

PERFORMING THE PAST: TWO PAGEANT TRADITIONS
IN NAUVOO, ILLINOIS

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology

Indiana University

July 2015

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Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 7, 2015

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**Dedicated to Colin,
my dearest companion in all journeys.**



Acknowledgements

Drawing down the names of all the individuals who have supported this project will be difficult. I feel as if it has been a cast of hundreds standing behind me for this journey. However, it is also a pleasure to remember the wonderful people who have contributed at various points along the way.

I will start with the good people of Nauvoo. Mary Logan personally taught me local history and dared to share her sacred text of *From Quashqueme to Nauvoo*, and Genevieve Simmens willingly took on my questions when others were more hesitant to engage. Marilyn Candido's dedicated work chronicling Nauvoo history in writing has been a major resource and I appreciated that she and her husband Sal were willing to let me join in their rehearsal and performance of the Grape Festival Pageant. Ramona Hallman and her family welcomed me home, fed me, and shared valuable insights with me that helped direct my thinking. Huge thanks as well to Jim Topic who took the plunge and shared his rich and evocative story with me, helping to shape my view of the entire picture.

Folks at Western Illinois University in Macomb combed the archive and provided a wealth of material for my study and perusal. Special thanks to Jeff Hancks who took time to interview with me and invited my participation in the Grape Festival Pageant Dinner Theater where I thoroughly enjoyed his portrayal of Etienne Cabet. Thanks as well to

historian John Hallwas who corroborated my intuition that Nauvoo and its portrayal has as much to do with myth as with history. Scott Parker offered personal insight into the Carolina Playmakers phenomenon. Ardis Kay Smith proved a valuable resource at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. She did an initial search and oriented me to the resources available in the library. Steve Olsen, Curator for Historic Sites for the LDS Church offered a listening ear and thoughtful advice about how to proceed and interpret the fire hose of information facing me. My path would have been impossible without the support of Cynthia Collier and Ray Robinson in the Priesthood Department of the LDS Church Office Building. They took valuable time to meet with me, to be interviewed, and to provide access to essential documents and resources.

The Red and Blue Family Casts of the Nauvoo Pageant in 2008 and 2011 brought the pageant experience to life with their enthusiasm, commitment, and passion. We all agreed that despite the discomforts and grueling conditions, we had a taste of Zion. It was a pleasure to work with Alex Mackenzie Johns as a generous and inspiring director. Our adopted grandparents, David and Pat Bills touched us with their genuine and loving care for our little ones, and the Broc and Julie Mathews family were our favorite roommates and fellow cast members. Debbie Hartley's generosity in freely sharing her family's home (with us and everyone else) and her willingness to entrust her story with me has been marvelous and appreciated.

Of course there are all the people who move through and around the edges of my life through these many years: Abby Parcell whose precious City of Joseph cassette can now be returned; Danille Christensen who always gives sound counsel (and at a crucial time held baby Hazel for hours); Emma Harper who stepped in as “mom”; Kathy Roberts whose perspective and constancy I always admire; Becca Thayne who knows how to show up and take charge; Emma Williams who can make me laugh; the Book Group Gals (you know who you are) who have continued to be interested and encouraging for the long haul; the Kitchen Sisters, Kim Price and Tara Nutley, who exhibit the strength and fortitude that I aspire to; the ad hoc review committee of Liz and David Charles, Nancy and Brad Kramer, and Abby Parcell that helped to whip me into shape; Sally Council who pitched in with some beautiful transcripts; and Cedric Chatterly who reminded me that I just need to keep showing up and chopping the wood.

My folklore path started some time ago in the Folklore Curriculum at The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, and I must acknowledge those early influences. Terry Zug, Dan Patterson, Glenn Hinson, David Whisnant, Sally Peterson, and Jacquelyn Hall introduced me to a whole world of ideas and possibilities that I’m still trying to grasp today. The faculty of the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology opened the door for my doctoral path, and I’m indebted for that opportunity to learn and grow in the discipline. I gained a great deal from my exposure to the

foundational works of the discipline and appreciated learning from Greg Schrempp, Dick Bauman, Beverly Stoeltje, Sandra Dolby, Henry Glassie, and Jason Baird Jackson. Those proved valuable days. I cannot overstate my appreciation to Jason Baird Jackson for his patience and encouragement throughout this process. He and my committee members, Inta Gayle Carpenter, Michael Dylan Foster, and Eric T. Sandweiss have showed real graciousness in staying the course and seeing me through to completion.

But of course, the greatest source of constancy and sustenance is my family: my parents, Val and Alice Hemming who always seem to assume that I can accomplish just about anything and who have never clipped my wings; my sisters Heidi and Julie who are always in my back pocket; my brother Patrick and sister-in-law Margaret who keep making time to be together; my in-laws Kathleen and Allan Austin who have helped out generously time and again; and all the extended family of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins that make life abundant and meaningful. The greatest sacrifices belong to my unflagging husband, Colin Austin, and my children Graham, Benjamin, Truman, Seth, and Hazel. As I often say, life without children is like playing tennis without a net—pretty unremarkable. My net has been high, but the rewards of being a family working together and striving for worthy goals have been immense. You are my treasure.

Jill Hemming Austin

PERFORMING THE PAST: TWO PAGEANT TRADITIONS

IN NAUVOO, ILLINOIS

The founders of American historical pageantry were keenly interested in the social effect of pageant performance on audience and participants. Their vision for social transformation through performance endures into the present day with those who continue to promulgate the form. Examining two enduring pageant traditions in Nauvoo, Illinois affords a better understanding of how the formal features of outdoor historical pageant production and the social relations that underlie them are still potentially powerful for those who participate in their production and performance. This dissertation encourages serious study of pageants as a unique performance form particularly attuned to the tasks of building continuities and tradition, the reinforcement of group sentiment, and the propitiation of group myth.

Nauvoo, Illinois is a historically contested site boasting two historical pageants dedicated to the portrayal of the Nauvoo story: The Grape Festival Pageant and The Nauvoo Pageant. Christened “Nauvoo” by Mormon [LDS] refugees in the mid-19th century, the thriving city’s overwhelming social discord drove the Mormons west, and the town was resettled and reclaimed by new seekers and settlers. The legendary quality of Nauvoo continued to grow in the Mormon imagination, eventually leading to a reclamation process including heritage development. Competing claims on local history has led to a heightened historical consciousness among townsfolk and ongoing public presentation from multiple perspectives. The two pageants are cultural displays that influence this ongoing social process. Both derive from distinct traditions--the local drama squarely planted in American historical pageantry and the Mormon-sponsored pageant deriving from LDS social and religious culture.

Historical pageants have some unique formal features that make them particularly interesting to folklorists. They depend heavily on sacred localities, tradition, legend, and large-group participation for their success. The story told gains power from familiarity and reinforcement of cherished group values. However, changing tastes and sensibilities have challenged the survival of pageants as a relevant cultural form into the present. Drawing on interviews, field observation, and historical research,

the contemporary context of the town and its two performances is
fleshed out in the voices of four individuals who have participated in the
pageants.

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Introduction



Figure 1: Nauvoo Pageant Cast practice onstage in July of 2011.

Nine years ago I made a “pilgrimage” with my family to the town of Nauvoo, Illinois—a small Mississippi river-town of just over 1,000 citizens. As a practicing member of the Mormon faith, I wanted my children to experience being in the place where much of the church’s formative history occurred. I knew that there would be plenty of activities and diversions. Over the past five decades, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has invested heavily in the restoration and

interpretation of the Mormon city of Nauvoo¹ that flourished from 1839 until 1846 until forced removal. Alongside dozens of restored pioneer homes and a Visitors Center that displays artifacts of the period, the church has recently rebuilt (2002) an imposing reproduction of the limestone temple that was destroyed in the 1850s by arson and tornado.

Maintaining an historic site of such magnitude requires a large number of personnel. By placing church historic sites under the oversight of the church's proselytizing arm, The Missionary Department, church leadership in Salt Lake City has been able to assign scores of senior LDS missionary couples to "serve" in the Nauvoo Mission. Paying their own way, these couples come for 18 months to two years as volunteers for the church. They tend to whatever work is assigned. They welcome visitors and interpret sites, they perform in the Cultural Hall, direct the wagon rides, and seek to preach the faith whenever possible. Their services meet the needs of the 200-250,000 visitors that come to the town of Nauvoo each year—the majority of them LDS tourists.

At the time of our family trip, I was pursuing a doctoral degree of Folklore and Ethnomusicology in Bloomington, Indiana. Previously, my professional work had been in North Carolina as a cultural field worker, documenting subjects as diverse as Native American quilts and traditional commercial fishing. I had developed public displays for museums and festivals and spent several years working on community-

¹ Joseph Smith named Nauvoo, evoking a Hebrew word, "na-wu" interpreted "to be comely." Its popular nickname quickly became "City Beautiful."

based oral history projects. When I returned to graduate school, my intention was to build my research on a topic I had already covered in the past. However, during those three days in Nauvoo, I could not help seeing evidences of an intriguing social process occurring.

Nauvoo holds historical and religious significance for multiple groups: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), The Community of Christ, formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS), other groups stemming from the LDS Church, and the Icarians. It has also been the site of a sizable Catholic population with Sts. Peter and Paul Church and an accompanying parochial school. Beginning in the 1950's, individuals and leaders of the LDS Church launched a major restoration project that has significantly impacted the local economy, demographics, and image of the town.²

During my visit, I could see multiple evidences of “counter-narratives” to the LDS dominance: two museums dedicated to an alternative local history, The Rheinberger Museum and the Weld House Museum; Grandpa John's Restaurant, a long-time establishment on the main street with a display case of black and white photographs documenting the town's annual Grape Festival Parade in the 1930s and 1940s; postcards printed with pictures of a now-defunct Catholic girls'

² In a region struggling with economic stagnation and loss of population, the town's growth between 2000 and 2010 from 1,063 to 1,149 with the number of households increasing from 403 to 494 is worth noting. The size of LDS Church membership has increased from a single congregation founded in 1956 to a regional consortium of multiple congregations in 1979. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nauvoo,_Illinois#2010.

school in Nauvoo and images of Icarian buildings no longer standing; and some of the most iconic church history sites, including founding prophet Joseph Smith's family home and Red Brick Store, currently owned and operated by The Community of Christ Church.

I thought to myself, "This place harbors a story worth telling. I have to tackle this!" But there loomed a challenge: how to enter Nauvoo? How to unravel such a complex and multi-layered social field? I knew that moving to Nauvoo for a year of participant-observation and deep ethnography was not going to be feasible. However, the discipline of folklore led me to a second question that I hoped might resolve the question of entry. What were the prevailing genres of Nauvoo? Folklore has illustrated the value of genre as a way to uncover loci of meaning.³ Groups of people tend to develop distinctive aesthetic forms, expressions that are recognized and valorized as worthy and desirable by some portion of a social group. This pattern can become the basis for group solidarity, boundary maintenance, as well as for satisfying traditions.

Following this line of thought, I needed to identify a prevailing genre in Nauvoo. It seemed to me from the outside that significant local energy went towards preserving, presenting, and remembering multiple strands of town history. When I encountered a flyer for the local Grape

³ There has been a lengthy conversation in folklore on the idea of genre including work by a number of leading scholars including: Dan Ben-Amos's *Folklore Genres* (1976); Linda Dégh's discussion of personal-narrative as a folklore genre (1985); Barre Toelken's textbook description of genre (1996:184-195); Trudier Harris-Lopez's definition of genre in Feintuch's edited volume of essays on the folklore's key words 2003:99-120).

Festival Pageant I thought, “Bingo!” I was already aware of the five-week Nauvoo Pageant sponsored by the LDS church each summer, but here was another fully staged outdoor historical pageant in the same town. That struck me as a noteworthy social fact. Two operative pageants occurring back-to-back might make the social processes in the town more clearly seen. Could the documentation of these two pageants provide sufficient ethnographic detail to open the story of Nauvoo to closer examination and understanding? The picture became even more intriguing as I learned of an earlier LDS historical pageant performed in Nauvoo for over thirty years previous to the current pageant. This would add yet another layer to examine.

I realized, however, that outdoor historical pageants as a genre have not been considered as a folkloric expression within the discipline. This oversight derives from a number of tendencies in the field including a general distrust of: attributed written texts, institutional control, and artistic professionalism. Given these disciplinary boundaries, could pageants such as these hold up as a vernacular form studied through a folklore lens? As I looked at the prevailing literature on folk drama, it became clear that this genre was not only a good fit, but also offered a needed corrective to the academic conversation. My study would enlarge the canon from an over-emphasis on European derivatives like mumming and pastorelas, as well as pave the way for folk drama to be understood

in terms of emerging contexts and group building rather than adherence to undefined “folk texts.”

But the question remained, why choose pageant performance as the research vehicle? Was there anything unique about the form specifically and generally that might illuminate Nauvoo as a place of heightened memory and performed history? One obvious answer for me was pageantry’s unabashed departure from academic history, history in books, or history as presented in professionally curated museums.⁴ This use of historical material seemed distinct in its reliance on physical involvement of large numbers of people, the inclusion of expressive elements like music, dance, and storytelling, and its clear commitment to history as heritage and as an inter-generational transfer of commitment and meaning. I hypothesized that these grandiose shows would offer a highly self-conscious public display where I could view how the portrayal of local historical events onstage might affect those participating and watching in powerful ways.

⁴ In the late 1980s, academic historians Roy Rozenzweig and David Phelan set out to understand how Americans relate to their past. As they suspected, the 808 randomly selected Americans and additional 645 African Americans, American Indians, and Mexican Americans observed and interviewed, were not so interested in generalized and academic versions of history per se, but pursued the past actively and made it a part of their everyday lives in personal pursuits including family history, family photos, attending family reunions, or writing in journals (Rosenzweig and Phelan 1998:18).

I decided to leap forward. I based my primary research on several ethnographic field trips to Nauvoo in 2007, 2010, and 2013. While in Nauvoo, I visited all the major historic and religious sites, church services, and civic sites, meeting many gracious individuals along the way who were willing to talk with me. I planned my visits to coincide with the annual Nauvoo Grape Festival on Labor Day weekend, and successfully videotaped the 2007 Grape Festival Pageant and attended the rehearsal and one performance of the 2013 Grape Festival Dinner Theater. In 2008 and 2011, my family participated as members of the family cast in the LDS Church's production of the Nauvoo Pageant. We were one of five casts rotated through a two-week commitment to learn and perform the pageant's portrayal of the Mormon settlement and departure from Nauvoo. Here our family developed some memorable friendships and I was able to make contact with some of the pageant organizers and producers.

Bit by bit I was able to gather the textual sources of pageant scripts, stage directions, and public flyers. I began reading scholarly treatments of pageant, spectacle, and public drama, contextual history of Nauvoo and its region, Mormon studies generally, and some of the literature around cultural performance and theory; civic engagement and public history; and myth and ritual. My primary sources have been created through fieldwork: interviewing, observation, personal

interaction, in dialogue, and with constantly evolving interpretation.⁵ The individuals I interviewed have profoundly deepened my understanding on many issues and topics, and I have regularly returned to the transcripts and notes for clarification and better apprehension.

Approaching this research topic, I found the work of theorist and theater director Richard Schechner helpful. I will discuss this idea more fully later, but to summarize, Schechner has explored the way that ritual and staged performance fall on a continuum between being efficacious and entertaining for their participants (Schechner 1998). In other words, “pure ritual” is meant to affect some kind of substantive and transformative change in those present while “pure performance” seeks only to please. As I studied and participated in the pageants in Nauvoo, I realized that pageant leans towards ritual, relying on the dynamics of pageant content, audience, scale, and location to tap into the enduring human hunger for continuity and belonging. As a form that consciously builds on the idea of bridging past, present, and future, historical pageantry resonates with the ideas of anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff who explained, “Ritual always links participants to one another and often to wider collectivities that may be absent, even to the ancestors and those yet unborn” (Myerhoff quoted in Etzioni 2004: 306).

⁵ Bente Alver’s book, *How Do We Create Our Research Sources: Creating the Source through Folkloristic Fieldwork* (1990) is the best model I have found for approaching fieldwork as a whole-hearted engagement that requires genuine empathy and interest in the perspectives of those we study.

My background in oral history led me to lean heavily on interview transcripts to foreground the stories of four individuals deeply involved in Nauvoo's pageant traditions: Mary Logan, Jim Topic, Debbie Hartley, and Ray Robinson. I felt their multiple viewpoints might bring us closer to a sense of the social whole rather than relying solely on my voice as narrator. I quickly realized that their perspectives could elucidate important ideas like community, social memory, belonging, and group formation. It was in their experiences that I could see questions of efficacy and entertainment articulated. It was in their descriptions that I could more clearly delineate the inter-generational transference of meaning and heritage. In the story of Jim Topic, I encountered his metaphor for community as a conglomeration of larger, smaller, and overlapping social circles. His thoughts on the importance of individuals integrating into larger social units and the bigger "we" struck at the heart of the matter—how much our sense of ourselves lies outside of individual identity. Ownership of a defined past and group narrative is a source of personal authority. It helps a person say, "This is who I am today" (Rosenzweig and Phelan 1998:63).

Tucked into Robert Redfield's classic work, *The Little Community* (1963 [1956]) I rediscovered his argument for why the "little community" persists as a model for larger concerns and questions:

"The small community, the village, the ideal city of Plato, so small it is not easily to be distinguished from a village, these have come to mean,

for one thinker or another, the desirable and ideal form of human association and the center of effort to realize the good society and the good life. In this direction of thought about the community, the prearrangement of the facts, the forms of thought for conceiving it, are not the value-free concepts of descriptive and analytic science; the concepts are those of centrally important values chosen and declared. The little community is seen as something to be made good, and as something through which to make the great society good... In the history of utopias and of social reform, the small community has long held a significant place" (154).

Nauvoo has been a "little community" in multiple iterations. It incubated two utopian movements: Mormonism and Icarianism. Under the leadership of Joseph Smith and Etienne Cabet, The City Beautiful sought to purge itself of human fallacy, spiritual blindness, and self-interested greed. Its reformist fortunes have risen and fallen with the movement of history and people across its landscape. And indeed, the further I journeyed into my project, the more I recognized that Nauvoo represented my own "little community" for study. Far from Redfield's purposefully platonic and bounded social sphere, Nauvoo felt more like an octopus with its social networks reaching far across time and geography. However, Nauvoo's pageants offered a fruitful case study for how one small place was engaged in the process of social amelioration through the medium of remembrance. The civic and religious

associations surrounding Nauvoo's pageants also offered a window for examining the wider ongoing struggle in America over the balance between individualism and group solidarity.⁶ In what ways might practitioners employ the pageant process as a social "glue"?

A final research question remained. Can outdoor historical pageants hold relevance for contemporary audiences and participants? Popular wisdom and the work of pageant historian David Glassberg (1990) would answer in the negative. According to Glassberg's research, the heyday of American historical pageantry enjoyed its final glories in the 1920s with a general petering out through the next few decades. His study gives no indication of any American pageantry tradition enduring into the present. He also offers no guidance on where those energies and historical sensibilities shifted in the social sphere.

There is no question that the past fifty years Americans have instigated a dramatic rise in the historic preservation of physical environments and museums dedicated to the memorialization and remembrance of social movements and luminaries in our history.⁷ There has also been the rise of a popular movement—historic reenactments—

⁶ This larger conversation includes the collaborative work of sociologists who wrote *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Bellah, Madsen, Tipton, Sullivan, Swidler 2008[1985]) and *The Good Society* (1992); Robert Putnam's critique of America's civic engagement in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000); Ronald Kraybill's intriguing, *The Riddle of the Amish* (1989); and a whole lifetime of work by community studies scholar Amatai Etzioni.

⁷ This movement is described in Norman Tyler's *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles and Practice* (2000 [1994]), and in David Lowenthal's more interpretive and analytical work, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985).

whereby individuals role-play people and events from the recent or distant past, investing substantial time and energy into their costuming, equipment, and knowledge of their chosen period.⁸ The reenactment trend shows a conscious connection and investment in the past, but also exhibits a highly individualized quality in its emphasis on self-expression and personal fulfillment that feels quite different from historical pageants.

My conviction at this point in the research journey is that connecting with historic pageants appears to require a mythic sensibility of shared group destiny and a comfort with dramatized heritage. This means that the “history” presented is selectively chosen for its potential as a heritage product for present and future generations.⁹ Perhaps the best way to illustrate the popular application of this idea is the T-shirts I saw being worn by a group of LDS teenagers gathered to Nauvoo in 2007 for a youth conference: HERITAGE something you get, FAITH something you do, LEGACY something you give, LEGEND something you become.” For groups secure in their conceptions of group identity, the sublimation of the individual story into the group story continues to be compelling.

⁸ An evocative new series on reenactment history has published *Historical Reenactment from Realism to the Affective Turn* (2010) edited by Iain McCalman and Paul A. Pickering: “During the past decade...reenactment has emerged as a vital trend in popular as well as scholarly forms of historical representation...as a new concept in the understanding of the past...it introduces history to passions generated when an individual dwelling in a present moment of time achieves a sympathetic identification with another inhabiting an earlier one” (Introduction).

⁹ The concept of heritage as a value-added product with emphasis on the future has been explored extensively by folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, particularly in her volume *Destination Culture: Tourisms, Museums, and Heritage* (1998).

For groups more fraught or less invested in the maintenance of solidarity, such stories might unravel and lose relevance.

My presentation of material will begin with an historical overview of Nauvoo and a description of those who call it home, whether physical or spiritual. The next four chapters will introduce individuals deeply involved in the pageants in Nauvoo, two of them insiders and two of them outsiders-become-insiders. Their personal experiences will touch on many of the issues raised above. Chapter six will engage with the wider disciplinary questions of what constitutes folk-drama and how pageant can be understood as a distinctive performance genre. Chapters seven and eight will provide fuller contextual and historical grounding for the two pageant traditions and interpret the performances as purposeful heritage products. In conclusion, I will tie together all the material presented and consider how pageants work as *physically conveyed* vehicles of historical tradition that attempt a purposeful passing of meaning between generations; how pageants depend on mythic sensibilities for continued social relevance; and how changing social contexts invite reflection on the potential role of pageants today.

Chapter One

Nauvoo as a Site of Memory



Figure 2: Map of Nauvoo, Illinois region.

How a small town of 1,000 people came to be the site of so many layers of memorializing and conflict, political and economic jockeying, and not just one, but two historical and site-dedicated pageants is a question worth consideration. Of course the answer has to lie in the voices of the many contributors and residents, pilgrims and interpreters who have come to stay or who have passed through. Perhaps it is best understood as one of those high-stakes locations that have come to represent far more than themselves; but rather have become ideologically charged for their link to the histories of multiple and distinct groups. Not to hazard too much hyperbole, but this tiny town has a fraction of the

Jerusalem quality in the high stakes that have been placed on meaning, interpretation, and ownership of local history.¹⁰

¹⁰ It can be said that Illinois has always been a place of conflicting loyalties and shifting people. When Jesuit priest Father Marquette and trapper Louis Joliet first crossed Illinois terrain, they noted the existing tribes of 1673: the Illinois, the Pottowatomies, and others. One hundred years later, competing tribes had shifted and moved the boundaries of their dwellings, all but wiping out the Illinois and introducing newly dominant tribes of Fox and Kickapoo.

Beginning in 1679, the French staked claim to the area and began building forts, including a massive stone fort begun by Louis IV in 1718 that took thirty years to complete. Robert Cavalier de la Salle worked for the French government, building the state's oldest fort, Fort Creve Coeur (1679) and Fort St. Louis on Starved Rock (1682). In 1763, the Treaty of Paris gave the British control of French holdings in that region and in 1765 Captain Sterling and the 42nd Highlanders began occupation and all were asked to take allegiance to the King of England. Those who wished to remain under French rule were asked to go to French Territories. When all land north of the Ohio River was annexed to Canada in 1774, residents of the region expressed their displeasure in language that forebode revolution. In 1778, Patrick Henry, the governor of Virginia sent George Rogers Clark to take the Illinois country from the British, which he did with general cooperation from those being "occupied." During this effort, the French were adopted as allies, bringing all French settlements into friendly relations with the fledgling American government.

Incrementally, the region came under the complete control of the United States. With the Ordinance of 1787, Congress passed a code of laws for the Northwest Territory that designated the land to be divided to no less than three and no more than five states with an appointed governor, secretary, and three judges. At the point that a territory had at least 60,000 inhabitants, it could apply for statehood, with the provision that there would be no slavery or servitude in said region. First Ohio and Indiana were carved from the territory in 1806 and 1809, with the remainder being called Illinois Territory. Counties began to be organized and in 1812, permission was granted to elect local officials to office, encouraging increased migration into the region.

Following the admission of Illinois as a state in 1818, the pioneers began to enter the region. Settlers from the New England states settled mainly in the North, those from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana in central Illinois, and those from the south in the southern counties. Several families would come together to build a settlement and offer one another mutual protection and shared resources in a place with plentiful water, woodlands, and hunting. It is worth noting that Illinois did not meet its quota of 60,000 residents. Indeed, it did not even meet the requirements of the 1818 Enabling Act that asked only 40,000 residents and in a tricky turn of events, the word "hereafter" enabled a grandfather clause in what would have seemed to be an anti-slavery clause. An 1819 Black Code ensured that free blacks would be given no status or support in the new state, with the potential to be captured and sold at any turn. Governor Coles, elected in 1822, battled to repeal the Black Laws and fought against those seeking to legalize slavery in Illinois. It should be noted at this time that finances were rocky in the new states and the issuing of currency and creation of banks was in its infancy. Many churches were established bit by bit and in 1825 the first law was passed providing for a free school in Illinois.

History points to a rough citizenry. The 1827 Winnebago War consisted of drunken boatman stealing Winnebago women overnight, leading to an exchange of volleys and senseless bloodshed on both sides. However, there were also signs of social infrastructure beginning to surface. The first seminary, university, and penitentiary were

Situated on a bluff that overlooks the Mississippi River, Nauvoo rests at the convergence of Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri. A mixture of swampland and dense forestation, the area was sparsely settled by the Sauk and Fox Indians and by nomadic French and British trappers. Along this shoreline, the famous Sauk Chief, Black Hawk, fought to keep control of the lands of his ancestors and to protect Saukenuk, the village of his youth. He rejected the Treaty of 1804 that ceded all the Sauk and Fox lands east of the Mississippi River—50 million acres—to the United States. His devotion to the land divided his people into opposing camps with followers of a younger leader Keokuk crossing to the west, and Black

built during this time. The Black Hawk wars of 1831-32 reflected the dishonest wresting of land from the Sac and Fox tribes, who despite efforts for redress, were destroyed and scattered by US troops.

In what might seem an interested foreshadowing of things to come, anti-slavery advocate, Elijah P. Lovejoy was murdered by a pro-slavery mob in 1837 for persistent publication of anti-slavery literature. That same year, substantial funds were allocated for railroads and canals, and the City of Chicago was incorporated. 1840 found a state congress chastened by wild overspending and a massive debt. The settlement of the Mormons in Hancock County, beginning in 1839, quickly became a power in Illinois politics, securing favors from both the Whigs and the Democrats. With the murder of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith in 1844, the Mormons eventually made their exodus in 1846 to the west. There was other trouble in the 1840's. A group of outlaws in the Ohio River region would meet unsuspecting immigrants and sell them stolen goods or pay them for goods in counterfeit money and warrants on the state treasury. They would also kidnap free blacks and sell them in slave-holding states. Their power was great enough that they could influence elections, court proceedings, and threaten lives of those who opposed them.

In the 1850's, a complete railroad system was completed and school legislation and funding was passed. That same decade, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas held their series of famous debates across the state. Although Lincoln lost, he was a successful candidate for president two years later. It should also be noted that Illinois was a hotbed for the slavery debate, with Illinois being a major thruway for blacks making their way northward along the Underground Railroad. With the signing of the 13th Amendment in February of 1865, the Illinois Black Laws were repealed. Afterward followed a flurry of civic building included state universities and a massive new state capitol building in Springfield.

Waller, Elbert. 1901. *Waller's Brief History of Illinois*. Galesburg, Illinois: The Mail Printing Company. <http://history.ilgenweb.net/WallersHistory.pdf>

Hawk's followers being ambushed and killed on the east side by American soldiers.

In early 1824, frontier entrepreneur Captain James White purchased a village site from Keokuk and established a trading post. With the formation of counties in the region, he named his settlement Venus and built a permanent home on the edge of the river, where he held the first county court for Hancock County and housed a post office. A handful of other early settlers began to build small home sites throughout the next decade and White's Venus was formally platted with the new name of Commerce.

The 1830s saw a feverish rush on land in Illinois with land speculators inventing "paper towns" to advertise land in eastern cities. These towns existed on paper only and offered grandiose prospects of broad avenues and distinguished citizens—before any actual building had been done (Hallwas 1983:45). The potential of the Mississippi River and its commercial importance was still a matter of speculation and anyone with a dream to get rich or establish an empire scrambled for a piece. Hancock County journalist Thomas Gregg satirized this tendency to speculative exaggeration in 1846: "Among the many paper towns ushered into life and beauty by the expansion of 1836-1837, Commerce City may be ranked the first. And a splendid affair it was. Churches, not excelled by the costly edifices of New York and Philadelphia—stores, equal in magnitude to the most extensive in New Orleans—Colleges and

Universities, second only to Yale and Harvard—parks, avenues, and public grounds were scattered in rich profusion over its broad surface—on paper—and all that was wanted to give reality to the picture, was the city itself” (ibid 46).

But by the late 1830s, events were to take an interesting turn—perhaps making the paper version of Commerce prophetic. Followers of the charismatic Mormon prophet Joseph Smith had fallen on hard times. Driven from their homes in Missouri by mob violence and escaping legal troubles in Ohio, Joseph Smith saw in the swampy location the possibility of building a modern-day Zion. Here would be a city where his follower “Saints” could realize their theocratic vision of God’s Kingdom on Earth. The land was purchased in 1839, re-plotted and cleared by the Mormon settlers. Significant challenges included the swamp conditions and malarial difficulties of low-lying land. However, the fervor of the newly converted Saints was sufficient to turn a very unlikely patch of land into a thriving and viable city over the next five years.

With the commitment of a large number of able-bodied men to missionary work across the U.S. and across the sea, the ranks of believers increased exponentially. The call to those who joined was to gather to Nauvoo and to the bosom of the Saints. At this time of rapid church expansion, the city population exploded as new converts came to a new

city that, at its peak, may have claimed close to 12,000 residents.¹¹

Alongside the crude cabins of the frontier, many finely crafted brick homes were constructed and in an act of sheer discipline and devotion, an imposing limestone temple was built at the crest the bluff overlooking the river. Riverboats coming along the Mississippi river would pass many such river towns bustling with economic vitality and civic energy, but the magnitude of the Nauvoo temple rising at the bend set this town apart.

At the head of this industry and effort, the prophet Joseph Smith brought many of the doctrines and peculiarities of his faith to full fruition. Having already established the ecclesiastical organization of the church, translated and published the *Book of Mormon*, edited and annotated the *King James Bible*, and mobilized a core group of successful missionaries and advocates, Joseph was at the pinnacle of his achievements. What still remained was the completion of a temple theology—a doctrine that put the church at the center of a cosmic and divine endeavor to link earth and heaven through religious rituals that would bind together families across generations and endow church members with the power to carry out God’s work for all humankind. Joseph felt the urgency of this effort and spoke often to his companions of the need to establish these temple teachings and principles before his

¹¹There are many competing estimates on population numbers in Nauvoo, but Susan Easton Black’s extensive survey of records puts the number in the ballpark of 12,000 (Black 1995: 93).

death.¹² The divisive teaching of polygamy also became publicly acknowledged at this time, sympathetically linked to this ideal of binding together the whole human family. The social upheaval for both members and non-members that accompanied this revelation cannot be understated and drove many of Smith's strongest supporters to renounce his leadership.

Scholars have written volumes on the rising tensions and conflict that led to the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum at the hands of an angry mob at Carthage. Some point to the public practice of polygamy as the catalyst. Others emphasize the lawlessness of frontier life. A more convincing explanation lies in the work of historian John Hallwas who describes the tremendous clash of ideologies that made civic relations between the Mormons and their neighbors seemingly irreconcilable. On the one hand, the frontier region of Western Illinois was, at this time, an ardent hotbed of Jacksonian-era democracy. Foremost in the minds of civic leaders and newspapermen were the principles of democracy and egalitarian values: the need for separation of church and state, legal representation before the law, and the essential

¹² In his interpretation of the Nauvoo period, Ronald K. Esplin turned to letters written by Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail. As Joseph wrote in March 1839, "I never have had opportunity to give [the Saints] the plan that God has revealed to me"(1990:35). Pondering past problems, and perhaps his own performance, he concluded that "many things were introduced among the Saints, before God had signified the time ... notwithstanding the principles and the plans may have been good." Timing was important. The Saints must be prepared and God must approve before pressing forward again, but Joseph felt certain the time was near "when God will signify many things"(36). Freed from prison in April 1839, Joseph Smith arrived among the Saints with an internal agenda, a sense of personal urgency, and "a conviction that the city that became Nauvoo represented his last opportunity"(78).

freedom of a democratic vote. The tendency for the Mormons to vote in a bloc was already a concern to their neighbors, but when Joseph Smith in 1841 succeeded in legally creating an independent armed militia in Nauvoo, with himself as the commander, non-members in the surrounding communities were duly alarmed.

One key player in the pending conflict was the nearby town of Warsaw:

“Warsaw was particularly important, for it was the center of anti-Mormon feeling in the 1840s. Like most Illinois towns, it was a cumulative community, a kind of voluntary association devoted to the economic and social advancement of its members. The Warsaw pioneers hailed from a variety of states and countries and had various religious affiliations, so the town was something of a microcosm of pluralistic America. ... More importantly, Warsaw was a practical exercise in self-government, founded (1834) and incorporated in the Jacksonian era, when the public — especially in the West—demanded non-interference with popular rights.

"Freedom," not "faith," was the shibboleth of the community”
(1995:56).

In Warsaw, where political passion centered in the protection of civil rights, the Nauvoo experiment was very perplexing and of great concern. From the outside, all they could see was a hierarchical, collectivistic, and authoritarian community that harbored all the possibilities of despotism

and tyranny.

When a group of nearly 300 disgruntled Mormon dissenters met to organize against Joseph Smith and to publish a defaming paper, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, outsiders were appalled when the press was forcibly taken by the Nauvoo Town Council and burned—what they saw as a clear abuse of power. This triggering event sparked Joseph Smith’s enemies to seek his death in hopes of destroying the Mormon Kingdom. On the evening of June 27, 1844, the prophet, his brother Hyrum, apostle John Taylor, and church historian and apostle Willard Richards were attacked at the Carthage Jail by masked men who succeeded in killing both of the Smith brothers. Following these violent events, the Mormons were driven forcibly from their homes and Nauvoo was left to those who would follow.

One of the most interesting chapters in the story occurred with the scramble for leadership in the church. Many competing claims to leadership created a confusing situation for all those casting about for direction. The largest majority of committed church members chose to follow Brigham Young and became a part of the now mythologized pioneer exodus to the Great Salt Lake. There were others, however, who also drew sufficient followers to establish splinter versions of the church throughout the mid-West and Pennsylvania—movements that persist into the present day. The most successful of the smaller groups held to the tenet of lineal descent, referring to statements by Joseph that his son,

Joseph Smith III would be his rightful spiritual heir. Because Joseph's widow, Emma, their four sons and his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, had all remained in Nauvoo after the expulsion of the Mormons, the family was available for persuasive pleas. By 1860, Joseph's oldest son agreed to shoulder the presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This branch eventually renamed itself The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [RLDS] and, in 2001, changed its name to Community of Christ Church.

The joint ownership of history between the Community of Christ Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah has been rather like divorced parents with a shared child. In the early 20th century, as Utah Mormons began to show interest both personally and institutionally in a return to their eastern roots and a desire to buy up properties, some complex maneuvering and out-maneuvering went on as both groups tried to ensure their control of a fair piece of the historical pie.¹³ The discomfort of Joseph Smith III and those who came after with many aspects of Joseph Smith's Nauvoo doctrines and teachings led the

¹³ This maneuvering is described in detail in Benjamin Pykles' book *Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archeology in America* (2010). When a descendent of the Nauvoo Mormons, J. LeRoy Kimball, started visiting Nauvoo in the 1930s, he became familiar with the local residents and history. In 1954, he purchased the home of his great-grandfather, Heber C. Kimball, to renovate for his own use. This personal interest evolved into a passion to increase interest in Nauvoo historical sites by church leadership in Utah. Through his advocacy and eventual connection to some of the leaders of the Williamsburg, VA restoration and interpretation, Nauvoo was seriously considered as potential federal tourist attraction. There was a brief hope that Nauvoo might be a similar kind of historical destination that could tell the broader story of western expansion. Nauvoo Restorations, Inc. was founded in 1962 by Kimball to continue the work of restoring scores of LDS historical homes and public buildings; however, funds came mainly from LDS sources, keeping the emphasis on the LDS experience, and ultimately, reflecting a proselytizing perspective.

then-RLDS to obscure that era of their history and to link polygamy and temple doctrines to Brigham Young and his followers. There was a sense that the original church had been corrupted and that the true restoration was the re-establishment of the eastern band of Mormons under the leadership of Joseph's descendents. What followed was decades of a complicated reconciliation between distinctive features of RLDS history and culture and a more mainstream Christianity. Ultimately, this tension has led to a distancing of the reorganized church from its restorationist origins. Despite this disenchantment with its own history, the Community of Christ Church owns foundational Joseph Smith properties in Nauvoo, including the original Smith log home, mansion, burial plot, and the Red Brick Store site where many of the revelations and events of the Mormon Nauvoo period took place.

However, when the Mormons fled in 1846, they left a near ghost town. An anti-Mormon arsonist set fire to the temple and soon after, a tornado nearly completed the destruction. (This is an impressive fact considering that the original temple dimensions were 128 by 88 feet of limestone, with a spire reaching 165 feet).

Meanwhile, across the ocean, French communist Etienne Cabet was overcome by the flattery of his admirers and devotees. They pled with him to put the utopian principles in his fictional book, *Voyage en Icarie* (*Voyage to Icaria*) into embodied practice. His 1840 fictitious novel described an ideal community based on both democratic and communist

values—a place where all would work equally for the good of the group and share all material goods in common. Yielding to the persuasion, the sixty-three year old Cabet announced Texas as the destination point, but after facing both disease and difficulty procuring land in Texas, Cabet was pleased in 1849 when he heard of the abandoned city in Illinois. Starting from New Orleans, the “Society of the Icarians” could travel up the Mississippi to their new home. In Nauvoo, they found ample stone from the temple ruins to build their workshops and classrooms. By 1852, 450 acres were in cultivation and the community boasted 365 members—a number which ultimately grew to 464 (Hallwas 1995:156).

Unfortunately, goodwill and good intentions did not prevail. When internal conflicts and accusations of unequal treatment grew too great, the group disbanded and scattered, leaving fields open to both those who remained and those who soon followed: German and Swiss immigrants, Catholics, disaffected Mormons and descendents of Joseph Smith, and others moved into the homes and surrounding area. Fragments of the Mormon and Icarian eras became pieces of the emerging community. The original pioneer homes on the lower flats of the river eventually became the run-down rent district for the community and the Icarian buildings of temple stone took on new functions.

The Catholics exerted a continuous presence on the town. From the humble offering of church services in the Mormon era, they purchased a permanent church site in 1851 and in the 1860s built the Saints Peter and

Paul Church whose steeple and bell took the visual place of the previous temple spire. In 1874, the Benedictine Sisters opened St. Scholastica Academy—a parochial school that eventually became St. Mary’s Academy, a boarding school for high school girls from both the region and all over the country. When enrollment declined significantly, the Benedictine Sisters closed the school and monastery, selling the buildings to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1998 (Gabbert and Candido 2006: 84-85).

The region is blessed by rich farmland and has enjoyed a strong farm economy in wheat and corn—an economy that has shifted today to primarily corn and hogs. The local economy expanded as the grape and wine industry grew in the region. In 1877 “nearly every piece of available land was planted in grapes” (79). Until the crushing blow of the Prohibition Act of 1918, Nauvoo vintners used the natural limestone substrata to create wine cellars that remain in Nauvoo today. Such availability of caves proved useful to an engineering cheese maker named Oscar Rohde who moved to Nauvoo in 1937 specifically to use them as a cheese-curing location. Here he could age his own brand of blue cheese—a creation dubbed Nauvoo Blue Cheese that was actively produced in a small local factory until its closure in 2003 by a global conglomerate. (With its proximity to the temple site and Visitors Center, the Latter-Day Saints were quick to purchase the site and remove the factory structure). Town booster-ism thrived through the 30’s to the 50’s under the

leadership of Mayor Lowell Horton who established the Grape Festival in 1937 and dreamed up the idea of borrowing “The Wedding of the Wine and Cheese” ritual from Roquefort, France. This initial performance seed grew into a full-scale outdoor drama depicting important scenes from Nauvoo history. An outdoor sod stage was constructed in town, further emphasizing the importance of the town story. Horton’s active leadership also planted the idea for Nauvoo Restorations in the mind of visiting Mormon descendent J. LeRoy Kimball.

