

ACTING

LIKE PIONEERS

BY SHANNA BUTLER
Church Magazines

You already know that pioneer children walked and walked and walked. But did you know that they also sang and danced and planted crops? Some of them even saved lives.

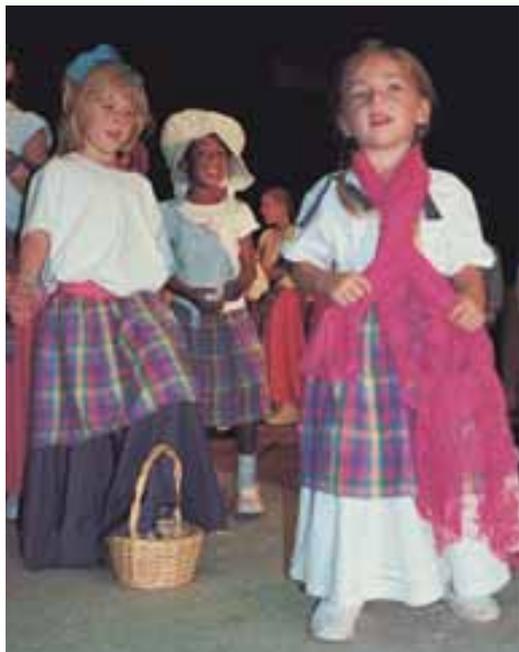
The Primary children in the Willow Creek First Ward, Sandy Utah Willow Creek Stake, learned about the pioneers when they performed in a play for their ward. They acted out scenes from the building of the Kirtland,

Nauvoo, and Salt Lake Temples, and some things that happened in between. It took them all summer to plan and to learn their parts, but on the night of the big pageant, they were ready.

Sacrificing for Kirtland

Before the curtain opened, two children dressed as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young stood onstage and talked about building the Kirtland Temple. “The Lord has made it perfectly clear,” Joseph said to the audience. “He





has commanded us to build a temple here in Kirtland.”

These early Church members donated their time, talents, and money to follow the Lord’s commandments. “I think they had to sacrifice a lot to build the temple,” says Kyle Esplin, 9, one of the narrators. “I’m paying my tithing now to help build up the Church.” When Kyle pays his tithing, he tries to remember the sacrifices the pioneers made.

Nauvoo Pennies

The Latter-day Saints lived in Kirtland, Ohio, for

eight years before they were forced to leave. They moved soon after they completed and dedicated the Kirtland Temple. When they arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois, they started to build another house of the Lord. Nauvoo became a large, prosperous city, and the people were happy there for some time. But soon they began to be persecuted, so the Nauvoo leaders formed a band of young men called the “whistling and whittling brigade.” The young men in the brigade looked for any suspicious-looking strangers and followed them, whittling sticks and whistling.

Jesse Fackrell, 10, one of the narrators, enjoyed watching the brigade on stage. “I thought it was neat that the boys went around and watched for troublemakers and protected the people,” he says.

Another sacrifice the early Church members in Nauvoo made was donating pennies to the temple fund. “I think they really felt good about giving something up for something else really important. It might have only been a little, but they felt thankful to

be able to give their money,” says Mary





Garbett, 10. One of Mary's parts was being a harvester in the fields. In her role, she sold the vegetables she gathered so she could have money to donate to the temple.

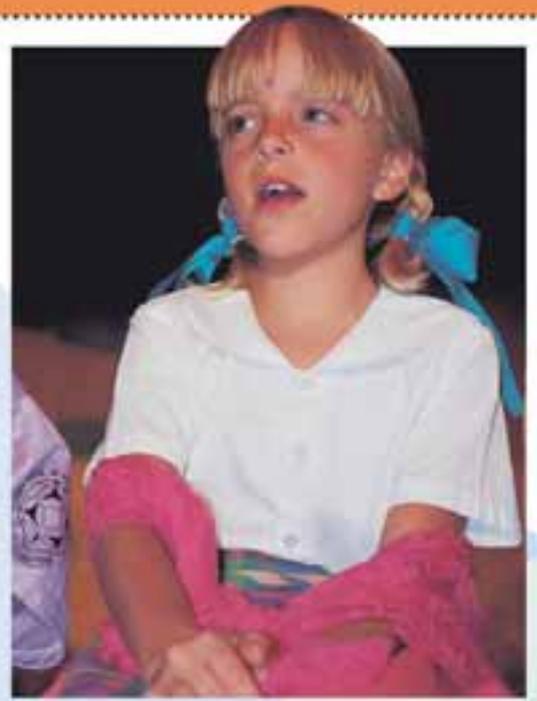
Mary and other children in the ward also went to their stake center for the dedication of the new Nauvoo Temple in June 2002. Seeing the dedication helped the children better understand the sacrifices made by the pioneers for the original Nauvoo Temple.



Dancing Westward

After working hard to build the Nauvoo Temple, the people had to leave it behind after the Prophet Joseph was killed. Mobs forced many of them out of Nauvoo in the dead of winter. Brigham Young led them to a new home in the West.

Though life was very hard for the pioneers, and they really did walk and walk, they also managed to dance and sing during their trek west. The children in the play performed a quilt dance and had a hoe-down with real fiddlers to show the audience that the journey was joyful at times. Many of the pioneer children had great adventures on their way to the Salt



Lake Valley. They saw buffalo and mountains, and they preferred to walk a lot of the time because riding in the wagon was so bumpy.

Jeffrey Yee, 11, and his younger brother Ryan, 6, performed the parts of James and Joseph Kirkwood. James was one of the young heroes of the pioneer trek. He, his mother, and his three brothers had come





from Scotland, and they set out together to cross the plains with their handcart. James took care of his four-year-old brother, Joseph. When Joseph was too tired to walk any farther on Rocky Ridge, James carried him. When they finally got to the camp, James set his little brother down safely by the campfire. James died beside the fire from the cold and exhaustion.

“I think that he was very responsible and brave. His little brother must have been grateful for a brother to look up to,” Jeff says about his character. “Because he was kind to his little brother, he helps me know it’s not nice to make fun of my little brother. He usually needs help because he is so young, so I try to help him.”

Finally, the Salt Lake Temple!

Though getting there was difficult, the Saints finally made it to the Salt Lake Valley, where Brigham Young dug his cane into the soil and said, “Here we will build the temple of our God.”

Davis Esplin, 11, learned a lot from performing the part of Brother Brigham. “I have a new respect for Brigham Young because I didn’t know how hard it was to build the temple.”

After dedicating the cornerstone, it took 40 years to complete the Salt Lake Temple. By that time, Wilford Woodruff had become President of the Church. He

dedicated the temple on 6 April 1893. There was even a special dedication session for children under eight so that more Primary children could attend.

Touching the Temple

The Saints spent years building each of the three temples, suffering setbacks along the way. But they never gave up. Why did they do it? Zach Fackrell, 12, says it was because “they had faith and they knew it was important to get it done so they could do what the Lord wanted them to do.” Zach’s brother Jed, 10, says the temple is really important to him because “that’s where you can do baptisms for the dead, and that’s where you can get married so you can live with Heavenly Father again.”

Some children long ago had the right idea. After the Salt Lake Temple was completed, two boys brought their younger brothers to the temple so they could touch the walls. “We want them to know how great the temple is,” one of the older brothers says in the play.

“Yes,” the other boy says, “so they’ll want to go inside when they get big!”

Those children knew the importance of building temples, even though it required so much. They knew that just as they could touch the temple, the Spirit inside the temple could touch them, too. That was why they walked, and walked, and walked. . . . ●

