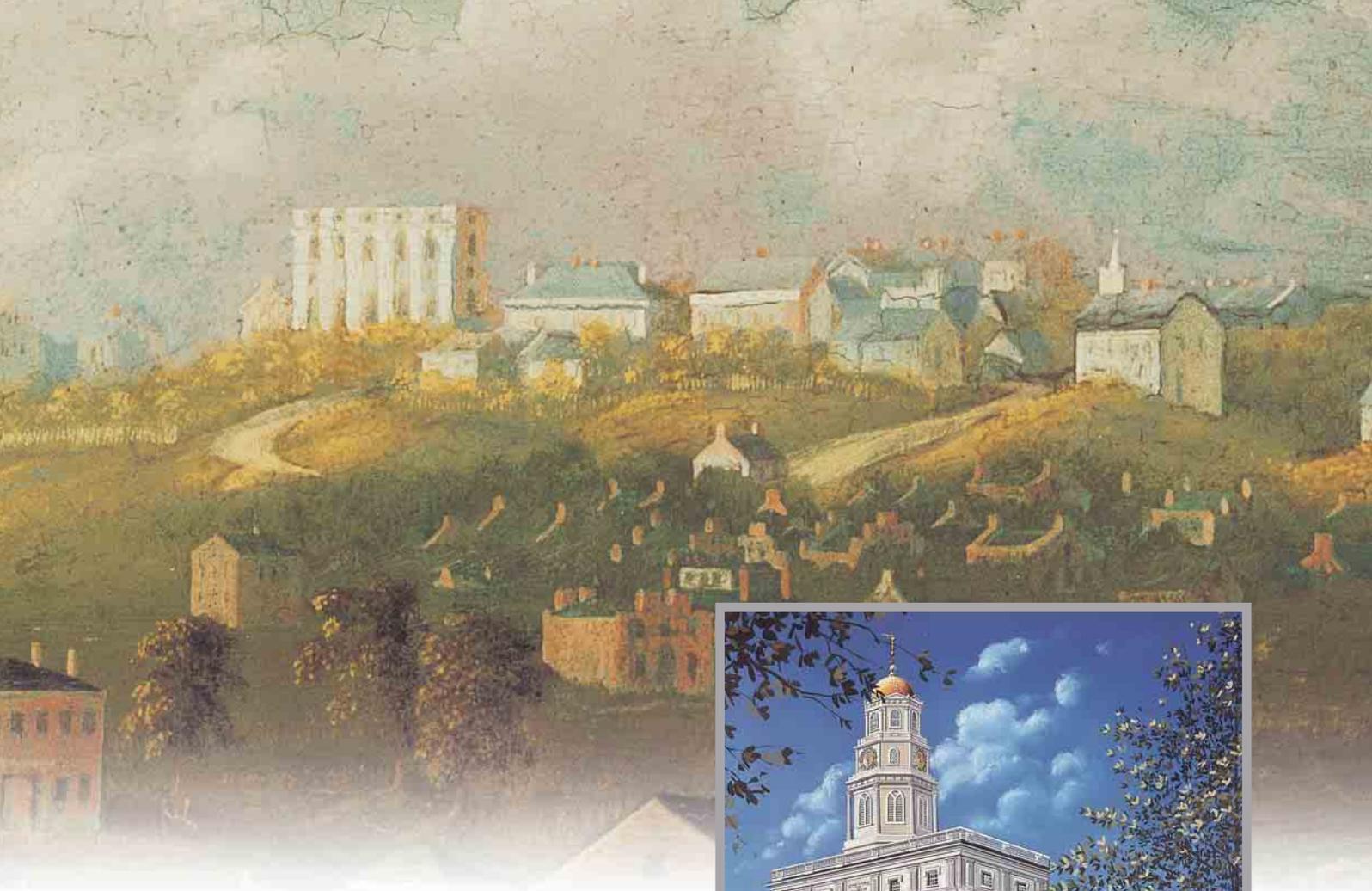
Men tithed their time by working on the temple one day in ten. Some were willing to work longer

for food—or for no pay at all. Mercy Fielding Thompson and Mary Fielding Smith

encouraged the sisters to pledge one penny a week to buy glass and nails for the temple, and the women organized to provide clothes for the workmen.

Before the temple was completed, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were martyred at Carthage Jail. Mobs attacked and burned homes in Nauvoo, and the Saints knew that they would have to leave their homes once again. Nevertheless, they did not stop working on the temple. They were determined to finish it and receive the temple ordinances before leaving Nauvoo.

Portions of the temple were dedicated as they were completed. The lowest level, containing the baptismal font, had been dedicated in 1841 so that baptisms could be performed while construction continued. The attic was dedicated on November 30, 1845, and the first endowments were per-

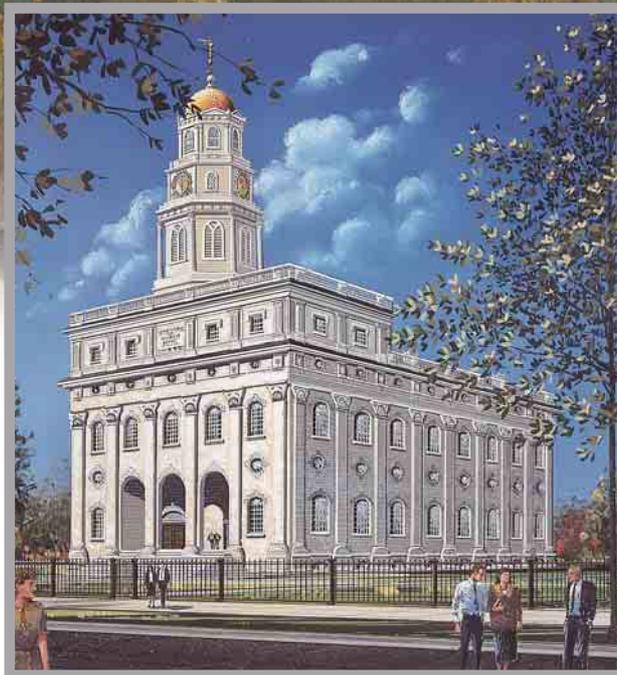


formed on December 10. Saints worked in the temple night and day! In the months before they left Nauvoo, 5,615 Saints received their endowments.

The completed temple was not dedicated until May 1, 1846, after most of the Saints had already left Nauvoo. Elder Erastus Snow said, “The Spirit, Power, and Wisdom of God reigned continually in the Temple and all felt satisfied that during the two months we occupied it in the endowments of the Saints, we were amply paid for all our labors in building it.”*

When all the Saints were gone, mobs took over the temple and ruined its holiness by drinking and gambling in it and by vandalizing it in other ways. Two years later, the temple caught fire, and everything burned but the stone walls. Those walls were hit by a tornado in 1850.

For years, the site where the temple once stood served as a memorial to the faith of those early Saints. During the April 1999 general conference,



President Gordon B. Hinckley announced that the Nauvoo Temple would be rebuilt! He said that the new temple, designed like the original one, will stand as an even greater memorial “to those who built the first such structure there on the banks of the Mississippi.”†

The new Nauvoo Illinois Temple will be dedicated on June 27, 2002, the 158th anniversary of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

* *BYU Studies*, Spring 1979, page 361.

† *Ensign*, May 1999, page 89.

(For more information on the history of the Nauvoo Temple, see *Institute Manual—Church History in the Fulness of Times*, pages 240–261, 302–304, 317–319.)