A grandson of Mormon luminary Heber C. Kimball, J. LeRoy Kimball felt the pull to purchase the original Kimball home in Nauvoo. From that simple step a significant LDS restoration movement was born. As he explained in a 1972 interview:

“So there was the archeology and then we brought in these fine architects and we had to bring in construction people, most of which we have to have trained here in order to put these building back together. So it’s true that practically any of these building we could build for about a third of what its cost us to put up the old one. But I always told them that I’ve always looked on this Nauvoo just like I would a resurrection. When we get up, we’ll take up our bodies again and you want your own body, and when Nauvoo came up we needed to do it accurately and properly, and not so that when a building was restored that as near as we could humanly do

it, it was as it was when it was here one hundred and twenty-five years ago (Kimball 1972:21).

One could also say that with the resurrection of buildings came another kind of revival. As the work of Nauvoo Restorations, Inc. advanced, interest in historical pilgrimage increased among Mormons curious to see their Lost City. As buildings rose from the dust, there came an increasing number of bodies not from the grave, but in station wagons and then minivans from all over the country.

Currently, the Baxter Family of Nauvoo seems to be leading the charge for a similar restoration on their end. Kelly and Brenda Logan, the owners of Baxter Wine & Vineyard has, on a small scale, maintained the tradition of growing grapes and manufacturing wine in a region that no longer competes in that industry. They are also working to redress the loss of the blue cheese, although limited by the loss of the “Nauvoo Blue Cheese” trademark. The family is actively working with a consultant to look at the cost of equipment and the viability of once again manufacturing blue cheese in Nauvoo.

In looking at Nauvoo collectively, it is good to remember that every group has the potential to be exceptional in some area of creative expression. For some it may be music or the gift of gab. Local proclivities might lead to exceptional woodcarving or gardening. In Nauvoo, conditions have produced a hyper-historical awareness that pervades the

ways people talk, think, and the social relations between them. In effect, Nauvoo is a hotbed of homegrown historians with the passion to work a listener up and down until their version of events solidifies in the air between—a verbal monument that only lacks the physical matter to be mounted on a pedestal. To be ignorant of such historical matters in Nauvoo would be akin to living among cowboys without knowing the difference between a steer and a bull.

Entering the physical landscape of Nauvoo is quite dramatic. The town displays the sort of hyper-awareness that occurs in places that are self-consciously historic. Coming around the bend in the river, the temple immediately comes in view. But the pathway up to the bluff runs a gauntlet of historical signs, dates, directive arrows, and claims on the land. On my first field exploration of Nauvoo, I kept close notes of my initial impressions. Within my first few minutes of arriving in Nauvoo, I encountered a very active narrative of place in terms of visual clues.

Just entering town, the Division of Highways and the Illinois State Historical Society have a sign that they erected in 1963:

“NAUVOO, ILLINOIS

Nauvoo was once the site of a Sauk and Fox village. After the Indians moved West of the Mississippi, promoters attempted to develop town sites here but the marshy bottom lands attracted few settlers.

In 1839, the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith chose the town, then called Commerce, as the home for his followers, who had been driven from

Missouri. The Mormons named the community Nauvoo, said to mean “beautiful place,” and obtained a special charter from the Illinois legislature, which gave the city government its own courts, militia, university, and all other governmental powers not prohibited by the federal and state constitutions.

Mormon converts from all parts of America and Europe soon swelled the population to about 15,000 making Nauvoo one of the largest cities in Illinois by 1845. But some of the Mormons as well as their Gentile neighbors began to resent the civil and religious authority of the Mormon leaders, and frictions in the area grew severe. When the Nauvoo City Council had an anti-Mormon newspaper destroyed, the Mormon leaders were arrested and jailed at Carthage. There, on June 27, 1844, an armed mob shot and killed Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum. Conflict between the Mormons and their neighbors continued until 1846 when the Mormons completed their exodus from the state.

In 1849, Etienne Cabet’s followers, the Icarians, came to Nauvoo to practice their form of religious communism but dissensions soon weakened the colony. Their experiment lasted less than ten years.”

Coming around the bend into town multiple signs appear:

“Nauvoo United Methodist Church

In ministry since 1846

Located at Ripley and Wilcox Street

Sunday School 9 am and 10:30 am. Worship 9 am.”

Just behind stands a sign for the Nauvoo Presbyterian Church followed by a very large blue sign with Joseph Smith's profile and the words "*Joseph Smith Historic Site.*" The left hand turn is for Water Street and opposite the sign is the Community of Christ church building, a low, red brick structure with a cross of stone imbedded into the front. The sign states its meeting times: "*Church school 9:30 and worship service 10:45.*" Opposite is the church's visitor center with a flag out front that depicts the church's seal—the image of a child with a hand on a lamb and on a lion with the outline of a globe behind them. An earlier version of the seal is on the visitor's center building that has the inscription "*Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*"—their name before it was changed to Community of Christ. The visitor's center was not open, but the hours were posted.

March-Oct, M-S 9-5, Sunday 1-5

Nov-Dec M-S 10-4 Sunday 1-4

Jan-Feb Fri & Sat 10-4

The Community of Christ operates a visitor's center, with an orientation video, museum store and exhibits, a restoration of Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store and a \$2 guided tour of two original Smith family homes.

Just past the RLDS site on the right is the Nauvoo State Park with a beautiful, expansive spread of grassy knolls and big trees. The Nauvoo Historical Society has a museum dedicated to winemaking that they run each day from 1-4. It is also a red brick structure like the others. In the

park there is a metal sign posted about *“The Icarian Community in Nauvoo.” A communal society of French Icarians was established at Nauvoo in 1849...Etienne Cabet, a French Political Theorist incorporated the town in 1851 with 335 members. They operated their own saw and gristmill and a commercial distiller. Disputes later arose over Cabet’s leadership and the Icarians began settling in other states. The Nauvoo community survived, however, until about 1860—longer than any other secular communal society in Illinois.” Erected by the descendents of Icaria and the Illinois State Historical Society, 1975.*

Midwestern scholars and writers have often struggled to describe the Midwest in coherent regional terms, leading historian Andrew Cayton to label the Midwest as “the Anti-region” because of its seeming absence of contested regional meanings and a self-referencing regional discourse.¹⁴ As part of a network of small towns tied to a larger cultural and economic system, Nauvoo stands out in its highly active discourse over local identity and its rich sense of its own meaning. Despite its exceptionalism, the rise and fall of its fortunes have always been linked with larger regional forces like the shift in transportation from waterways to railroads and the general decline of an industrial base in the U.S. economy.¹⁵

¹⁴ Andrew Cayton explores this idea at length in his book edited with Susan E. Gray, *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*.

¹⁵ Two noteworthy studies that contextualize Nauvoo in a larger regional history are Timothy R. Mahoney’s *River Towns in the Great Midwest: The Structure of Provincial*

So how to enter Nauvoo? It seems there are competing authenticities and claims to the land. Public discourse is one arena—what is going on in the paper, gossip, how different groups in the town are talking about things and shaping them through their talk. There is also the material dimension—how the town is divided among the groups into discrete spaces of ownership and claims to varying types of authority. The self-conscious display of culture through artifacts, museums, tourist attractions and monuments act as symbolic markers on a field of cultural meaning. All of these are possible avenues, but I will narrow in on the Nauvoo Pageant and Grape Festival Pageant as key sites where groups stake their ownership claims and embody their past in the present.

When I talked with local historian Genevieve Simmens about her involvement in the Nauvoo Historical Society, she wanted to make clear that they have a mission to make sure the whole story gets told:

“Yes. ...The mission is to preserve the one-hundred-fifty-year history, the period from the beginning of the town, with the Indians, [Quasquema], to the present day. That’s the part of history - the Mormons were only here for a very narrow segment of time. We want to preserve all the rest of that history. They’re doing a beautiful job of preserving their own history. And, of course, they have a lot more money and workers and so forth to do

Urbanization in the American Midwest 1830-1870 (2003) and John Teaford’s *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (1994).

it with. And that's fine. They have a right to preserve their history. We want to preserve the rest. We feel it's important that we preserve the rest, because it was a hundred-fifty-year period.”

All of these stories, the pluralistic narrative of the many gathered into the one, make up the backbone of the Grape Festival Pageant. But why is the pageant form still a viable and working expression for the Mormons and not for the local Nauvoo folks?

Lifetime resident Mary Logan has scrapbooks full of the pageant's over seventy-year history. That the Grape Festival has been sustained for so many decades testifies to its long-lived importance to the town. Old-timers like Mary and others reminisce about the year their sister was the Grape Festival Queen or the year their children portrayed the cheese makers and danced in the Virginia reel scene. Because of its longevity, the community developed a strong sense of succession and tradition in the roles surrounding the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese. Boys would start out as trumpeters and, if lucky, could move up through the ranks to Groom. Girls looked forward to getting old enough to wear a beautiful dress and to be a part of the wedding party.¹⁶ Somewhere in the eighties, the energy needed to launch and sustain such an effort flagged with the younger generation.

¹⁶ These observations are drawn from conversations with Kay Berry and Mary Logan, 8/30/13 and 8/29/13, at the time of the 76th annual Grape Festival. Both were responding to the movement of the pageant from its original outdoor sod stage and large cast to a downscaled performance of the pageant-turned-dinner-show at Christ Lutheran Church that was taking place that weekend.

Marilyn and Sal Candido moved to Nauvoo from New York in the early nineties to work at the parochial school. They quickly involved themselves in local leadership and the Nauvoo Historical Society. As the current directors and resuscitators of the pageant, they have struggled to garner the community will and vision necessary to make the pageant matter and “make sense.” There is a populist base to outdoor pageantry that cannot be ignored. It takes a lot of volunteers working very hard over a period of time to make such a production both possible and aesthetically pleasing and entertaining. They also face a change in the capacity of small towns to launch such an affair. People are involved in far more outside activities. Children are busier. More women work full time. There is the tendency for people to be consumers of entertainment rather than creators of their own entertainment. Some of the skill sets and inclinations for assembling such an event are less apparent in a younger generation.

The slow erosion of the social base of the pageant has also undermined the continuity that gave the pageant some stature. As Kay Berry put it, “Now we’re just trying to find someone willing to do it!” Because her husband Allen was simultaneously the Chairman of the Grape Festival as well as President of the Nauvoo Historical Society, two of her grandchildren were roped in to play the bride and groom for the 2013 performance. There have been other shifts as well. A Mormon woman who moved to Nauvoo eight years ago, Ramona Hallman, has

been instrumental over the past few years recruiting sufficient LDS church members to populate the big group scenes. This reflects the decline in involvement from other groups in town. At one time, the majority of the churches and civic organizations in town were interested in representing their piece of the story and assembling a group of willing volunteers was not so difficult.

In the late nineties, the pageant seemed on the brink of collapse. A group associated with the Nauvoo Historical Society determined to resuscitate the pageant, rewriting and updating the scripts to reflect more modern tastes. Some felt that the historical accuracy needed some attention. It was this group that kept the pageant functioning for the next ten years, but not without difficulty. First, the pageant faced declining commitment from various community groups and some audience boredom with the repetition of the same script year after year. There were differences within the society about how to proceed with the pageant and at what scale of resources to commit to the effort.

Meanwhile, a major shift was occurring in Nauvoo with the announcement of the rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple for 2002—a painstaking reproduction of the original building built by the Latter-Day Saints before their exodus in 1846. In addition to this physical memorial, a new pageant was announced to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth. The Nauvoo Pageant would replace an earlier, regionally produced pageant, City of Joseph. Staff in Salt Lake City, Utah

would oversee the writing and production of a pageant that reflected the doctrinal focus and oversight of top-tier church leaders. Professional performers rehearsed in Salt Lake City would form the core of the cast with volunteers drawn from church-wide membership filling the ranks of the chorus and dancers. Major overhauls of the landscape surrounding the temple square were undertaken to “clean up” the vistas and views from all sides and to make way for new statues, walkways, and memorials.

Generally, memorializing is the prerogative of the wealthy and powerful, or of the collective. Memorials get erected either through entitlement or dogged collective action. Being a longtime resident of Nauvoo could, for some, feel like being under memorializing siege. Every time another local building gets razed down to make way for an LDS structure (or parking lot), or another statue is erected to the Mormon story, there is one less piece of another story. Ironically, the same dismantling took place when the Icarians disassembled Mormon structures for present needs and has been true of each subsequent group who has come to take up residence. Whatever your perspective or allegiance, the amount of labeling and dating on both sides is impressive. However, it is impossible to deny there is a seemingly limitless number of friendly LDS missionary couples cycling into two year volunteer missions from the west. They just keep coming. They are always fresh and glad to come back to their spiritual roots. They consider Nauvoo as much their own as

people who have lived their whole lives in the town. The repeating phrase of missionaries and repeat visitors is the “spirit of Nauvoo.” This ineffable sense of being in a place made special by the aura of its history and spiritual significance stands uncontested among its most passionate pilgrims.

When I talked with Jeff Hancks, the director of the Western Illinois University Archive, he explained the breadth of this phenomenon very well. He had gone to Salt Lake City to the Church Archives to research Mormon attitudes towards the French Icarians. One day, he and his research partner had time to visit the state capital building:

“And they had a check-in book where you could sign where you were from. And we had been saying all week that we were from the Nauvoo area and I made the mistake of saying I was from Nauvoo. You would have thought that I was a prince that had walked into that building! You know, like “You’re from *there* and you came *here*? Usually it’s the other way around that we go to you!” We got a *special* tour of the capital. It’s amazing that this little town—that you could go to the towns around here [Illinois] and people don’t know what Nauvoo is, but everyone in Salt Lake knew the story of Nauvoo; even the non-LDS people. My wife’s aunt lives in Park City. She’s the daughter of a Baptist minister, very evangelical. ... She has no reason to know Nauvoo except that it’s around her all the

time on television and in the media. It's kind of amazing. No one around here knows where it is. No one in Chicago knows where Nauvoo is. But everyone from Saint George [UT] all the way up knows where that little city is and knows its story. We were like royalty when they found out that's where we actually—"you actually get to live there?!?!” (Hancks 2013).

His experience touches on the powerful emotional connection Mormons feel with a place they may never have actually seen.

Through their theology and telling of history, Mormons promote a sense of being a chosen people. The hand of God is upon them and the story of their history is couched in a much larger cosmic time. Although lacking mal-intent, this perspective can easily cut everyone else out of the story. Within this world-view, there is no other story to be told. The Latter-Day Saint story is the *only* story. The artifacts, buildings, and narratives of other groups are simply irrelevant. They fall away in face of the grand narrative, obstacles in the path of progress.

However, there is no doubt that there have been many beneficiaries of the return. The economic impact of the LDS return to Nauvoo has been profound. A lifelong resident of Nauvoo, Genevieve Simmens is descended from some of the earliest settlers in the region. A devout Catholic, she has seen the town pass through many stages of development and change. In her own life, she can attest to the direct

impact of LDS tourism on her family economy. When farming became unfeasible because of the health and capacities of her husband, she was able to sell her farmland to Nauvoo Restorations, Inc. for three times the original purchase amount, providing an opportunity to pay for her five children's schooling. She also purchased an older home in town that she operated as a bed and breakfast for eleven years, hosting the scores of visitors coming to Nauvoo for historical interest and meetings. As she put it, "It was very profitable. I bought it inexpensively, \$48,000, \$46,000, and I sold it for \$164,000, because the price of property had risen.

JILL: You've benefited a lot from the tourism here.

GENEVIEVE: Yes, I sure have! *[Laughs]*

JILL: *[Laughs]* It's worked for you!

GENEVIEVE: It worked for me! *[Laughs]*

So there are many stakeholders involved in this one small place: Townspeople, local government, the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism; the church bureaucrats and local members of the Catholic faith; the LDS missionaries, church bureaucrats, local members, visitors, volunteers, performers and leaders of Nauvoo Restorations, Inc.; the RLDS members, historic and museum site managers, visitors and participants in RLDS retreats; members of the Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian and other faiths; Nauvoo Visitor Center anti-Mormon crusaders; Nauvoo Historical Society

Members; Icarian descendents and enthusiasts. Seen from the perspective of their pageant narratives, they are all staking claims in two mythic conceptions of place: the Grape Festival Pageant portraying a myth of the productive village centered on a seemingly defunct wine and cheese industry as well as an origin myth for the town that invited its members to embrace the kind of collective identity that could pull such a grand production together—a Nauvoo unified in its diversity and the model of a pluralistic democracy at work. The Nauvoo Pageant calls on the power of Nauvoo as a heritage site and place of pilgrimage where Mormons can walk where their ancestors walked and memorialize the divinely directed story that unfolded in that very place. It is fascinating to see how these two versions of history hearken back to the early struggles between Warsaw and Nauvoo in the 1840s. The politics of that era pitted the concepts of individualism, democracy, and the civil myth against the communalism, theocracy, and religious myth of the Mormons. Perhaps this new chapter in Nauvoo’s history will be broadminded enough for both.

In 2010, Community of Christ historian and scholar Roger Launius posted a blog in response to the question “What significant areas of Joseph Smith’s life remain to be explored?”¹⁸ His response is interesting to our topic because he touches on the idea that myth and ritual work as vehicles for inculcating social memory:

¹⁸ launiusr.wordpress.com/2010/11/09/how-might-historians-interpret-joseph-smith-jr-for-the-twenty-first-century/

“There is one huge area that I would like to see explored concerning the life of Joseph Smith. It relates to his place in the myth and memory of the Latter-day Saints. No area in historical study has been more significant in the recent past than the study of memory. The reality of what happened in the past—which in any event is unrecoverable—is decidedly less important than what the population who values the story believes about it. ... Perhaps it is time to consider new uses of the term ritual and myth to allow them to enter our modern sensibilities in ways that are useful and vital.”

Historian Richard D. Poll also tackles this fascinating issue of slippage between history-as-told and mythologized, and history as documented through written and physical evidence. As a practicing Mormon and trained historian, he has encountered many instances where conventional telling and recorded actualities of certain aspects of Mormon history are in conflict. He expresses confidence that most professed believers will find ways of integrating difficult historical material into their bigger faith, not sacrificing what is consequential for what is probably less consequential. He does have some good thoughts on the valid place of the popular myth:

“A historical myth is an idealized version of someone or something that once existed. It is what the memory of the event becomes after people have transformed it so that it is more useful, usually for reasons that involve group values. The process of myth-making distills from the past elements that motivate people to be more patriotic, generous, loving, or virtuous in some other dimension” (Poll 1988:19).

As such, myth-making is a selective process of both remembering some elements and forgetting others. Over the next few chapters we will encounter the voices of those involved in the making of myth through the vehicle of pageant performance. We may find that the process is far more self-conscious than we might imagine.

Chapter Two

Mary Logan's Barometer of Community Wellbeing

“I don't know if they have as much fun as we used to have.”



Figure 3: Mary Logan shows her photo in a past Grape Festival Pageant Program

Labor Day weekend, after the rush of LDS visitors has subsided and Nauvoo starts to feel like a town of 1,000 again, the town girds up for staging its own self-performance. Since the 1930s, the Nauvoo Grape Festival has coincided with the ripening of area vineyards, celebrating a century-long era when grapes represented the town's largest crop. Based on the ubiquitous harvest festival theme, the Nauvoo Grape Festival remembers a time when locally produced wine and cheese played a key

role in the local economy. As the 70th Annual Nauvoo Grape Festival's Official Souvenir Program explains it, "Our secondary products are Baxter's Old Nauvoo brand wines and Rohde's Nauvoo Blue Cheese. Since only one other city in the world produces these two complementary foods, we have imported and reproduced their unique ceremony—the wedding of the wine and cheese."

This enactment of a wedding between wine and cheese once stood alone as a singular staged event, but over time it became imbedded in a more extensive local pageant narrative. Mary Eleanor Logan, who has the stature of being present from the beginning, describes the placement of the wedding in the overall pageant: "[The pageant] tells the history of Nauvoo from the Indian days through the fur traders, the Mormon scene, the Icarians, the coming of all the Germans, and then it climaxes with the old French ceremony, the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese. It's – supposedly it's held only in two places: Roquefort, France, and Nauvoo. And the young girl – she's about an eighth grader – represents the wine industry and carries the bottle of wine. And the boy represents the cheese industry, which kind of is in limbo right now, but he carries a head of cheese. And they have the wedding march, and they place it on the altar, which is a wine barrel. And then, the minister comes and takes the wedding ring, which is a barrel hoop, and places it over the wine and cheese, *[laughing]* and they're united in holy matrimony."

I met Mary by talking with her nephew in 2007 outside of the Baxter Winery. He described his aunt as a key local player and historian and suggested that I contact her. When I arrived at Mary's door for my first of several visits, I was struck by a vigor and sense of humor delightful in a woman well into her seventies. She was immediately interested in my efforts to document the Grape Festival Pageant and did not seem to hesitate to take me into her confidence. As I moved forward in my research, Mary willingly collaborated long distance as questions arose and gave critical feedback on facts and interpretation. When she realized through candid conversation that I was a member of the Mormon faith, she assured me that she (unlike some other locals in town) was still comfortable working with me.

In Mary's words and life I found a strong theme of the importance of collective remembrance. For her, the pageant represented a key site for helping a next generation remember the past and to actively participate in its telling through performance. It was in the process of creating and producing the pageant that the associational life of the community was brought together as a whole each year as the separate congregations and civic organizations ensured that their piece of the narrative would be staffed and represented. From this perspective, the viability of the pageant and the continuation of its tradition could be interpreted as a measurement of civic health and community wellbeing.

Born and raised in Nauvoo, Mary soaked up the local penchant for historical awareness and enthusiasm. “Well, I was a history major in college, and I like history. And my mom sort of imbued the history of Nauvoo in us when we were little. We always - anybody who’d come to town, we’d take them down. The Joseph Smith Homestead and the Mansion House were the only things standing, and every year we’d tour them. And I just like to see history saved, preserved.” Armed with a wry expression and storytelling bent, Mary’s first interview with me lasted for nearly three hours. From her narrative, a profile emerged of a funny, smart individual who has been a major local leader and contributor. As a Nauvoo youth, she attended the now-defunct Catholic school for girls, partied in the area bars, rode the local steamboat on the Mississippi, and grew up to stir a finger in nearly every civic pie. It turns out that Mary directed the annual wine and cheese wedding pageant for several years and is the guardian of the original script that was written in the 50’s by one of the Benedictine sisters, Sister Mary Paul. “I was connected with it in 1952, the first one. I was the gofer girl, you know, getting the people lined up and so on. And I progressed a little bit further, and by the late 1950s, my uncle was the chairman, and I directed the pageant until I quit about 1978 or ’79.”

“We had a very enterprising mayor here in the late ’30s. And he and a friend came up with the idea of a Grape Festival. And he was a big promoter of it. He ran the Standard gas station uptown, and he had

Frigidaire appliances and so on. But I think he never answered a phone without saying, 'Greetings from beautiful historic Nauvoo!' And wherever he went, 'I'm from beautiful historic Nauvoo.' He was a big promoter of it, and he thought the Grape Festival would be one way of putting it on the map. And he was the one that found out about the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese ceremony in Roquefort, France, and he wrote and got directions on how to do it and so on. But he was a big promoter, you know."

As Mary describes it, Mayor Lowell Horton had a charismatic personality that helped launch civic involvement: "You'd go in to complain about something, and the next thing you knew, you were heading some kind of committee. I know at the time we lived over on that street, and I had two little children. And the traffic through there was tremendous, the Cheese Factory trucks and everybody went through. And I complained about the speed limit in it and I went - if he couldn't do something, you know, put speed signs up. The next thing I knew, I was chairing some committee to host, to advertise the Grape Festival, you know. *[Laughs]* That's the way he - he just had a way of doing that."

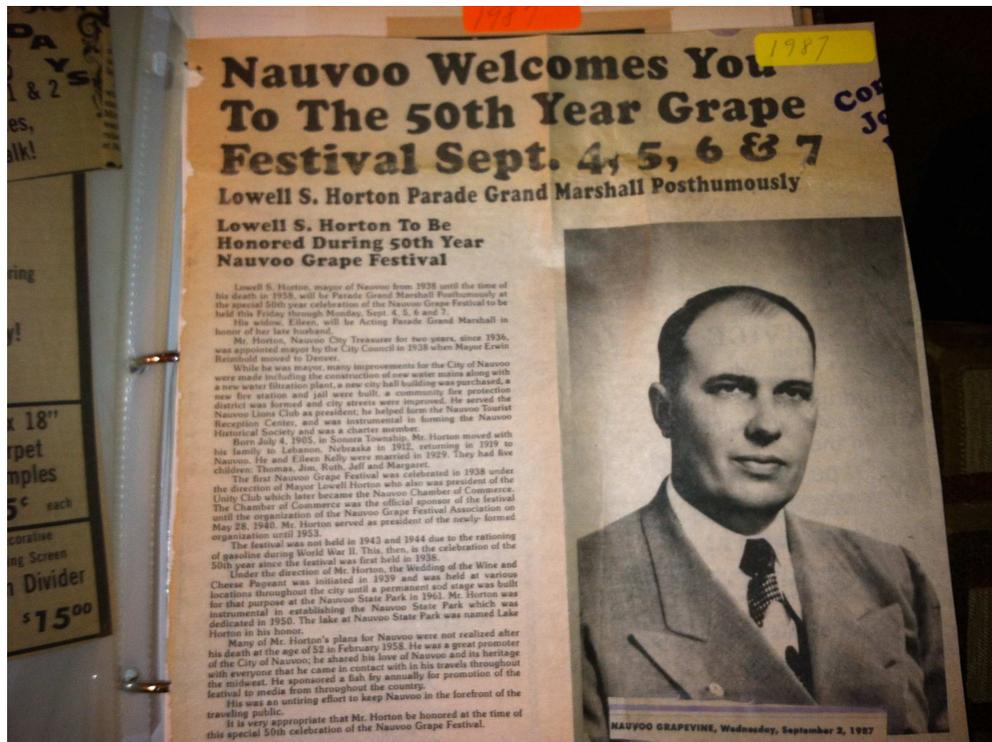


Figure 4: Page from Mary Logan's Pageant Scrapbook - image of Mayor Horton

“And he had every year, along about in June, before Grape Festival, he had a big fish fry down in the park. Everybody wanted to do something for Grape Festival. And you'd go - food, they had the fish fry, and they had all this. And everybody that came got put on some kind of committee or something, and you worked together. He just had a way of doing that. People would say, 'Well, I'm not going to go talk to him because he'll put me on a committee.' [Laughs] Yeah, but he had that, you know, he had the way of doing that.”

This spirit of town booster-ism found shape in the formation of a Unity Club, a precursor to today's Chamber of Commerce. Under the

leadership of Mayor Horton, the group started the festival in 1938. “ And we had - the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese started about 1939, and that’s all we had. And then, the next - a couple of years later, they decided to have some pageant going on, but they didn’t have a script. They just sort of told the story of Nauvoo and then had the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese. Then in 1952, Mother Mary Paul came forth with a script. And it’s amazing. A man, a minister from La Harpe, was interested. And he got together with Mother Mary Paul, and he wrote the music. We have three songs. One, ‘Come to Historic Nauvoo,’ ‘This Tender Little Vine I Plant Today,’ which is on the planting of the grapevine. What’s the other one? He wrote three songs. Oh, ‘Moving,’ when the Mormons were moving. It’s a song that’s called ‘Moving.’ And he wrote the music for it. And it was amazing. We had our Grape Festival. We had a dress rehearsal. And on the way home, Reverend [Libby] had a heart attack and died. Almost put us into chaos, you know. *[Laughs]* But we got through it. We got through. People came forth and helped, you know. And it was a real shock, because he didn’t - he was actually the director directing it that year, too.

“During the war years we did not have a Grape Festival. From, I guess, ’43 and ’44 we didn’t. The war was over in August ’45, and we did put together - within a month we put together a festival. ...And, see, the original - when we first started the pageant in 1952, we didn’t have a very good stage. It was hayrack wagons and stuff like that. And then a couple

of the men who were involved in the pageant plus the mayor went over to the State of Illinois and the Conservation Department and got them to build our sod stage. And it's almost like a natural amphitheater there anyhow, and so that's the way we've had it since, I think, 1962 maybe." This was a significant upgrade to the pageant and reflected its central importance to community pride during these years. This enabled a much larger audience to be seated comfortably and made the event feel permanently embedded in the annual calendar.

The event has grown through the years: "It has changed a whole lot. For one thing, it always used to be uptown, and we outgrew it. There was no - the Temple Square, the Mormons let us use it for many years for the Carnival and so on. And then, the City Park held the rest. Well, then it got too big, and we moved down to the State Park, plus the City ball diamond out here on the northeast where they have the car show. We now have a car - antique - what is it? Custom Model Show, I guess it's called. And it has several hundred contestants, really interesting... And then, of course, we have the parades. You have to have parades, and you have to have the Carnival, and we have the beer tent, and then we have the [teen] tent, and then the pageant. And the pageant has been going on, this pageant, since 1952. And it just keeps on. Someone else - the Historical Society takes care of it now. And, you know, it's just something. It's free admittance; it's a free-will donation." Currently, the

festival brings in thousands of visitors from the surrounding three-state region—Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois.¹⁹

Just like the overall event, the pageant itself has also changed as Mary has altered the script to reflect new town conditions. “I have the original one that Mother Mary Paul wrote, and it’s quite a bit the same. We’ve had to update it several times because of the restoration, the building of the temple. So, we’ve had to update it. But I’ve kept the original one. I make copies. *[Laughs]* I don’t let it go. I make copies for the other ones.” But the general narrative flow has remained constant, with an effort to include all the various social groups in town. “We had the Indian scene. ... And then, of course, the fur traders were always done by local farmers coming in with their horses and so on. And they had a ball doing it. It was a fun thing. And the RLDS always did the Mormon scene. And then, some descendants of the Icarians put on the Icarian scene. And then, they also played the part of the Germans. They changed their hats, you know, and did the German part. And then, we had the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese. So, we used to have a lot - I don’t know if they have as much fun doing the pageant as we used to have” *[Laughs]*. Mary’s comment points to the original role of the pageant as a full-community event that drew all the area associations into cooperation with one another. Indeed, this full cooperation of the entire

¹⁹ According to the office of Nauvoo Tourism, the Grape Festival continues to draw 2,000-5,000 visitors each year, with much of the energy now focused on the 400-600 cars entered in the annual car show.

range of social organizations was a key element in the high attendance and popularity of the pageant.

Interestingly, the Nauvoo Historical Society organized during the same period, in 1953. “Well, it was before the Mormons even started to come back to Nauvoo. I think there was a group of people my dad and mom’s age who thought Nauvoo history should be preserved. And they knew that the state park would let us have the home in there for a museum, and they worked hard. They did a good job of getting it all going.” It has been this same historical society that has actively organized to sustain the pageant. The opening of the LDS temple in 2002 and the closing of the Nauvoo Blue Cheese factory in 2003 coincided with a brief hiatus in the pageant’s production—a lapse ended by the historical society taking over leadership for its continuation in 2004.



Figure 5: Local boy scouts prepared to perform in Grape Festival Pageant.

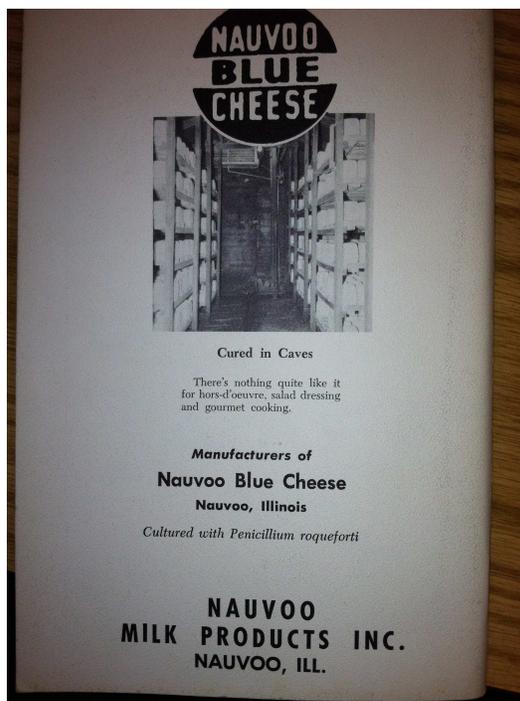


Figure 6: Back of Festival Pageant Program, 1963

Many changes were occurring during these postwar decades. First, “When the young men came back from World War II, a lot of them didn’t want to grow grapes and so on. If they worked in a factory, they could make more money, and it was a sure job. They didn’t have to depend on Mother Nature to have a good crop or not. And a lot of them didn’t want to live in Nauvoo anymore; they moved on.” This was soon followed by the return of Mormon descendents who started to buy up the land along the river. “Because down on the flats, it was vineyard and so on. And then, of course, those vineyards were grubbed out in restoration and so on. On the other hand, if [the Mormons] hadn’t come back and done that, people were spraying with 2-4D, and that killed a good many – that’s what happened to all those six hundred acres of grapes were ruined by the spraying 2-4D. They did not know it would kill grapes and tomatoes.” With that destruction came a major economic blow: “So, I think, you know, if [the Mormons] hadn’t come back and restored it, I’m not sure we’d be a town today.” Considering the dire economic struggles of many of the nearby river towns, Mary’s realization of the role of the LDS church in shoring up the local economy is not too far off the truth.

The changes afoot also affected one of major town institutions: “Saint Mary’s Academy was built in 1874. Nuns came from Chicago to establish a school for young ladies here, and it turned into Saint Mary’s Academy. And it was a tremendous school, but in the late 1900s their

enrollment dropped. When my daughter went there in 1970, there were three hundred and sixty-some students in high school going there. And it had dropped down to - well, I think it was about less than 100.

Teenage girls don't like to go to a school where there are no boys." I had to agree that generally girls like to have boys around. Mary responded, "Yeah. Anyhow, it was a sad day when they closed, you know. I really hated that, because my grandmother was the first student to enroll there in 1874. My other grandmother went there. All her daughters went there."

These shifts account for some major changes in the landscape and property has changed hands. Where the Catholic girls school once stood, lawnmowers trim the grass. The 66-year old Nauvoo Blue Cheese Factory suffered buy-out by a multinational corporation and saw its structure purchased and torn down by the LDS church for open space. The "Temple Square," once an open field for the Grape Festival, now boasts an authentic replication of a Mormon temple abandoned and destroyed in the 19th century. In "the flats" where the grape vineyards and strawberry fields overran dilapidated and nearly uninhabitable homes, the Mormon restoration of its original town site is in full bloom. Mary acknowledges some positive effects of the riverside restoration. "Yeah, it helped - it changed the economy, you know. [The Mormons] were buying up all the land on the flats. And these people who had lived in these shacks and old homes on the flats got good money, could move uptown and have a

nice home.” This arrival of outside capital benefited some families who were able to send their children to college, upgrade their homes, or invest in local businesses. The local Kraus family actively invested in downtown Nauvoo. “Oh, yes. Their dad - or it would be Danny’s grandfather - of course, he started out with just the café and a pool hall, and he had good food, and he made money, but he invested it in buildings in Nauvoo. He bought the Nauvoo Hotel, or the Hotel Nauvoo rather. Then he’d buy this and had the Laundromat put in, and he bought that building for his furniture store. And it kept the money in Nauvoo.”

It is this theme of economics, the movement of people from place to place, the building and dismantling of the physical and social environment, that underlies both Mary’s story and the Nauvoo Grape Festival Pageant narrative. This kind of social upheaval mixed with the spirit of Progressivism has been credited with the brief flowering of the American Pageantry Movement in the early 20th Century. In his groundbreaking book, *American Historical Pageantry*, David Glassberg argues that earlier traditions of nineteenth century civic events took on a serious moral tone as its practitioners believed “that history could be made into a dramatic public ritual through which the residents of the town, by acting out the right version of their past, could bring about some kind of future social and political transformation” (Glassberg 1990: 4). Mayor Horton perceived that there was transformational potential in endowing his town with historical self-consciousness and a social

cohesion centered in civic involvement. He understood the power of symbolism and ritual in the wedding of the wine and cheese—albeit in a playful manner. Interestingly, his leadership in civic affairs bridged a time of major social upheaval both nationally and in his own small corner of Illinois—an era that Glassberg describes as a shift in historical consciousness that manifested in the rise of community pageants produced and performed in small towns across America.

Glassberg chose to narrow his focus on the development of the pageant form in American during its heyday from the 1910s into the 1930s, allowing for an interesting comparison of the pageants' changing portrayals of history across time—a sense that there had been an decisive break between past and present social structures and mores. What began as a narrative of historical continuity in early years became a narrative of discontinuity and commentary on change from one generation to the next. He describes in detail the public stakeholders involved in shaping those public narratives and the varying philosophies that molded both their approach to the project as well as intended outcomes.

From his perspective, the earliest American pageants piggybacked on the sermon-like historical oratories that accompanied the commemorative public events of the 19th century. A speaker of some renown or moral stature would expound on the continuities of an ancestral past into the lives of those present. The importance of upholding founding virtues and carrying forward the work of the

founding ancestors called the listeners to bear the unbroken contract towards a solid future. Glassberg considers this a narrative of historical continuities that faced severe challenges in the rapid social change of the late 19th century. Facing large-scale immigration and the seeming loss of homogenous populations, shifts in economic and social relations, the explosion of technologies and changing perceptions of time and civic values all demanded creative response to what seemed to be the end of the known world. Organizing large groups in symbolically loaded performance of a unified communal narrative struck many early practitioners as a promising antidote to what seemed to be a failing civic sphere.

But why the use of pageantry as opposed to another form of group expression? What does this form offer that others do not? Glassberg argued that for the group of progressive social thinkers in that era, the pageant presented an opportunity to draw together “the common people” into a cooperative endeavor that could mine the folk elements and local history of a place for a “true” representation of a unique locale’s story and accomplishments. For those with a conservative bent, such performances could be a potential tool for social control and the conveyance of a conservative interpretation of past events. For social reformers, such enactments offered a space for building social coherence as disparate individuals and groups came together for a singular effort.

Heritage pageants like the Grape Festival Pageant reflect an historical self-consciousness in the places they are performed. Mary agrees that living in Nauvoo demands an awareness of depth of time, particularly with the sometimes -cursed blessing of becoming a major Latter-day Saint [LDS] historical destination site that has turned the town into a summertime pilgrimage resort for LDS visitors. On the Nauvoo Historical Society Website, a Nauvoo Timeline places the historical trajectory of the town into sequential orderliness. A number of bars and arrows delineate the length of various Nauvoo periods including Native American period, Exploration and Settlement, Mormon Period, Icarian Period, Agriculture and Industry, German Period, Restoration, and Development. Some of these bars end abruptly to show a completion of that period and others have an arrow to show continuity forward. Arguably, every category could be a forward-moving arrow considering the continuing influence of all of these elements in Nauvoo. The reality is that both that yellow Mormon dash and the other bars around it push their boundaries despite efforts to confine them to neatly boxed Eras.

The presence of two pageants in the town can be seen as cultural performances that reference a more complicated version of a Victor Turner-esque social drama that seems to keep cycling through: a rule is broken, sides are taken, repairs are attempted, and either the breach is redressed, or the community breaks apart (1982: 33). In Nauvoo, there seems to be perpetual disagreement as to what the rules are, the

community has broken apart many times, there have been many reconciliations, and the ancestors keep showing up to stir the pot. Nauvoo's pageants draw on this raw and socially messy material as meta-social commentary on the ever-emerging life of the community (39).

In a social-engineering manner, Mayor Lowell Horton understood Nauvoo's need for communal recreation. Alongside a patriotic and democratic vision of "many becoming one" was the practical need for all the town's groups to participate in a common effort while buttressing associational spheres and roles. On the Sod Stage, everyone's contributions could be recognized and everyone's ancestors honored as the economic symbol of the wine and cheese rose as the crowning jewel of the unified town. Members of the town like Mary Logan have struggled to keep the tradition alive because for them, the pageant represents far more than an entertaining diversion—it is a reflection of the community's ability and will to ensure the continuation of its own shared social memory.

Chapter Three

Jim Topic's Nauvoo Boosterism

“ I like to say that it's like... when you come into Nauvoo, it's like a satellite trying to re-enter earth's orbit. If you come in at the wrong angle or the wrong speed, it's just going to bounce you out. But if you're in tune and you come in at the right angle and the right speed, you will become an object in orbit for a long, long, long, long time. That can happen and it does happen to people. So you just have to manage it properly because I've seen a lot of people bounce out— lot of, lot of, lot of people... with great ideas. But they just can't...too fast, or too slow, or too high or too low. And they just don't make it. I can understand longevity over excellence. I empathize with that, with the people here.”

At the Grape Festival Pageant of 2013, Jim Topic impressed me with his convincing portrayal of cheese maker Oscar Rohde. When he ended his narrative with the punch line, “In Nauvoo you can't keep a good mold down,” the packed audience erupted with laughter. Jim's apparent confidence in front of the audience and effective delivery added a memorable touch to the evening's earnest efforts. Other highlights of the evening included a properly bombastic Etienne Cabet performed by Western Illinois University archivist Jeff Hancks and some fine piano accompaniment by LDS missionary-turned-Nauvoo-permanent-resident Marie Fletcher.

The dinner theater was my first opportunity to meet Jim Topic, though I had seen his Nauvoo Glassworks shop on the edge of town and had hoped to make his acquaintance. A wiry, athletically built man in his early fifties, Jim exhibited an ease and poise in the social setting. When I approached him and asked if he would be interested in sharing his experiences in Nauvoo, he promptly gave me his contact information and expressed interest in hearing from me. Though distance required us to complete our interview by phone, Jim also communicated with me by email and was gracious in offering additional feedback and information.

The interview process proved very satisfying for him and he openly shared experiences that at times moved him to tears. Within the interview, Jim was able to articulate some profound observations about the social dynamics of Nauvoo in the past and present and pointed to the ways that staged performance allows the “small circles” of peoples’ lives to intersect and impact one another in valuable ways. He described the power of Nauvoo as a place of lingering dreams and visions—if you have the sensibilities to feel their continuing influence. He also preached with passion the necessity of group solidarity to bring about positive change in the future.

The 2013 performance that I saw Jim participate in represented a dramatic shift in the Grape Festival Pageant Tradition. Rather than being performed on the outdoor Sod Stage as consistently done since 1962, the Nauvoo Historical Society decided to take it indoors and to turn the

pageant into a Dinner Theater performance at the Lutheran Fellowship Hall. Tickets were successfully sold for \$25 to 105 individuals and a sit-down dinner was provided for both the paying audience and the 14 volunteer members of the cast. Using just the bare outlines of the original pageant script, Director Sal Candido gave his volunteers free hand at editing their parts. Constrained by the smaller space, the original pageant's crowd scenes, group dances, and special effects were replaced by musical solos and character sketches including the customary chronology of events. The resulting performance was more like a Variety Show. However, the requisite Wedding of the Wine and Cheese did culminate the evening, graced by the dutiful grandchildren of the Grape Festival Chairman, Allan Berry.

At the evening practice the night before the performance, cast spirits ran high. First, all tickets had sold out in advance. Second, the cast felt openly gleeful not to be subjected to the bugs, heat, and weather of the Sod Stage. And of course, with the pared down cast, there were so many less logistics and headaches to attend to. Things got a bit chaotic when the LDS couple portraying Joseph and Emma had to settle down their four small children, and there was the tension that the individuals portraying the Sauk Indians had not shown up, but faith that they had always showed up in past years prevailed. Other dynamics were also afoot. Pianist Marie Fletcher and her husband LeGrande explained that the last couple of years on the Sod Stage, half the audience had been LDS

missionaries. This move to the Lutheran venue moved that number to nearly zero and lured in many of the old-timers of Nauvoo and the surrounding towns. At the same time, some of the Old Guard of the original pageant pointedly showed their displeasure by staying away. In some ways, this move regained some control of the audience demographics, but the tiny size of the dinner theater cast abandoned the cooperative and associational dimension of the earlier outdoor pageant. What was once an expansive public statement of shared history was morphing into a privately organized and somewhat exclusive affair for those inclined towards local history or committed to supporting the efforts of the Nauvoo Historical Society.

As someone who came to Nauvoo from a farm up in Minnesota, Jim Topic adopts a philosophic stance towards local politics. He likes to think of the social spheres in the town as a moving plane of smaller and larger circles: “Well, the thing with Nauvoo is you have to be born here ... it’s a situation where they have their circles and you come in and you set up your circles. But those circles don’t overlap necessarily.” Though the population only hovers around a thousand, “there’s quite a large variety of interests in this town...and what happens a lot of times is that these interests are fairly insular.”

However, Jim’s involvement in local theatrical productions and his avocation as a glassblower and artisan have helped him cross over into many of the groups. He quips about his ability to stay neutral: “See, I go

to the churches. People ask me what church I belong to and I tell them I belong to ALL of them because I consider myself a member of every church. [Laughs]... And so that gets me out of a lot of problems, you know, in terms of being identified as a certain church member. ...It is also a slight threat to them all too because I haven't chosen one!" What he *has* chosen is to embrace Nauvoo as his hometown and the focus of many of his visions and desires because, "It's the history of this place—it's built on vision. French visions and Mormon visions and glassblower visions. There's a lot of them here. A lot of visions." What Jim is getting at here is the storied layers of Nauvoo. It is a place where people have been quite courageous and daring in their ideas and social imaginings. The effect of such a past is a potentially rich field for those hungry for new social and moral imaginings sunk into the soil of memory.

Jim readily acknowledges that one of Nauvoo's greatest visionaries was Lowell Horton, the "five-time mayor of Nauvoo in the thirties, forties, and fifties. And the only thing that stopped him was he died of a massive heart attack...in his early fifties. And he had just been re-elected the mayor of Nauvoo and both the Republicans and the Democrats had run him as their candidate. So you can imagine how popular he was." What most impresses Jim was Horton's ability to get everyone in the town involved and contributing. According to legend, people "would run into him on the street or they would stop at his service station and they walked away having committed to do ...some civic activity that they had

no idea that they had any interest in until he had talked to them.” This was a man who was a great communicator who could cross over and be accepted into all the town circles and then cleverly use that information for the good everyone.

His accomplishments were astonishing for the circumstances he faced. “At that time, in the Thirties...there was nothing going on here. It was rough. They didn’t even have a hard surface road to Nauvoo. The Great River Road was the first hard surface road to Nauvoo. So I was like, ‘I want to be Mayor Horton,’ you know? I want to know what he did. How did he start this Pageant? How did he get this road to Nauvoo? How did he get all these people thinking on the same page? ... How was he able to do that? And so there was a slogan he had: ‘Stop at Horton’s where you’ll get a tank full of gas and an earful of Nauvoo!’ And I thought, ‘I’m going to run with that. I’m going to run with that!’”

Jim translated his enthusiasm for Horton into a researched and original character sketch for this last year’s 2014 Grape Festival Pageant. When the pageant director Sal Candido approached Jim about participating in the pageant, saying “‘Well, we’ve got you down for doing the cheese,’ I’m like ‘No!’ I told you! I’m going to do a different character! I want to do Lowell Horton. And I so impressed upon him the fact that I wasn’t going to do it UNLESS I could be Lowell Horton. And so then, of course, he allowed me to do Lowell Horton.” It is as if Jim has found a way to disrupt the small town circles that would keep him an outsider.

Embodying town luminaries like Oscar Rohde and Lowell Horton has allowed Jim to become deeply linked to two of the founding fathers of Nauvoo. In his representation of their lives and words, Jim has enfolded his identity with theirs, becoming heir to their legacy of local craftsmanship and boosterism. By putting local history onstage, it has symbolically opened the door to his belonging.

Despite Jim's earnest effort and original material for 2014, "the crowds were down this year. Two years ago, you remember, we had standing room only. Well they didn't even sell out this year." The removal of community participation and buy-in appeared to be taking its toll on attendance. The seeming decline in enthusiasm and public commitment reflects periodic resuscitation and renewal: "But the problem that I was hearing a lot about the [older] pageant was that people would complain that they were getting tired of it. It's the same pageant over and over and over every year. They barely put in any rehearsal time. They would rehearse for like a week before the pageant. They would have like two or three rehearsals before the pageant would actually go on. That started happening in the eighties and that got even worse in the nineties. There were a few people that got involved. Carmine Orth got involved in the nineties and gave it a little bit of a boost. They made some new costumes and they got a little storage shed down there so they could put the props and everything would be there when they needed it. But the sound system was terrible. They didn't have a whole lot of money. And the

people who had been doing it traditionally were the SAME people. You know, you had the same major characters every year. And so they were getting older too. And so it kind of started to waver a little bit, the interest in it. And the attendance was going down. And then in 2002, I believe they didn't even have a pageant any more. There wasn't even enough interest to even have a pageant."

Clearly, the form was struggling under the weight of the massive resources required for such a production to maintain its vitality and interest. This is a huge issue for outdoor pageants. Its success rests on its ability to generate a new generation of participants and producers who approach its success with something akin to religious fervor. People have to believe there is a compelling purpose to sacrifice in proportion to the scale of the endeavor. The pageant has to be able to stand up to the question of "why it matters?"

"So then the next year a group of us got together and we rewrote it. And the idea at that time was to build this historical scaffold and then just to plug in these different characters and we would change it each year. And we'd still tell the story of Nauvoo, but what it would do is go through the lives of different characters. And we would also highlight different segments of the population. For example, the first years' rewrite we honored the German immigrants and the German influence in Nauvoo. And so we would have a couple of German characters tell their story and how it related to the wine industry. ... And then we had other

people portray members of their family because Nauvoo has a long history of familial histories here. So we had the Moffitts—talked about - Dan Moffitt portrayed one of his ancestors who had come here and settled. So we did it like that. We tried to have a current tie back to the historic personage.” In this way, Jim and the other writers recognized the logic of historic pageants; that they needed to bring history to life through its connection to living descendants. By appealing to peoples’ sense of connection to their own ancestors, they might provide sufficient personal interest to populate the pageant. However, this approach still seemed to lack the support of the wider community.

This open format was short-lived as Sal Candido allowed pieces and scraps of old script to creep back in as the guiding template. This seemed the ideal formula to keep the pageant both slightly moored to tradition but distressingly unfamiliar to some—enough that there continued to be occasional power struggles over which script to follow and an overall malaise about how much time and energy to devote to the effort. “I was happy when they went to the format of the Dinner Theater. I thought that was a great thing to do. ...You can’t do the same thing every year unless it’s a huge spectacle and you throw a lot of money in it. Then you can do the same thing every year, because you’ll bring people for the spectacle. It’s like fireworks. They’re pretty much the same thing every year, right? We get some new ones once in a while. But it’s watching things blow up in the air with pretty colors. There’s not a lot of change.”

Without the right scale of resources and dramatic elements, the pageant form falls very flat. “One of the problems with that Sod Stage is that the audience is so far away. And that you need to have a good sound system and they haven’t had a good sound system for a long, long time. And that really cuts down on the experience. I had a few friends go who had stopped by, and they went to the Pageant and they were very, very disappointed in the production. ... You could hardly hear it. So unless you know exactly what’s going on, which some of the old-timers do, it’s not a very good theatrical experience.”

Jim has memories of some very extraordinary theatrical experiences in the town. As a theater and political science major in college, he was thrilled when he hitchhiked down to Nauvoo as a fresh twenty-four year old anxious to find studio space for a glassblowing shop and discovered an abundance of performance opportunities. He and his friend left St. Paul half an hour apart and arrived in Nauvoo within five minutes of each other. “I was crossing the Fort Madison Bridge there, and there he was on the other side.” There was a confluence of events in this arrival—this friend fascinated by religious history who discovered the town in previous ramblings, eleven months spent traveling in Europe and seeing the artisan economy in Europe and becoming enamored in the craft of glassblowing, and the limitations of only having 2,000 dollars to realize his dreams. Thus, on October 1st in 1984 Jim touched down. “I would work in the summer and then go back up in the fall, then go back

up for the winter, up in Minneapolis, Saint Paul. For the first three years, I did that. ... And then, I had this studio up and running at that point. It took a while to build, because I didn't have very much money."

Using scrap glass and scrambling for free building materials from odd jobs and projects around town, Jim was able to piece together a glass studio. "And so what I did ...I just made these clear glass cups, basically, just a little—you could use it as a vase or a bowl or a little cup. And then, I sold those for like three to five dollars apiece. And so that was a great way to practice because, you know, people like those inexpensive souvenirs in Nauvoo. Especially Mormon families because they don't have much money for anything else." His shop was uptown, right off Main Street then and "there was a big front door...that could be opened. It was one of the sliding ones with the rollers on a rail. And I'd open it up and people walking along Main Street could look down along the building there, and they they'd see right into my shop. ... It used to get pretty full during the holiday events. I'd be working, you know, and it would get darker and darker and darker. And I'd look up and there would be 50 to 60 people standing there, watching me work. It was a great spot for publicity."

He also enjoyed getting involved in theater productions over at the Girls Academy where he found a strong department and a beautiful stage and auditorium. "Brother Bill, William Myers, who was the youth Methodist Minister over here, he also taught there and did the drama. He

was quite accomplished, so it was very successful productions. So I got involved with that right way when I got here and that was a lot of fun—a lot of positive reinforcement for me too. Because I'd be struggling to get this furnace built and then get cleaned up and go over there and you know, play around and practice my craft. Get better at it and flirt with the girls a bit. You know I was only eight years—six years older they were when I first came down here. ...So that was kind of fun too. And then I got involved in the pageant because of that too, and so I did a few parts on that.”

The stage and auditorium at the Girls Academy was a part of a complex of buildings associated with the Benedictine school compound in Nauvoo. During the eighties and into the early nineties, Brother Myers took an active role in organizing all various church circles into an ecumenical council that was a major organizational player for the Grape Festival Pageant. For many years the council sponsored a yearly Easter Passion Play that involved almost everyone. “We had like—you couldn't pack any more people into that auditorium. It was unbelievable. It was unbelievable how the community came together too. Yeah, it was everybody. EVERYBODY was part of that. Everybody who was anybody was a part of that. The only church—the Baptists weren't involved in that because they didn't like the Mormons. When [the building] was Catholic, they were fine with that. But when it became Mormon property, they were gone. They were out.”

Jim remembers a particular year when he was a part of the cast and they marched out at the end of the Passion Play into the lobby to meet the audience as it exited: “And so we marched out with the music after the performance, and I remember—I distinctly remember opening...[catches breath, with tears] I remember opening those doors on the outside and it was almost like these rays of light just SHOT OUT. It was like the door opened and it was overpowering. It was like you could FEEL it and you could SEE it. It was just like this [lets out breath of air] beam of light came out. It was one of the most amazing...I mean, I’ve had a lot of amazing experiences [crying], but that was...”

JH: Unforgettable.

JT: “Oh my God. It was amazing. And that [light] led the people out too and they were just—oh my God. There were people who were just so happy. There were people that were crying. Oh, it was just...[big breath out]. You wish you could live that every week. You just wish you could live that. And to know that you could live that every year?”

Needless to say, the removal of the auditorium in 2001 was a huge loss. “Oh, that was really hard for me—*especially* hard for me. That was really hard for me.” The community stage is not the only thing lost in the past decade and a half. “People have gotten older. People have gotten older in the community and then some of the support businesses have fallen away. You don’t have a hardware store, you don’t have a newspaper; you don’t have a Five and Dime. We have a grocery store

that's barely hanging on and that's about to let go. Think about it. Those are all businesses that support a family. And so when those businesses are gone, that is one less family in the community. That's one less motivated wage earner that's out there promoting and pushing to keep Nauvoo moving ahead. That's a number of less children that grow up in a community like this that are able to replace their parents as they age. And still push, and still promote. So you lose those businesses and then you start to lose your school too because you don't have enough kids anymore. So that's not a good thing. We saved our school, thank God. We passed a referendum last year. Taxes went up again big time, you know. But it's worth it to save the school. Gosh, If you lose the school, oh my gosh, what else have you got left? You've got your churches. [Deep sigh]."

The departure of the Benedictine Sisters also felt like a huge blow. Everyone knew that the sale of the properties to the Mormons could only mean one thing. "[The nuns] sold it all! You can't tell me they were thinking what was best for Nauvoo—the people that they were leaving behind. No, they were thinking about what was best for them. ...They pushed that through because they could. They weren't thinking about the larger circle and the many smaller circles. They were thinking about their little circle." These fraught situations place historic preservation on the auction block. "If you have a site, and it has two types of history on it—for example, the temple site. Okay. It had Icarian history and it had Mormon history. Well, the Icarian history is completely gone. There is no

Icarian history on that site any more. ...And that's where the problems lay. Because the Mormon history, they have shown that they are not as interested in preserving non-Mormon sites. If there is a non-Mormon duality to that site, the duality is resolved in terms of the Mormon history. Why did the Academy—why was it torn down? Do you have any idea?"

JH: I think that it's called Vistas and Views, right?

JT: "Well, it's partly that. Yeah. It didn't have a tie to the Mormon experience there and of course now it's gone. That happens. Catholic Church, they'll do the same thing in similar circumstances—more than likely. What you have to do—the people with the money and the interests are the people who determine what happens to those sites. So what you have to do there is mobilize your people and you have to do your preservation. It's not like an ideal world where things are evaluated and preserved as best they can be with the contradictions and the dual usage. ... That's where the stakeholders have to exert their influence, their time and treasure in order to preserve their history. History is a fluid thing, you know. It comes and goes too, the preservation of history—because it's impossible to preserve everything. You can't operate a modern business base if you tie everything to preserving everything that happened in the past. You're not able to do that. There have to be these compromises."

Jim does like to take the long view. He recognizes how Mormon

tourism has given the town a full-time Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Director. The Mormon Church has been generous with the town on many occasions and done a tremendous job improving the roads and sidewalks around town. He also sees opportunity in the waves of new Mormon settlers that come to town. There are people, “especially the religious pilgrims, the people that come here thinking that God will provide. And there’s a lot of those people that come here...but you know, they’ll stay for a year or two years and then it’s like, ‘Man this is a lot harder than we thought. We’ve got family out in Utah. We’re going back to Utah.’”

But there are others that he feels he is able to co-opt into town life. They start out saying “This is a great Mormon town,’ they’ll say. ‘You know, it’s been in our history forever and ever and ever.’” ...But they begin talking “to the locals. They start to get their own idea of the town. They start to perceive of these other circles out there and they start to reach out and branch out to them and all of a sudden you start talking to them and the Mormon part of it is sort of drifting away. And they start talking like someone who’s really interested in the town and building up the town itself. And so those are the kind of people that I find to be very good for the town. Those are the kind of people that I try to encourage in the town. They’ve ‘gone native’ in other words. ...Nauvoo has affected *them*. Has broadened *them*. Has *taken them*. As I say, there’s power here. There’s power here so deep that we don’t even feel it. And so that’s why I

don't worry a while lot about how things happen. How things go. But I also know that there's never going to be a hegemony here. There's never going to be ONE thing in this town. It's never going to happen! It may happen in little bursts like shew! Shew! But you've got to remember Nauvoo's been Boom and Bust."

As a businessman, he has been very sensitive to the way the town's economy fluctuates. He has had visions of innovative policies to support the small businesses in town and has been working with Brenda Logan over at the Baxter Winery to get some Nauvoo Cheese back into production. The rescue of the winery from the public auction block and its turnaround from bankruptcy in the early 1980s is a story unto itself. The winery benefited from a large infusion of cash when the Mormons produced a movie about the story of Nauvoo in the winter of 1989 and 1990. "There was a big Quonset hut there that [the producers] used. And so Brenda was able to take that money and upgrade some of the buildings and one of the buildings was the winery. And one of the reasons I moved out there was because it gave me the opportunity to have a year-round shop." After a decade of working at the winery, Jim moved his studio north of town and handed the warehouse back to Brenda so that they could start building the infrastructure for cheese production. Their first step will be cheese-making classes "to work on the recipe and get some experience." Jim and I joked that the goal should be to produce enough cheese for the next year's Wedding of the Wine and

Cheese!

There are a lot of things that need to happen if the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese and its original pageant are going to hold relevance. First, there must *be* some young people in the town to be the bride and groom. Second, it helps to have an actual wine and cheese industry to celebrate. You also must acknowledge that “people...are already doing too much and they don’t want to commit to something new, or you have people who are not quite up to—you know, they don’t have the experience or the ability to pull off what you sometimes need them to do...and there is a certain amount of institutionalized resistance to change.” There can be an attitude typified by, “we’re either going to have the old one or we’re not going to have anything at all.”

Jim’s choice of Lowell Horton as a character to portray felt purposeful: “That was also a time of stagnation in Nauvoo. Prohibition was over but it had really hammered this town because it was a huge grape-growing area. I mean, in the 1890s there were sixty people in Nauvoo on the census who reported their occupation as ‘Vinter.’ Basically sixty different wine makers in this town! ...I went into the library and found the various dates that I needed through the microfiche. But it’s not a very good reader in there. .. And so it was a lot of work to sit there, day after day, hour after hour, to get through. But I got the basic dates that I needed. I needed when the cheese started—I already had that. I needed when the pageant started.”

“They had a club they called the Unity Club. And it was the precursor to the Chamber. Lowell Horton was involved with that because he saw it as a good business opportunity to be involved with other business people in town. And then the politicians too, in those days, and still do—politicians have businesses. So that was a nice crossing there between businesses and political activity. It’s not that way so much any more. Our mayor has a business, but Nauvoo’s becoming quite a retirement community. So that the people that have a lot of time to put into the politics are generally getting to be a little older. They’re getting to be retired people. And those peoples’ interests are not the same as the business interests in town. ...[Deep sigh]. It’s a tough thing, you know, to go through booms and busts. Because you look at it and you know if you have any kind of a sense of history, if you have any kind of a sense of your own capabilities or an idea about—and some experience, you look and say, ‘Well, this could be avoided if we would do *this*.’ You get the type of human activity through the policies that you set.”

He sees some good action coming from the Historical Society. With the added energy of the Candidos behind it, the historical properties in town are cared for and open to the public. One of the society members, Debbie Callaghan has been collecting oral histories and doing some writing and researching. The society has also sponsored a new annual event, Untold Stories: “We had a good turnout last year. I presented my information on the early cheese making.” The event covers “a wide range

of history. ...And a lot of the community as a whole has gotten involved in that, Mormons and non-Mormons. So that's been really good to see that happening. Especially in February. There's nothing going on February. There's not even a place to eat in February."

So there was Jim, onstage at the 2014 pageant portraying Lowell Horton. He'd had the idea that he'd be talking on the phone at his gas station and talking to someone the audience could not see about promoting Nauvoo and about his role as mayor. "Then [Horton] said, 'what was that? What's the thing I'm most proud of? Oh, my family.' So then I talked a little bit about his family. And then I finished that and I said, 'Folks, I'm going to let you in on a little secret. ... In Nauvoo, we're all family.'"

"And that's kind of how I ended it—with the idea that we're all in the down low. We all know this. We may have our disagreements. We may have our different desires. But we're all in the end family and we can work this out. We can make this thing happen. We can. We've done this for over 175 years—we've done this. And we can do this again. We're going to rise up again just like we always have. It's boom and bust. You know, let's manage the booms and manage the busts the best we can. But we're all going to do it because we're all part of this bigger family, this community that lives in Nauvoo."

In social life, we can generally start with an assumption of conflict. Individual interests easily conflict with group solidarity. People build

their boundaries that delineate those who reside within and without their circles of contact and influence. Has historical pageantry mitigated these human tendencies in Nauvoo? Exacerbated them? Within the Grape Festival Pageant tradition, Jim Topic has had the opportunity to enact the stories and characters of his chosen home. Nauvoo's shared social memory of Oscar Rohde and Lowell Horton now exist both in Jim's mind and body as well as in the recollections of those who have seen Jim's portrayals. In some ways he is both Jim Topic the glassblower as well as a reiteration of the innovative cheese maker and tireless town booster. When he speaks up in town meetings for the good of the whole, the need for cooperative effort, the necessity of social imagination, he carries their vision forward along with his own.

Jim has been unafraid to take the pieces of local story to create a new one that mirrors his own in significant ways. Rather than a private project, Jim's research has achieved some affective fruition in the ongoing tradition of the Grape Festival Pageant. Though he appreciates his own artistry and the entertainment dimension of his pageant performances, what holds him to the task is his sense of efficacy in the present. The people of Nauvoo need to hear the voice of Lowell Horton come back again to reissue their charge to get busy in their making of the City Beautiful.

Chapter Four

Debbie Hartley's Sense of Belonging

“Watch me doing this not because I’m doing this but because I am part of a greater whole who wants to share why families are important and why we’re here.”



Figure 7: Debbie Hartley studying her pageant blocking book, July 2011

The Nauvoo Pageant is not the first LDS pageant to run in Nauvoo. From 1976-2004, the City of Joseph was performed annually on a stage down by the Mississippi River. Originally starting with a small cast of around 120, the pageant had grown to over 600 participants before its final performance. Many church members in the region deeply identified

with the pageant and some families had as many as three generations involved in the production.

The first time that my family participated as cast members in the Nauvoo Pageant, we had the lovely surprise of running into my cousin's daughter who was also in our cast. She had come with her Aunt Debbie Hartley and cousin Kara to volunteer for two weeks in the Family Cast. Over that first week we all attended cast rehearsals together at the local Nauvoo Colusa Junior High School building, participated in religious services at the nearby LDS Chapel, sweated profusely on the wooden stage while practicing our blocking and dances, swapped tips on how to put our hair into 1840 buns, and marveled that we would be putting on a show for hundreds of people within a week. We also talked at length about the fact that the Hartley family had spent many years involved in the City of Joseph Pageant that preceded the Nauvoo Pageant by almost thirty years.

I appreciated Debbie's warmth and unassuming demeanor. She welcomed us to visit with them in the home she and her husband had purchased in Nauvoo. Though they still lived in Iowa, they had seized the opportunity to own a home in proximity to the Nauvoo temple. Keeping the décor simple, they filled the house with spare mattresses so that they could make it available for free to anyone coming to participate in church events being held in Nauvoo. On the walls hung pictures of her seven

children and their growing families, images of the temple and LDS homilies like “Families are Forever.”

As I considered what stories to include in my writing, I felt drawn to Debbie as someone with a deep connection to Nauvoo. Like Jim Topic, she was someone who had come to the town from the outside. Through performance, she internalized the early history of Nauvoo and made it her own. She also shared the perspective of someone associated with the earlier City of Joseph Pageant and could offer observations about the differences between the older and the newer pageant forms.

Unfortunately, Debbie incurred debilitating head injuries in a car accident prior to my request for an interview, so it took time for her to recover sufficiently to talk with me. When we were finally able to interview by phone, she struggled at times to say what she most wanted to say; but we persevered. Despite a slow delivery, she felt satisfied with her version of events and expressed approval of the narrative when I presented it to her in writing.

What stands out in Debbie’s experience with historical pageants is her clear description of the community-building function of pageant performances as well as the profound social belonging resulting from repeated participation in their production. She also speaks clearly to the difference between what I would term “high-spectacle pageants” and pageants with a clear intention to inculcate emotional connection and belief. The difference in the underlying logic of the two pageants became

apparent in the reception of the two LDS pageants by those outside the faith. And the difference between a regionally directed pageant compared to a church-generated pageant also revealed a major realignment of the associational ties underlying City of Joseph.

Debbie Hartley was born and raised in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, two hours north of Nauvoo, Illinois. Her parents were converts to the church during a time that there were very few Mormons in the region. “Well my dad owned a dental lab and he had an employee that was a less-active member of the church. And they knew that he was – well, he was a great guy. He was married and he was an alcoholic and so my parents thought that if there was—if he could get active in his church, then that might help his family and his personal life. So my mom started asking around if there were any LDS churches in the area and there wasn’t, in Iowa City, at the time. Someone in the dental school mentioned that they thought there was something down in Nauvoo. And so we looked into that and then there was just the Kimball home and the Temple Site.”

“One Saturday they packed us all up, our family and his family and we all went down to Nauvoo and they just felt there was something good there and of course the missionaries had us fill out a card and – I don’t remember if there were missionaries there at the time. But anyway, we went down to Nauvoo and came home with a whole lot more than we bargained for.”

In 1965, her family converted to the LDS church during a period of time when a number of other families were either moving into the area from the west or also joining. She sees that as a period of significant growth in church membership. The oldest child in her family, Debbie forged a path west, attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah for college. Her freshman year, she saw an advertisement for City of Joseph. “I was at BYU and they were just announcing that they were auditioning for people to come and I called my parents and was like ‘I think we should do this and give it a try.’ And so they—I think I had to send in some kind of an audition—nothing dancing or singing but about why you want to be in the pageant. ... It was only for a week and we went down every Saturday starting in the first of May through the middle of July when we had the rehearsals. And so it had to be people who were from around here. And they did that for a number of years. Then you went and put it all together and you were only in Nauvoo a week. We’d ride down the Friday night before and rehearse on Saturday and then perform on Monday and then Tuesday through Saturday. That was it. And then eventually it went to two weeks.”

City of Joseph was the brainchild of R. Don Oscarson, a church member from the St. Louis, Illinois area. As a history major at BYU, he had a passion for church history. After graduating, he created a historical musical of the Mormon Battalion, “Sand in their Shoes,” that was produced at BYU and performed two seasons in the football stadium with

a cast of 500 and a full symphony orchestra. Riding on this success, he turned around and wrote “City of the Saints” to tell the story of the persecution and expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo—a show that was never produced. When he and his young family moved to the St. Louis area, he would take his children to explore around Nauvoo. Sometime in 1961, he approached Dr. J. LeRoy Kimball of Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. [NRI] about the possibility of producing the show. His efforts were premature, as he describes it: “After I pitched my idea, he [Kimball] said ‘No.’ I was disappointed, but he was right. How can you tell an audience, many of whom had ancestors who were living in Hancock County in the 1840s, ‘Look at all the terrible things your ancestors did to our people. Now come and enjoy a show that tells this story.’ What followed were years of visiting Nauvoo, meeting the local folks, getting to know them...As the years passed, the restoration effort grew, and I spent more time in Nauvoo and with Dr. Kimball. A new vision of Nauvoo, and the story that should be told emerged” (2014:114). What emerged from this new vision was the City of Joseph Pageant. First performed indoors at the Nauvoo Visitor’s Center in 1971, the small-scale historical musical was turned into a full-blown pageant production for its debut in 1976.²⁰

Some portion of Debbie’s family participated in the pageant over all of its years: “We always felt like The City of Joseph Pageant was our

²⁰ For a comprehensive overview of City of Joseph, R. Don Oscarson has written a history of the pageant in the *Mormon Historical Journal*, Fall 2014, vol. 15, no.1. A complete collection of documents and manuscripts associated with the pageant are housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

pioneer ancestry because we were in it from the very first year and saw it grow and be very minimal compared to what it was at the end. We always felt like that was our church history and pioneer connection.” Making their own costumes, driving the two hours down and back every weekend, living out of tents, and foregoing other kinds of vacations, the family transformed the annual pageant into a yearly devotional to this newfound faith and community.

Along with the dedication to the cause came a desire to serve generously. The outdoor venue required maintenance with the elements and her father used that opportunity to teach his family to work: “My dad was the one that, like when we’d be down there the week of the performances and we would—like sometimes it would rain and we would have to put hay down so we wouldn’t slide during the performance. And so it was really important for my dad. All that would have to be cleaned off in the morning so that it could dry out and we could practice again. It was really important to my dad that we’d gotten down there and gotten that all cleaned up before anyone else got there. It was a way that we could give back for the experience that we were having. And we had to go early every morning to clean up the fireworks and to clear the whole area. And because we had done it—let’s see, there is 16 years difference between myself and my youngest sister, and I was the oldest of the six of us. And so for me, starting, I was in college, but my younger siblings were—and that’s what we did every summer!”

Debbie continued the tradition with her own family of seven children. When her youngest daughter Kara was six months old, they rejoined the cast until its final year. Her daughter Megan was on a mission during that last performance, and her greatest sorrow was that she missed that final gathering. “She said that she felt like that was the only real sacrifice that she made by going on a mission. She did not feel like it was really a sacrifice to give up her time or her, or you know. It was a great opportunity and she loved her mission, but she said that was the only time she felt like she really sacrificed something—when she couldn’t be in City of Joseph with everyone there.”

The relationships forged with other families were significant. When you live in a place with so few members, the association with like-minded people is a powerful draw. “I just feel like they are lifelong friends. Because you worked so hard together and you’re working for a common goal, I think that—and that was well before we had email or Facebook or things like that. We were always really excited. Best friends. And always there were people who met, went on missions, came back and married and many other situations.”

The pageant was also a setting where participants felt their contributions mattered and that the work they offered had wider significance. Even her small son’s job as “the rock” had importance: “In the kids’ scene, one child would fall asleep on the top of the stage. We called it ‘the rock.’ And at one point at the end they would pick him up by

the suspenders and whisk him away. When Garrett had seen ... the pageant, before we were in it again ... he had said, 'I want to be in that part one day. I want to be that rock!' So he had mentioned that to Lynn Bodily who was the director. And so the next year when we were in it and he remembered that and he said okay and was placing everyone where they should be. And he said, 'Where is Garrett? This is what I want you to do.' And then he kind of forgot about him and went on probably for an hour. And he was placing other people and doing other things, but Garrett never moved. We thought he had fallen asleep. But he was just so into that part, you know. 'This is going to be my job.' And because of his size—you know, I said he was little, he did that like for three years--four, five, and six. That was important to him and he was going to do that well."

"And so ...we were having this family discussion [about chores] and all of a sudden [Garrett] piped in and said, 'Well I won't be able to do that because I am the rock' you know. From that experience I saw that everybody felt needed, wanted, and being able to have the ability to do something that they would not have had that opportunity in other ways. And to do it well and be appreciated and to know that at the end when they'd go out into the audience and ask people how they felt. Even beforehand, to be able to say, 'This is where I am and this is why it is important for me to be here.' Watch for me not because I'm doing this

but because I am part of a greater whole who wants to share why families are important and why we're here.”

The pageant also became a vehicle to express the group experience, with the script changing and responding as needs arose. In particular, there was a family that suffered a tragic death: “There was a father who had gone home for a business meeting in the middle of the two weeks that we were there. Coming back to Nauvoo, he fell asleep and was killed, was hit by a truck, driving. That was devastating for everyone. Not only did it take a number of people away to do that, but just that something would be so hard and so sad. And how could that happen? But the courage and the testimonies of that family that were so strong at the time obviously were such a good example and such a strength to a number of my children who were the older teenagers at the time. ... One of the scenes that was added to City of Joseph the last number of years, I can't remember exactly how many, but about the temple and life after death-- similar to the Nauvoo Pageant where King Follett is all dressed in white— and so they added that. And so for a number of years that family came back and they had them all dressed in white and being the angels.”

The hardness and challenging aspects of being in the cast were much of what gave people opportunities to grow closer to one another, to help and serve one another, and to see one another grow in faith and conviction about the message of the church. “And over that many years, you have ... the unique opportunity of working from early in the morning

until very late at night, and working out in the sun and the rain and the mayflies, [laughs], you know, all of those things certainly solidify and testify of what you're doing." Such a trying environment provided a chance to feel connected to the early Saints: "You know I think it's similar to handcart pioneers or anybody who's struggling through trials or whatever, but they knew they were not alone in pushing... You are working hard alongside lots of others who are working hard, and giving each other encouragement and strength. And then the element of being able to share what you believe and what you've worked hard for with those who come. And to be able to ask them what they felt? And then being able to have that opportunity to share."

A run of 28 years affords a lot of time for traditions to grow deep. People become profoundly identified with certain aspects of the production and feel bereft when those things change. Debbie's family took leadership in the construction and stage management of the Nauvoo Temple included in the City of Joseph. Debbie's sister designed the massive stage prop and all the members of her family took part in its care and maintenance during the duration of the pageant. "[The temple] would come up on a metal frame. And so it was painted canvas stretched over a metal frame. [Fighting tears, "I'm sorry!"] Anyway, everybody had a specific job and they took it very seriously. And it helped them to feel a part. But one of my nephews was an early teen. It was his job at the end of one scene to run across that field to push the button to have the frame

hydraulically go up. And he would always take that so seriously. And so again, it's that connectedness of everybody working together ... again it was knowing that it is an important thing that you're doing because you're sharing the gospel with others, and that's where the culmination is—it's in that temple.”

When Debbie first participated in the new Nauvoo Pageant, she had unexpected emotional fallout when the new temple prop was raised during a rehearsal. “And it was totally not—you know, the music wasn't going, it was not a—it just went up. But I had to leave, I had to leave the stage because I was so completely overwhelmed with where it had come” [crying]. And of course we had worked hard and [the new directors] were kind to say they would not have been able to have the Nauvoo Pageant if it hadn't been for the City of Joseph paving the way for the people in Nauvoo to accept it and everything.” Even though she felt positively about the new pageant experience, feeling the baton of stewardship over that symbol pass from her family's hands was wrenching. At the same time, it was a coming full circle. The temple was still there, still central, and still symbolically powerful in her life. For her it felt like “a coming home” in the new pageant.

Indeed, the restored temple has been a pivotal symbol of reclamation for both the town and the church membership (with obviously differing feelings). Despite its absence on the landscape for well over a century, the temple block remained open and marked off as a

site for visitation and contemplation. When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the church's intent to rebuild the Nauvoo Temple at the church-wide General Conference in April of 1999, the response was immediate. *The Deseret News* created a dedicated Nauvoo byline to handle the traffic on its news webpage; LDS business interests moved into the town in anticipation of growth; and members all over the world found ways to celebrate. The construction leaped forward and by June 2002, church dignitaries gathered to dedicate the building in service to the Lord. Then came another surprise announcement. At the final season of the 2004 City of Joseph pageant, the audience and cast were told that this would be the last time it would be performed. In commemoration of Joseph's Smith's birth, a new pageant would be presented the following year. Leadership for the pageant passed from local hands to a new Pageant President in Salt Lake City, Jack Renouf, who began the effort of launching a new production within a year.

Efforts were made to smooth the feathers of local feeling. The families who had given so much to City of Joseph were formally invited back for a reunion the following year with a special performance dedicated to them. Assistant directors that had been in City of Joseph were brought on board to help with the new pageant. But as Debbie describes, the new pageant presented a very different cast experience. "[My daughter] Kara, the very first year we had been there three or four days at the Nauvoo Pageant and she said, 'When is it that we are going to

start working? When it is going to start getting hard?' [Laughing] And because it was different, it was good. It was a lot different. I'm not saying that you don't work hard in the Nauvoo Pageant but they have the means and have it set up a lot differently." Rather than the competitive environment of auditioning for specific parts, the new casting system brought in a rotating group of volunteers who showed up to pre-assigned parts. The professionalism and entertainment focus of the City of Joseph directors gave way to a stronger emphasis on spiritual goals for the cast: building a spirit of warmth and camaraderie between cast members, understanding the principles underlying the scenes portrayed on the stage, building Zion in a present tense through the pageant experience.²¹

This change in tone also manifest in the performance itself. "I think many people went to City of Joseph for more the dancers and their super high lifts. [Laughs] And there were pyramids and the fireworks. And more that little bit of entertainment? You know, the colors, and the costumes, where especially the people in Nauvoo, who live in Nauvoo, a lot of them

²¹ This approach may have been influenced by the lessons learned from those directing the Hill Cumorah Pageant in the 1980s: "As the pageant presidency worked with the artistic team during the maturation process, attention continually focused not only on the artistic quality of the production, but also on the overall experience for the participants, as well as on the success of the pageant as a missionary tool. They learned two important lessons. As the spiritual quality of the experience was enhanced, the aesthetic quality of the show and the quantity and quality of missionary referrals increased. Although it is obvious that a balance is necessary, it became clear that taking time for the participants' spiritual development and service was more effective than requiring more time for rehearsal. Almost 2,000 referrals were generated in 1997, 10 times greater than the 250 referrals gathered in 1988. The positive response to missionary contacts was also significantly higher." Gerald S. Argetsinger. *The Hill Cumorah Pageant: A Historical Perspective*. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 13/1-2 (2004): 58-69.

that we talked to didn't like, or don't like (I don't know, maybe some of them have changed their mind) the new pageant. Because I think it is more—I mean—it's just different. It is still entertaining, but it is not as flashy or dramatic, I guess. It still has all those elements, but they were used to something different.”

In a region where the church's history and claims have been hotly contested and local interests have often clashed with church interests, the general popularity of City of Joseph can be seen as a significant bridge of trust and goodwill. “Well, I guess because it can reach a lot of people. I know early on, when we were doing the City of Joseph, we would go and talk to people in front—to the audience before and after the show. And it would just amaze me when we would run into people from our area, from Iowa City where we are members. ‘Oh my goodness! Why would you come all the way down, drive two hours when you're not—‘ You know, or some people we would specifically invite and plan activities around during the day and stuff. But it was just random people. And they always said they could feel—they loved it! And even after it was over, several of our acquaintances and non-members who would go down every year, would say, ‘Oh, we just love the feeling that was there.’ And so I guess it involves a lot of people to do it and it reaches a lot of people over a period of time.”

For Debbie, the demanding work structure of pageant offered a number of important experiences. Like the circles described by Jim Topic,

the social cohesion and continuity of contact year after year built a sense of belonging and community that was difficult to achieve in the far-flung church congregations of the region. That marriages and missions and deep friendships emerged among a group of like-minded seekers testifies to the impact of their labors. She can further add to this larger social circle the shared experience with her parents, siblings, spouse, and children. Events that happened during those years of City of Joseph have become key moments of meaning. They still reminisce and remember what altered and shaped their identities, their faith, and their family. “I’m grateful we’ve had the opportunity to enact those [stories], because as you do that, it gives you— it strengthens that resolve. Even though you’re acting it out, you’re also helping yourself and your family and everybody around you, to know what’s happening for you. It didn’t just happen for [the early Saints] but it is available to you ...and to everybody and that’s the spirit that you want to share with others so that they can feel and learn more about it.” Ultimately, the goal was not only self-transformation but also transformation and conversion for those who would come and be simultaneously entertained and moved upon by the message. The circle could be wide enough for anyone who cared to enter.

So how to explain the audience shift with the change in pageants? Debbie’s experience in City of Joseph points to the integrative power of pageants both as a catalyst for personal social belonging and as an inclusion of fellow-performers and regional audience members in a wider

circle of social belonging. City of Joseph represented more of an inter-group pageant that made folks from the region feel friendly amongst themselves by placing the contested history of Nauvoo into a glossed-over, celebratory format with high levels of spectacle and entertainment. It was mainly a "feel-good" event in the public sense. Because the proselytizing element remained understated and subtle, audience members could attend without feeling overt coercion at the hands of the producers. The new pageant is clearly more direct in its doctrinal appeals and draws back from spectacle for a deeper thematic development. More practically, there are fewer local folks involved and that translates into less personal connections to the cast.

The shift also felt abrupt to City of Joseph participants. Clearly, the production was also effective as an intra-group phenomenon by building working relationships among all those who gathered each year to participate and perform. Participation came at a price of discomfort and inconvenience that many felt was far outweighed with social integration and meaningful connection between private belief and public declaration of that belief. Living in an area with few members, the group declaration of faith in an inter-generational context of families felt exhilarating and empowering. There is great power in bringing private observance into a river of public observance and feeling carried along in the wake of shared emotion and conviction. The loss of local leadership was felt as a rupture of the intra-group process that fostered a sense of regional solidarity and

local LDS performance traditions. Although the past participants were welcomed to participate in the new iteration, the baton had clearly passed from their hands. The regional effort had instead become a church-generated effort that centered Nauvoo in the wider global church context (even more so with the addition of the British Pageant in 2014 to the Nauvoo performance line-up). This pageant would extend well past regional audiences to reflect the vision and intentions of centralized church leadership.

How efficacious is this new iteration of LDS pageant? The deep doctrinal commitment and artistic excellence of the current Nauvoo Pageant seems to offer LDS pilgrims with a deeply moving experience as the story of Nauvoo happens before them in language and cultural references (hymn-based music, familiar tenets of the faith) that resonate with familiarity. This cultural steeped-ness does not seem to have the same effect on non-LDS visitors who were used to the entertainment style of City of Joseph. Perhaps because of their caution about being recruited by the Mormons, they have showed their discomfort by staying away from the new pageant. This hesitancy on the part of non-LDS locals is understandable. Where the pageant once represented their LDS neighbors and friends putting on a "good show," it now represents "The LDS Church."

The symbolic force of the rebuilding of the Nauvoo temple on regional folks and church membership cannot be overstated and the shift

to a more spiritually evocative pageant can be seen as a natural response to this emerging context. The reclamation of the space carries with it a significant increase in the number of LDS pilgrims to the site. For these visitors, the restored temple invites feelings of deep connection to a pioneer past. For locals, the extraordinary physical presence of the building and its prominence on the landscape cannot not be dismissed or disregarded. There is nothing about its placement, scale, or appearance that does not demand attention. When the lights shine out from its rounded windows late into the evening, when the profile rises on its promontory as you round the bend in your car, or when other buildings stand humbly by, its eminence is hard to deny.

The wide reaching symbolic resonance of the temple for a global church membership can be seen in the work of Jay Condie, a man in my own local congregation who, when he heard the announcement that the temple would be rebuilt, began his own rebuilding in his garage. After hours and hours of meticulous research, he developed scaled-downed measurements and gathered the materials to construct a replica that he displayed at local church events and then eventually loaned for display at the Church Museum of Art and History in Salt Lake City. When I asked him to share with me what prompted his project, he sent me a lengthy devotional-style essay that makes the construction of the temple a symbolic extension of church membership itself:

“In the course of building my model of the Nauvoo temple I had a lot of opportunities to think about how our lives are built or shaped one piece at a time much like the model or even a real temple is built or shaped. This model has over 400 individual pieces in it. Each piece can represent a part of our lives, a decision or choice we make. Most of these 400 pieces are made out of ordinary building materials that were then cut or shaped into individual pieces. Most of them took several different kinds of cuts with different kinds of saws or tools, and were shaped by hand to make them unique and individual. Each piece had to be carefully shaped, then sanded with several different grits of sandpaper to get the desired smoothness or texture, then painted with many coats of paint then carefully fastened into its own place.”

The effort and care that went into Jay Condie’s replica of the Nauvoo temple echoes the years of committed involvement by regional church members who, summer after summer, raised their cloth temple and then folded it up for another year. It would seem they did lay the groundwork for the restoration of the real thing.



Figure 8: Jay Condie's scaled replica of the Nauvoo Temple

Chapter Five

Ray Robinson's Making of the Saints

“I'll tell you, in most theatrical settings, inexperienced performers just can't do the job.”

“[Mormons] like to organize and do things as a group. They make good organization people, whether in large corporations or in local neighborhood clubs. Harking back to their past, in other words, they prefer to act cooperatively. Thus, they are strong in the performing arts where numbers of people are involved, but their institutional life has not given the same encouragement to the private arts: painting, sculpture, and creative literature . . . The emphasis on authority and obedience accords with their own desire for predictability and order.” (John L. Sorenson, *Utah historical Quarterly*, Federal Art Project, 279: 1990)

As I mentioned earlier, much of the impetus behind pageant-making lies in the desire to make something positive happen in the social sphere: the stirring and resurrection of shared memory, the revival of civic virtues, or the strengthening of communal bonds and commitments. Perhaps the residual energies of making the western deserts “bloom like a rose” still persist in the Mormon passion for taking group action. Popular LDS sayings like “Planning with a purpose,” and “No success can compensate for failure in the home,” point to the cultural emphasis placed on choosing expenditures of effort wisely. All actions point to positive and negative outcomes that impact not only the individual but

the group as a whole. Considering the huge outlay involved in pageant production, the LDS church evidently sees great value in the outcomes.

I met Ray Robinson when he and his wife Julie provided directing support for the 2007 pageant. A graceful and engaging man in his thirties, Ray appeared uniformly cheerful and unflappable. Despite the oppressive heat and the distractions of his small children, his teaching and leadership felt genuine and unforced. When I began seeking out interviews from pageant leadership, I was pleased to discover that Ray had been hired as the new Director of the Music and Cultural Arts Division for the church. I soon discovered that he was a hard person to track down with tremendous responsibilities to shoulder in his work at the church office building. I also came to understand that he was in the midst of his own dissertation research, making his time even more precious. When I realized that my research would require a trip to Salt Lake, I finally made contact with Ray's office and was able to make my way up to the fifth floor where I spent well over an hour talking with both Ray and pageant writer Cynthia Collier. We came away from the meeting with an understanding that they would provide support for my work, access to the pageant script, and phone interviews.

I felt I should include Ray's story for a number of reasons. His insider involvement with the Nauvoo Pageant from the near beginning would provide a longer view of events. I also could see how his personal story represented a rich chronicle of performing arts in LDS culture.

When he talked about the backstage dimension of pageant production, he illustrated the many ways the overall pageant process fosters social transformations that transcend the limits of the stage and performance frame. Through his stories, Ray offered considerable clarity about how the scripted show is secondary in importance to the social relations established through the process of putting on the show. He could also speak to the purposeful innovation on tradition represented by the City of Joseph as church leadership sought to create a pageant more appealing to contemporary sensibilities.

We'll start at the beginning. Once upon a time there was a boy named Ray Robinson who grew up in Jerome, Idaho in an active Latter-day Saint family and cultural environment where music and performance were assumed. Most western LDS homes have some semblance of a piano and all children are encouraged to sing regularly in the church setting. It is understood that opportunities to develop these musical skills are an extension of life in the church where there are endless opportunities to participate in lay choirs and accompany worship: "My mother had a strong commitment to providing cultural training experiences for her kids, and that she had since she was a little girl, I think. And so she was committed to that from the get go. ... I took piano lessons and voice lessons as I was growing up. Mostly, I think I was just obedient. I wasn't a prodigy or anything." Ray's father also supported his endeavors due to a spiritual blessing he had received earlier in his life, urging him to pay

close attention to the cultural development of his children. This prophetic injunction inspired him to make sure that Ray and his siblings had access to the resources they needed to be well trained in the arts.

In high school he realized that his peers thought that his hard-earned abilities were “cool.” Expanding his interest, he got involved in local musical theater and entered his freshman year at Brigham Young University with a well-developed hobby of performing in the theater. However, feeling that he should be responsible and study something that could support a family, he majored in Communications. “Then a series of events toward the end of my undergrad career kind of landed me in a graduate program in dance at the University of Utah with a really generous scholarship—real wonderful faculty members.” This training was followed by a professional performing career, and then several years as BYU faculty. Following this path, Ray had landed squarely into a strong performing arts infrastructure whose roots tie directly into the foundational efforts of early LDS pioneers to cultivate theater, music, and dance in their new western home.

Ray explains that from an early age, he was fascinated by how art and performance affect audiences and individuals. He has always liked to make things happen: “My earliest recollections as a performer, as a child, and as a teenager, had more to do with my effect on the audience than it did even on whether I was any good. I always wanted to be good at what I was doing, but the reason why I wanted to be good is because I wanted to

have some kind of an impact. From a very young age I was watching an audience even while I was performing to see what was happening to them.”

This interest has been useful to Ray in his job as Director of the Music and Cultural Arts Division in the Priesthood Department at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City. He has been directly involved in most of the major staged church productions over the past dozen years including *The Light of the World* (for the 2002 Olympics), *The Savior of the World* (annual Christmas production), *The Nauvoo Pageant* (2004-present), and the brand new *British Pageant, Truth Will Prevail* (2013-present), staged this last summer in both Preston, England and Nauvoo, Illinois. As he talks about these theatrical productions, he makes it clear that church leadership engages in pageants and shows because they are efficacious; because “generally speaking that's one of the main reasons why the church leaders would be interested in sponsoring these kind of projects, is for their capacity to impact people.”

When the church president, Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008) announced the rebuilding of the temple, Ray was working at Brigham Young University, but preparing to pursue a Ph.D. in Higher Education Leadership at Ann Arbor, Michigan: “Okay, so . . . President Hinckley . . . made the announcement just as you have it listed—what he announced was a new production in Nauvoo to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth. And it was soon after that, that the Priesthood

Department and Missionary Departments together were assigned to work on it. The Missionary Department has the historic departmental support from church headquarters for pageants generally, as an outreach mission of the church. And the Priesthood Department has a primary assignment for members and leaders.” Because of its home in the Missionary Department, the cultural arts division carries the burden of accountability. Performances must warrant some justification as inspiring, uplifting, or converting. They also come under the purview of church leaders who can give approval or ask for changes.

“The writing was assigned for David Warner [then the current Director of The Music and Cultural Arts Division] to be chair of the writing committee, so he assembled a writing committee. ... And that writing committee wrote sample scenes and overview for some time. As they began the writing, they began it with objectives right up front with the church leaders. Understood and approved. These were things like ‘tell the story of the restoration of the church with power, tell it through the lives of people rather than an historical—dry history approach,’ I guess. Things like ‘relying heavily on hymns as music and as ways to get at underlying messages.’”

In an interview with me, one of the original writers, Cynthia Collier, added her thoughts on the process, explaining that she did not feel their approach was modeled after theatrical styles. The seven writers and historians would work in sub groups, talking out loud and collaborating

until scenes would emerge from the conversation. In the scene where Scottish immigrant Robert Laird talks with Joseph Smith, her group worked all day long to the point of exhaustion, but the exchange still felt contrived. Finally, someone asked the question, “What is it that happens when you realize you have a testimony without a ‘Burning Bush?’ How does it work?” As Cynthia put it, they could finally put it to rest because “what they came up with felt true.” What felt most important to their writing was drawing out what they felt were more fundamental and spiritual truths rather than a sequential historical truth.

She and the other writers wanted the story to be both epic and intimate. The epic would be supported in the outdoor pageant structure and the environment in Nauvoo was seen as vital, because “Pageants and temples have a close connection.” There was no question that the actual temple had to be the backdrop. The physical raising of an onstage temple was also seen as a key moment of powerful cooperation between the women’s Relief Society organization and the men’s Priesthood organization as they raised a symbol of salvation together. They wanted the “temple principle to show, not tell.” As their writing progressed, they could see the advantages of the stage over cinema; how “the stage is well-suited to time travel. Bringing heaven onto stage is easier. People willingly suspend disbelief and are willing to go places with you.”

Up until this point, Ray had not been directly involved. Because of his earlier work with David Warner on other productions and familiarity

from working together on the BYU faculty, he was invited to take a part. “In January of 2005—I guess I don’t want to say January because I can’t remember exactly. But early in January of 2005, a number of things happened to expand the team. A number of composers were invited to gather and watch a reading. A Pageant President [Jack Renouf] was called at that reading—so that early 2005 reading was a pretty developed reading that had been the culmination of lots of smaller readings in front of General Authorities [church leadership]. So by the time they got to January it had had a lot of work.”

“And that reading--the next day, I met with the composers and facilitated a discussion with about ten or so—but a pretty good handful of composers. We met for several hours, reviewing the script and brainstorming what kind of musical approaches could be developed that would be really meaningful as a score so that the production in the end wouldn’t be like a musical theater piece where there’s periodic songs, but rather more cinematic; that the score would be integral in telling the story. So that was how the composers got started. And then the composers worked—a lot of them didn’t live around here, and so they worked by sending samples back and forth through email. And Dave Zabriskie ended up being the lead composer. So he collected it, refined it and re-wrote things on occasion. That’s how the music was developed. ...”

“And by spring, late spring, there was a first staged reading and we had volunteers from around the area and some BYU dancers. The twenty

core cast members had all been identified by then, so they were working on it and we had a workshop in the conference theater and at that point, the script was reviewed again by the leaders ... It was really fast and it was very, very intense. For everybody. And to me, boy there's so many parts to make a large production like that happen. So all the time that writing was happening, the pageant presidency had organized and had gotten nearly a thousand, probably about 800 family cast volunteers lined up and organized what their days were going to be like. So there was a whole administrative effort going on to make it able to happen as well as the artistic efforts with the script writing, and music, and things."²²

²² Gerald S. Artgisinger experienced a similarly challenging experience with his production of the Hill Cumorah Pageant in 1988: " To grasp the magnitude of producing the new pageant, it is important to understand that a typical Broadway musical requires at least two years for development. That includes script writing and revisions; the composing and arranging of music; the designing and construction of sets, "properties" (such as metal plates, weapons, and spoils of war), costumes, and lighting; and finally the casting and rehearsing of the actors. Most elements of the new pageant were developed in less than one year and many in less than six months. Not only did a new, complex, state-of-the-art spectacle have to be conceived and designed, but it was being produced in a setting that was not conducive to this type of creation. Instead, it was being created from the ground up, in the open air, at an active historic site. The pageant's development involved all phases of theater in addition to a wide array of church committees and General Authorities at all levels, many of whom were already very supportive of the pageant. After all, this was the flagship pageant of the church presented at one of the most important historical sites of the restoration. The committees and departments were responsible for such things as historic sites, visitors' centers, pageants, building and construction, maintenance, and history. Under perfect conditions, it could have been considered a miracle that the new pageant was even performed in front of a live audience. The difficult bureaucratic and production routine was exacerbated by the fact that 1988 was one of the rainiest summers ever for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. (Argetsinger 2004: 65)

Ray had a lot of experience going into the fray and was asked to focus on music and staging: “I have a background in musical theater both as a performer and then director. I have an M.S.A. in Dance Choreography and Performance and had a professional career as a dancer, as a concert dancer. Spent seven years—so at that point I spent seven years on the faculty at BYU in dance and musical theater. And I had been involved in the creation of Savior of the World and Light of the World. Light of the World was the 2002 Olympic production that the church did. And my initial invitation came because David Warner’s last semester on the faculty at BYU was my first and we were assigned to team teach the musical theater Senior Project Course together. And so that’s how we met. Apparently he thought I wasn’t too bad to work with so he invited me onto other things. So that’s kind of how that went . . . So I was working on the pageant from late 2004, and then we packed up the family and headed east, stopped in Nauvoo and worked on that production there in 2005, and then continued on to Michigan and then from there I would typically come back to Salt Lake for a week or two in preparation for each summer’s production. And then we’d just take the whole family down there.”

From the beginning, the pageant staff’s focus on family involvement was reflected in Ray’s own participation. Ray’s wife Julie (who is also a choreographer and dancer) and their growing family made it an annual trek west from Michigan: “All of those first five years of the pageant the

specifics of Julie and the children's involvement changed kind of based on how old they were and how things could work out. But particularly the two oldest participated in it every year. And then the younger ones, as they got old enough to--either they were young enough to be just held; then they were in it. And then there was usually a little break until they got old enough to be able to do well, both with sleep and how they would behave onstage."

Being part of the pageant is obviously an arduous undertaking for anyone, let alone a family with young children. I suggested to Ray, "That it's kind of a special group of people who chooses to come spend two summers in Nauvoo volunteering their time, perhaps foregoing some salary. It's not comfortable. It's not really a vacation!" Ray had to agree that those who come reflect a strong desire and commitment: "Whatever it is in their life situation that allows them to come, they choose to take it. A few of them have had wealth enough that it just does allow them to. Some of them have to use their whole vacation. Some of the families over the years have determined as a family that if they get accepted, that will be their Christmas. And if you can imagine giving up your Christmas when you have children for two weeks in the hot sun wearing pioneer clothes—I think for a number of them, the whole family is together and they have a belief, and the desire to serve, and experience it, and strengthening their own testimonies [faith]."

“But a number of families are split in terms—maybe not physically, but emotionally, spiritually—on whether they want to do something like this, and even on whether they really want to be engaged in church kind of stuff. There's a lot of families come hoping that the pageant experience will dramatically impact their teenager. They come with a lot of prayer and hope that it might happen. They usually come with a lot of church... No, I was going to say ‘a lot of church experience,’ but that's misspeaking a little bit. Many of them come with a lot of church experience—leadership in their local units in one way or another. But a fair number of them come as new members who just want to immerse themselves in the whole culture.”

The social dynamics for the families involved can be deeply influenced by the focus of the production team. From its inception, its creators and implementers have intentionally sought to model their pageant production on Christian principles of love and compassion. As Ray puts it, “The overall... perspective, particularly as a Christian play—it seems to make some kind of common sense to say, ‘Well, we have to be Christian in every aspect of this production.’ From that perspective, it's hard to conceive of another way that the director lead a production like that, and not really spend time thinking about, and trying to follow the leadership example of the Savior in attempting such a thing.”

“What does that mean? Treat others with kindness, with respect. Think about what their needs are. Think of what they're struggling with,

and just consider, and try to imagine those things. I think where people have commented on their experience with the pageant directors, and their district leaders, and things, it's often done in contrast with some theatrical experience that they've had. All I can say is from my professional experience as a performer, that I'm so sorry that so many theatrical productions are done so poorly. I just don't believe you can get the best work out of people who feel berated, or belittled, or anything negative. It just boggles my mind—although I've had my share of experience in where I just did do that. But it just...some people say they tried to get a thick skin or something, and that's so bad. Because I think what we really want is soft hearts. If we're soft toward each other, then it becomes less likely that we're going to hurt each other.”

“From a practical standpoint, we're in almost all cases with the Nauvoo Pageant, we're working with inexperienced performers. There are people with theatrical experience who come, who sign up and then come, but it's a huge population of people who *don't* have experience but are believers, and yet we want to do a powerful production. I'll tell you, in most theatrical settings, inexperienced performers just can't do the job. They're too self-conscious, they're thinking about themselves from the moment they step on stage, and every practice it's concern about, 'How I look,' or, 'Where I'm supposed to be,' or, 'What's supposed to be happening here?' and if the audience is considered, it's as of fear of, 'How they're going to judge me?’”

“Experienced performers get over that in a number of ways. So we're thinking about people who are totally inexperienced, but believers. We're not trying to pull one over on anybody. We want to tell true stories of true people. What I mean by true is, how their experience in this church and the gospel has affected their lives, their hearts, their families. All these inexperienced people in theater are very experienced with their feelings about the subject, and so if we can direct and lead in such a way that allows them to be who they *are*, and express that, it turns out pretty marvelously. It's been really surprising to me over the years to look at production photos. Really, I challenge anybody to look at a production photo of the Nauvoo Pageant over these 10 years, and find one of these group photos where somebody is not engaged.”

“It's miraculous, you're looking at 150 people, all gathered around in a group, and everybody's engaged. That doesn't happen when I go watch "Les Mis" on Broadway. That's not hyperbole. It's terribly disappointing, but is not hyperbole. I go there, and if I'm sitting close enough, I see actors disengaged. They're getting it. They're very skilled, but they play stage games. They'll get distracted. And here I am watching people who don't know how to perform at all, but they know what they believe about this, and if the only way to help people in the audience understand how they believe is engaging in what's happening on the stage, ah—they do it, and it's beautiful.” This description of how the production succeeds despite amateur cast members begs the question of

how pageant staff convinces a group of amateurs that their feelings and convictions about the pageant script and its content are sufficient to carry the performance? Not everyone arrives with an open heart, thus creative measures and compelling rhetoric are often needed in the emerging moment to bring about the unity of purpose required for a strong performance.

When I first traveled to Nauvoo to observe the pageant production as a fieldworker, I recorded some of the dynamics I saw as the original director, David Warner, interacted with a pageant cast. I watched as a motley crew of families, all ages and sizes were onstage singing and acting to a piped in soundtrack of an LDS hymn, while Warner, wearing a white shirt and khakis and toting a microphone was giving them encouragement and direction. In a peppy and kindly voice he was telling them, “You’re helping these people understand their ancestors!” and “We receive joy, we don’t have to manufacture it!” and “That’s it, brothers and sisters. That’s exactly right!” It was apparent that these were not hardcore trained actors, but very sincere volunteers doing what they could think of to do. He was emphatic with the group about what distinguished their efforts from “performing” or “acting.” As they rehearsed a scene he stopped them a number of times to say things like, “I have never seen a cast of 150 people be so responsive!” and “It’s for the Lord, that’s why it’s so good!” When they did something he was very pleased with he stopped and said emphatically, “This is so effective to me! This is not pretending.

This is who we are.” He went on to say, “So many who come and see this performance say, ‘This is so real.’” He pointed out the difference between rolling through the motions of actions and really being and believing in the moment on the stage. The example he drew on was one of the actresses kissing a child, and then rather than doing the usual thing, she reached out towards her husband and he reached out to her. Rather than doing the scripted movement, she followed her feelings. He considered this being “willing to have something unfold before our eyes rather than just coast along.” He stressed that the audience can tell the difference between acting and *real* (Field Notes 7.14.07).

One might wonder what the strategy would be if the cast did not engage and “get real?” How could the production staff get them to arrive at that point? Ray jokes that he likes to give “special assignments,” but then adds some specific examples: “I think there are all kinds of ways, and there are different ways of not being engaged. But one of the goals was [anonymous celebrity] and his family was in the pageant one year. Not [anonymous celebrity], but his son, who is also quite an author, and he brought his family, and it was clear that he, like a number of other men in those first couple of years, had been dragged there by their wives, totally disengaged. He was up sitting in the bleachers on his cell phone. He'd reluctantly come down to join whatever was going on, and in this particular case I was thinking that ‘If he doesn't get engaged, it's going to be difficult for his whole family.’ And so I think in some settings that

might be a temptation on an occasion to pull somebody aside and have kind of a serious heart-to-heart with them, but I think those serious heart-to-hearts begin with so many assumptions that they're difficult in that kind of setting. And I believe personally that the Lord magnifies our decisions, and helps things turn out right, and directed towards the right way.”

“In this particular instance, I had asked one of our stage managers if she could find a special assignment for him, and so she assigned him to play one of the twelve [apostles]. I was thinking, ‘Well, but it is a...it has a...’—Well, you’ve seen it. You have to show up on stage a couple of different times. And three or four days later, we're getting to end of the rehearsal process, and getting ready to start performing, and by this time he's a changed man. He's engaged, he's kind of a ringleader. You can imagine coming from that family, he's all over the place. Everybody's engaged, and it's just delightful. He came up to me after one of the rehearsal sessions and he said, ‘How did you know?’ ‘How did I know what?’ ‘Well, you assigned me to be Willard Richards.’ I said, ‘Yes, have you enjoyed it?’ ‘You don't know, do you?’ ‘No.’ ‘He's my great-great grandfather!’ He said, ‘You gave me that assignment, and I realized that I had work to do, and that the work wasn't on my book, it was here.’”

“In another case we had a group of teenagers who were unengaged together, and they'd kind of formed a collective, and just... I tried several things to boost them up, to encourage them, kind of cheerlead, ‘We need

you here, we need you.' Then we were staging the martyrdom scene, where everyone's kind of standing around the edges of the stage, and actually this little thing happened, and then somehow it became codified. I think that when you came, this thing probably happened as well. The stage managers probably ran it, but when this activity first happened, it was happening in response to a very specific, and real, desperate need to engage these youth. We're doing the scene, and I walked up to one of the young men who had kind of a leadership role in that group, unofficial of course, and I can't remember exactly what I had him do, but he responded positively, and so I had him and then the rest of the youth come and demonstrate together. They demonstrated it while the lines were being spoken, and the parents were just so moved, because they've been... If you're a parent, you know that your kids not behaving correctly [laughs]."

"So they're watching their teenagers be majestic, and I remember mothers who were crying, and those kids, they totally changed. From that *moment* they were engaged, they were pulling others along with them, they were really creative. So that I think maybe one way to describe the leadership that we're hoping for is really responsive to emerging needs, and desires, challenges. I hope what I taught when I... We've had different directors now, and as I work with them and try to give them a little training, I try to help them see, 'You've seen me, or you've seen David do this or that...It's not the thing that is done where there's any kind of a pattern. Whatever skills you bring are good enough. If you can respond to

the people who are there, and figure out what *they* need, and take care of that, your directing is going to be brilliant, because they already know how to live.”

Church members also come with a ready set of insider tools to bring to the pageant experience—common behaviors imbedded in church membership. This includes tonal pitch and singing and knowing hymns; efficiently putting up and taking down chairs; leading and participating in small group ‘spiritual devotionals;’ knowing how to reach out beyond one’s comfort zone to serve and offer help to others. Life in Mormondom cultivates a number of group behaviors that lend themselves to putting on a show in two weeks. There exists a sufficient amount of common ground to grease the logistics. Ray attested to these baseline behaviors: “I guess the one thing I might add to that is, to those characteristics that you mentioned, is a general willingness to jump on board in a project and follow a leader. I don't mean that in a prophetic way. I actually mean that in a local way, we locate leadership. After the first year, we started putting more special emphasis on de-emphasizing the importance of the role of the director, and trying to diffuse that to some degree. For a number of reasons, but it really surprised me how easy that particular effort was. As soon as the people show up—and I think this has to do with that kind of culture that you've described, we're used to... ‘We have a new Young Women’s leader this week,’ ‘Okay, so what are we going to do?’ The cast members throughout Nauvoo, somebody comes up on stage, picks up a

microphone, and starts giving instructions, and everybody says, 'Okay, we'll do it.' And sometimes the person giving instructions hasn't been introduced yet [laughter]. Creates a lot of grace for those who are directing, and those who are performing.”

A lot of thought has been given, as well, to what the experience will be like for those who come to be the audience. In most theater, the opening scene usually introduces a stranger: who is that? The unfolding of the story deepens the character. The Nauvoo Pageant replaces strangeness with familiarity by framing the pageant within a larger context that includes the placement of pageant characters throughout the historical sites of Nauvoo during the daytime and a pre-pageant country fair that invites audience members to come and rub shoulders with cast members as they participate in 1840s games and activities ranging from stickball to puppet shows. Ray thinks it was David who probably came up with the concept: “He's very likely to have a conversation with the writers about, 'All right, okay, let's think about this clearly. Someone's going to have... If they're going to cross the country, they're really on their way to see the Hill Cumorah Pageant, but they're going to see all the church sites. They arrive in Nauvoo, they're tired, they had a flat tire on the way and they're down to their last box of crackers, they finally get into Nauvoo late one night, and the next morning they think, 'Well, we're here. We need to go to the sites.' They start going around, so what's going to happen to them? Out of this kind of visioning comes this idea that we might have

these historic vignettes, that they might meet key cast members during the day up close and personal.”

Before the show, cast members organize pioneer games and activities on the field below the seating, including stickball, marbles, puppet shows, stilt walking and other participatory events. There the cast meets and greets its guests with the idea, “that ‘if we want people to listen to us, we need to listen to them first.’ And so the pre-show fair was developed as this opportunity for the cast members to host, welcome, listen to the stories and experiences of all the people who come, so that when Parley P. Pratt comes up over the hill, over the top of the stage, what it really shows everybody is, ‘Huh, we know him.’ Which is a pretty unique theatrical convention!”

It is good to point out here that inculcation of historical memory requires conscious effort. It is hard to go very far into the annals of early church history without running into the peppery and charismatic Parley P. Pratt—and certainly, his name alone is worth remembering. However, young church members, converts, and less historic-minded members may well have no familiarity with his story or his contributions. The bigger outline of the Nauvoo story and its narrative of the building and destruction of the temple and the martyrdom of Joseph Smith are such dramatic and broad strokes that the dramatic irony of the pageant story is quickly apparent even to the least initiated. However, the other myriad strands of the narrative tradition require some reaffirming. This active

telling of the story throughout the daytime through street vignettes and the engagement of the audience as fellow-citizens with the pageant cast set up nodes of familiarity and recognition that allow the performance to strike just that most closer to home. What Ray describes is something much deeper than putting on a show. It is an experiment on group building that goes beyond choreography and synchronized singing and audience involvement. It is an invitation into a Mormon worldview, a window into the tribe, and a call to believe.

Ray explains that “the foundational themes of this pageant or I think any of the efforts that I’ve been involved in under the direction of the church leaders, have been done with the understanding and desire to connect to the main doctrinal historical themes of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ... So those kinds of things, both explicitly and implicitly are throughout. And so then dramatically, the themes can become interesting ways of talking about those things. Like, one of the production concepts is that these believers come together, they learn the will of God, they build a temple, they become in some ways sanctified through the process and prepared for what comes next. And so we see that in the overall arc of the story. We also see it reflected in the costumes, and in the lighting, and in the music. There are themes of welcoming and inclusion that—[pause] President Hinckley said ‘Bring all you have and let us see if we can add to it.’”

“And that theme is a pretty strong one that you can read in ... kind of the corpus of the stories together and in some key individual journeys. So as you think of the Robert and Becky Laird story [a fictitious immigrant Scottish couple], you see believers have feelings and those matter. And you see that husbands and wives belong together, they work together. You see that following a prophet brings blessings even through the hardships of life. And that everyone is needed. There’s not [pause]—regardless of your background or why you’re coming, you’re essential.”

Themes play out in the pageant music as well. “So what I mean by that is there are a number of original musical themes that show up in the Nauvoo Pageant. The meaning that they carry is not--you know, like the beginning of the music [whistles opening theme]. Sometimes people call it ‘Parley’s theme.’ But that’s not really accurate, at least in the way that it was conceived, because that music was dramatically created as the theme of coming home, or familiarity, you know? So that musical theme shows up in a number of places throughout the production with that kind of meaning. Sometimes it shows up with Parley P. Pratt, but it also shows up with several other people and in several other instances.”

Pageant writers also wanted to convey the industriousness of the women in Nauvoo: “So you would notice through the script that there is a sequence of little scenes that begins with the sisters noticing a need. And they are participating in building the temple by providing clothing for the men. It was a really important historic contribution. It doesn’t read really

well in contemporary society. It sounds like grunt labor to think of the women today sewing shirts while the men do the important thing— if it's more important to chunk rock [laughs]! ... So what we start to see in the script is that the sisters really are the driving force in the city for good. And in fact, historically, there are a number of sisters—prominent women in the city who were clearing land and building homes, largely by themselves. And identifying needs of other families in the area and just taking care of them, all which led to the formation of the Relief Society [the church's organization for women]. And as part of that you recognize that we show the sisters sewing on those panels very much throughout the whole section. That it's always happening in the background.”

“So you see the men onstage working on the frame of the temple, working on that throughout this whole section of the pageant. And closer to the audience to the sides are the women sewing these panels. And then when the time comes for all the, for the temple to be raised, now under the direction of the new president of the church Brigham Young, it is in vision, the sisters come center stage with those panels. The men now move to the sides. They still have a thing to do, but it's off to the side because the sisters are dressing the temple. So that goes up. And as it goes up, although the main music is a hymn, you hear floating at the top of the orchestration a theme of industriousness that particularly shows up especially when the women are contributing. And it goes like this—you'll recognize it [whistling].”

“So that’s the theme of sisters’ contribution, really. And it gets introduced right at the beginning when we see all of the sisters’ young sons coming out to help new people coming to Nauvoo. It’s played quite strongly when the sisters come out. The whole community is introduced during that dance, but the sisters are introduced when it’s the boldest. Right? And so that shows up all throughout. That theme shows up throughout all the little activities where the sisters are helping each other or serving throughout town and that theme shows up in various ways. And then finally when the temple is raised, it’s a trumpet solo right at the top.”

The stage and sets are designed to be a continuation of these intentional themes. First, the stage has been located in a place that allows the temple to function as a focal point for the audience. The group responsible for the new pageant had not been to Nauvoo. They had drawn up some preliminary plans, and then in February of 2002 they came to Nauvoo for a site visit. They had originally assumed the stage would be over towards the pine trees, just below the temple. According to David Warner they had a pivotal experience one evening. At about 11pm, they ended up walking over to where the stage is now and they were talking about “These are the same stars that were over the saints!” And they looked up at the temple and felt moved that this was the place. As Ray puts it, if the goal was to “tell the story of a people who followed a prophet, worked together, built a temple under prophetic direction, and

there received really great blessings that prepared them for the rest of their lives, for all those who came on the journey west—the whole story of Nauvoo revolves, in a religious sense, around building that. And I know there are lots of way to frame up the story of Nauvoo, but in this case, that was one of the ways it was framed up pretty clearly.”

Even in the stage design, “there was a strong desire in creating these to make all the elements of the presentation as cohesive as we can. Certainly we needed speakers and microphones. But while there wasn’t a desire to fake it or transport people back to the 1830’s and 40’s—I don’t think that was ever part of the interest. On the other hand, there was a desire to represent the stories and the feelings as clearly as possible. And so one of the ideas of creating that cohesion was to make the stage work by human power. So there’s welding underneath. That wasn’t necessarily available. That wasn’t the regular construction thing, but all the mechanics that you might see on regular stages—they’re all done by counter-weight and people pulling on ropes.” What resulted is a stage made of wood, very simple in appearance, with two banners rising on either side with words taken from one of the hymns in the production: “Let Nauvoo in her beauty rise, the gate to latter days. The final dispensation lies, before all mankind’s gaze.” Above the words is the inscription, “Years 1839-1846.”

Ray explains, “So really I think the set design is a nice reflection of what was happening in Nauvoo at the time. So the set tells the story of

Nauvoo all by itself. What I mean by that is, when you go and see the set initially it's nothing. It is just a big mound of wood. There's nothing there—the same as Nauvoo when the Saints arrived. And as they come, and as they start to change and build and grow and learn together, serve each other, then the stage gets dressed. Buildings start to appear. Color appears in peoples' costumes. And so all the life that comes, comes as people are coming and working together and changing.”

“At one point the set design included projection. And then it was determined that we did not want to impose technology into that kind of thing. So at some point after that we came up with the idea of building a temple and having it faced with fabric panels. And in the course of events a sister was invited to take the lead in designing and overseeing the sewing of these panels. They had many, many, many people come and contribute hours of sewing on those. They're totally hand-done.”

Ray talks again and again about the emergent dynamic of this work on the pageant. Every step has involved trial and error, the willingness to change direction, and an experimental orientation. He comes to the productions with the sensibilities of a dancer and cautious of the older, more static and episodic types of pageants. I asked him to be candid about how he feels about pageant as an artistic form, with the acknowledgment that a lot of people have a hard time with the pageant form. It's something that harkens back to an earlier aesthetic and that can come across as fairly hokey and corny or over-dramatized.

“I guess the liabilities are just—you've described them. The historic form of pageants, at any rate, is not really accessible to people who have access to spectacular story telling in their home theaters. With the pageant form being primarily a panoramic view of historical events, it's likely representational rather than narrative. Narrative is not exactly a good way to describe that. We're not usually getting a plot that has to do with people in the typical pageant form. The story is really the land or the people, plural. I can watch a movie like *Gladiator* or *Braveheart*, which gives a much more compelling historical view that has way more spectacle than is in a true pageant form, a historic pageant form.”

“And it's part of the reason, I think, that what we've tried to do has been to bend pageant form quite a bit towards an emphasis of how these historic events change people's lives who are accessible and like people who are in the audience. People who are relatable—so that whatever the remaining historic pageant elements are—parades or costume or narration, the way that we try to make sense of it is through the lives of people that the audience can connect with, that aren't bound up in imagining what people in those days felt like, with the exception of using journal entries. But rather showing them in dramatic contexts that actually matter more to the people who are watching it than to people who've lived it. ...We care about how people lived, and we draw heavily on their writing. But when it comes to the Lairds, which is the highest emotional track that we have, their experience, while historically... I don't

know what the word is. It's similar to other stories at the time, and episodes. The reality is, the journey that the Lairds take is one that's intended for a contemporary audience. Does that make sense? We are really trying to take what is an established form—not just for the church, but also for outdoor theatrical experiences—and make it useful for today.”

There is no question that pageants are a well-established theatrical form in LDS culture. The pantheon of Mormon pageants depicting everything from the life of Christ to the history of the church is downright breathtaking. The church maintains sponsorship of a handful of these performances, including the Hill Cumorah Pageant: Another Witness for Christ in Palmyra, New York; Mormon Miracle Pageant in Manti, Utah; Castle Valley Pageant in Castle Valley, Utah; The Man Who Knew [Martin Harris Pageant] in Clarkston, Utah; The Mesa Easter Pageant, Jesus the Christ, held on the lawn of the Mesa, Arizona Temple Visitor’s Center; and now the Nauvoo Pageant: A Tribute to Joseph Smith and The British Pageant, Truth Will Prevail, performed in both Preston, England and Nauvoo. Two of these pageants date from the 1920s. The last two are products of the last ten years. The rest cover the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s. These church-sponsored pageants represent a drop in the bucket compared to the countless numbers of homegrown productions that have occurred wherever Mormons have gathered. It is worth noting that the seeds are often planted in the context of church leadership and

sometimes accompany commemorations of major events in local or generalized church history. Consistently, the importance of a spiritual heritage is invoked as the catalyst that animates and feeds these efforts.

The Castle Valley Pageant in Castle Valley, UT is a classic example of this kind of grassroots undertaking. The scriptwriter and originator, Montell Seely, was serving as the lay-leader of his congregation in the late 1970s. In this role of bishop, he received direction from church leadership in Salt Lake City to appoint a “cultural arts specialist.” Dutifully, he asked a musically accomplished member of the congregation, Carol Ann Driggs to undertake this “calling.” After a short time passed, she approached him to ask what this calling might entail. Without hesitation, he suggested that she consider writing a pageant that would honor the “stalwart pioneers who settled this valley.” The Seely family had traveled to Manti, UT on many occasions and seen the Mormon Miracle Pageant. Montell always wished that Castle Valley could have a pageant of their own, but “I was a farmer and sheepherder. I was no pageant writer or producer.” Earlier in his life, Montell Seely had served as an LDS missionary in North Carolina and had been very impressed with the annual outdoor pageant, Unto These Hills, as performed in 1956 in Cherokee, North Carolina. As he remembered it, “This pageant made such a profound impression on me (an impressionable young missionary) that I can still remember (vaguely) a few of the scenes” (Seely 2003:1). When it became clear that Driggs and all the college-educated members of the ward were not snapping up the

chance to be the creator, Montell took it upon himself to lead the effort. With his wife as editor and typist, he focused on a handful of local stories to create a script that he and the pageant committee felt would do the ancestors honor. What followed was a Herculean effort to build an outdoor stage, sound system, and community support for a production that still occurs on a bi-annual basis today.

Following the first year's two performances, Montell described the intensity of his feelings in a commemorative book published in 2003: "I looked at the lights in the valley and thought of the stalwart pioneers—and felt their presence all around. I don't know if they had been privileged to watch the Pageant in their spirit bodies—I don't know how things like that work. But in my mind they were all in attendance. ...If they were not in attendance, at least I wish that they were told of our efforts to honor them. I know this: I have a burning within my bosom—an intense desire to honor them! It is not something I conjure up, or pretend, or give lip service to. It is a feeling that is real. It is a driving force in my life" (29).

This intense connection to the past and to ancestors is something that is cultivated in LDS culture on many levels. Keeping a record of family history and seeking out ancestors through genealogical research is a major anchor in LDS temple theology. Those who are living have been instructed to vicariously perform sanctifying ordinances like baptism and marriage for those who have left the earth without those important spiritual stepping-stones in place to lead them back to God. To perform

these ordinances in the temple is to physically reach through space and time to reorganize and reconcile families to a divine pattern of eternal families. These are powerful and motivating visions that derive from the temple theology articulated by Joseph Smith in the last days in Nauvoo.

Ray agrees that there is a strong cultural sense of the importance of remembering our history and heritage. “It’s a long, long tradition and maybe there’s something in there about just the fact that traditions are a big deal. ... I think in the Book of Mormon, the traditions of our fathers, there’s a lot of cultural hints that traditions are important and there are in any religion with any lasting strength.” From Ray’s perspective, it is not the intrinsic value of history per se, but more the potential of our history to strengthen our commitment: “just like art’s not just valuable for its own sake, as far as the church is concerned, it’s valuable for uplifting, for wholesome recreation. ... But, the intentional value is how can these stories help us strengthen our faith quite intentionally?”

As the church has grown from a regional to a global entity, the struggle has been what Eric Eliason termed “the Pioneer Dilemma” (Eliason 1997:201). The Mormon Exodus to the Salt Lake Valley in the 1840s became a centering narrative for LDS historical consciousness and has been endlessly commemorated and memorialized through public ceremony, art, song, statues, dramatic presentations, literature, museums, living history, Pioneer Day parades, and oral history. As more and more members have no direct lineage to those people and events, the pioneer

heritage can either be abandoned or reinvented to extend its metaphor to “new pioneers” in the church and to encourage the adoption of early church history as a spiritual inheritance to those who enter the fold. The work of church professionals like Ray Robinson and his colleague David Warner are clearly attempts by the church leadership to encourage breathing new life into core narratives for those who encounter them.

Interestingly, the creators of the Nauvoo Pageant felt nearly as unprepared as the founder of the Castle Valley Pageant. After looking at some of the other church pageants, they had to “discover how to make [a pageant] happen in Nauvoo, because really none of us had ever done anything like that before.” What Ray does not acknowledge, however, is that those involved had been steeped in Mormon performance culture long enough to skip reading the manual. They decided that they did not feel compelled to do something on as large a scale as the Hill Cumorah Pageant in New York or the Mormon Miracle Pageant in Manti. “Those require a lot more people to make that big effect because of where the audience is and where the performers are.” At the same time, they desired to tell story of Nauvoo “with *affect* in a way that can have some emotional carrying capacity.” They wanted the pageant form to be more intimate in its message and less a big spectacle and parade of characters like the others. According to Ray, there has been a lot of enthusiasm at church headquarters for the pageant in Nauvoo and even interest in updating and

launching new pageants—although there is also caution for the commitment required.

Ray spent three and a half weeks in Britain working with church members there to create a pageant telling the story of the first missionaries and baptisms in England. He had the challenge of balancing his professional experience with the amateur aspirations of his collaborators. Instigated by a British church member, Alex McKenzie Johns, who had played a key role in the Nauvoo Pageant, area leaders in England determined that they would like to produce a pageant. At first local members were rather confused by the undertaking. They assumed this would be a glorified Road Show, a somewhat vaudevillian Mormon tradition of writing original scripts and lyrics on a theme and performing them among the various church buildings. “Everybody who wanted to bend my ear, that was one of their consistent references—that this was going to be another road show. I guess the point is that they got into it and started catching the vision for the fact that it could be connected to the church and really high quality and moving and exciting, and ‘bring your friends to this’— really, everything changed.”

“One man came up to me. About a week in ‘Brother Robinson, I want to introduce myself and ask your forgiveness’ and ‘Really. You have it, what do you need it for?’ He said, ‘When you arrived and started working with us I thought, ‘What's this American doing here? We're talented, we know how to do stuff.’ And kind of the crux of the story was,

'I (and a number of others) kind of resented that you were going to come in and tell us how to do our business. Impose your American aesthetic and how the church is quote "supposed to be done." But then he said, 'I was totally wrong. I've watched you work with us, and David came and I watched the two of you work together, with your staff and with us and I realized that this isn't about you imposing your will or showing us how to do the right things. It's helping us learn for ourselves what the right things are and that you think we're talented and can do it too.' So, that was pretty touching to me." Ray could see that eventually, in every aspect of the production, the consensus became, "'This is OURS, this is US. The success, the polish, the goodness of it is in US.' They really took it on."

Ray was actually a bit taken off guard by how passionately audiences responded to the pageant. He was also surprised with the sense of patriotism that seemed to grow as the pageant developed. "What we were told over and over again was, 'You Americans fly the flag for every event. We don't really do that here. You Americans, everything is patriotic. We're just glad for the holidays'— this kind of thing. So I think they kind of built an expectation, at least in me, on what that was going to be. For example, we had to do something to represent the early missionaries going to all the different areas of the U.K. So the music changes as it goes from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and then kind of the finale is everybody's together. Oh, and the lighting designers had put up these striped colors on their backdrop that matched the colors in the flags. ...

So the colors come up. The music changes and a big section of the audience would just erupt and then the next section, and then the next section. Then at the very end, they put stripes up there that were red, white, and blue. Everybody seemed to understand it was the Union Jack, everyone's together. The whole place just went crazy. Really, super enthusiastic.”

“I didn't expect that. I didn't expect telling the story of Wilfred Woodruff preaching, saying they were going to arrest him. The policeman ends up asking to be baptized. Everybody cheers. I mean CHEERS. And that is literally a thirty-second scene so it's not anything that's really developed. It's just a huge—*enthusiasm*. That was from an audience perspective. What else happened was that people asked to join the church afterwards, after seeing it. Quite regularly. And who would have thought that?”

As Ray explained at the beginning, he has always sought after affect—people moved, changed, altered, overcome. Although he has moved from working with strictly professionals at the top of their powers to earnest amateurs, he has become just as interested in seeing the character transformations that can occur in a like-minded group of people seeking to overcome the obstacles of putting on a show with all the handicaps of insufficient time and experience. The pageant form seems uniquely suited to such an endeavor. As a very elastic and emergent process, the creation of the pageant allows for “the goodness of

discovering and creating together, and working things out—of critical importance in something like this I think.” And because there is a new cast arriving each week of the five, “it is created new every week with every new cast, and that the creation is actually *in* the people rather than on the stage. What happens on stage is just kind of the expression of that and that's really interesting. ... the real work and the lasting impact is in people's lives.”

Chapter Six

Pageant as a Unique Generic Form

The Folk Drama Dilemma

In popular usage, the word “pageant” generally conjures up beauty contests. Those more familiar with the form may think of religious passion plays like Oberammergau in Bavaria, outdoor historical dramas like *The Lost Colony* in North Carolina, or they may even think of a familiar local outdoor civic production. Other associated words and terms include Lay Theater, Public Display Event, Community Theater, among others. As a folklorist, I am compelled to consider the folk drama continuum that has been argued in folklore over many decades. I must assert, however, that *all* drama relies on some folk elements or adheres to some level of tradition. What “qualifies” the Nauvoo pageants as subjects worthy of folkloristic inquiry is their embedded-ness in long-standing performance traditions; their reliance on lay performers; and the way they use public performance to tell a group story. If we insist on a Folk Drama boundary, then we must acknowledge that any given performance will have more or less enduring elements in its production with differences in text-source, performance content, and amateur or professional production and participants. It has taken folklorists a long time to even approach a theoretical conception of folk-drama and I would like to play with those definitions and ideas to further the work.

In 1978, Thomas Green of Texas A&M cautiously titled an essay *Toward A Definition of Folk Drama*. He opens by expressing concern that social scientists of his day were carelessly overusing the “life as theater” metaphor. As outsiders to those they study, social researchers could easily over-read or dramatize the daily events unfolding before them and thus erroneously impart theatrical intent. He also worries that the term “folk” would be used for expressions that were labeled such only “because an author endeavors to imbue his work with a regional or national character through an overlay of local dialect or custom. ... although they are not subject to the conventional alterations generally imposed by traditional means of transmission and performance” (845). What Green argues for is both a traditional performance context as well as a clearer definition of what constituted performance as opposed to everyday activities or even ritual. His final plea is that folk drama “should be applied only to those performances which incorporate mimesis and role distribution among two or more players and are transmitted by traditional means among folk groups” (849). This would indicate a self-conscious movement into role-play or acting “as if,” as well as the need for some kind of performance tradition to frame and give contextual meaning to the event.

In a thoughtful response to Green two years later, Anne Burson further clarifies folk drama with the observation that folklorists remained heavily text-centered in their attempts to delineate folk drama from other

kinds of theater. In her essay, she hoped to completely reconceptualize the genre by abandoning outdated theories around fixed folk drama texts “which were handed down unchanged from year to year and generation to generation” (305). This orientation long led folklorists to survivalist texts of what seemed to be unarguably longstanding performance traditions: Mummer’s Plays in the British Isles and the Mexican Pastorela that derive from Spanish-imported Catholicism.²³ After reviewing the general neglect of the genre by the discipline, Burson makes some helpful observations. First, she affirms the vitality of folk-drama in modern life. She points to the active use of skits and homegrown dramatic events by a wide number of social groups including professional associations, sororities and fraternities, summer camps, and schools. These are “not survivals, nor are they based on scripts which are handed down year after year. Nonetheless, they arise in traditional ways in groups” (308). What she desired to see was an ability to move beyond traditional *texts* towards traditional performance *models*.

These two attempts at generic definition alert us to the struggle that folklorists have had articulating a clear disciplinary home for drama and theatrical performance in folklore studies. Because of the scripted

²³ Steve Tillis, a scholar of dramatic arts at St. Mary’s University in California, further outlines this issue in his book, *Rethinking Folk-Drama*. “While some folklorists have written extremely worthwhile essays on folk drama theory and others have written detailed and penetrating studies (both essay and book length) of specific forms of folk drama, the bibliography on the subject pales in comparison to those on, say, riddles, proverbs, or, most especially, fairytales. Drama scholars have paid even less attention to folk drama, with very few major journals offering more than the occasional article” (1999:11).

and institutionalized nature of the form, it has never been a strong player in the folk genre pantheon. Considering this neglect, Roger Abrahams suggests that the some of the more compelling folk-drama analysis came from early scholars like James G. Frazer, Francis M. Cornford, and others who sought to link myth-ritual and seasonal observances to staged drama (Abrahams 1972:351). Again, because of this desire for ancient origins, certain types of plays with unmistakable “folklore flavor” have received more attention, leading to fuller studies of such forms. Like most things in folklore study, there is often a preoccupation with the folklore “object”: in this case a script of some sort that comes from either a gloriously murky or pure stream of tradition that opens that object to rich symbolic interpretations of fertility, death and life themes, reversals of social mores, and the like.

As seen in Burson’s work above, scholarship of folk drama gains ground as we shed theoretical commitments to the primacy of oral transmission as a defining feature of the production of folk material in the world. Emphasis has shifted towards continuity versus innovation in performance, communal ownership of text, and the dynamic relationship of audience to the performance. The range of what constitutes reasonable content for study has broadened considerably as the field has embraced the idea that folklore is both socially constituted and socially constitutive through repeated aesthetic action. Considering folklore’s preoccupation with folk groups, there would seem to be an attraction to the group-

building dimension of theatrical experience and the incorporation of traditional elements into a theater piece, regardless of script origin.

Folklorist William H. Wiggins' illustrates this social potential in his writing on the Heaven Bound Pageant—recognized as an enduring black religious drama in America. In the 1930s, an Atlanta, Georgia washerwoman by the name of Lula Byrd Jones heard about a church-sponsored “morality pageant” in Florida that had raised impressive funds. She approached another church member, Mrs. Nellie Davis, who liked the idea and who undertook to co-write a script that has since become a centerpiece in Black Church Theater, “Heaven Bound.” Part pilgrim’s progress, vaudevillian swordplay, and a mix of rhyming verse interspersed with hymn and spiritual, the pageant continues until today with both a “traditional” and “contemporary” version. In this instance, two insiders used the materials at hand of scripture, verse, and church music, and the very real imperative of fund raising to create a dramatic performance that resonated with both their own congregation and the community at large.

The “Heaven Bound” example links effectively with Burson’s vision of a model-based approach to folk drama. In this instance, folk drama as a category might derive its definition from the premise that when confronted by some type of self-preservation need—financial, spiritual, social—creative individuals within a group might see dramatic performance as the tool to achieve that end. If the resulting artistic form

successfully reflects the group ethos, needs, desires, self-conceptions and goals, it will persist and gradually draw an aura of tradition to itself. Owned by the group both in terms of production and audience reception, that could constitute drama by and for the “folk” because of its social utility, relevance, and adoption by the group as a valued form of expression. It also represents what I see as a democratic impulse that could be considered a foundational feature resting at the root of much of what *I* would term folk drama. This type of theater can be the domain of most anyone who wants to be a creator or a participant—across a spectrum of professional to amateur, schoolchild to city mayor, washerwoman to preacher (Wiggins, 1991).

In the U.S. social associations of all varieties offer a creative space for folk drama to flourish: church congregations, civic clubs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, summer camps, genealogical and historical societies, sororities and fraternities, local drama associations. In these socially rich places, goals to fundraise, entertain, commemorate, and lampoon are abundant and open the door to drama as the vehicle for group expression. Performance will reflect the resources and talents of the group and derive shape from their social needs and intentions.²⁴

²⁴Scholar Jay Mechling has devoted significant time on the topic of the importance of the civil sphere and has expressed concern that the public work of folklorists tends to concentrate on public events like parades and festivals rather than showing "...how folklore operates in the civil sphere." He believes folklore could be shown to be a "necessary, integral part of the study of liberal democracy" (1997:115).

A strong example of association-based performance research can be found in Regina Bendix's *Backstage Domains: Playing William Tell in Two Swiss Communities* (1989). Based on a 19th century literary script written by a German poet, Gottfried Schiller, the William Tell play dramatizes the 13th-14th century legend surrounding the democratizing of the Swiss state as rural cantons swore allegiance to fight foreign oppressors. In her study, Bendix models the ideological shift in the discipline of folklore towards performance and context. Comparing two different productions of the drama in Altdorf and Interlaken, Switzerland, she uses ethnography as a way to go beneath the surface of these large public displays to examine the historic trajectory leading to their formation; to consider the important role for cultural maintenance that voluntary associations play in Swiss community life; and to describe the backstage social dynamics of production and rehearsal. She also looks at the way the performance texts and images enter the everyday conversations and relationships of participants. Her study reveals some interesting ideas: that large display events like the William Tell play generally rest on associational structures for their production and maintenance; that the live performance itself is only a small facet of a much greater social phenomenon; that there exists slippage between generic boundaries when lay performers undertake the performance of a "high art" literary text.

In a somewhat tortured treatise called, *Re-thinking Folk Drama* (1999), theater scholar Steve Tillis travels the world struggling to find a definitional box big enough for folk drama and finally comes to the somewhat anti-climactic conclusion that “each form has its own particular structure, as well as its own particular place in its host culture” (203). That certainly sounds reasonable to me. Substantial work has been done across the globe to look at the ways cultures represent themselves through staged performance; and, of course, comparison to other drama traditions is useful for raising the questions that come from difference and similarity. International perspectives on folk drama can be found in the writing of James Peacock in Indonesia, Dorothy Noyes in Spain, Clifford Geertz in Bali, Richard Bauman in Mexico, and Victor Turner in the known universe, among many others. It may be a fool’s errand to seek an encompassing master narrative for such a ubiquitous human activity. Steve Tillis is not too far from the truth. There is wisdom in tending towards the descriptive rather than the prescriptive approach when it comes to examining the two pieces of theater before us. There are many types of theater emanating from any number of historical and environmental and cultural contingencies. It is our job to understand the underlying patterns of this social activity.

Pageant as Form

Pageant can be situated within a fluid spectrum of performance genres while keeping in mind its social context. Using the work of performance theorists, we can examine its special features and qualities. What has been useful about the performance theory movement in the social sciences and humanities is the idea that performance in live social context with an attending audience has tremendous bearing on the meaning and interpretation of the material. The majority of the work by sociolinguists, folklorists, and anthropologists has focused on the ways that cultural performance can be a window into larger social dynamics of gender, power, aesthetics, religion, politics, and public life (Beeman 1993: 370). Less attention has been paid to the actual structure and mechanisms of particular genres and the sympathetic role that they play in the wider social arena. Perhaps the association of popular performance with pure entertainment has kept it relegated to a leisure category less worthy of serious study.

In the widest possible lens, cultures around the world have almost uniformly dedicated impressive amounts of resources to performative activities. The field of comparative drama and theater is too vast to cover here, although it is worth pointing out that every continent can claim a complex of genres that illustrate the ubiquity of music, dance, and spoken word as important parts of human expression. What varies is the

degree to which these three expressive categories are represented, the socially designated role of actors and audiences, and the location and intentions of the performance.²⁵

Richard Bauman has offered several broad statements on what Milton Singer dubbed “cultural performance” (1986:285) These are performances that “tend to be the most prominent performance contexts in the community.” They are temporally and spatially bounded with an assigned time and program. They are open to public viewing and participation. As communal reflection, they are moments of heightened group awareness. But what differentiates theatrical performance from its cultural companion ritual? Theater director and theorist Richard Schechner has created a rubric that illustrates that the distinction lies in the context and function: where performed, for whom, by whom, and with what intention (Schechner1998: 120). As seen in the model below, these differences fall across a spectrum:

EFFICACY -----	ENTERTAINMENT
Ritual	Theater
Results	Fun
Link to an absent Other	Only for those here
Symbolic time	Emphasis now

²⁵ William O. Beeman’s comprehensive essay, “The Anthropology of Theater and Spectacle” provided me with a clear and helpful framework to approach these questions. His bibliography and overview of the literature covers the breadth and theoretical depth of this field. I acknowledge his influence and utility in drafting this section.

Performer possessed, in trance	Performer knows what s/he's doing
Audience participates	Audience watches
Audience believes	Audience appreciates
Criticism discouraged	Criticism flourishes
Collective creativity	Individual creativity

Richard Schechner and Victor Turner have further developed these descriptive dimensions to separate theater and spectacle from other performance forms (Turner: 1986, *From Ritual to Theater and Back*; 1986, *The Anthropology of Performance*). From the Efficacy vs. Entertainment intent, they have added Participation vs. Observation in the audience's role and the Symbolic Representation vs. Literal Self-Presentation in the performer's role.

One other related genre is spectacle. The work of John MacAloon on public spectacle illustrates that spectacle requires an audience, but "Spectacles give primacy to visual sensory and symbolic codes; they are thing to be seen. Hence we refer to circuses as 'spectacle,' but not orchestral performances." Further, spectacles require "a certain size and grandeur" (MacAloon 1984:243). Spectacle includes public events that occur at regular intervals, with enough symbolic content and group participation to elicit strong emotional response from those involved.

I evoke these models and classifications because they raise interesting questions about the nature of historical pageants as being

distinct from typical theater genre. As a local civic display or as a depiction of semi-sacred history, pageants approach public ritual in that they exhibit a certain degree of efficacy and belief for both performers and audience; there may exist a strong element of duty and commitment amongst those present because of the involvement of other family and community members; the spirit of criticism by the audience may be tempered by the communal content of the material; the division between Self-Presentation and Symbolic Representation can become very thin when representing one's own ancestors; and because of their scale and visual emphasis, pageants certainly border on spectacle. Historical pageants also have the added characteristic of being located physically in the site of their own story. This durability of landscape makes the re-creation of historical events all the more emotionally affecting by linking the performance to absent Others.

This kind of social (and ideological) efficacy is what has drawn people to utilize the form over and over again. In a 1943 pageant performance titled, "We Will Never Die," over 600 Jews performed Ben Hecht's Holocaust pageant in Madison Square Garden, New York City. Located at the center of Jewish and theatrical communities, the lay and professional actors and singers moved across an outdoor stage framed by two enormous stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments and a backdrop of the Star of David. Using dramatic effects of light and darkness, songs familiar to Jewish audiences, and a charged narration

with phrases like, “The corpse of a people lies on the steps of civilization” (Skloot 1985:178), the performance moved many Jews and non-Jews to take political action. In describing the intentions of the pageant, theater scholar Robert Skloot explains that literary greatness or subtlety were not the aim: “What is wanted is color, size, and mass together with a stridency and sentiment which allows easy access to intense emotional experience” (179).

In his study of how public dramas of this sort can be deliberate social construction, symbolism theorist Ed Gross looks at the tools and the techniques of the form as used in English Corpus Christi Pageants of the 14th-16th centuries, commemorative and thematic community pageants, and pageants of the French Revolution. In all three cases he saw the effort to “mobilize emotion and reinforce sentiments of attachment to group, tribe, class, or nation” (Gross 1986:181). Again, the efficacy in all three historical models derived from a mixture of the artistic, the communal, the spectacular, the theatrical, emotionally charged symbols, and evocative locations. He also raises the issue of the resources required for such a spectacle: “Financially too their scope and the resources, stages, costumes, and professional personnel and actors used all require having expenditures that call for public subsidy and support, at the very least. . . . They are . . . deliberately constructed, employing for effectiveness the kind of technology we have been describing” (197).

In David Glassberg's "American Historical Pageantry, he credits the origins of American pageantry with a 19th century resurrection of medieval and Renaissance pageantry by English dramatists and anti-modernists whose passion for the form crossed to American soil. He describes the social groups in America who vied for control of its implementation and interpretation in its fledgling performances in turn of the century New England. These initially included conservative heritage groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, disciples of the Arts and Crafts Movement who hoped to foster an elevated aesthetic among the common folk, and finally, the social reformers of the Hull House variety who saw pageantry as both wholesome recreation and a vehicle for championing a pluralistic and inclusive vision for society. In his view, there was a special season for the form in which the extent of its possibilities was pushed and prodded by a group of passionate practitioners who saw in pageantry everything from the restoration of abandoned civic virtues in urban settings to the economic revitalization of struggling rural villages.

Glassberg's thesis implies that large-scale, public historic pageants declined significantly post WWII as the professional groups and associations who sought and supported their production declined or turned their attentions to other activities. However, during this same period, the genesis of the outdoor historical drama in America was just rising to its pinnacle in the work of dramatists at University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill – the self-proclaimed UNC Playmakers. It is worth looking at this strain of American pageantry to acknowledge the persistence of the secular form past its “golden era” into the present day. The Playmakers group saw in “folk-drama” the opportunity to create a theater derived from the living stories and legends of the participating students. From its beginnings until the present, this locus of activity has been a stabilizing and encouraging presence for outdoor dramatic performance in America.

Recruited from the University of North Dakota in 1918, Professor Koch came to UNC-Chapel Hill to found the theater program. Because of his work in North Dakota, he came with the idea of founding a student group that would generate original plays based on the locales familiar to the North Carolina students—mountain hollers, coastal villages, Piedmont tenant farms. Using the ideas of dramatic writing and structure, these plays would evoke the spirit of common humanity and the presence of humanities themes in everyday lives. Koch’s program was wildly successful, grooming such American playwrights as Paul Green and Kermit Hunter to focus their talents on native-grown topics and stories.

The students performed their own plays both in their own local outdoor theater, as well as traveling around the state to perform. The popularity of the movement took root in the state, leading to the development of dozens of outdoor historical dramas. The watershed

production was the creation of Paul Green's *The Lost Colony*, an outdoor historical drama, which has been continuously performed on Roanoke Island since its debut in 1937. Its overwhelming success impressed other communities. Over decades, the UNC Playmakers acted as a clearinghouse for production support and expertise on outdoor drama for performing groups both in and out of North Carolina. In 1963, the pressure on the program was such that North Carolina Governor, Terry Sanford, gave state monies to begin an Institute of Outdoor Drama housed at UNC-Chapel Hill. This institute carried the direct responsibility of responding to the public need for expertise and consultation in the creation and continued vitality of outdoor drama in North Carolina.

Scott Parker, director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama from 1990 to 2006 came to the program with a depth of personal investment. Participating in the UNC Playmakers from his childhood, his extended family contributed actively in the folk-drama movement of the Fred Kochera through the present-day. His father taught drama at UNC for 40 years and oversaw the production of many of the major outdoor dramas, his aunt created the original costumes for "The Lost Colony," and his uncle was the first production's stage manager. During Parker's tenure at the institute, he saw peak attendance at the dramas in the late nineties, with a marked decline going into the new millennium. He spent a great deal of time and money trying to understand the fall in popularity, without finding any clear answers.

In an interview with Parker, he described his view on the difference between an outdoor historical drama and an outdoor historical pageant: “Pageants are really not much more than a string of vignettes, little individual scenes that are produced, and oftentimes the scenes have no relation to each other. So, one scene will dramatize when the bridge went across the river, another scene will dramatize when the Pepsi-Cola plant came to town, another scene will dramatize when Joseph Smith was shot in the Carthage Jail, or whatever. I don’t remember all my history. And there will be a different set of characters in each scene. There’s usually a narrator that tries to connect all that, but there’s no building, there’s no inciting incident, there’s no building, there’s no conflict, there’s no building in the emotional buy-in, there’s no climax in the way that you structure what we call in our business a well-made play.”

“And so, there tends not to be an emotional buy-in into this the way you can do with a play. And so, the people who mostly appreciate pageants are the people who live in the local community. Those folks who live outside the community are not taken with it so much, because there’s not that emotional buy-in to it. They don’t really care when the bridge went across the river, but the local people get all excited and start foaming at the mouth and breaking up the furniture because they’re dramatizing when the bridge went across the river! [Laughter] How that changed our lives!”

Parker also described the significance of location and placement outdoors for these productions. “Well, these... outdoor historical dramas are produced right on the site or very near the site where the events occurred. So, it’s not like we’re producing Hello Dolly outdoors, and that’s what makes part of the experience such an emotional one for the audience. Because you’re told, or you should be told, right away as an audience member that you’re sitting on the site where it happened or very near the site where it happened, so it’s almost like taking a pilgrimage to this site to walk the hallowed ground where it happened. And that has a very strong emotional effect on people. You can walk around down at the Lost Colony at night, and it’s spooky, because you know you’re walking under four hundred year old trees that were there when that colony was there and disappeared.”

“So, it makes a huge difference in how people respond to these plays if they’re produced right on the site where it happened. You try to produce Hello Dolly down there outdoors, and it will die in a heartbeat. We can all see Hello Dolly at home, but you cannot see The Lost Colony anywhere else except **there**, and that’s where it happened. That’s the key ingredient. But it’s also true—you know, these pageants are produced right where those events occurred as well, so they share that, certainly.”

As the director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, Parker was intimately familiar with the production challenges associated with moving theater outdoors. According to his experience, “These outdoor

historical dramas, generally speaking, are epic productions. They produce--they are about extroverted events. They are not about navel contemplation. [Laughter] They're about big epic things that occurred, and the stages are really big, compared with indoors. So, stages can--it's not unusual to find an outdoor drama stage 80 or 100 feet across. We have some that are much bigger than that, 300 feet and 500 feet deep that will seat 6,000 people."

"These are big shows, and so you cannot perform them in the same way you would in a little 500-seat theater. Everything has to be much, much bigger, and it's much, much harder to do. So, if I were to say to you, "Honey, I love you to death," I can do that like this in an indoor theater. But you try doing that in a 5,000-seat theater, and it will not reach the back of the house, I guarantee you. So, you have to learn how to say, "Honey, I love you to death" without screaming it, but it's still got to be big. It's got to be larger than life."

"Very hard to do. That's one thing. And so, that's something that actors have to learn how to do, directors have to learn how to do. The scenery is bigger. Everything is bigger. It's sort of like comparing easel painting with mural painting, easel painting being small indoor theaters, mural painting being the outdoor historical drama. Everything is bigger, and when you make it bigger, it gets harder. So, if you've got a little quirk as an actor, it's easy to hide it in a small indoor theater. When you get out in a major outdoor drama, this little flaw you've got, whatever it

may be, because you've got to be bigger than life, is all of a sudden going to be magnified, and it's going to be impossible to hide it. It's tough; it's really tough."

"And you have to learn how to project. We don't teach people how to project anymore. So more and more the theaters now are being miked—because of that—and because the audience is really starting to demand it. So, there's that. You've got to build costumes; you've got to build scenery, put up lights, all that stuff that has to be resistant to inclement weather, for one thing."

"A lot of these dramas will have livestock in them, dealing with horses, dealing with camels. [Laughs] You name it! Pigs! They've got it. It's not the sort of skill they give you in drama school [laughter] to deal with that kind of stuff. So, that's some of it."

Beyond the production issues of filling a huge space and a larger than-life-storyline with impressive backdrops, movement, and spectacle, this scale of drama also requires masses of people to fill that stage. Generally, most casts will involve large numbers of locals and non-professionals to swell the ranks. This requires a quick turn-around time on staging and practicing that fits into the daily life commitments of those involved. With few members of the cast receiving payment and most of them fitting the show around employment, things have to move fast: "The joke in outdoor drama is if an actor stopped and said to the director, "What's my motivation?" You know, the director says, "Okay,

cross stage left,” and if the actor were to say, “Well, what’s my motivation for crossing stage left,” which is what is commonly dealt with in indoor theater when you’ve got a month and a half to rehearse a play, the director will say, “Well, your motivation is duh-duh-duh.” In outdoor drama, the director will say, “Your motivation is your paycheck. Get your ass across the stage!” [Laughter] There’s no time to deal with that. You’re trying to get a major, huge, complex play up, so there’s no-- training is not part of the mission.”

This question of professional versus amateur participants is an interesting one. Most of this kind of theater has had strains of both built into its production. In the early 20th century, professional writers, producers, and directors of civic pageants and shows proliferated, resulting in the creation of an American Pageantry Association in Boston in 1913 that acted as a clearing house and guardian of best practices for the field until its demise in 1930. An impressive array of professional practitioners made a living traveling around the country providing boilerplate scripts, costumes, and directors for communities interested in staging a local pageant.²⁶ Many of these “pageant masters,” writers, and producers were women who found a decent way to make a living with their artistic skill. But as was the case for the Institute for Outdoor Drama, large-scale productions have generally involved a layering of professionals and amateurs to keep quality of performance high while at

²⁶ See Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry and Prevots*, *American Pageantry*.

the same time drawing the requisite numbers of participants and sustaining community buy-in. Of course there have always been community groups who keep all aspects of production in-house, from writing scripts, to costuming and building sets, to artistic direction.

This business of presenting large outdoor portrayals of local history has been surprisingly resilient, even since the demise of the formalized American Pageantry Movement of the 1910s-1930s. In 1966, Mark Sumner of the Institute of Outdoor Drama at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, under a U.S. Office of Education Grant, wrote on the topic of best practices and feasibility models for outdoor historical dramas and pageants. His greatest concern was that performances be financially sound and “culturally effective” (Sumner, 9). I take “culturally effective” to mean salient and meaningful to their intended audiences. Part of Sumner’s intent was to better define the genre of Outdoor Drama for contemporary usage. He made some interesting observations about the contemporary state of the field at that time. First, he noted that the primary motivation for those producing such shows was not monetary, but an attempt to “affect the greatest number of spectators with the meaning of the history and of the region being depicted in the drama. The playwright must help the audience to understand with a much deeper emotional sense the humanity of the facts and bones of history” (Sumner, 29). He noted that in rooting the story in the land and people near the theater site, a “sense of pilgrimage” was inculcated in the

audience and participants (Sumner, 30). He also found through surveys that in all the companies participating in the Institute, that 12% to 25% of those attending were children—a far wider range of age than most contemporary theater. These observations point to some consistent features and intentions of this form: educating audiences, awakening deep connections to story and place, and bridging these stories to a new generation.

Observations and Conclusions

Is pageant an expressive form worthy of study in the context of folklore scholarship? Absolutely. The scripts are particularly and intentionally tied to the articulation of group tradition and group identity. Its practitioners look to the productions as instructive communication between generations, as a way to situate a group in relation to time and space. Often, the performances can be emotionally provocative and even transformative for those participating. Because of the scale of production, pageants rely heavily on lay participants, making it a rather extraordinarily democratic form of theater. The transmission of scripts, acting knowledge, and production knowledge are generally passed from hand to hand with the old-timers training and initiating the newcomers in the field. As in most folk forms, there is ongoing struggle within communities over continuity versus innovation as insiders jockey

over the amount of change they will allow—certainly a looming issue with the Grape Festival Pageant. There is a dynamic relationship between audiences and performers that either know one another personally or feel that they do because of common membership in a regional community, a faith tradition, or some other shared and meaningful affiliation. The incorporation of familiar tunes, language, and worldview associated with the group's tradition is expected and essential to exert the desired emotional affect. And in all cases, there is some element of a group that is engaging in an act of self-preservation and perpetuation, using the tool of pageant to meet that end. For all these reasons, I find pageant to be a fascinating subject for folklore study.

Looking at a range of pageants, there seem to be some special features and qualities that emerge, including some elucidated and articulated in the scholarly examples given above:

- Looks to the past for its themes and content
- Depends on community buy-in and effort
- Tends to be annual or set to some fixed recurrence
- Portrays either a critical historical era or a large span of time
- Relies on members of the community to portray the story
- Tells a story already familiar to the audience
- Is not performed in any other place or time than its expected performance

- Open to public viewing and participation
- Represents a moment of heightened group awareness
- Gives primacy to visual, sensory, and symbolic codes
- Mobilizes emotion and reinforces group sentiments
- Requires a certain size and grandeur

I would also add that the most emotionally moving pageants for participants seem to be those that tend toward the direction of ritual instead of theater. I say this because at their core, pageants are intended to be efficacious, not just entertaining. This is true both historically and currently. Pageant producers and casts want to do more than entertain their audience. Their form, by its appeal to the past and to the ancestors of those present, calls on symbolic time to link the audience to those long absent. A good example of this is when Parley Pratt comes onstage at the opening of The Nauvoo Pageant. He calls out, “Hello! I said hello!” in greeting, inviting the audience as if they themselves are on the stage in the story. Later, he makes this connection again in another direct speech to the audience: “When *you’re* here, *we’re* here.” The pageant writers do not want the audience to think how sweet those words sound—they want the audience to *believe* it. When the audience is asked to join in the Grape Festival Pageants theme song, the appeal is meant as an invitation for convictions and belonging:

“Come to historic Nauvoo, City of dreams. Here in historic Nauvoo, Come, dreamers of dreams! Here in Historic Nauvoo, Dreams still come true—For all the dreams men have dreamed Still live in you!”

The communal nature of the performance does not preclude criticism, but it can certainly dampen it. If your sister-in-law is the one doing the singing, you may well keep your judgments to yourself or you may find yourself in her place next year. The point is to applaud what is good because it is an extension of yourself. Because of the conservatism of the enterprise, a lot of innovation or change to the text is not generally smiled upon. Like the townsfolk in Manteo, North Carolina who do not want to see a single line of *The Lost Colony* script tampered with and who prefer to dampen too much individual flair on the part of the actors, there is a commitment to keeping the performance a reflection of the group’s collective creativity and not an instrument of individual expression.

The social dynamics around both of the pageants in Nauvoo are an excellent way to look at the place of generic expectations in performance. Both groups have standards of what a pageant ought to be. In the case of Mary Logan and others in the town, the 1952 script and its forty-some years of full production are *the* model. The script can be altered to include some updates to the historical record, but the tone of high drama and the inclusion of the whole town in the production are terribly important. This version of the pageant ties into Regina Bendix’s

observations on the importance of volunteer associations in providing the support needed to create a pageant of any scale and grandeur. All the constituents in town have to buy-in and participate. As Jim Topic pointed out, however, that network of strong associations and key individuals has diminished over the years, to the point that it may be unsalvageable. For Mary Logan, who grew up in the town and sees the pageant and the story as part of her legacy, watching the pageant turn into a pared-down dinner theater is almost too much to bear. Although she realizes the difficulty of producing a pageant that has any of the efficacy that she feels it once exuded, she would rather try the old model than admit defeat.

As a performer and creative individual, Jim is far more interested in putting on a good show. If the original pageant lacks artistic value and feels outdated, he is behind altering the form to fit present needs and tastes. He'll even continue to call it a pageant. This is not to say that he does not deeply identify with the historical characters he performs onstage: he is busily trying to resurrect Oscar Rohde's blue cheese industry and to spark the civic flame of Lowell Horton. However, the performance is far more about himself and his contributions than desiring the social revolution of bringing in two hundred cast members to participate in telling the Group Story.

A similar rupture occurred with the replacement of the City of Joseph Pageant. From all accounts, it was a rollicking good show for the audience, (though admittedly corny by some standards). People loved the

large group dances and the fireworks at the end. Mixed in with the story of the Saints was an abundance of spectacle and entertainment. There was tremendous energy to having six hundred plus members in the cast and people from around the region looked forward to its annual appearance. Backstage, there was a deep sense of mission to the effort. Regional church members knew that this was their only chance to share their faith with their neighbors in an indirect and non-threatening way. And more importantly, this involvement in the group narrative of their faith with other members felt like a huge infusion of strength into the commitment of their own families to the church.

When the new Nauvoo Pageant was first performed, the immediate reaction by locals was to identify the loss of entertaining spectacle. A new score emphasizing hymns and sacred music replaced the original songs of City of Joseph. Church members from all over the country replaced the neighbors and friends who had made up the City of Joseph pageant, effectively displacing the feelings of regional solidarity. The new pageant so deeply reflected Mormon sensibilities and culture that those coming from outside did not necessarily feel drawn in the same way as before. For Debbie Hartley, the new pageant came easily, albeit with a sense of loss of the older social tradition. She readily took to the new script, music, and production style because they were in harmony with what she considered the purpose of a pageant: to deepen our connection to our heritage and our faith.

Interestingly, Ray Robinson and others who wrote the new pageant felt that they were bending the form intentionally. Much like the dismissive stance of Scott Parker (Institute of Outdoor Drama) who viewed pageants as a static portrayal of disconnected historical individuals pasted together by a narrator, the writers wanted to avoid this older style. More like the historical pageantry of the UNC Playmakers, they sought to build a dramatic narrative within the sequence of events that would be emotionally evocative. They wanted it to be a story that would define the Mormon experience in all times and places—not just in Nauvoo. What resulted is a pageant that seems to speak deeply to its own people.

Chapter Seven

The Grape Festival Pageant Daring to Dream: Background and Performance Description

The Nauvoo Grape Festival Pageant is sheer civic booster-ism at its best and it has a long line of precedence. In 1954, Anthony Parker published a how-to book on the production of community pageants titled, *Pageants: Their Presentation and Production*. The grandson of Louis Napoleon Parker, director of the wildly successful and influential English Sherbourne Pageant of 1905, the younger Parker could not contain his appreciation for the social efficacy of the form:

It is a Commemoration of Local Worthies. It is also a great Festival of Brotherhood; in which all distinctions of whatever kind are sunk in a common effort. It is, therefore, entirely undenominational and non-political. It calls together all the scattered kindred from all parts of the world. It reminds the old of the history of their home, and shows the young what treasures are in their keeping. It is the great incentive to the right kind of patriotism: love of hearth; love of town; love of county; love of England (Parker 1954:14).

Accompanying these performances came the expectation of group commitment to organize local committees overseeing fundraising, site development, script development, costuming, casting and directing, and publicity. The local community also furnished the historical research, the

props, the dancers, the music, and the actors. Glassberg traces this enthusiasm for cooperative, homemade bliss to the Arts and Crafts Movement that surfaced in England in the late 19th century in the writings of social critics and artists like John Ruskin who called for a return to Medieval and Renaissance handicraft and non-industrial modes of exchange and social interaction. As local residents participated in the artistic rendering of their own town, their ability to imagine and create and contribute to the life of the wider community would awaken and be used for the benefit of all.

This view of public spectacle and pageant as a vehicle for civic pride and engagement persisted in its voyage to America and took root in the proliferation of American civic pageants that focused on the story of hometown history. One of the leaders of the American version of this movement, William Chauncey Langdon, created a string of successful pageants in New England between 1911-1914. His signature pageant—the 150th Anniversary of Thetford, Vermont—sought to demonstrate the socially transformative power of pageants. Alongside the performance, he instigated the development of civic organizations like Campfire Girls and Boys Scouts, a community choir and orchestra, and the employment of agricultural consultants to area farmers. In his pageants, he insisted that “the place is the hero and the development of the community is the plot” (Glassberg 1990:78).

Despite the unfortunate fact that the civic revolution envisioned by Langdon and others was never systematically measured or evaluated afterwards, their conviction that democratic theater based around community life and stories of place could be strong social tools was not lost on the hundreds of communities around the U.S. who developed their own historical pageants. It is also interesting to note a historically strong commitment in the region around Nauvoo to civic enactments. Next door to Nauvoo, the town of Warsaw subscribed to a fundamental republicanism: “ ... it had a religious quality. Common democratic ideals bound the people together, and the rituals of self-government, such as local elections and city council meetings, were symbolic affirmations of those beliefs. Likewise, Fourth of July celebrations — marked by the erection of a liberty pole, patriotic speeches, and public reading of the Declaration of Independence—affirmed the community's ideological bond through symbolic participation in the origin of the republic” (“Our Anniversary” 1843), (Hallwas 1995:56).

To uncover the scope and lineage of community commemoration and pageantry in the region would require extensive archival research to find the ephemera of single-event commemorative and recurring civic pageants—certainly a good future project. The ubiquity of the form in the national public psyche might be realized in the creation of modern spoofs on the genre such as the episode of *The Simpsons* devoted to Lisa Simpson’s sad discovery of the overinflated worthiness of their town’s

founder when she tries to write a flattering tribute; as well as the popular pseudo-documentary, Waiting for Guffman (1996) that follows the creation of a commemorative pageant in small-town Missouri.

However, it is clear that the Grape Festival Pageant has direct lineage to the civic pageant movement and historical tableaux of the early 20th century by its sheer formulation. The pageant presents a series of key local events occurring over its known recorded history. The events occur in a tableaux style with the voice of a narrator framing these events with interpretation and meaning. The overall themes of perseverance and hard work are illustrated through a story line of rough wilderness settled by sturdy pioneers who rise above the capriciousness of the Mississippi River to persist into a joyful and satisfying present. Interspersed, the cast dances and sings and fills the outdoor stage with color and energy. This template, replicated hundreds of times across the country in other cities and towns in America, received a bit of a twist in Nauvoo. Nauvoo's Mayor Horton was extra savvy in his linkage to the French folk play of the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese. The town also had the compelling and fraught narratives of the Mormons and Icarians to spice up the drama beyond the usual run-of-the-mill rise of progress and industry to a present-day prosperity.

The Grape Festival Pageant would seem to be an entirely amateur affair, minus the fact that the music was written by a professionally trained musician: Reverend Libby, pastor of the nearby LaHarpe Union

Church, who wrote the original music for the pageant. He had received musical degrees and training at both the Boston Conservatory of Music and the University of Chicago, and theological training at the Chicago Theological Seminary. He and Mother Mary Paul collaborated on the script and music. Mother Mary Paul wrote the script of the Nauvoo Grape Pageant. A Benedictine nun who joined the convent in 1926, she was elected Prioress of the Benedictine order in 1955. She taught school for many years at St. Mary's Academy in town and was well acquainted with Nauvoo history and its people. In 1952 she wrote the pageant as an addition to the events surrounding The Grape Festival that had been started in 1937. At the request of Mayor Horton, she wove into the story line all the major strands of settlement and pivotal events and developed a narrative context for the introduction of the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese to the community, first performed in Nauvoo starting in 1939.

With an active churchgoing community and the resources of the Girls Academy, the town had a pool of ready theatrical and musical talent. The locals had also developed a strong network of organizations that could bring leadership to the endeavor. Between the Grape Festival Committee and the ecumenical council, the pageant was able to thrive in full form for decades. What the town was unable to mitigate, however, was the loss of the symbols lying at the heart of their festival and pageant as the wine industry slowly withered and the famed Nauvoo Blue Cheese was lost. Similarly, who could have foreseen the untimely death of

Lowell Horton and the partial unraveling of some of the town's strongest voluntary associations? However, the original pageant script and its performance in memory represent a classic expression of American civic pageantry. The year I attended the outdoor performance, which I describe below, was one of the last years the pageant was performed on the Sod Stage. However, much of the original script by Mother Mary Paul had already been altered. I will include both the script as written and departures from the script as performed. [For a full text, see Appendix 1].

The format of the pageant script follows a thematic form used in popular historical pageants being performed across America from the 1920s onward: the American wilderness inhabited by the noble savages who wisely and sorrowfully give their lands to the white settlers—those sturdy pioneers with a dream for a better future and a will to succeed. Various industries and developments come along, and with them arrive the hard workers and respectable ancestors of town citizenry to build up churches, schools, and a home on the frontier. Each of these historical tableaux are linked together by the voice of a narrator whose omniscience interprets and explains events as they unfold chronologically. Where this pageant departs from many others is in its interrupted narrative of unceasing progress. In the center of the pageant text, the Mormons and the Icarians successively establish themselves and then abandon the city to those who come later. Mother Mary Paul had the distinctive challenge of dealing with discontinuities: a past of communitarian experiments,

expulsion, and violence. The pageant mitigates these uncomfortable scenes in two ways: by having the descendents enact these portions as forceful embodiment of our ability to transcend and overcome; and by using the naturalizing metaphor of the river and its capriciousness as a way to account for and understand social discord.

What stands out about the Grape Festival Pageant when compared to many other historical pageants is its textual flexibility. Because the script has consistently been “owned” and presented through the descendents of those portrayed, a surprising amount of artistic license seems to have permeated the pageant performances. At various points throughout the 2007 production, actors replaced the ideologies and prescribed words with their own interpretations and perceived meanings. The collaborative approach to its staging and direction kept the pageant from being frozen into an overly prescribed form and probably opened the door for the dramatic alterations and substations of more current productions.

According to Mary Logan, the “town fathers” intended for this pageant to be a way to share the town’s history with visitors from other towns. At one time, other towns had active festivals and pageants as well, but according to the festival program book, the Nauvoo Grape Festival is “probably the oldest festival in west central Illinois,” bringing in thousands of visitors from a tri-state region. The “Sod Stage,” which was built in the early 1960s through funds from the State of Illinois, slopes

upward from the seating to a flat plateau, with a hill rising just beyond as backdrop. The action occurs on the sod, without any permanent platforms or raised areas. Tall pines grow up along the perimeter. A handful of telephone posts are wired with floodlights that light the performance area, attracting swarms of summer insects. On stage right, a plywood shed in the implied shape of a riverboat, houses all of the production's electronics, including the sound system, narrator microphone, lighting board and such. To the left of stage left, the cast of over one hundred is partially hidden by trees. In this makeshift space, a group of largely women and children with a handful of men were organizing their costumes and props just out of the main sight of the audience.

When I attended the 2007 pageant, a brass band played march tunes onstage to set a festive and patriotic tone for the opening of the pageant. Because the pageant occurs as a small component in a larger festival, the sounds of the carnival next door, beer tent band, cars driving and general commotion bled over into the pageant area. Although over two hundred folding chairs were set up in front of the stage, only about a third of them were filled that evening—the majority probably being family members and friends of those performing alongside a few LDS missionary couples. The pageant was also scheduled to be performed the following evening as well. Because the performance was outside, the show could not begin until the sun went down at eight o'clock.

Many people obviously knew each other and milled around visiting and making introductions until the Chairman of the Festival, Allen Berry, came onstage in his cowboy hat and red-checkered shirt to welcome the audience and explained, "We're here to portray the history of Nauvoo, beginning back when the Indians were here. We have a couple hundred years of history in this town and it's very unique. Some of it's well-known and some of it's not well-known, but we hope when you see the story as it's carried out here in this pageant tonight, that we will make you much more informed as to what our history is." He then drew attention to the Grand Marshall of the next day's Feature Parade who was sitting on the front row. "And on Sunday she will celebrate her 100th birthday, so therefore she has been around, as have a few others, for all seventy of the festivals that have been held." The audience cheered and joined the band in singing "Happy Birthday." With this opening introduction, all those watching were invited to partake of the shared past; to become the receptacles of a genuine and complete Nauvoo history and partakers in the continuities enjoyed by the elderly audience members who had been present since the very beginning.

With the departure of the brass band, an electric organ backstage prefaced the festival performance with the introduction to "The Star Spangled Banner." A horse and rider bearing the American flag came onstage with two teenaged soloists to lead the audience in the singing of the national anthem. Then, with the flag planted in the sod, the narrator

could begin: a man in a slouchy driver's cap, and loose shirt with sleeves rolled up walked out with a microphone in hand and somewhat adlibbed a welcoming narrative based loosely on the script.

The original written script, "From Quashquame to Nauvoo" opens with a call from the narrator to a boy resting on the ground to stop lying around and to sing a song, "Old Man River." This evocation of the Mississippi River continues throughout the rest of the show as a constant presence and symbol of the rise and fall of those who live on its shores. The narrator introduces himself as Steve, an *old* barge captain, who has known the river in many seasons and conditions. The river is the *old* Mississippi, a grand *old* river that is anthropomorphized as masculine, moody, and powerful. And one of its gems "is one little town I am thinking of today sunning itself in beauty and historic lore. Crowning a bluff where the mighty river makes a giant horseshoe bend on its never-ending flight to the ocean...the village of Nauvoo." As a member of the audience, I was feeling the high value placed on historicity and the durability of Nauvoo as a place of legend and story.

The narrator in the script continues to introduce each group in turn, framing the description in terms of remembrance and stories passed down. With each migration, a tableau is created on the stage as actors represent each particular group. The Sauk and Fox Indian descendents who participate enact an Indian village and ceremonial dance: "I can almost see the happy village now." The narrator talks to the

audience in a familiar, insider way: “You know there was lots of trouble among the Indians those days.” Considering how many times a local may have seen the pageant in a lifetime, they should certainly know what is coming next: Captain James White, “a splendid young adventurer” who is seeking “a better world and a better way.” This strapping young actor hands Chief Quashquame two hundred sacks of corn for the land, leading into the Chief’s speech.

This is one of only three scripted places where someone other than the narrator speaks aloud. In 2007, the Indians, represented by a group called “The Thunderbird Society” in the festival program book, consisted of mainly women and children dressed in a mixture of calico and leather, beads and feathers enacting cooking around a fire and gathering around a drum. The actor for Chief Quashquame, an older balding man, abandoned the written script altogether with its stilted “Great Spirit very unhappy. Tomorrow Indian go westward”-type speech that frames the Indian removal as unfortunate but destined. Instead, this Quashquame critiqued the idea of owning land and framed the departure as the lack of choice of the Indians: “I am too old to fight for my people.” This exchange delighted me for its ability to open the pageant narrative for more contemporary historical understandings. Because the owners of that portion of the script had proprietary rights through being descendents of the Sauk, they claimed the right to depart from the original script for their own purposes. A pantomime shows the exchange

of land for two hundred bags of corn and the Indians depart back to stage left.

Thus begins the briefly named city of “Commerce.” Onstage the “FUR TRADERS SURVEY, LAY OUT THE CITY OF COMMERCE, DO FUR TRADING THINGS.” In just short nine years, White has cleaned out his source of hides and betrays the script’s estimation of him as one “seeking a better way.” Rather, it probably should have read, “By reason of personal gain and a need for a new source of hides, Captain White decided to move on.” But as we know, heritage is the selective use of history with the intent to inspire.

The 2007 narrator shortened “Joseph Smith” to “Joe Smith” in his introduction of the Mormon scene, calling Joe’s followers onstage to a place of refuge from the persecutions of their Missouri days. Here again, the performance took a radical departure from the script as thirty “saints” arrived onstage singing a common Mormon hymn, “The Spirit of God.” Gathering the people round his feet, the actor playing Joseph Smith launched into an extended sermon evoking “the fundamental principles of our faith” and entreating all to be diligent and faithful. “Brothers and sisters, let’s build Nauvoo!” After this pious moment, the actors begin moving around the stage, pantomiming teaching schoolchildren, talking, and embracing.

Neither the hymn nor Joseph’s speech appear in Mother Mary Paul’s version of the pageant script. She penned voiceless, happy

Mormons who come onto the stage to start their new life without subjecting the audience to an earful of proselytizing. A boat whistle blows, reminding the audience of the river and showing the arrival of Mormon converts from distant lands to Nauvoo. A song original to the show is sung by two local teenagers, “Come to Historic Nauvoo”—an echo of the influential 1930s and 40s Mayor of Nauvoo, Mayor Horton, who insisted on pairing “historic” and “Nauvoo” in his everyday interactions. “Hello from historic Nauvoo!” or “Welcome to historic Nauvoo!” Thus the town is crowned with historicity from its infancy and booster-ism is evoked as an enduring value.

Now the audience would expect strong visual action as the actors reenact the building of the original Nauvoo temple: “It was built of native limestone, hammers and chisels fashioning and polishing the massive pieces of stone.” Timbers are rafted and raised and the Mormons give their last cheer before the forces of the river evoke the trouble ahead. “You know it is wonderful to watch the old river. ...However, suddenly almost unnoticed, the waters begin to rise. ... and only those who know Old Man River can know his dormant power that sometimes rises against earth and man in the terrible word ... FLOOD!” And so come the tides as mobs rail against the Mormons, kill Joseph, and drive the people from their homes.

The enactment of the scene in 2007 lacked any visual focus. As the Mormon settlers walked somewhat aimlessly around the space, a group

of men representing the law came from stage right to arrest Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. Joseph embraced his wife Emma and the two men were led offstage with little fanfare. Back in the riverboat, the backstage crew fired off two shots in the air. Here, the script tells the cast to “PAUSE FOR FUNERAL PROCESSION.” Four pallbearers carried a black casket from stage right to stage left. With the scene “BURNING OF THE TEMPLE, the lights were dimmed for a moment and men’s voices catcalled from stage left. In the original script, “The city itself becomes a personified witness. “The City of Faith and Vision was stunned” at the sight of the temple in ruins.” The Saints onstage gathered up belongings and left the stage with doleful organ music playing in the background, interrupted when the cheery young couple come back to sing another original song called “Moving Song.”

Thus, the narrator sends off the beleaguered Mormons “to various factions in the North, South, and East, and a large group to the West with Brigham Young. Joseph’s wife Emma stays in Nauvoo, where her son, Joseph Smith the third takes over the reorganization of the church.” Meanwhile, large cut-outs of the letters N-A-U-V-O-O were starting to be placed along the highest part of the hill, each decorated with a symbols of the history—wild branches on the N, red bricks on the A and so forth. Here we see the true hero of the tale—Nauvoo itself. As a distinctive place, its letters will frame the development of its own history in visual terms of economic production and progress. Remove any letter from its

name and you will lose a piece of its story as well as its whole identity. This pageant's portrayal of Nauvoo rests on a narrative of plurality of peoples and industries that are deeply linked together.

With the Mormon departure come the utopian communists. The 2007 performance of the Icarian scene followed the script closely, with the Cabet actor reading his speech directly from a piece of paper. "CABET ENTERS AND LOOKS OVER LAND/ NEGOTIATES/ ICARIANS ENTER"—a "new flame burst forth." Their story of struggle and near extinction leads them to the ghost town of Nauvoo where they can buy up the properties for a pittance. Here they can follow the vision of Etienne Cabet, who gathers the followers around him for a full page of "PEP TALK" and then enactment of getting to work. Yet again, paradise is lost to "TROUBLE BREWING" and the break up of the commune as disagreements arise as to how to continue forward. Mother Mary Paul, in her pious appraisal, explains that "Communism without the help and blessing of God had been tried and found wanting." Here we are prompted to feel a patriotic fervor that God's grace is over all those who will ask His blessing and acknowledge His hand in all endeavors. This leads beautifully into the arrival of the blessed Catholics.

Into this vacuum of leadership comes "the good priest, Father Alleman," bearing the gift that would revive Nauvoo and once again bring prosperity—a grape vine. This tiny import from France "was a thread of gold in the historical tapestry of the City Beautiful." To highlight its

arrival, an original song is sung, “This Tender Vine” and a big letter V covered with grapevines is erected upstage. Now the grape cutters and wine makers enter to plant the vineyards. More pioneers arrive “FROM ALL DIRECTIONS CARRYING THEIR FLAGS.” Each group bears their stereotype proudly: “The happy French, the deliberate Germans, the energetic Swiss, the conservative English, and the care-free Irish.” This is the multicultural, democratic America – Finally! This was the most visually dynamic part of the 2007 pageant with bright costumes and flags being run across the stage and there was almost a feeling of palpable relief in the air that the story was finally beginning. *Here* were the ancestors of the audience ready to build the bridge to the existing present.

At this point, the performed pageant departed from script, skipping stage directions for a dance and an exhaustive review of all the religious denominations who came to Nauvoo and built the town: the “self-sacrificing Lutherans,” “Devout Methodists,” Presbyterians, the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints, all named and welcomed as they bring “PEACE AND HARMONY ETC.” In this section of the script there was also some updating and editing with the added mention of descendents of the Brigham Young Mormons who “returned to restore many of their old home and culminating with the rebuilding of the Mormon Temple.” Instead of this text, the 2007 performance included a

solo of a young woman singing Bing Crosby's 1949 hit, "Dear Hearts and Gentle People."

I love those dear hearts and gentle people
Who live in my hometown
Because those dear hearts and gentle people
Will never ever let you down

They read the good book
From Friday till Monday
That's how the weekend goes
I've got a dream house
I'll build there one day
With picket fence and rambling rose

Off towards stage left there started to be commotion and movement. A group of young people was milling about and then a full-size threshing machine started chugging across the stage with lights and a blowing horn. The second true hero of the pageant had arrived and the audience burst into spontaneous applause. A new narrative was added to the script that described the coming of the farmers and their fields of corn, wheat, and beans. A large "O" was erected with gears from machinery covering its surface.

The narrator then abandoned some of the dreary text of Mother Mary Paul who described the Prohibition days when the wine vats were abandoned, “mute witnesses of the instability of all things natural and human.” And rather than having the story of blue cheese told by a “shepherd boy” actor, the narrator recounted the story while a young girl “shepherdess” with a dog skipped around the stage, acting out the narrative: how she discovered by accident how to make blue cheese. Leaving her rye bread and milk in a limestone cave for several weeks, she found that the mold made a delicious cheese. Her town now became renowned not only for its wine, but for its cheese as well.

Now the final big letter O with “blue cheese veins” arrived at the top of the stage. The dairymaids and cheese makers entered the scene to reclaim the empty limestone wine cellars. In one sentence, the Prohibition Act was repealed and the grape cutters and wine makers reentered. “Now in the city of Nauvoo may be seen each fall groups of happy vine-gatherers carrying baskets of luscious fruit from which eventually sparkling wines are made.” In this abundance, everyone danced the Virginia Reel while the audience cheered and clapped.

Then the lights went low for the culminating scene of the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese “as celebrated in Roquefort, France.” With the Wedding March piped in over the speakers, the wedding party entered, a very young Flower Girl and Ring Bearer, school-aged Best Man and Maid of Honor, and then a teenaged Bride and Groom followed by the Priest

from the local Catholic Church. The “bride” came forward with the bottle of wine, and the “groom” came forward with the cheese to place on a wooden barrel. The priest then encircled both with a barrel hoop “ring,” completing the “marriage.” With this action, the stage went silent. The music stopped. In this dramatic pause, the narrator announced, “And this year folks, our bride and groom are Peyton Hopp and Andrew Boylin.” The audience cheered and whistled.

This scene represents civic booster-ism at its best. When Mayor Horton cast about in his mind a way to bring good publicity and marketing potential to his small town, he made the brilliant Roquefort connection. Wine and cheese make a perfect marriage in Nauvoo as well as in France. Why couldn’t he borrow an already existing tradition and make it a local ritual? The persistence of marriage of the wine and cheese in Nauvoo into the present corroborates his hunch that the symbolism and ritual of the event would quickly enter local tradition and persist—probably longer than he would have imagined.

In this moment, there did not seem to be much more to do or say. In the original script, the narrator alludes to the audience’s suspension of disbelief during the performance and welcomes them back from their magical journey. “Memory is the magician that enables us to reconstruct the past. ... Data, legend, myth each form an integral part in the lovely mosaic that makes up our fair city ... Nauvoo, the City Beautiful.” Instead, the 2007 narrator went a little more “home town” in flavor. “Well, you

have heard and witnessed a story of Nauvoo and a tale of lights and shadows, of a typical American people in a most unusual setting. We hope that you will always think kindly of our people who are glad to welcome you here. If you're happy to be with us, we ask you to join in singing, "Come to Historic Nauvoo."

Unfortunately, the tune and words of the song are not particularly memorable, so the young couple with the microphone reemerged to lead the song, singing alone until the final chorus when some members of the audience joined in with "Come to historic Nauvoo, City of dreams. Here in historic Nauvoo, Come, dreamers of dreams! Here in Historic Nauvoo, Dreams still come true—For all the dreams men have dreamed, Still live in you!" Fortunately, the words to the chorus appeared in the back of the Official Souvenir Program to help those who do not know the lyrics.

Although the written script remained the key structuring agent for the show in 2007, there were many points when parts of the text were rearranged, completely bypassed or replaced. It is important to note that stage directions are nearly absent from this script. Their sketchiness leaves a great deal of room for interpretation and/or insider knowledge of how such sections are to be enacted. Set off in all caps, they indicate the movement of people on and off stage, songs to be sung, and the designation of particular vignettes. The written pageant script's overall tone and plot seemed to be falling apart in this performance. This was partially due to the abandonment of large portions of the text, including

bridging narrations that explained the meaning and inter-related flow of events; it also was exacerbated by the speakers in various scenes bringing their own terms of expression and personalized ideologies to the performance. It felt as if the unifying thread of solidarity, shared dreams, and forward visions present in the text had been deemed irrelevant.

Mother Mary Paul's carefully crafted narrative of the unified City Beautiful felt a bit tossed to the wind.

What was occurring onstage that year was a reflection of what was occurring backstage. The town was just coming off of five banner years of intense LDS tourism and resettlement and the fact that thirty Mormons would crowd the pageant scene and use the event as a soapbox did not feel neighborly. It was okay for the Indians to have their say because it would not make much of a difference anyway. Meanwhile, the rock n' roll sounds from over at the Beer Tent might seem a bit enticing in place of a teenaged girl singing a Bing Crosby song. Fortunately, the threshing machine added some bulk and spectacle where it might be lacking otherwise. However, the irony of skipping shepherds and maidens carrying baskets of plastic grapes would be difficult to miss for anyone with any level of historic sensibility. Somehow, the Civic Myth of the pluralistic democracy represented by throngs of town folk seemed to have lost its way in the context of the present. The crowds had not come—either to participate or to celebrate.

Now the pageant occurs indoors with a cast of fourteen and an open-ended agenda. The Sod Stage lies empty. Has the pageant lost its way? Did it need to hold firmly to the original script with its flowery and highly stylized language and commitment to large crowd scenes? Did a strong group of individuals need to step forward and carry the day or has the pageant run its course of utility to Nauvoo? Is a small-scale performance by local historians and theater types dynamic enough to keep historical memory alive? Does Nauvoo already have more than enough historical recreation and interpretation going on without its annual presence? Those are all good questions that would be difficult to answer. Perhaps it would be worth considering a brand-new outdoor pageant reflecting more modern tastes and with a cast of hundreds. Maybe.

Chapter Eight

The Nauvoo Pageant Calling Us Home

When the original script was retired after 50 years, it was the last representative of a lost art form: the American community pageant. Times had changed, and communities had stopped producing founder's day and Fourth of July pageant celebrations, the tradition from which "America's Witness for Christ" had developed. The audience was now accustomed to films and television and could not understand a presentation of unrelated "scenes on a theme." The time had come to completely rework the pageant at Hill Cumorah for a modern audience.."

Gerald S. Artgetsinger on Hill Cumorah Pageant, 2004.

The Nauvoo Pageant presents a different lineage that is wrapped in a fairly unique historical trajectory. As the church started to reach milestones of their own story, a consciousness of the value of those memories began to take hold. The earliest memorial efforts centered around pioneer monuments and later, sites associated with the prophet Joseph Smith. A group of historically minded women took on the job of guardians and keepers of memory's flame. Following the model of the DAR, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers crisscrossed the Mormon Trail erecting markers and publishing songbooks, pamphlets, and organizing

public programs to heighten awareness of the sacrifices and fortitude of the Mormon ancestors.²⁷

At the turn of the last century, church leaders also became increasingly concerned with the both the loss of the pioneer generation who was passing away, and the need to create an historical image distanced from the controversies of polygamy and other non-mainstream practices (Pykles 2010:20). The LDS Church Historian's office published quite a few works at this time and there was a move to purchase some key historical sites, including Carthage Jail (1903), the Joseph Smith birthplace (1905), the Smith Farm in Palmyra, New York (1907) and after much effort, the Hill Cumorah property (1928).²⁸ (Concomitantly, the Reorganized LDS, concerned with the move on shared history, purchased the Nauvoo House, Smith Homestead, and Joseph Smith's Mansion House between 1909 and 1917, with exhibition starting in 1918 (2010:26-27). The LDS Church also organized commemorative celebrations "around key historical events and markers over the 20th century—many of them held at sites significant to the faith, including the 1947 commemorative motorcade that followed the Mormon Trail from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City" (2010:22). These kinds of events had the impact of increasing

²⁷ This credit to the DUP is briefly described in Walker, Ronald B., David J. Whittaker, James B. Allen. (2001). *Mormon History*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 37-38.

²⁸ This story of patience and perseverance is chronicled in David F. Boone's 2004 article "A Man Raised Up": The Role of Willard W. Bean in the Acquisition of the Hill Cumorah. *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. 13(1-2):24-37.

visitation to LDS historical sites and inculcating reverence in a new generation.

This is not to say that the leadership or organizational structure of the Mormon Church nurtured the seeds of a precocious historic preservationism or the nostalgic sensibilities of a later age. To the contrary, much of what was older construction tended to be torn down and replaced by the church with little regard for heritage. A regrettable case in point was the demolition of the Old Salt Lake Theater in 1928. In a time of financial uncertainty, and when the costs of theater operations and upkeep greatly exceeded income, then-president Heber J. Grant reluctantly sold the completely hand-built structure and an adjoining piece of property to the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company for \$200,000.²⁹ Public opposition to the demolition of the Salt Lake Theatre and, earlier, the original Social Hall (1921) appealed to sentiments that such buildings would “engender sacred memories for the uplift and benefit of the community and for generations yet unborn” (Sunstone 1983:68). But often, more practical and modernist instincts prevailed and history was consigned to memorializing plaques.

The effort at record keeping among the Saints has been, however, an organizationally prescribed and diligent endeavor. “The keeping of records is done in response to a direct commandment from the Lord and

²⁹ This story is described in detail in Ronald W. Walker and Alexander M. Starr’s 1989 article, *Shattering the Vase: the Razing of the Old Salt Lake Theatre*. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57(1):64-88.

is considered a sacred trust and obligation” (Ludlow 1992:1194). Indeed, on the very day the church was organized, Joseph Smith received a revelation: “Behold, there shall be a *record kept among you*” (Doctrine & Covenants 21:1). Three main areas have been deemed essential: “(1) accounts of God’s dealings with his children (i.e. the scriptures, for example), (2) records of religious ordinances (i.e. baptism), and (3) histories of nations and peoples, including personal histories” (1992:1195).

This injunction to keep organizational records, family histories, and personal journals appears regularly in church magazines and sermons. An emotional appeal to its importance can be found in President Spencer W. Kimball’s promise that, “As our posterity read of our life’s experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us. And in the glorious day when our families are together in the eternities, we will already be acquainted” (Kimball 1980:61).

In addition to this preoccupation with keeping records, the LDS culture has a long history of social recreation through the performing arts. Unlike the opposition showed the theater by other denominations of its era, the LDS church actively embraced and welcomed the theater into its community life. Both men and women felt equally free to enhance their everyday lives by participation in staged performance. The content of these early shows was not pious or based on religious exhortation. Nor were they staged as social or political commentary against the United

States government. The plays were popular scripts of their day, often set in European or more exotic settings. The tastes of audiences tended towards high drama or slapstick humor and functioned as both an escape and creative outlet from the toil of daily life. The culture also cultivated an openness to a multiplicity of social roles for an individual—where a farmer could also be a bishop at the church, and a murderous villain onstage; a mother of six, the congregation’s choir director, and a dramatic heroine in a stirring community production (Lamar, 27).

When the Saints built their city in Nauvoo, one of the earliest complete structures was a Cultural Hall where performances could be given formally. Apostles like Brigham Young even took an active part in the casts of shows, and the formation of the “Nauvoo School of Dramatics” testifies to the enthusiasm of the early Saint for the theater. Anticipating the hardships of the trail west, when the Mormon migration crossed from Illinois to Salt Lake, “trail shows” were encouraged by then-second church president Brigham Young. He felt the spirit of the travelers would be lifted if they included music, dance, and theatrical performance in their evening encampments.

When the pioneers arrived in Salt Lake in 1847, a bush bowery was immediately erected of canyon logs, crossbeams, branches and willows. Here the people could gather and performances could be organized and enjoyed. In 1848, a second bowery was needed and again in October of 1849, a sixty by one hundred foot bowery was built on the south side of

the temple square (Maughan 1961:11-21). Within four years of arrival, a Social Hall became the setting for theatrical performance. One of the greatest testaments to the church's commitment to dramatic arts was the completion of the Salt Lake Theater in 1862. Based on the architect's admiration for London's Drury Lane Theater, the massive and costly Grecian Doric structure was completed in Salt Lake before any other major buildings such as a conference center or the temple (1961:75-85). From this enthusiasm grew a network of community-based theaters across the settled Mormon West as Brigham Young sent the growing body of Saints to colonize any habitable land.

In "Community Dramatics in Early Castle Valley," Elmo G. Geary and his son, writer Edward A. Geary collaborated on an article describing the blossoming of community theater in the last area of Utah to be settled—the region east of the Wasatch Plateau. From its settlement in the 1870s until church-run programming, school dramatics, and picture shows gradually took over in the 1920s, the small towns of the region enjoyed scores of local performances every year. "If theater in Utah differed from the national trends in any significant way, it was probably in the more widespread community involvement in amateur dramatics. National theater histories usually date the "little theater" movement from the 1890s. The Salt Lake Social Hall, however, functioned as a little theater from its completion in 1852, with several productions staged each season by the Deseret Dramatic Association. As Mormon

communities were established throughout the core region in the 1850s and 1860s, they typically constructed their own multipurpose social halls and developed local theatrical groups somewhat on the Salt Lake model (Geary and Geary 19985:113-114).

This open and supportive environment attracted the legendary Maud May Babcock to the University of Utah where “she taught several thousand students oratory, speech, physical education, and acting for forty-six years.” Trained in the National School of Oratory in Philadelphia and from the Lyceum School of Acting in New York City, Babcock was well prepared to promote the performing arts. While teaching at Harvard University Summer School in 1891, she was recruited to come to Utah by Susa Young Gates, Brigham Young’s suffragette-minded daughter. By 1897 Babcock had organized the influential University Dramatic Club, which launched a regular run of productions. She also helped found the College of Physical Education, which included instruction in dance—a forerunner of the famous University of Utah dance program. Miss “B” “trained not only four generations of college students in speech and drama but many others through her work as a devout Mormon in the LDS Mutual Improvement Association” (Lamar 1999:15-22).

The Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) was created to oversee social activity in the church in the 1880s and 1890s. Eventually, it evolved into the organ that administered social programs for the young men and young women of the church. This attention to the social sphere reflected

the belief that “Recreational activities can strengthen social connections and a sense of community. ...Recreation—good Latter-day Saint recreation—is one of the devices by which we may help the young people of this Church to learn and love the gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thereby learn to live righteously” (Petersen p. 554 quoted in Ludlow 1992:1081). To expand that idea further, there was a sense that this kind of recreation was good for *all* of its members: “It is likely that the large number of converts from many nationalities and cultures ...were more easily assimilated into the new community of Saints when recreational activities were a common denominator (Skidmore, p. 9, quoted in Ludlow 1992:1081). This conviction translated into the architectural tradition of constructing halls and stages adjacent to or adjoining chapels so that social activities could be promulgated: games, sports, music, drama, speech, and dance.

One of the more enduring folk drama forms that grew out of this context was the Roadshow. In “The Roadshow: A Mormon Theatrical Phenomenon,” scholar Janna M. Larsen explains that roadshows are a form of amateur theater in which local congregational units develop an original script based on a theme. Generally lasting around fifteen minutes, the shows traditionally traveled from building to building, culminating in a competition. Road shows also include choreographed dancing and music either composed or with lyrics set to familiar tunes. This theatrical seedbed has had a long and fruitful life in LDS culture,

often including casts of all ages as well as the contributions of those providing the technical and production support required.

Pinpointing the first roadshow is difficult, but a Roadshow Manual published by the church in 1974 explained that an ecclesiastical leader in the Provo, UT area recalled a roadshow being organized in 1916. The first published report occurred in the May 1924 issue of *The Young Women's Journal*, stating that The Ensign Stake Roadshow “has become an annual event.” (Larsen 2000:5) In the decades that followed, roadshows proliferated across the western states and throughout the church. Adding to their popularity was their inclusion in an annual program called June Conference. Held in Salt Lake City for over twenty years, June Conferences were a training ground and launching platform for church directed programs—particularly those for youth. The June conferences became known for showcasing artistic performances. The June Conference of 1950 began to include annual workshops on roadshow production, guidelines, and tips for successful shows. At this same time, roadshows were officially placed under the direction of the Church Drama Committee and were made an integral part of the church-wide drama program.

A culminating event was the June Conference of 1960 when casts from California, Utah, Arizona, Texas, Idaho, and Oregon gathered for “The Greatest Youth Drama Festival ... in the World.” However, this kind of “all-church” fervor was tempered as membership in the church became

more and more global and leadership sought to implement programs that could be implemented anywhere in the world. In this spirit, the last June Conference was held in 1973 and the roadshow moved from official endorsement back to the grassroots level with local leadership leading the movement. Small shows of support continued throughout the seventies and eighties with publications and handbooks. However, a search of the term “roadshow” in church periodicals from the past four decades shows that the frequency of the term declines from 35 in the 1970s, to 12 in the 1980s, 4 in the 1990s and 2 in the 2000s.

In January of 1984, the church’s General Activities Committee published a new Theater Manual accompanied by an August article in the church-wide magazine, *The Ensign*. Author Kathleen Lubeck interviewed Cultural Arts Specialist for the General Activities Committee, Pat Davis, about the significance of the roadshow. Pat describes what might be termed an indigenous folk drama form: “I sometimes think we don’t realize what we have in roadshows. Roadshows are a unique LDS art form, and an exciting showcase for talents. Every would-be composer, choreographer, director, singer, playwright, and dancer, has the opportunity to hone skills and try them before the public” (Lubeck 1984).

Naturally, this theatrical activity has generated a group of people who not only like shows, but that have learned how to put on shows. One of the first people asked to “put on shows” in the newly built Visitors Center in Nauvoo (1971) was LDS composer and playwright Nonie Nelsen

Sorensen. Growing up in Salt Lake City in the 1920s and 30s, she and her sisters learned piano from her mother. At an early age she showed an affinity for piano and composing. She has memories of her mother being in charge of writing many scripts and scores for roadshows. When she attended University of Utah in the 1940s, a professor there urged her to pursue a dance degree, which she chose to despite it not being her primary artistic interest or form.

In her early-married years, she was called to serve on the Young Women's General Board, an organization overseeing church-wide programs for young women aged 12-18. She was asked to be directly involved in developing the large performance spectacles involved in those events—music and dance and hundreds of participants - a process she found quite exhausting, yet instructional. Over the many years she raised her eleven children, she found herself called upon repeatedly to use her significant composing and script-writing skills to create all kinds of theater pieces. One important effort was the script and show that she and her sisters wrote for a family reunion in honor of their great-grandfather, Joseph F. Smith. That performance was a big hit and she was approached many times by other families with illustrious ancestors to create a script and musical score for their families: Heber C. Kimball, John M. Browning, and others. She did not feel that she was ever seeking out “something to do.” Rather, she felt she was devoted primarily to her family, but was

asked repeatedly throughout her life to meet a request that would use her talents and abilities.

From 1980-1988 Nonie and her husband Maynard were asked by the church to spend their summers working at the Nauvoo Visitors Center. At first it was “a patchwork effort, trying to get the warm bodies I needed to fill the stage of the Nauvoo Visitor’s Center and the Cultural Hall.” The first four summers, Nonie had to draw on any local talent she could drum up for cast members. She found the local Methodist preacher, William Myers, who was teaching at the Catholic Girl’s School in Nauvoo. “He was an outgoing, theatrical type who thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the productions.”

She wrote the scripts for two full-size shows to be performed for visitors. After two slow summers, they saw a gradual increase in visitors. Over those years she wrote a number of mini-vignettes that focused on the characters and history of Nauvoo and began producing them. As for her feelings about the City of Joseph and other pageants, Nonie says, “I am not a pageant person. I do not like that form.” She often finds that “they drag on too long, their timing is off, and the music is sometimes awful.” She did, however, like the Martin Harris Pageant in Clarkston, UT and the Castle Valley Pageant in Castle Valley, UT. Somehow those pageants managed to have more modern sensibilities and better writing.

At the end of our conversation, Nonie expressed her concern about the seeming demise of theater in current LDS practice as the emphasis

has shifted to sports, and traditions like the road shows have been abandoned as less and less socio/cultural practices are being supported by church programs. Nonie feels that people are not willing to put the time in that it takes to make a production happen. She is alarmed to see that some of the new church buildings do not have stages-- a marked departure from early days of the church where the theater went up alongside the church and the temple as a key feature of the LDS landscape.

Her perception is echoed by an observation made by historian Steve Olsen, currently the Curator of Historic Sites for the church. In conversation, he pointed out that in the early years of gathering, the church had a strong geographic base. Membership was concentrated in key population areas. As membership spread and the idea of gathering to Zion waned, the sense of community was maintained through a flurry of ecclesiastical programs, curriculum, and social life centered round the church building. Moving into the 21st century, the church has seen tremendous growth worldwide. Many of the cultural programs and activities of the North American church could not transfer well. There has been a move to emphasize the temple as the main focus of membership and the key symbol of unified effort.³⁰

³⁰ Sociologist Armand Mauss describes the social evolution of the church in its balancing act between assimilation and distinction from the surrounding world. His view on this simplification of church programs points to some of the potential loss of social cohesion: “Gone are the regular work projects for fund-raising or for the welfare program; gone are

Interestingly, there are only two kinds of spaces in Mormondom that are publicly blessed and dedicated by the apostles of the church: temples and historic sites. Specifically charged as living witnesses of Christ, the apostles call on the powers of heaven to make a place holy, a point of connection between heaven and earth. Here God's purposes will be carried forward as part of a transcendent plan. As the church has continued to actively develop and expand their number of visitor centers, they are creating a network of officially sacred spaces. It is worth noting that during this same period, church president Gordon B. Hinckley announced a dramatic acceleration of temple building across the globe, ensuring that larger numbers of members would have proximity to a temple.

These introductory thoughts establish the historical and social context of LDS performance traditions and lead us into a consideration of the Nauvoo Pageant itself. Since its first performance the summer of 2004, attendance over its five week run has averaged 35,000 per year. For its 10th anniversary summer in 2014, the Pageant Presidency invited the brand new British Pageant, Truth Will Prevail, to run alternating nights in

the speech and drama and dance competitions provided by the old Mutual Improvement Association; and gone are most of the meetings of the various auxiliaries during the week, at which the Saints were able to renew community ties with other Mormons outside of Sunday worship. The loss of these occasions for maintaining a sense of unique Mormon identity, through frequent participation in the life of the Mormon community, is likely to make that sense of identity increasingly problematic and thus only encourage the recent resort to fundamentalist extremes in search of the boundaries of Mormonness" (1994:207). It is interesting to consider the pageants as a vestige of the past or as a cultural corrective to the threat of a loss of group identity.

Nauvoo. Pageant President John Ricks reported a jump in attendance reaching 58,000. Because the Nauvoo Pageant does not allow recordings to be made and distributed, audiences must come and be present. The pageant is well publicized in church media and periodicals and much of the social impetus to attend circulates by word of mouth. Considering the church membership is nearly 13 million worldwide, the number of members who actually make the journey is statistically small. However, the inclusion of the Nauvoo story in church curriculum materials and its continuing popularity ensure its general familiarity to those in the faith (as evidenced by Jeff Hancks' story of visiting Salt Lake City in Chapter One).

This limitation of recordings means that my description is drawn from memory, an audio recording of portions of the soundtrack, and the written script, resulting in a description that will be more general than specific to any one given performance. I have appended an extensive description of the entire pageant (Appendix 2), but will limit my description here to a few key elements of the performance that illustrate the power of the Nauvoo Pageant to elicit a sense of belonging and belief for those participating as cast members and as audience.

The Nauvoo Pageant takes place in a larger complex of events, much like the Grape Festival Pageant and its accompanying carnival, car show, parade, and flea market elements. A large field beyond the seating for the audience contains an area marked off for the Country Fair with

patriotic banners of red, white, and blue. Cast members in training are charged with running the pioneer games and activities the week that they are not onstage. Engaged in stilt-walking, stick-pulling, square dancing, and stickball, among other things, they are in full costume, laughing, sweating, and mingling with the visitors as they enter the space. (One of the evenings, the first week of the Pageant, the Pageant Presidency sponsors a Community Dinner, providing a sit-down dinner for any townsfolk in Nauvoo willing to come down to the flats for some fellowship).

In the rear, a large concession building provides fundraising opportunities for rotating civic and religious organizations in Nauvoo to sell hot dogs, popcorn, and other refreshments. Although the locals may avoid participating as audience members, they do avail themselves of this tourism perk. To the other side, a Family History tent shields patrons interested in looking up their genealogy on one of the many computers set up, with the added bonus of being able to see if you are related to any of the characters in the Nauvoo Pageant. This represents a fascinating pathway for someone who arrives as a self-perceived outsider to suddenly shift to a genealogically defined insider. Scores of earnest LDS missionary couples, identified by their nametags and pleasant smiles, move through the crowd meeting and greeting. Across from the entrances, several anti-Mormon protestors keep a respectful distance from the event, handing out alternative programs to incoming guests.

Their texts warn visitors of the fallacies of Joseph Smith's teachings and profess Mormons as non-Christians.

In this broad, public context it is easy to imagine the social spheres described by Jim Topic mixing and moving across the social field, blending and dividing groups to varying degrees. What will occur here is an attempt at bridging and opening those circles through what is intended to be a universal story that draws in all people in all times. As Ray Robinson explained earlier, the pageant narrative intended to emphasize, "...how these historic events change people's lives who are accessible and like people who are in the audience. People who are relatable—so that whatever the remaining historic pageant elements are—parades or costume or narration, the way that we try to make sense of it is through the lives of people that the audience can connect with, that aren't bound up in imagining what people in those days felt like, with the exception of using journal entries. But rather showing them in dramatic contexts that actually matter more to the people who are watching it than to people who've lived it."

In the midst of all this activity, the bagpipes start gathering to the back of the field and any youth assigned to be flag bearers run to gather their props and take their places. With the high-volume bagpipe and flag parade comes the signal for the audience to move to their seats for an opening introduction and prayer. The grass is a bit uneven and the white plastic chairs are sometime a bit disheveled, but everyone manages to get

settled as prayer is offered by an LDS ecclesiastical leader or by a special guest from one of the area churches. The context of the pageant also includes the wider ecclesiastical structure that underlies its production, the local tourism complex, and other influences, but for our descriptive purposes we will say that the immediate context creates an inviting and inclusive atmosphere that builds excitement for the beginning of the show.

The plot line of the Nauvoo Pageant follows the story of the arrival of the Saints to Nauvoo, the building of the town, the sending of missionaries to England and the resulting immigration of converts, the building of the Nauvoo Temple, the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, and the passage of leadership to Brigham Young who leads the exodus from Nauvoo. Interwoven in these broad events lies an intimate story of a fictional couple from Scotland, Robert and Becky Laird, who come to Nauvoo, losing a baby along the way. The crux of the story is Robert's disbelief. He has cooperated with his wife's newly found faith, but now he grieves the loss of his son and feels anger towards those he holds responsible. On another level, the story portrays multiple themes including the ones Ray described: "...So as you think of the Robert and Becky Laird story, you see believers have feelings and those matter. And you see that husbands and wives belong together, they work together. You see that following a prophet brings blessings even through the

hardships of life. And that everyone is needed. There's not [pause]—
regardless of your background or why you're coming, you're essential.”

Pageants seek to elicit group commitments through rhetoric of belonging and appeals to believe. We experience it immediately in the opening of the pageant and again in the closing. When Parley P. Pratt comes on stage, there is nothing but himself and his whistling tune—a tune previously identified by Ray Robinson as the “homecoming theme.” He pauses to look at his watch and then suddenly notices the audience. Meanwhile, his whistled tune leaps to a clarinet echo in the soundtrack background as he smiles and says, “Hello! . . . I said, hello! . . . Ah, there you are! Welcome! Parley P. Pratt here. You know, we've been watching you all day--- tasting gingersnaps at Scovill's and making your own bricks just yonder . . . The truth is, we couldn't be happier to have you here . . . in our homes, strolling our streets, and now spread so handsomely across this sweet green. So what have you seen today? Well, you've seen where we lived and how we lived.”

From the very first moment, we have been met and welcomed and the distance between stage and audience collapsed. Because we *have* wandered Nauvoo's historic district earlier in the day and encountered the cookies and the bricks, we now realize that we are full participants in the story now unfolding. We have shared tastes, sounds, and experiences familiar to our narrator, suggesting that we have seen something of his life and can feel we know him. He too can “remember summer nights on

this very meadow, wending my way home through this grove of trees over here, knowing I would soon hear my beloved's voice calling me from an open door . . ." A woman's voice calling offstage, "Parr-leeey!"

Parley laughs, explaining, "There I go again, getting ahead of myself! I can't help it. None of us can"—taking us into confidence as fellow prisoners of moving time. One by one the principle characters walk calmly onto stage with warm, inquisitive looks. When all have arrived, Parley makes a final statement: "You see, when *you're* here, *we're* here also—Because we are in you. Some of what you are now is because of what we are . . . what we became - here, in this place - in this beautiful city called Nauvoo." As an audience, we are invited to dissolve the distance between self and the story and to enter a symbolic time of shared experience. We are claimed as a continuation of their lives because we have come to this place out of a shared faith that transcends the time between. *Our* bodies are here because *their* bodies were here.

This opening and the show's closing are like two bookends to this rhetorical invitation. Near the ending of the pageant, the principle characters begin reentering the stage carrying props from daily work and speaking as they enter. Together they create a final stream of thought through a shared monologue of single voices: "[You've] come to be with us . . . and to remember . . . Yes, we've been waiting. For you are more than friends. We know you, and you know us! . . . You know what it means to embark on the journey of life . . . to step into the darkness of

uncertainty . . . to lose the one ye love, and bear sorrow . . . and know the deepest grief . . . But in the darkness, there comes a light – a hope – in the One who bears all sorrow . . . In Jesus Christ – in whom we find the purpose in our lives. . . And on a night like this one ... when moonlight streams through your open window . . . or you hear the whistle of a riverboat far, far away . . . *then you feel, you know, there's something more to life than what we see . . . and someplace yet to go . . . Beyond where we have been. . . It's true. We know you . . . And you know us . . .* For we are all one family . . . Children of our Heavenly Father . . . Beloved in His sight, each one of us.”

This theme of enfolding and embracing also happens throughout the dance choreography. When the British Saints enter the scene from their long voyage across the sea, the sound of whistling and a pipe signal the rising action. The tune is what Ray Robinson labeled “the Industry theme” that occurs whenever folks are getting to work. The stirring 4/4 march throws the melody back and forth between instruments as the new saints are swept up in the Welcome Dance: all the adult women spill over the top of the stage, sweeping their dresses at the height of the number, when the trumpets are playing the melody, and the choreography involves a whole series of smaller and large circles moving and connecting. In one portion, each “family” develops their own sequence of steps in a circle, so that each group is dancing in a circle, but obviously different from one another as a unique expression of a single idea.

During my family's 2007 cast year, there was a family participating with a Down's syndrome child—a young woman about eighteen years of age. One of the more complex circle dances followed a scene where the full cast gathers around to watch and join Becky and Robert Laird in a Highland fling. The rising choreography led to a high-energy moment involving four large concentric circles moving in opposite directions. This young woman would get confused every time as to where to be and which circle to join. A group of cast members determined to make it their job to pull her into the center circle each time so that she could take part in the feeling of being in unison and confidently in movement with the whole. She became a bit of a mascot for the cast as everyone found ways to bring her into the full experience of participation. The effect on all of us was profound in its distillation of charity made alive every practice and every performance.

These circles of inclusion begin well before the show—back at the pre-show country fair where the family cast invite visitors to join them in a series of simple Round Dances and reiterated onstage through dance formations, plot development and visually evocative scenes like families gathering in circles for evening prayer. Perhaps the strongest symbol of this theme lies in the onstage building of the temple. As Parley explains at several points, “building the temple brought us together as nothing else could.” This phrase resonates with Debbie Hartley's family experience with “building” and “manning” the staged temple in the City

of Joseph Pageant. That physical involvement with the symbol of their faith left deep impressions and memories. Parley touches on this physicality when he says, “Glazing the windows, carving the oxen, and setting the stone were an expression of what was happening in each of us. We who were many were becoming one.”

For those participating as cast members, the backstage experience mirrors these sentiments. From the day of arrival, participants are grouped into “districts” that function as a smaller social unit of about twenty to twenty-five people. (This reflects a model used in LDS missionary work where elders and sisters are grouped into smaller districts for reasons of accountability and camaraderie). Each district is assigned one of the core cast members as a leader and coach. The group meets daily to share a spiritual thought, to sing hymns and pray with one another, and to build meaningful connections through mutual support and shared experience.

Each time we participated, my family found itself thrown in with individuals and families encompassing a wide range of ages and backgrounds. This smaller circle created a social cohesion that worked as glue for the wider cast. It is good to remember that summers in Nauvoo can easily hover in the upper nineties with a humidity index also in the upper nineties. Add to this the layers of heavy 1840s period clothing and, for women, lots of hair gel and hair pins, and it offers some idea of the endurance and cheerfulness required of cast members. Because of the

district structure, everyone had somewhere to go for support and familiarity in a stressful physical environment. Like Debbie Hartley described in chapter four, shared hardship shouldered well can build meaningful bonds between people because of the trust built among them. For the Pageant producers, the quality of this backstage experience is an imperative because, as Ray Robinson explained, the only way to convincingly portray Saints onstage with complete amateurs is to actually have saintly people portraying themselves onstage: “I’ll tell you, in most theatrical settings, inexperienced performers just can’t do the job.”

The music of the pageant provides another powerful evocative force throughout the performance. The soundtrack of the Nauvoo Pageant taps into the stores of group memory, building melody lines and themes that evoke the most familiar and best-loved LDS hymns. Casts quickly master choral scenes. Those less confident in their abilities feel at home in the songs. The subtle use of melody lines woven throughout the cinematic orchestration allows scenes to be connected through the reiteration of a theme. One of the opening hymns of the pageant, “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise,” was included in the first LDS hymnal. A new verse was written for the pageant with the added words, “Let Nauvoo in her beauty rise, a gate for latter days.” As the audience sees the wooden stage transform slowly from an empty space to a town filled with buildings, people, and an imposing temple, a thread of “Let Zion in Her

Beauty Rise” ties the theme of Zion to the town rising before us. This example is only one of many instances of this technique.

Of course successful pageantry also requires bold spectacle. One of the showstopper moments comes when the temple structure finally rises from the back of the stage as men and women, singing at the tops of their voices, heave ropes and raise massive white temple panels to the sky: “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!” Often, the audience breaks into spontaneous applause at this moment in response to the magnitude of the mass and volume of its effect. For the faithful, there is a heart skip as the culmination of Joseph’s prophetic vision and the symbol of God’s will manifest on earth is made forcefully present.

The pathos of Zion attained and temporarily lost brings the show to its conclusion. Parley narrates: “And so we walked down Parley Street, crossed the Mississippi, and with one last glance back at our beloved temple, we turned our wagons west. Over the years, time and the forces of nature erased all of what we had built here, with so much love and desire. One by one, the temple stones were scattered throughout these parts, and for decades the foundation was plowed over and used as a field. But nothing could erase what Nauvoo had given us. That we took with us. And we taught our children, and they taught theirs. Which is why when you’re here . . .” Parley does not have to finish the sentence. The audience knows its closure. The dramatic irony of knowing that the loss has been replaced by reclamation underlies this moment; it leads into

another emotionally heightened moment where the artifice of stage is replaced by the weight of actualities.

The core cast and their families move to the edges of the stage as the lights go out. In the darkness we hear the voice of President Gordon B. Hinckley speaking as the restored Nauvoo Temple suddenly blazes to light on the hill far beyond the stage: “Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi, and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph’s temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham’s temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the . . . thousands who made the long journey from the Mississippi River.”

Light returns to the stage as both the family cast and training cast sweep onto stage singing full volume a hymn traditionally sung at all temple dedications: “The Spirit of God like a fire is burning! The latter-day glory begins to come forth; the visions and blessing or old are returning, And angels are coming to visit the earth.” The singing pauses as Joseph Smith steps forward to give his last testimony of Jesus Christ, and then all sing again to completion, “Henceforth and forever, Amen and amen!” with the flourishing of trumpets, bright lights, raised hands, and fervent countenances. This brilliant leap from the creation of a past Nauvoo onstage to the explosion of light and physical presence evidenced

in the lighted temple on the hill and the living, singing, and sweating “saints” crowding the stage cannot be disregarded. The “We” of communal memory, belief, and belonging has thrown its seeds into the soil of its people—both cast and audience. Most everyone there feels moved, exhilarated, and emotionally charged.

As the finale ends, the cast pours off the front of the stage to meet with the audience and to encourage their engagement in a post-show recapitulation. “Did you like the show?” “What was your favorite part?” “Where are you from?” “Have you seen the Pageant before?” Family and friends exchange embraces and enthusiastic appreciation. “Wasn’t that you on the upper left side during the Evening Dance?” “Wow, you did a great job in the stickball scene!” Small postcards and pencils are quickly distributed to the cast so that they can invite visitors unfamiliar with the Mormon faith to fill out their name and address and to check a box that they would welcome a visit from the LDS missionaries. They can also request to receive a musical recording of the Nauvoo Pageant. These exchanges begin again the cycle of group renewal.

It is worth reviewing my characteristics of historical pageantry to reiterate what is occurring in this type of performance:

- Looks to the past for its themes and content
- Depends on community buy-in and effort
- Tends to be annual or set to some fixed recurrence
- Portrays either a critical historical era or a large span of time

- Relies on members of the community to portray the story
- Tells a story already familiar to the audience
- Is not performed in any other place or time than its expected performance
- Open to public viewing and participation
- Represents a moment of heightened group awareness
- Gives primacy to visual, sensory, and symbolic codes
- Mobilizes emotion and reinforces group sentiments
- Requires a certain size and grandeur

The success of a pageant rests on the strength of its ability to capitalize on *all* of the characteristics above as a pathway towards group ritual. To move audiences and performers towards a sense of solidarity and communion, pageant draws on the shared commitments, values, and symbolic codes of its members. The writers and producers of the Nauvoo Pageant seemed to have perceived the social potential of the form. Using contemporary language, narrative plot development, and a cinematic soundtrack, they have developed a pageant that integrates pageant's characteristics with the structural form of ritual into a format that seems to hold relevance for the present and rising generation.

EFFICACY -----ENTERTAINMENT

Ritual

Theater

Results	Fun
Link to an absent Other	Only for those here
Symbolic time	Emphasis now
Performer possessed, in trance	Performer knows what s/he's doing
Audience participates	Audience watches
Audience believes	Audience appreciates
Criticism discouraged	Criticism flourishes
Collective creativity	Individual creativity ³¹

In this distinctive performance form, the affective force lies in soliciting remembrance, enacting social commitments both onstage and off, and tapping into the symbols and cultural tools that bind the group together. As a case study, the Nauvoo Pageant offers a compelling model for how groups generate social memory and solidarity.

³¹ From Schechner (1998: 120)

Chapter Nine

Pageant as Tradition, Myth, and Social Agent

“Many times in the past, scholars have tried to contrast the image and the reality in the existence of a particular group of people. This has led to the writing of books with such titles as *Myth and Reality*. Today we realize that such a dichotomy does not really exist since the image or myth associated with a particular lifestyle is a part of its reality. Thus, it is important not only that we understand the boards and bricks of a culture but that we perceive the mythological structure that provides the glue and mortar to hold the culture together.”

Edward Geary in “For the Strength of the Hills: Imagining Mormon Country.” (Shipps 1983:72-94)

“Rituals, likewise, provide physical and bodily means of acting out ideas dramatically: ritual and myth provide the contexts which allow symbols to function.”

Barbara Myerhoff 1974:240, (quoted in Doty 1986:20).

Pageants function as the theatrical equivalent of murals—enormous public paintings depicting collective identity. We have encountered four voices of people recently engaged with and participating in the form. From their perspectives we have considered how married pageant is to a place and its people. We have looked at the sociality that occurs in the creation process and the struggles over

ownership. We have seen the high demands of its production, and identified its strengths and weaknesses.

Mary's story represents an accretion of time and experience. The Grape Festival Pageant story is largely *her* story and she has deeply internalized its meaning. Her pageant scrapbooks and memories of Nauvoo in the past and her relationships with all those involved in its creation have made the pageant sacrosanct. It represents the community itself in her mind. When the pageant is altered or loses ground, the community suffers. When she perceives a lack of appropriate leadership to put on a vibrant pageant, it is an indictment of the Nauvoo collective. This flaming torch that should be passed from generation to generation is sputtering and, with it, the understanding of the communal story that would anchor a next generation. In her estimation, the willingness of all the various town constituents to contribute the needed time and energy to making the pageant a successful performance is a barometer for the wellbeing of the community.

Jim has the interesting perspective of being an insider-outsider. Coming to Nauvoo in his early twenties, he has been in town long enough to know all the players and all the politics. He is not so tied up in the original script or original conception of the pageant and does not resent the movement of the pageant from the outdoor stage to the indoor theater model. He has played an active role in researching and writing parts of the newer script that bring in fresh voices from Nauvoo's history,

including cheesemaker Oscar Rohde and Mayor Lowell Horton. At the same time, he feels strongly about the power of the collective, often in economic terms. He has sought to be an advocate for pooling resources and effort. He also has a passion for Nauvoo history and taking direct action to bring forward elements of the past into the present, including efforts to reestablish blue cheese production and to enliven the pageant with inspiring stories from town luminaries. For him, history is a resource to be mined for present purposes and visions.

City of Joseph came at an opportune time for Debbie and her family. As the church was struggling to build its base in the region, new converts found in the pageant experience a doorway to belonging and contributing. The lack of professional requirements and the welcoming attitude towards all ages and abilities ensured that everyone who desired to participate would not be turned away. During those years, Debbie deepened her identification with the early history of the church and her commitment to her faith, and saw that same process occur in the lives of her children. The movement to the new pageant was viewed as a continuation of a bigger story of church expansion and progress. The change felt poignant, but understandable in the context of the temple restoration. However, the grassroots dimension of City of Joseph was undeniably one of its virtues for those who participated.

A deep insider of church culture and performing arts, Ray Robinson came to the Nauvoo Pageant with an interest in developing

more than just a pageant. As he would see it, he came to affect those involved in ways far more transformative than learning their entrances. Because of the highly social dimension of pageant production, there exists the potential of shaping a significant backstage experience as well. The scenes enacted onstage reflecting principles of kindness, faith, courage, and cooperation are intentionally incorporated in the lives of the participants as they meet and work in smaller groups, hold religious devotionals, sing and pray together, and are entreated to serve and help one another. This authenticity of being *contemporary* Saints is believed to lie at the heart of portraying the *original* Saints with power. Despite its potential artistic liabilities, Ray realizes pageantry cannot be surpassed for its group-building potential on a large scale.

The pageant scripts and performances themselves also present interesting considerations. Neither of them function as a stand-alone event. Both are couched in a constellation of other activities, including parades, fairs, dinners, and live music. Large groups of people need to be gathered and attracted to the location so that the audience will be sufficient for the effort expended. By the time the people gather, it is in the evening after a day of other experiences and connections with the community. There is a congregational and worshipful feel to its structure as the day ends with the story of “Why we are here.” Local leaders frame the telling with the honoring of special visitors and a formal welcome, blessing the event with a dignity and an importance. There is a special

energy as the audience anticipates the beginning of a story that they recognize as their own.

The text of the Grape Festival Pageant reflects the limited number of primary historical documents used by Mother Mary Paul. No bibliography or list of sources accompanies the script and her story is written in a generalized language that does not pretend to be a researched record of events—though the events portrayed are verifiable. She approached her subject with the sensibilities of a poet, relying on metaphor and symbolism for dramatic effect. What made the 2007 performance feel partially out of kilter was the attempt to cut and paste her rhetorical style against an adlibbed conversational style. The intermittent attempts to update the script have instead undermined its integrity as a coherent piece of narrative writing and as a record of a distinctive theatrical genre.

The current state of the Grape Festival Pageant does not make it likely that the fully staged production will be occurring any time soon. Its loss of a community-networked base of operations and the high demands of bringing its narrative to life are serious obstacles. The current producers' creativity with the script and desire to bring fresh characters to life seem like a positive direction, albeit fairly insular and disconnected from most people's interests—including those *most* committed to the idea of a pageant. Perhaps if the town still boasted a robust wine and cheese industry, things might be different. However, the

historical society's struggle to keep it afloat in any form mirrors the plight of many historical pageants around the nation.

In an interview with Michael Hardy, current director of the Institute for Outdoor Drama—a professional association for pageants—he talked about the problem of a rapidly aging audience base and dwindling attendance at most of the major outdoor pageants in the U.S. He sees the need for reinvigoration because over the past ten years any survey results have show an audience decline. Related to this issue is how audiences experience and anticipate the older dramas. Often, audiences carry a sense of “religious purity” that leaves the director and performers no artistic license.

At the Lost Colony, they recently had an incident where the artistic director proposed cutting one small and less important scene. This led to public outcry from both alumni and townspeople. This should be expected in a town where the streets and the tombstones in the cemetery carry the names of characters in the cast list. This depth of tradition makes any change a threat to something cherished. Hardy feels, however, that many folks in the business want to break out of the traditional boilerplate of the pageant form because, as he puts it, “The form isn’t old enough to be outlived and then rediscovered.” In other words, overly rigid cultural performances can become their own worst enemy. Rather than actively responding to changing social contexts and needs, they

freeze into museum pieces that cease to be more than quaint residuals of the past.

The Nauvoo Pageant may well represent that boilerplate break. While drawing on the tradition of portraying epic historical events *in situ* on an outdoor stage, the effort to build a cinematic feel through music and to develop a more intimate story line seems to succeed in freshening the form for younger audiences. The inclusion of a small core cast of professionals while maintaining a substantial family cast also hits a balance between quality and inclusion. The pageant script is exemplary in its inclusion of an extensive list of primary documents used in its creation while at the same time avoiding a strict historicism. Given the extreme social complexities of the polygamy and theocracy of the Nauvoo Mormon era, the writers steered entirely clear of controversy and instead focused on the linkage of Nauvoo with the idea of Zion.³² Onstage, the scenes are more about showing what a Zion community looks and feels like than chronicling the history of Nauvoo itself. The historical accounts portrayed function mainly as a vehicle for the inculcation of gospel principles and as a model of ideal Mormon social life.

Could the Nauvoo Pageant be written to appeal to a broader audience than its own believers? Certainly. But the desire to explore the *idea* of the Mormon Collective seems to have had a strong hold on its

³² Zion is understood in religious terms as “the pure in heart” or the gathering of God’s people into one place. <https://www.lds.org/topics/zion?lang=eng&query=zion>

creators. Within its telling of “history,” the pageant also drives home all of the core principles of the faith as ideally lived by contemporary Latter-day Saints. The story incorporates scenes of welcoming in strangers and travelers into the community; freely sharing one’s resources and talents for the common good; families who serve together and pray together; people who listen to the counsel of their prophet; members who willingly embark as missionaries; and a community who places the temple at the center of their spiritual lives. Did all of these things happen in early Nauvoo? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. But they did happen often enough to make it into the written record and into the Mormon moral imagination.

In summation, both communities possess a performance tradition with substantial roots (albeit without a parity of resources to draw on). Concomitantly, the recourse to historical pageantry drew on already existing social trajectories and proclivities and the adoption of the form displays a conscious awareness of its potential to achieve certain social ends. The scriptwriters actively pursued rhetoric of continuities across time right up to the present tense, themes of belonging through collective remembrance, and expressions of belief in a divine destiny. All groups find social and cultural ways to maintain spaces where remembrance matters—where the group story can be enshrined, taught, and passed along to a new generation. Differing cultures have different relationships with time and history. But each ensuing group has to ask itself, “What is

it that we need the past to do for us?”³³ At its core, the early 20th century historical pageantry movement presented a very bold and rather revolutionary answer to that enduring question: transform and unify and enlighten us in large numbers! This underlying spirit of the endeavor persists into present-day iterations. Whether those desired effects are ever fully achieved or not, I would reiterate that historical pageants *are* a unique form of theater particularly attuned to the tasks of building continuities and tradition, the reinforcement of group sentiment, and the propitiation of group myth.

Tradition

In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton makes a compelling proposition: one of the significant ways that we recollect the past is through bodily practice, or what he would call “habit-memory”(1989:23). Like a pianist who has internalized all the spatial relations, mechanisms of movement, and bodily positions to create music without being subject to all the mental calculations and laws of physics underlying the act, we *incorporate* a wide number of behaviors that permit us to function and perform within our social groups (92). The conservative nature of these cultural accretions in our bodies can be seen in the durability of our physical traditions around celebrations, commemorations, and religious rituals like the Christian Sacrament or Jewish Passover—generally very

³³ I’m indebted to David Loewenthal’s *The Past is a Foreign Country* for many of my thoughts on the ways people relate to the past.

formalized affairs with little variation (45). Our actions in these occasions are performative memory because they are enacted publicly with our bodies in a shared sphere of social memory.

The rehearsal of a pageant has some of these same qualities of repetition, accretion of habit-memory, and movement from self-conscious enactment of mental constructs, to flow. As cast members become more deeply habituated through practice and performance, their bodies remember and retain the motions of kneeling and pulling and dancing and shouting in relation to the critical mass of other bodies around them. They may feel exhilarated physically enacting the “social body” and incorporating its rhythms, motions, and group feel. In these theatrical moments of heightened self-awareness, the central meanings, values, and goals as enacted by the group can feel like a grand physical declaration. All the smaller units of accumulated habit-memory become a sea of rehearsed movement and incorporated group memory.

Add to this dimension of physical memory the ways in which some individuals in the two casts deeply identify with the characters they portray. There was the situation Ray described with the LDS celebrity writer whose oppositional demeanor changed when he was asked to play the role of his great-great-grandfather; or the emotional kinship Jim feels to Mayor Horton and his real pleasure in bringing his vision for Nauvoo to life onstage. In performance, both of these men felt very strongly that they represented a continuous thread of either family or ideological

lineage. Or consider the man who seized the opportunity to deliver the testimony of Joseph Smith in the middle of the 2007 Grape Festival Pageant with an ardent sense of being the latter-day messenger. This has long been a staple of the genre, to appropriate *actual lineage* whenever possible because that is an undeniably powerful way to embody continuity.

What is key is the physical dimension of the enactment. Our bodies stand as their bodies and physically reconstitute their presence. This is not a unique phenomenon. There is a massive body of literature on people around the world enacting the return of ancestors (Connerton 1989:66-70). Studies of historical re-enactors in Western tradition acknowledge that the line between self and other can grow very thin: “Re-enactments are patent anachronisms. But they do not always seem anachronistic; some actors become so involved in bygone events that they feel as though they are really living them. In making a film about the Napoleonic Wars those who portrayed officers and soldiers were paid at the same rate, but after a few days ‘the officers of this celluloid army began to eat at a separate table from the mere privates and NCOs’” (Loewenthal 1985:300).

Add to this fundamental bodily dimension the layers of costuming and props, ways of speaking and moving, and the evocation of old tunes and tools and types of work occurring onstage. Cast members of the Nauvoo Pageant are present for the laying of the cornerstone of the

Nauvoo Temple, they attend the funeral of King Follett, and they stand witness to the departure of Joseph and Hyrum for Carthage Jail. The Grape Festival Pageant engaged generations of local children and teens in the act of “gathering the grapes” and celebrating a harvest they had never actually seen. Etienne Cabet transformed for the town from a small, dark photograph in the historical museum into a bespectacled gentleman with a long-winded speech. Within all this repetitive flow of action and added symbolism lie the seeds of group recollection. It is the *physical* making of the shared social memory.

The rhetoric of the pageant scripts and their practitioners reinforce the idea of continuity in people and ancestral presence: Mary and Jim described the active effort to draw in living descendents: “ So we had the Moffitts—talked about -Dan Moffitt portrayed one of his ancestors who had come here and settled. So we did it like that. We tried to have a current tie back to the historic personage.” Debbie pointed out the importance of adding the heavenly presence scene to City of Joseph for the family who lost their father: “And so for a number of years that family came back and they had them all dressed in white and being the angels”—now embodying a deceased member of the pageant itself. In the Grape Festival Pageant, Mother Mary Paul exclaimed, “Memory is the magician that enables us to reconstruct the past,” and “For all the dreams men have dreamed, Still live in you!” The closing narrative of Parley draws a wide circle around the whole story of building up and tearing

down, forgetting and remembering, leaving and returning: “And so we walked down Parley Street, crossed the Mississippi, and with one last glance back at our beloved temple, we turned our wagons west. Over the years, time and the forces of nature erased all of what we had built here, with so much love and desire. One by one, the temple stones were scattered throughout these parts, and for decades the foundation was plowed over and used as a field. But nothing could erase what Nauvoo had given us. That we took with us. And we taught our children, and they taught theirs. Which is why when you’re here . . . We’re here also.”

In these pageants, tradition, not historicity, is the leading principle. By tradition, I mean drawing down the accumulated resources of the past to know what needs to be said and done in the present. From this vantage point, the past and its ways are seen and valued as relevant and desirable—meaning that authenticity of the pageant form resides in its ability to derive potential meanings from the past and place them into present actualities and physicalities. This is why the pageant form can be so rigid. *It is itself the embodiment of tradition.* History merely functions as the grab bag of materials to be pieced into a coherent pattern to be held up for ourselves and others to see. The depths of its conservative nature may best be understood in the form of a joke told to me by Scott Parker. “[Laughing] How many people does it take at The Lost Colony to change a light bulb? And the answer is: One person to screw the light bulb in, and 150 people to tell you how we did it last year!”

The Efficacy Principle

As I suggested earlier, the pageant form has always sought to do more than entertain.³⁴ If its source is tradition, its aim has been something akin to Emile Durkheim's vision of community effervescence (with an enduring didactic twist). Despite a theatrical dressing, it carries a moral imperative. In this way, it has much in common with the realm of public ritual and commemoration. In these events, the focus is on linking those present to those who are absent, engaging an audience who believes rather than simply appreciates, displaying the collective over the individual, and seeking to instill some kind of meaningful result in the social body represented. The formalized and repetitious nature of these public events also cultivates a deep remembering, as meaning is perceived through familiarity of signs, and bodily memory.

³⁴ In my conversations with LDS Historic Sites Curator, Steve Olsen, he addressed this issue cogently. He approaches the site as an anthropologist rather than as an historian. What he means by this is that is less interested in complete and painstaking chronicling than he is at finding the compelling elements of story that will meet the needs of the visiting LDS pilgrims. He is convinced that the sites primarily serve the purpose of building the group vision and narrative and giving those who come another piece of the collective story that will anchor their souls.

Because of the oversight of the Missionary Department, there tends to be an assumption that the visitor centers will be a gateway for non-members to hear the message of the church. Considering the out-of-the way locations and relative obscurity of most of these destinations, Steve considers that to be far too rare an occurrence to warrant focus on reaching non-members. Rather, he sees the profound importance for members to come away with a sense of identity and connection to their past.

In *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, Roger D. Abrahams explains how early studies of drama centered on origins, positing that drama grew out of a myth-ritual pattern tied to seasonal observances. In Abraham's thinking, he continues the ritual-drama link, dividing ritual from drama on a continuum of serious to humorous tone. "Rite stands as the serious center of the festival, while drama and other amusements are the humorous counterparts of the ritual" (1972:358). As to the question of liturgical origins, he argues that ritual and accompanying festivities are often a foil for one another—one not preceding the other as much as working through similar themes from a more lighthearted or playful direction (359). The one is not a degenerative version of the other.

Abrahams does well to ask about "the nature of this activity" (352). He calls it the creation of a play world through the use of symbolism, and is thus very tied into game, dance, music, and ritual. As such, it clearly demarcates itself as different from the real world, and yet evocative of and referential to the real world. The structures within the play itself, if "folk" in its relationship to its audience, will present a view of things, conventions of behavior and symbolic value that will be understood as functionally appropriate to its audience members. Moreover, folk drama differentiates itself from mere oratory by the addition of dramatic effects. Though it relies chiefly on dialogue to tell its story, it combines the dialogue with action towards an ending that the audience already knows.

In both of these pageants, the audience already knows the conclusion from the beginning. The scenes portrayed simply follow a familiar path because they are already entombed in the social memory of the group. No one comes to find out “what happens.” People come to remember, “what happened.” But they also come for something else. As Debbie put it, “I’m grateful we’ve had the opportunity to enact those [stories], because as you do that, it gives you-- it strengthens that resolve. Even though you’re acting it out, you’re also helping yourself and your family.” Within the amusements and playful dimension lies a serious center of emotional intent: “We who were many were becoming one.” If the performance of the pageant ceases, the historic residue may take up life again in some other private or public form. Or it may not. That is always the prerogative of the present generation: what to bring along and what to bury—though the past can resuscitate in surprising ways.

For those who spend much time reading about the past, history might seem an odd place to go for comfort and a feeling of safety--except for the fact that it seems to be a *known* quantity. There is a sense that we can put it neatly into the order of hindsight and that it cannot come after us—though that has certainly been proven untrue when forgotten artifacts and lost stories come to light. But considering the uses of the past to live in the present, it is clear from the beginning that *selective* history can be perceived as one of our safeguards against dark history. Invoking uncomfortable history is a strategic choice, not to be taken on

lightly because it invites implications into the present. It's like opening Pandora's box. Things may come out that we are not prepared to contain or deal with. A willingness to engage with such history varies from group to group, family to family, culture to culture. We have museums and monuments dedicated to pain - but these must be cast very carefully so that we can live beside them and survive their implications. There is a documented tendency for a human need to choose historical tragedies that offer some redeeming feature: the bravery of New York City policemen in the wake of 9/11, for instance.

Nauvoo harbors dark pasts and tragedies alluded to in both of the pageants. The ruptures and renewals— from social conflict, disease, human error, violence, and dislocation--lie just beneath the surface of their narratives. But the overwhelming tone is hope. Historicity is not the aim; but rather, the strategic need to pull from the past those elements that help us live in a vibrant and forward-looking present. Like the quiet and steady movements of the men in the Nauvoo cast putting up a set of columns, crossbeams, and all the elements of a supporting structure, the pageant performances build up the frame of community memory. Cast members will remember because they took part in the building. The structure stands as a constructed symbol of both a collective present and past.

Many can be troubled by this selectivity and the questions of authority that arise. Professional historians tend to find historical

pageants appalling for their lack of historical verity. The writers and performers would seem to be far more committed to putting on an aesthetically pleasing show and moving their audiences than they are to the footnotes of academic monographs. But we now live in an age when master narratives are suspect and we generally understand history as a series of contingencies and conflicting perspectives. How can we embrace versions of the past that preach unbroken continuities and an overarching sense of destiny with anything but skepticism? This requires a leap—into a different frame of perception. I would argue, in fact, that historical dramas consistently unmoor historically because part of their narrative domain is myth.

Myth

History and its bedfellows, heritage and myth, are a tricky tangle and cross paths in our human efforts to memorialize and recall our past.³⁵ The written historical record, when thoughtfully engaged, offers a multi-vocal, contentious string of events that require the passage of time and human intent to wrestle it into meaning. Heritage leans toward simplicity. The celebratory moments or exhibitions of heroism become the fodder of heritage. Myth goes a step further, disentangling by

³⁵ We also must remember that historians have their own myths and myths their own histories.

entering an almost “once upon a time” mode that allows the narrative to embrace a more omniscient, timeless view of events.³⁶

But heading this direction demands that we acknowledge the never-ending myth controversy, which is the troubling tendency for the word “myth” to be misused and much maligned. In a modern context it is often synonymous with falsehood and ignorance, where people lack the good common sense to know what is real and what is fantasy. My use of the word myth hearkens back to *myth as origin story*—our explanation for how things have come to be in the present. Myth is our cosmic structuring of our place in the universe and what values constitute our ethical and moral order. Many outdoor pageants open that doorway to a group’s past, being more committed to the moral imaginings of the group than its actualities.

William G. Doty’s life’s work compendium, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (1986), has influenced my perspective. He argues the tremendous social loss that comes with the abandonment of our traditional myth systems and cosmologies and the misfortune of casting it in opposition to “critical” forms of thought. Evocative narratives that are rich enough to weave social, emotional, and spiritual frameworks can help individuals navigate meaningful roles and perceptions of their place

³⁶ David Bitton’s *The Ritualization of Mormon History* is an excellent overview of the process of ritualization and mythologizing of history in LDS Church culture and concludes thoughtfully, “But it would be pedantic of historians to ridicule all ritualizations of the past. The sense of perspective which the study of history enhances should enable them to take the ritualistic references in stride, recognizing their inevitability and functional value. For most of us will possess our history ritualistically or not possess it at all (85).”

in the cosmos. However, because of its semantic origins, “mythological came to be contrasted with logic and later with ‘history’ in the sense of an overview or chronicle of events” and thus, “the heavy burden of our cultural background lies upon the weighting of mythology with the sense ‘unreal, fictional’ (Doty (186:3-4). He counters the pejorative view with the explanation that in myth we are “close to the poetic seizure of truth” in the highest sense. In these stories we uncover meaning in what is most real and significant in life. They can be understood at their most basic plot level or at a more advanced transcendent level that touches on deep and important issues that have applicability to all humankind. Myths are not chronological history; they are wisdom from the past chosen for their insight and power to be given to a next generation. They are “not witnesses of that which once was but of that which will always be” (27).

Our two pageants would not be termed Wisdom Tales. They do not belong to a cycle of oral narratives told between generations in the traditional myth sense. I would have to describe the pageant portrayal of events as not history/not Not history, but more than moralistic tales because of their placement in a wider cosmological worldview. They display forces of light and dark; epic heroes, saints, and villains; sacred and profane events; courageous action and dramatic pathos in the midst of disaster; and a framing of God’s guiding hand upon the unfolding of events. They can be seen as “a fundamental testament that uniquely engages mind and emotion, holding together and perpetuating a certain

view of the cosmos and way of life” (Schrempp 2002:10). Through mythicization, the past has been pieced together in a coherent stream of events leading to the future.

Beneath this contemporary layer of civic display lies another contributing social factor. “From the days of the first settlers, inhabitants of the North American continent have seen themselves as players in a fore-ordained, divine drama” (Blanke 1979:84). This sense of American Mission has been described and debated with vigor since the publication of Robert Bellah’s “Civil Religion in America (1967).” What he proposed was that “most Americans share common religious characteristics expressed through civil religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals that provide a religious dimension to the entirety of American life” (Wimberly 1998: “Civil Religion”). Those beliefs are institutionalized through public holidays, observances, and rituals and appear throughout our media and public culture in a myriad of ways. A number of researchers tested the claim that civil religion is an “objective social fact” by surveying people’s responses to a number of statements like, “Social justice cannot only be based on laws; it must also come from religion” (ibid). What they found at that time (1978) was a wide cross section of the American public did subscribe to at least some level of civil religious belief and that denominations with roots in America scored highest on their measures of civil religiosity (ibid).

One means by which we institutionalize and perpetuate this public religiosity is “through their being rendered highly specific. The specificity derives from larger-than-life ways to create the nation and from particular events in which the mythic material is condensed or focused. ...The founder creates and establishes the cosmos which provides a framework of intelligibility for the collectivity [with] emphasis on history as linear development from a beginning to an end” (Wilson 1979:34). There is a much longer philosophical and theological horizon here that involves a covenant relationship with God, millennial prophecy, America’s role of being the Light on the Hill and guiding hand for other nations---all flowing from the arrival of the Puritans through the settlement of the American West and into the present. What I would like to emphasize is that American historical pageantry has been a committed handmaiden to the mission of raising the civic banner aloft.

Despite the fact that nineteenth-century Mormons were abused by the U.S. government, they have proved to be some of the staunchest believers in the tenets of civil religion. (Wimberly 1998; Mauss 1994). Their own origin myth has *encompassed* the American myth by interpreting the establishment of a democratic nation as cradle for the Restoration of Christ’s Church on the earth. With this epic orientation, Mormons seized upon the power of the historical pageant form as a tool for their own needs. Although they adhered to many of the conventions of the more secular forms of pageant, Mormon pageants turned

immediately to sacred time and divine narrative. Using the structure of broad sweeps of time, heroic characters, and deep human themes, LDS writers magnified the civil myth of “We under the hand of God” to “We as the *culmination* of *all* God’s efforts in this Promised Land of America.” The Mormons not only inhabit God’s Promised Land—they have been charged with the building of *the City of God* in that Promised Land. The whole of American history and its exceptionalism--its powerful blend of democracy and pluralism—can be read as God’s preparations for the Restoration of the gospel through a frontier boy named Joseph Smith.

For the majority of participants in both pageants, little will be remembered about any given lines or exact details, but the story of “the way it was and the way it has come to be” will be the lingering structure left in the group psyche. If there is significant slippage between the narrative and present realities, that story loses its power to place the audience and its participants into a “this is where we have come to together” kind of position. This is part of the generative power of the current Nauvoo Pageant. By narrating Nauvoo as an allegory of possibility that is then partially realized in the lives of those who participate, the “where we have been” and “where we have come to” match up. Ultimately, both pageants will persist only as long as they align themselves with contemporary social needs and what I would call the “mythic imperatives” of the group.

The Return Forward

Many might see public performance of Civil or Denominational Religion as airbrushing history with the patina of myth: “Good riddance to the form! Bring me the Destroying Angel of History and Chaos!” That is certainly a choice. In Richard Handler’s examination of living history, however, he writes at length about the quest for the authentic life and the nagging feeling of non-authenticity in modern life. He feels that one of the great appeals of living history for its practitioners is the feeling of being part of a coherent, emplotted narrative with sequences and events that move to an integrated outcome (Handler, 1988). In response to this, I would appeal to our need for satisfying artistic expression of Grand Narratives—not just privately, but publicly. In Dell Hymes galvanizing essay, “Nature and the Sun’s Myth” he posits that “Groups and persons differ, then, not in presence or absence of the traditional--there are none which do not traditionalize--but in the degree, and the form, of success in satisfying the universal need” (1975:353).

In his edited volume, *We Are What We Celebrate* (2004), Sociologist Amatai Etzioni challenges scholars to better understand the major shifts in American culture as families and communities move further and further away from traditional observances of holidays, celebrations, ritual, and family life. As the 24/7 world of the internet and media has taken hold of people’s work and private lives, commitment to these older social institutions and structures has seemingly waned. Although

sociologists have considered the shifting roles of schools and daycare in the socialization of children, Itziani feels that this sea change in the realm of traditional observances also deserves examination for its effects in social life.

One trend he notices is the selective use of what would be traditional observances. Their incorporation into family life is a choice rather than an overall belief that a traditional way carries wisdom or is the best way. Contemporary individuals feel the right to pick and choose what seems most worthwhile or personally satisfying. This might mean keeping a Sabbath to separate out commerce from one day of the week. It may be a commitment to getting together with extended family for Thanksgiving. This may well be accompanied, however, by a busy family life that prevents any kind of regular family dinners or other more mundane rituals like Sunday church attendance. His desire is to, over time, empirically link these observances to societal health and wellbeing. He goes so far as to say that “The extent to which the entire holiday calendar (cycle) is shared by a given society tends to be representative of the degree to which that society is integrated and unified” (2004:22).

He also raises the issue of the ratio between public and private holidays, being open to the possibility that they do not necessarily coincide with great or lesser civic engagement. Private family gatherings can also hearken allegiance to the greater whole or good. Overall, however, the scale seems to have tipped towards the smaller, private

gathering to ensure a more homogenous, “safe” setting—neglecting what Etzioni claims to be public “seedbeds of virtue.” In the late nineties, and since the 2000 publication of sociologist Robert Putnam’s book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, there has been a concerted effort in some American communities to reverse the trend by organizing large, outdoor public events and celebrations. This might include town picnics, festivals, and fairs that were reinstated or started in the interest of inclusive public holidays.

This ties directly into the influential work done by Hobsbawn and Ranger in their book, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). In their deconstruction of some of the sacred cows of European tradition, they may have been charged with exposing the magician behind the curtain, but they certainly did not cast out our need for “magic.” The point to be made was that traditions that seem quite old are often quite new inventions. These invented traditions, because they evoke preexisting values and norms, can give the aura of continuity. Most of them use historical reference as a key resource, although that historical continuity is generally concocted.

The authors make a useful differentiation between custom and invented tradition, only to make the point that there is a difference between conventional behaviors that serve a practical purpose and symbolic behaviors that are squarely centered in ideological purposes. Their power lies in their continuity itself, rather than their inherent

usefulness per se. A good example is the wearing of wigs by judges that only acquire their significance when everyone else stops wearing them, or spurs on calvary dress uniforms when there are no horses (1983:4). There is a power in such repetitions when they defy pragmatic explanations. This also begs the question of when is there a rise in such symbolism? "When a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old traditions had been designed" (5).

So we create new traditions. Robert Putnam's contested argument that there has been a marked decline in civic engagement in America and that we have lost societal common ground shares more than a little ideological ground with the idealistic practitioners of the American Pageantry Movement who worked tirelessly to create civic rituals and performances that would increase social solidarity and a secular faith based in patriotism and cultural democracy. The full gamut of America's pageant tradition acts in direct response to social change and perceived instability. Across the country civic leaders who felt themselves responsible for the overall wellbeing and welfare of their small town, city block, or rural village generally saw the need for the inculcation of certain values and the nurturing of familiarity and friendship among those who participated in performance.

Like these creative predecessors, Amitai Etzioni considers holidays and public rituals to be a measuring tool for the vibrancy and health of the social sphere and our civic lives in general. Ultimately, he makes the

charge that there is a correlation between large-group celebrations of shared symbols and ideologies and social cohesion. If our only celebrations are centered in private and intimate settings, we run the risk of atomized social units that do not recommit individuals to the larger social unit. We will lack the social capital needed for a beneficial democracy where individual interests are set aside voluntarily for the good of the whole.

Pageants are not categorically holidays, but they do represent an interesting expressive form that unabashedly seeks to extend into public life. This is partially achieved through large-scale citizen involvement as well as a durable presence on the physical landscape in the form of outdoor stages and amphitheaters. A supremely democratic form of theater, pageants not only demand demographically significant numbers of participants, but their production features allow huge audiences. They embrace an ideology of group formation and continuity, and generally offer a communal narrative that invites the audience to engage as witnesses to their own beginnings and journeys through the stories of the ancestors. As such, they represent an active attempt at cultural generativity—building within a new generation sufficient emotional commitment to the values and beliefs of those who came before.³⁷

³⁷ For an excellent illustration of the concept of “cultural generativity,” see Inta Gale Carpenter’s discussion of Latvian immigrants’ use of theater as a way to pass memory and meaning between generations: “Memory-Theater As Cultural Generativity: *Eslingena*: A Musical in Toronto and Riga.”

Following this line of thought, I also see a key connection in the research of Robert Bellah and his colleagues published in their *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society* books. This first study examined the question of civic engagement in America through the lens of American ideologies of individualism versus the collective. Within the original work of Alexis de Tocqueville, Tocqueville imagined the circumstances in which the American democracy experiment might fail. He cautioned the ballooning wealth of the industrial class overtaking governance through financial dominance. Impressed by the high level of civic engagement and volunteerism of Americans in the early 18th century, he also feared the excessive emphasis on individual initiative at the cost of group ethos and cooperative effort. *Habits of the Heart* argues that both of these imbalances plague modern American life.

The last three decades have seen a growing awareness in the social sciences that we, ourselves, are the greatest agents of creation and change. I'm interested in this ongoing struggle in American civic life between individual and group interests and to imagine how we might nurture coherent public life, strengthen our capacities to think in new and old ways--Who is my neighbor? How do we renew our cultural capacity for community and solidarity? I think the voices of Mary, Joe, Debbie, and Ray hold many of the answers in their appeals to remembrance, moving outside our own "little circles," embracing a new

tradition with conviction, and being as concerned with the backstage as we are with the front stage.

I recently reread Wendell Berry's "The Work of Local Culture," a lecture given for the Iowa Humanities Council. Berry describes a bucket that has been hanging on a fence near his land for decades. He identifies that bucket with the accumulation of stories, shared work, and knowledge of place. A good local culture feeds itself like moldering compost, accumulating the best practices and codependent relationships that sustain life in that place. As he sees it, the atomistic and hyper-individualized culture of contemporary life does not allow the bucket to happen. There is no recourse to the past. There is no passing forward. All is used and abused in the present, devoid of the rooted-ness that leads to accountability. Berry always brings issues of community and group life back to land and place.

Perhaps part of the journey is rediscovering and retelling our sacred spaces. Nauvoo has the advantage of being an acknowledged and dedicated sacred space. Victor and Edith Turner tell us that all pilgrimage sites have this in common, "They are believed to be places where miracles once happened . . . and may happen again" (Turner and Turner, 1978). Perhaps only believers of miracles can return to such beginnings.

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Appendix 1
Full text of The Grape Festival Pageant Script

FROM QUASHQUAME TO
NAUVOO (1952)

SCENE BOY LYING ON
GROUND

NARRATOR

What's the matter with you, fellar?
Haven't you anything to do on this old
barge but lie around and around and
dream? Isn't there something you can
do besides snooze? How about a song?
A fellow your age ought to be able to
sing a song about this here river. Come
on...Sing for me!

SONG: OLD MAN RIVER

Good evening friends, I am Steve, an old
barge Captain. Been up and down this old
river time and time again. There's a man's
love in my heart for the old Mississippi. I've
weathered many a storm through jagged
lightening and inky skies with black waves
leaping and clutching in fury at our old
barge. I've sat on the deck at sundown when
the river was molten gold and crimson in
the setting sun. There were days when the
old Mississippi was a mirror and the
willows on the shore rustled in admiration
at their reflected beauty in the water. There
were nights when the river flowed almost
silently echoing the quiet peace of the
starlit heavens above. It's a grand oldriver ...
"Father of Waters" was what the Indians
called it.

It may seem strange to say so but the
hundreds of cities and towns that line the
banks of the river seem to follow its moods.
They are cities of golden hope and towns of

grim despair. There is one little town I am thinking of today sunning itself in beauty and historic lore. Crowning a bluff where the mighty river makes a giant horseshoe bend on its never-ending flight to the ocean... the village of Nauvoo..

PAGE 2

The "City Beautiful", the city of many hopes. All the lights and shadows of "Old Man River are a part of its history. Beauty and joy, fury and tragedy, all these are there.

SCENE: INDIANS ENTER ON DARK STAGE

Why, I remember my grandfather telling of this very spot and of the Sauk and Fox ...the tribes who inhabited this area. They called this place Quashquame named after their Chief Quashquame which means Jumping Fish. He was a friend of Chief Black Hawk. He was also the last surviving Indian signer of the Treaty of Illinois 1804 which gave up all the land east of the Mississippi to the whiteman. For the Indians this area of the Mississippi was a favorite hunting ground. Thousands of buffalo and deer roaming its prairies and forests. Camp fires blazing forth into the darkened nights and dusky figures dancing to the weird music of the Indian drums. I can almost see the happy village now, woman and children laughing and working, warriors coming in from the hunt...the ceremonial dances.

SCENE: INDIAN ACTIVITY:
CHILDREN PLAYING/WOMEN
WORKING/ BRAVES RETURNING
FROM A SUCCESSFUL HUNT

CEREMONIA
L DANCE

You know there was lots of trouble among the Indians those days. The war drums beat

continuously and braves stalked the river banks dressed in war paints. Here in Quashquame the Indians considered the white men their friends.

PAGE 3

SCENE : CAPTAIN WHITE/FUR TRADERS SHAKE HANDS WITH INDIAN CHIEF, SMOKE PEACE PIPE AND PURCHASE LAND

They liked a young explorer who came here named James White Captain James White. He was a splendid young adventurer seeking a better world and a better way ... the first of many who were to follow him. Here at high point beside the river, he wanted to fulfill the great hopes that welled up in his heart. One bright day with a company of his friends, he sat down with Chief Quashquame and purchased the little village for two sacks of corn. Away from their beautiful village, their favorite hunting grounds, away from Quashquame went the Redmen forever. Captain White and his companions owned the land.

QUASHQUEMA'S FAREWELL SPEECH

Today Indian sell this land to white man for bags of corn. Indian today sell more than land. He sell his birthright to all the Great Spirit gave to him. Great Spirit very unhappy. Tomorrow Indian go westward to land of sunset. No more will he hunt in land of Illinois, no more will he fish in great river, his children shall not sing again in camp fires on these hills. Indian is not greater than Great Spirit. The Great Spirit will stay here. He shall not move on. Though foolish men go West, here when the moon is low and great river sings his song, men shall see Indian camp fires in the winds of autumn; their teepees shall be in the shocked corn and pipes of peace shall be shared between great chiefs and American boys. When these things come to pass, the Great Spirit shall be glad again and there shall

be peace in the hearts of men.

PAGE 4

SCENE: CHIEF LEAVES STAGE AND FUR TRADERS SURVEY, LAY OUT THE CITY OF COMMERCE. DO FUR TRADING THINGS

In June 1830 under Captain White's leadership, the sturdy pioneers developed the small village of Commerce. They were hard-working and thrifty people, and care-free in their new home. The loveliness of nature and the deep peace of the Mississippi was reflected in their new home.

SCENE : JOSEPH AND HYRUM SMITH SHAKE HANDS/LOOK THINGS OVER BUYS LAND AND MOTIONS FOR HIS PEOPLE TO COME.

Into this village of Commerce in 1839 came the prophet Joseph Smith. This man guided by a vision and a dream, desiring to find a refuge for his much persecuted people, led them to this place. They were a driven and misunderstood people, weary from their wanderings and, here, the Mormons as they were called, felt they had at last found a home. To them, Commerce was a City of Hope. The deed to the old land site known as Commerce was owned by Captain James White and his followers. By reason of personal gain and a need for a new source of hides, Captain White decided to move on. Joseph Smith had found his "Promised Land" and negotiations for the purchase of the land quite naturally followed. Joseph renamed the village which in old Hebrew means Beautiful Place.

PAGE 5

SCENE: MORMONS ARRIVE AND SET UP LIVING/SCHOOL/WORKING AND WOMEN & CHILDREN HAPPY.

As the Latter Days Saints enter into this quiet little village, their minds went back to the winter before when they had been force to the leave the state of Missouri. In bitter cold they had straggled across the frozen Mississippi to find a haven in the homes of the good people of the town of Quincy, Illinois. Remembering these experiences their hearts were overflowing with thanks-giving for this peaceful, purposeful journey.

PRAYER
SCENE

Being an industrious people seasoned by the cruel whip of persecution, the Mormons quickly surveyed the land, built homes, set up schools and through the magnetic leadership of the Prophet Joseph Smith the new town drew a divergence of nationalities from the entire world ...an epic of great prosperity followed,

SCENE: BOAT WHISTLE/GREET NEW
COME TO HISTORIC NAUVOO

Then the Prophet proclaimed a new revelation from God. It called for the building of a temple, a million dollar structure to be raised to the honor and glory of God; Each man-tithed - his money and his time, giving one day in ten to work on the structure. It was built of native limestone, hammers and chisels fashioning and polishing the massive pieces of stone.

SCENE: TIMBERS TO TEMPLE SITE AND\WORK
ON TEMPLE

Timbers were rafted down the river from the pineries of Wisconsin. And it was built, a monument to the Faith and industry as well as the self-sacrifice of the Mormon people. It was an important step in the realization of their dream of a city where God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

SCENE: TEMPLE IS SPOT-LIGHTED AND
MORMONS CHEER ETC.

You know. It is wonderful to watch the old river. You can see the sunlight glistening in many shapes and figures. On a Sunday afternoon you can take a ride on its lovely waters or find a lonely cove and relax in the shade. However, suddenly almost unnoticed, the waters begin to rise. They inundate cornfields and raid the grains. They drive men to higher land, carry away houses and barns, trees and fences and all things living and only those who know Old Man River can know his dormant power that sometimes rises against earth and man in the terrible word...

FLOOD!! So it is also in the life of man. Mutterings become murmuring, one voice becomes several and a peaceful town can become in an hour a raging inferno before an infuriated mob. So as a flood in summer, came the uprising against the Mormons which laid low their Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum at the hand of a frenzied mob in Carthage.

The City of Faith and Vision was stunned. It became for a time a place of sadness and despair. All beauty and hope had vanished and the spirit of the dead Prophet brooded over the forlorn city.

PAUSE FOR FUNERAL PROCESSION
SCENE: BURNING OF THE TEMPLE

One stormy night as the barges made the bend in the river came cries of the mob, flames against the sky, the Temple, the Temple.... a holocaust to Temple, the Temple. A holocaust to the hatred that burns in the souls of men.... and the beautiful Temple lay in ruins.

PAUSE AS INJURED CHILD IS CARRIED
OUT SCENE: MORMONS PREPARE TO
MOVE

After the death of their leader and the burning of their temple, what had the Mormons to hope for in this land of blighted hopes. Sadly and forlornly they gathered together their belongings. Several leaders sprang up leading various factions to the North, to the South and to the East. A large group followed Brigham Young to the West. Emma, the widow of the Prophet, and her little family and close friends remained in Nauvoo where young Joseph Smith the Third, grew up to take his father's place in the reorganization of the church. How often in history do we find a parallel to this scene! How often the howling mobs of yester-years return to gather up the martyrs ashes into history's golden urn.

PAGE 6

SONG: MOVING

PAUSE UNTIL MORMONS HAVE LEFT EMMA
AND FAMILY ARE ON STAGE

SCENE; CABET ENTERS AND LOOKS OVER
LAND/NEGOTIATES/ICARIANS ENTER

Then from the near-dead embers of the past, a new flame burst forth, a new venture, a new hope. Today the word communism looms in the news and it has become a word of many meanings, a way of living strange to us who have been born and nurtured in our democratic way of life. Communism is not a new experiment. Over a century ago it was tried here in Nauvoo and failed. From France came one Etienne Cabet, a revolutionary leader, advanced in years but young and dauntless in his ambition to establish an earthly paradise where equality and fraternity would banish greed and power. Peace and harmony would reign supreme. During his five years of banishment in England, Cabet had read and pondered over Thomas

More's "Utopia" and from it was born his dream of Icaria. On his return to France, Cabet drew a band of dissenters about him, who, believing in the practicality of his dream, migrated with Cabet to America and settled in Texas. The migrants were all skilled workers, artists and artisans. After two years of untold hardships, disease and death, the depleted colony learned about the ghost-town on the banks of

PAGE 9

the Mississippi from General Zachary Taylor. The Icarians migrated north and were directed by the friendly people of Quincy to the deserted village of Nauvoo.

SCENE: CABET GATHERS HIS FOLLOWERS
AROUND HIM AND GIVES A PEP TALK

Comrades, we now arrived at the well-built ghost city of Nauvoo, built by the hands of master craftsmen who but a short time ago followed their leader into the area of the Great Salt Lake. The trustees of the owners in the West will sell their properties in this improved city for a pittance, less than the value of the land alone.

This city of Nauvoo is truly a paradise and a haven for the people of our noble experiment after the swamp and fever-laden lands in Texas from which we have come. We shall make our headquarters on Temple Square where the stone from the ruins of the Mormon Temple shall furnish material for our school and a great communal hall. We have found a place for our Utopia!. We can here produce for our own use and everyone in our colony shall be supplied according to his needs. We shall create our own haven here. There will be no crime as crime comes from the wrong distribution of wealth and from the capitalistic exploitation of the working class. We shall have no need for preachers or police. Our salvation is here upon earth and with our dedicated minds and hands we shall here achieve a perfect society to

demonstrate to the world about us. NOW GET TO WORK!

SCENE: WOMEN/MEN WORKING/CHILDREN AT SCHOOL.

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Poverty and hardship had drawn them into close bonds of brotherhood. Their leader, Cabet, was sole legislator of the commune. With the meager funds they were to save during their sojourn in Texas they rented vacated houses the Mormons had abandoned and used the ruins of the Temple to build a school and a commissary and meeting house. All things were held in common. Clothing for all was of the same quality and quantity. Each morning the women went to work as did the men..the task of each had been assigned by Cabet. The children over five were at school. The food was prepared in the common kitchen. The principle that guided Cabet in legislating the colony was From each according to his ability ^I to each according to his need.

SCENE: TROUBLE BREWING
ARGUMENTS WITH CABET. BREAK UP OF
COMMUNE AND CABET LEAVES

During the lean years that followed the commune was blessed with peace and contentment. When prosperous years dawned and Cabet refused to use the accumulated funds to relieve the poverty of the colony using it instead to buy more land for its expansion, dissatisfaction grew, fomenting rebellion. A group of dissenters insisted that an election be held and that Etienne Cabet, now in his seventy-second year, was too old to guide the colony. At an assembly Cabet, vigorously voiced his intention of retaining leadership during his life-time. Open rebellion ensued and the now broken-hearted Cabet with a small group of faithful followers, went to St. Louis when he died a few months later.

SCENE: ICARIAN WHO REMAIN DIVIDE
PROPERTY & BEGIN THEIR OWN WAY OF LIFE.
ENTER FATHER ALLEMAN WITH HIS GRAPE
VINE PLANTING ETC

The Icarians who remained in Nauvoo divided the Property among themselves and settled down to our democratic way of life. Communism without the help and blessing of God had been tried and found wanting and was abandoned. Even before the break-up of the Icarian Commune, on a bright spring day when all the world seemed filled with new hope and beauty, into the village of Nauvoo came the good priest, Father Alleman, bringing a gift to the people of the little town on the Mississippi. It was the grapevine which was then not too well-known in this part of America. The vine was imported from France and Father Alleman planted and blessed it. Truly this was a blessed day for the hopes of the good people, and for the future of Nauvoo. This tiny grape vine was a thread of gold in the historical tapestry of the City Beautiful.

PAUSE SONG: THIS TENDER VINE

GRAPE CUTTERS AND WINE MAKERS ENTER

Now new activity, new life filled the little village. Eagerly the citizens planted and cultivated the grapevines. Daily the luscious grapes ...purple, white and red, were gathered from the vineyards. The wine industry developed and soon boomed. More than six hundred acres of grapes were planted. More than

forty wine cellars of limestone were built with press houses above them. Within a very short time, red, white and amber sparkling wines were flowing to the North, East, West and South and carloads of the Pride of Nauvooher delicious grapes were shipped in all directions.

SCENE: PIONEERS ARRIVING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS
CARRYING THEIR FLAGS

Up the Mississippi and down its course, in boats, canoes and over the hills in covered wagons and on foot, from the East, the North, the South and the West and even from foreign shores came other sturdy pioneers to build new home in Nauvoo. The happy French, the deliberate Germans, the energetic Swiss-- the conservative English and the care-free Irish, each had something to contribute to the Nauvoo of the future.

PAUSE FOR DANCE

SCENE: COMING OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS PEACE
AND HARMONY ETC.

With the coming of these sturdy courageous pioneers, Nauvoo became once more a happy prosperous place. The old Mississippi now flowed past a city beautiful with new hopes no longer to be dimmed. From the river barges could be seen a town blooming forth in activity with church spires reaching heaven-ward as proof of a loving faith and trust in God. There had been zealous missionaries riding muddy trails to Quashquame as early as 1820 to bring God to their scattered flocks.

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Later came self-sacrificing Lutheran pastors who gathered the God-loving Germans into a thriving congregation. Devout Methodists followed listening with reverence to the Word of God from their leaders. Presbyterians too, zealous for God's glory, joined to sing his praises. From their love of God, their faith and trust in His divine providence, their dependence His fatherly care, were built the beautiful picturesque churches of Old Nauvoo. The Benedictine Sisters came too, to establish a school, St Mary's Academy ...the Benedictines with their fourteenth century old tradition of praise of God, social service and the

education of youth. Later the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints came back to the home of their Prophet to beautify the spot made sacred to them by his one-time presence here and to practice their religion according to the dictates of their conscience, living in peace and harmony among their neighbors or other creeds. Truly might Nauvoo be called not only the "City Beautiful" but also the Haven of Peace. In the late 1950s the descendants of those who followed Brigham Young to the Great Salt Lake in Utah, returned to restore many of their old homes and culminating with the rebuilding of the Mormon Temple. Truly might Nauvoo be called not only the "City Beautiful" but also the "Haven of Peace"

SCENE: PROHIBITION DAYS/VATS COVERED.

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For years all went well in this land of promise fulfilled. Then came the years under the Prohibition Act. The cellars gradually became empty and no longer housed the wine that was given by the good God to cheer the heart of man. The wine vats deteriorated and the cellars became the home of mold and of spiders and other foreign bodies, mute witness of the instability of all things natural and human. As the poet, Burns, so aptly said "The best laid plan of man and men, gang aft agley." However, you cannot down the good people of Nauvoo. They have a way of making the most of a bad situation. So it came to pass for a third time in its history, Nauvoo built anew on things forsaken, abandoned dead. This time a new source of wealth came from the molding caves of dead hopes.

SCENE: SHEPHERD BOY

Let me tell you the story of how it all came about as my father told it to me. Long ago in sunny France, a shepherd boy left a half-finished meal of rye bread and milk in a lime stone cave where he often stopped to eat at mid-day. Months later, caught in a

sudden springrain, he sought shelter in the cave. Great was his surprise when he came across the remains of the lunch left there months before. The bread had molded and the mold had run through the curds, changing them into a lump of blue-veined and white cheese. Being hungry, as shepherd boys always are, he tasted the substance and to his delight found it most delicious. He took it home and gave it to his family and neighbors. Very soon most of the limestone caves in the region were filled with the

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Curds infused with some of the mold from the original cheese. The town of Roquefort, which had previously acquired an enviable reputation for its delicious wines, now became famous for its cheese.

SCENE: DAIRY MAIDS/CHEESE MAKERS

In Nauvoo it was found that many of the old abandoned lime stone wine cellars had just the proper temperatures and moisture for the culture of blue cheese. So from the ashes of the past a new occupation was born, a sign of prosperous days ahead.

SCENE. AFTER CHEESE MAKERS AND DAIRY MAIDS ARE SET UP, THE GRAPE CUTTER AND WINE MAKERS RETURN

With the repeal of the Prohibition act, the revived wine industry was now complemented by the new born cheese industry. Now in the city of Nauvoo, may be seen each fall groups of happy vine-gatherers carrying baskets of luscious from which eventually sparkling wines are made. Milk maids too with pails of Nature's own good gift of creamy whiteness, carry their treasure to the factory from which it emerges a pungent, blue-veined cheese.

PAUSE FOR VIRGINIA REEL.

As in France so in Nauvoo, it is found that these two

good gifts of nature complement each other. The people feel that there is more than a mystical relationship between their wines and cheese. They

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are at their best together. Each year at festival time, Nauvoo climaxes her festivities with an exact reproduction of the Wedding of the Wine and Cheese as celebrated in Roquefort, France.

SCENE: WEDDING OF THE WINE AND CHEESE AS THE NARRATOR EXPLAINS THE WEDDING, THE WEDDING PARTY SUIT THE ACTIONS

In the ceremony the bride is symbolic of the wine Brings cheer to the heart of man. The groom Represents sustenance, the means of healthful living United they set forth our determined hope that you, our friends will share it with us. In the ceremony the bride carries the wine which is placed upon the altar, the wine barrel. The groom carries the cheese which is placed beside the wine. The chief magistrate reads the marriage contract and places it between the wine and cheese. Then the minister encircles the wine and cheese with the wedding ring.....a barrel hoop. Thus the marriage is completed.

We have turned back the clock for a century or more. You have just experienced a rendezvous with history. Into this historic pageantry has been woven a saga of the poignant stories of our pioneer ancestors and the romance of bygone days. Memory is the magician that enables us to reconstruct the past. Life is the teacher; powerful historical forces propel us. Data, legend, myth each form an integral part in the lovely mosaic that makes up our fair city ...Nauvoo, the City Beautiful.

We hope you come back to visit us again . Now we ask
that you join us in singing one of our
favorite songs, one that is peculiarly our very own

COME TO HISTORIC NAUVOO

City of dreams
Here in historic Nauvoo
Come dreamers of dreams
Here in historic Nauvoo
Dreams still come true.
For all the dreams men have
dreamed
Still live in you
Dreamers have come o'er
American plains
Seeking a better land
Dreamers have tried to make
their dream real
Real in the life of man
Here to Nauvoo came the
dreamers so true
Each with a plan sublime
We must together make all
dreams real
In your life and mine.

Appendix 2 Nauvoo Pageant - Full Description

When Parley P. Pratt comes on stage, there is nothing but himself and his whistling tune—a tune previously identified by Ray Robinson as the “homecoming theme.” He pauses to look at his watch and then suddenly notices the audience. Meanwhile, his whistled tune leaps to a clarinet in the background as he smiles and says, “Hello! . . . I said, hello! . . . Ah, there you are! Welcome! Parley P. Pratt here. You know, we’ve been watching you all day--- tasting gingersnaps at Scovill’s and making your own bricks just yonder . . . The truth is, we couldn’t be happier to have you here . . . in our homes, strolling our streets, and now spread so handsomely across this sweet green. So what have you seen today? Well, you’ve seen where we lived and how we lived.”

From the very first moment, we have been met and welcomed. Because we *have* wandered Nauvoo’s historic district earlier in the day and encountered the cookies and the bricks, we now realize that we have shared tastes, sounds, and experiences familiar to our narrator, suggesting that we have seen something of his life and can feel we know him. He too can “remember summer nights on this very meadow, wending my way home through this grove of trees over here, knowing I would soon hear my beloved’s voice calling me from an open door . . .” A woman’s voice calling offstage, “Parr-leeey!”

Parley laughs, explaining, “There I go again, getting ahead of myself! I can’t help it. None of us can”—taking us into confidence as fellow prisoners of moving time. One by one the principle characters walk calmly onto stage with warm, inquisitive looks. When all have arrived, Parley makes a final statement: “You see, when *you’re* here, *we’re* here also—Because we are in you. Some of what you are now is because of what we are . . . what we became - here, in this place - in this beautiful city called Nauvoo.” As an audience, we are invited to collapse the distance between self and the story. We are claimed as a continuation of their lives because we have come to this place out of a shared faith.

Meanwhile, backstage, the cast is bustling into places, seizing props, adjusting hats. The sound of a steamboat whistle is heard and a teenaged boy (George Fordham) runs forward. “Boat’s in! Boat’s in! New Saints arrivin’! As the cast rushes onstage carrying their belongings, there is a flip-flop of arrival that occurs. First WE arrived and were greeted, and now we watch as Nauvoo welcomes those coming from far ports. The group erupts into a spirited hymn that was published in the 1st LDS hymnal: “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” With millennial fervor, the song continues until Brigham Young and all the core cast step forward to welcome all of us: Mary Ann Young, Heber C. Kimball, Vilate Kimball, Eliza R. Snow, John Taylor, Lenora Taylor, Twizzleton Turley, Margaret Turley, Elijah Fordham, Anna Fordham, George Fordham, Jane Manning, King Follett, and Charles Makepeace. Parley closes this introduction with

“You’ll meet all of us soon enough . . . as we share with you tonight . . . the story . . .” ALL say, “. . . of Nauvoo!”

In turn, principle characters introduce the main themes of the pageant: “how we came together to build a temple on that bluff;” how each “had felt God’s love and yearned to hear his voice,” that the message would be received “through a prophet.” With this dialogue, there is building energy as Parley sets up the question that leads to Joseph Smith’s entrance: “And what was it God told all these prophets? And what do they tell all of God’s children?” Joseph and his wife Emma and brother Hyrum enter for the response: “Of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the World.” As everyone whispers in excitement, Joseph works his way through the crowd, pausing to interact with cast members of various stages of life, and then tells a distilled version of Christ’s life, paralleling the scenes in his own life that will be portrayed in the remainder of the pageant: “. . . calling His apostles, organizing His Church, teaching the gospel, healing the people. And then He laid down his life for us . . .”

Now that Joseph and Emma have arrived, they can also welcome all of us. The center of the stage rises to a slightly higher platform and from there they address us: “Dearest friends! Sister Emma and I rejoice that you have arrived on your long journey here! Believe me when I say our hearts leap with joy to see you in Nauvoo!” Considering the number of miles many of us have come over the roads to Nauvoo, those sentiments

ring true as the cast rallies to sing a newly minted second verse for the opening Zion song: “Let Nauvoo in her beauty rise, The gate to latter days . . . Here gather in the meek, the choice, Their hearts in tune with heav’n, To learn from God’s own Prophet’s voice, And God’s own truth be given!”

The crowds disperse off all sides of the stage and a lone figure walks along the front of the stage through the “dock.” In a Scottish dialect he approaches Joseph. An understated but haunting theme plays on violins as this working class Everyman approaches and demands of Joseph, “So then! Where’s this great man of yours? This prophet called Joseph Smith?” In the exchange that follows, Joseph strips away pretensions and hears out Robert Laird’s complaints about “uprootin good Christian folk half a world away, bringin’ ‘em over a cold ‘n’ angry sea, on a boat full o’ sickness, to a place no one but God’s ever heard of!” It becomes clear that Robert has been dragged across the ocean by his converted wife Becky and that in that “fool’s errand,” they have lost their little boy to sickness. He displays all the emotions of anger and blame and challenges Joseph: “Dare you answer me, Mr. Smith, for the life of m’ wee lad?” “Robert, I cannot answer for your son, but I can mourn him with you. Some of our own children died as infants.” “Yet you can stand there and tell me that your God accepts such terrible sacrifices from children He supposedly loves?” “Yes I can. Because I know that He also knows what it means to lose a Son.” Then Joseph gently reassures Robert

that he does not have to trust him, but “if you will try, from this moment, to trust God, I give you my word – you will come into peace again.”

In the following silence, the energy changes as Becky Laird bustles onto the stage looking for Robert. She stops, awestruck, as she apprehends that she is seeing the prophet. Joseph offers consolation for their son and Becky laments, “It’s heavy sometimes, knowin’ we’ll ne’er hold him again.” “But you will! The Lord has promised it.” Joseph explains, “He is gathering us to build His temple, and we need your help to do it.” The link is made to holding her child and the promise of the temple. Becky enthusiastically volunteers Robert and his tools to the task. Joseph overcomes Robert’s protestations, inviting the couple to stay with he and Emma for the evening. Emma takes Becky by the arm, “Yes, we would love to help you get settled.”

A group of boys follow George Fordham carrying belongings of the newcomers up from the dock and are introduced to the Lairds. “What did you say your name was? “Uh, Robert Laird.” “It’s good to meet you, good to meet you.” The stage comes to life as women and men come in carrying their belongings with children playing alongside. Parley comes to comment upon the scene of fellowship, “The Prophet Joseph taught that friendship is one of the grand, fundamental principles of everything we are ...we try to carry each other’s burdens – well, quite literally!”

The sound of whistling and a pipe signal the beginning of some new action. The tune is what Ray Robinson labeled “the Industry theme”

that occurs whenever folks are getting to work. The stirring 4/4 March throws the melody back and forth between instruments as the new saints are swept up in the Welcome Dance: all the adult women spill over the top of the stage, sweeping their dresses at the height of the number, when the trumpets are playing the melody, and the choreography involves a whole series of smaller and large circles moving and connecting. In one portion, each “family” develops their own sequence of steps in a circle, so that each group is dancing in a circle, but obviously different from one another. In the background, the first two houses are raised upstage to show the growth of Nauvoo.

With everyone still disheveled and happy, Parley proclaims, “Wonderful! Wonderful! That was just right for how things are today, in 1842. But is this how things were in the beginning?” “No! Not at all!” We now enter into some time travel back to the beginnings of settlement in Nauvoo. An instrumental of a favorite hymn of the early Saints, “Adam Ondi-Ahman” rises in the background, evoking memories of their struggles in Missouri, as the cast scatters and prepares to tell the next story. The two upstage houses are altered to resemble tents and Brigham, Vilate, and Mary Ann recount in turn, “In those days, we had been driven from our homes in Missouri by people who feared us.” With Joseph incarcerated and the Saints homeless, they “camped wherever we could.” But then “our Prophet was set free, and by the grace of God he led us here.”

The scene that follows portrays the terrible swamp-born illnesses that plagued the Saints. The left platform is raised to suggest the Smith's home as Saints take their places on blankets scattered around the stage and pantomime sickness and worried families. A few healthy saints, including Emma and Hyrum move among them, tending to their needs. Parley narrates: Many gathered at Josephs' homestead," but one day, "Joseph took ill . . . But not for long . . ." Joseph's voice calls from offstage, "Emma!" He enters, putting his boots on with haste. "Emma! Where are you?" She approaches, "Joseph!" He calls to Wilford Woodruff, "Find Hyrum, will you? Have him gather all the brethren who are well enough to come." Though Emma urges him to look after himself, he explains, "If God expects me to look after His children, He will look after me." Emma expresses her fear for his life, foreshadowing future events, but Joseph comforts her, "Emma, when my time comes, it won't be because sickness or my enemies have their way. It will be because I've finished the work that God expects me to do." Off he rushes to stage right where Hyrum and the other men meet him. The center platform is raised to a flat position to suggest the Fordham home. He rallies Hyrum to go now "as the disciples of old and bless the sick in the name of Jesus Christ, healing them by the power of God, through the priesthood you bear" to the home of the Fordhams. Now, all the other assembled men move in pairs from family to family, enacting the motions of laying their hands on the sick and offering prayers of healing.

This enactment is explained by Parley as “The priesthood that Joseph spoke of . . . was given by Jesus Christ to His first apostles . . . In their day, they used this sacred authority to heal all manner of sickness and disease. Since the gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored, Peter, James, and John had come back to the earth and had given that same authority to Joseph who in turn had given it to us.” In the background, the cast hums along with the hymn, “How Firm a Foundation,” building until all sing the verse, “Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed, For I am thy God and will still give thee aid . . . “ as the families rise from their sick beds and slowly move offstage, leaving the audience with the sure message that God’s miracles persist into the present day. Only the Fordham Family and Joseph remain and Elijah moves to get up, despite the protestations of his wife Anna. “Elijah, I think you should rest!” Then Elijah gives the response that is quoted on many of the T-shirts family casts make as momentos for their cast group: “I will rest in God’s kingdom, but let me build it first!”

The scene changes into a personal exchange between George and Joseph when George confesses quietly, “Brother Joseph, today I doubted. I was afraid. I’m sorry for that.” Joseph takes this as a teaching moment. “Don’t trouble yourself over foibles, George. The Lord brought your father back through the priesthood. You believe that, don’t you?” “I’ll never forget it.” “Good. Because that mighty power will one day rest on you.” He turns to the other Fordham children. “The Lord trusts even

those who are young.” This exchange becomes a doorway into sharing a very simplified story of the vision Joseph received when he was just fourteen. “I was your very age, George.” “Will you tell it to us?” In the background, a flute and violins play “Oh How Lovely Was the Morning”—a popular hymn describing Joseph’s First Vision. With the children gathered around him under a spotlight he describes his experience: After “I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God . . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other - This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” He affirms his vision to the children and ends, “and though I have been persecuted for saying so, George, I know it is true. I know it, and I know that God knows it, and I cannot deny it.” The baton of faith has been passed as George exclaims, “Then I won’t deny it either, Brother Joseph. As long as I live.”

The children exit opposite Joseph and Hyrum as the center platform moves to a raked position. Stagehands beneath the stage open the trap door in the floor of the thrust stage to create a “ditch” for King and Charles to dig together. Parley also enters and brings them each a shovel: “And though sickness would continue to plague us, we had been renewed by His strength - strength we would now need to build a city

from a swamp.” The two characters have an exchange about digging the ditch and exit. (The script is being rewritten on this scene, so I have no dialogue).

Robert Laid enters while Parley is finishing his narration and looks a little nervous as he realizes that he is interrupting. “Excuse me, Mr. Pratt.” “Hello Robert!” As an audience, we are thrust into the story’s present as Robert apologizes for interfering with our conversation. “I know you’re busy tellin’ about Nauvoo and all, but if you could spare me just one moment . . .” Robert confides in Parley that there’s someone in his family “that’s findin’ himself a wee bit stuck.” That someone might be interested in the church but “doesn’t want to get pushed into anything.” Parley suggests this individual might want to read the Book of Mormon, but Robert protests that he already has the Bible. Parley teaches him that in the Book of Mormon he will find “everything the Bible teaches!” In parting, Parley presses Robert to tell his anonymous family member to seek God’s witness, and “give him my best, will you?”

Parley returns to his exchange with us while the homecoming tune returns, followed by the melody of the hymn “Oh Say What is Truth?” He asks our forgiveness because, once again, he has gotten ahead of himself: “Robert isn’t actually in Nauvoo . . . well, not yet. You see, he and Becky and thousands of others were still over in Scotland, England, Wales – all over the world, really. All still waiting to hear about the Restoration of the gospel. And that’s our next chapter in the story of Nauvoo. It’s the

story of how these thousands, how they heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and how The Book of Mormon was at the center of it all.”

One by one, the other apostles enter the stage to share their witnesses as they prepare to leave on missions to the British Isles: Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball and others. Joseph enters to send them off with the spiritual injunction to “let [my servants] depart to go over the great waters, and there [preach] my gospel.” The brethren pantomime packing their bags and bidding farewell to their families upstage. Before departing they share their faith that they are like the “ancient apostles,” and despite trials and burdens, “we went on our way . . . “ ALL: “Rejoicing!”

The city of Nauvoo is now laid out with the family cast throwing up long sheets of colorful fabric for the various roads in Nauvoo with shouts from Hyrum of “Mulholland Street! Main Street! Young Street! Etc.” Joseph is standing downstage reviewing the city plat and describing his vision of a physical kingdom where the farmland lies outside the city borders and “the farmer and his family shall live within the city in fellowship with the Saints.” The scene now shifts to two locations: onstage, where Nauvoo continues to be laid out street by street, and on platforms adjacent to the stage where the apostles preach the gospel in the British Isles. A reprise of “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise” is alternated with “Oh Say What is Truth” as the action moves back and forth between the energy and activity of the city and the missionaries, including

excerpts from letters between the apostles and their families. This “movement” occurs with the placement of lighting and alternating “freezes” by the cast.

On the lower left platform we meet the Laird family in their native land. Approaching Brigham, Becky exclaims, “O happy day! You are the Elder Brigham Young, missionary of the Mormon Church?” “I am.” “Elder Young, I desire to be baptized.” What ensues is a comic scene where Becky is ready to jump in the nearest pond and Brigham is not entirely sure what to do. He questions whether she is fully prepared: “Have you repented of your sins, then?” “Totally. Completely. Absolutely. My sins are decimated.” Robert interjects, “She’s not perfect yet!” When Brigham urges waiting, the “Laird theme” from Robert’s previous scene with Parley rises in the background and Becky entreats, “But I’ve had a feelin’! . . . And it’s not a feelin’ I conjured up m’self! I can’t quite explain it, yet I know it’s true! And nothin’, not even you, Elder Young, can make me deny it.” By now Brigham is convinced to go along and Robert agrees, “As long as that’s the end of it . . . But I can’t help feelin’ this is just the beginnin’.” This extended scene ends with Joseph writing to the missionaries in England: “Now, teach the Saints to gather, as many as can, here with us in Nauvoo.”

Stage cues instruct “newly converted families from England [to] come up through the audience, toting their boxes and bundles. Nauvoo citizens rejoice to welcome the new arrivals and take them in. From the

downstage platforms, the missionaries in England report their successes in letters to Joseph as Hyrum hastens the laying out of the city to make room for the newcomers.” As the audience, we start to get a sense of the magnitude of what was going on as Brigham reports, “we have baptized nearly eight thousand souls, with 1,000 emigrating to Zion, and many more to follow!”

A large group scene begins with the rolling of a snare drum and a rousing military march with a trilling fife. Standing at the top of the stage Joseph calls, “Brothers and sisters, the time has now come to erect a house of prayer, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house for the worship of our God! Here on the bluff, where Knight Street meets Wells, will stand a temple unto the Most High where we will learn of His ways and covenant to walk in His paths.” A lively procession ensues with “men carrying guns on their shoulders, women waving colorful handkerchiefs, young men carrying flags, young women flourishing their skirts, and children running behind. As the celebration reaches a climax, the Saints converge at the temple site, and the first cornerstone is laid.” All the people cheer in unison three times, ‘Hip, hip, Hooray!’ and then freeze.

Now the temple can become a focal point as men begin to erect the beginnings of a wooden outline of the temple façade. Joseph and Hyrum walk down to greet the returning missionaries. With all the newcomers, Parley explains, “building the temple brought us together as nothing else could.” Robert enters, wiping his brow as if he has been working as well.

He tells William Weeks that he'll be going, adding, "It's hard to believe I'm glazin' windows for a temple, and in America too." The other men start introducing themselves and talking and it becomes apparent that Robert also has skills that may be useful for carving the twelve oxen for the baptismal font. "I have m'own tools. It's not the first kirk I've built you know." "Kirk?" "A kirk—for praying, and singing hymns, and dozin' off when the preacher drones on..." All the men together, "A church!" "Aye, a kirk, that's what I said." "Well, this building is somewhat different, Robert." William Weeks explains to Robert, "a temple's for making covenants . . . promises we make to God . . . and in the temple we're joined to our families forever - even after we die." This strikes a chord with Robert: "I wish I was sure about that. I wish it more than you know."

There is a flurry of action along one of the city streets as the left platform rises to a flat position, indicating the home of Joseph and Emma. The men continue working on the temple in the background. Parley links all the activity together, saying "Glazing the windows, carving the oxen, and setting the stone were an expression of what was happening in each of us. We who were many were becoming one." Hyrum enters stage right with the character Jane Manning—one of a few recorded black pioneers. She is welcomed into their home by Emma and Joseph. They sit her down and listen to her story about her journey on foot from Buffalo, New York. Her family's feet were cracked and bleeding, but "oh Brother Joseph, we had a miracle!" Meanwhile, some large

sectional beams for the temple structure are being hoisted into place. During this and the following scenes, a signature LDS hymn “O My Father,” plays quietly.

With the industry theme playing in the background, we now encounter three scenes of women encouraging neighborliness and service in Nauvoo. Parley greets Eliza who shows how the schoolchildren have been collecting pennies for the temple; Leonora Taylor convinces her son James to bring garden sauce to an ill neighbor, even though the neighbor’s son Wilfie always steals his marbles; Vilate urges her husband Heber to give up the lumber he has been saving for his shed to build a floor and roof for Sister Makepeace. Underlying the dialogue, the “industry theme” weaves through a medley of instrumental hymns: “How Gentle God’s Commands,” “Come Ye Children Of the Lord,” and “Let Zion in her Beauty Rise.” The scenes culminate in Mary Ann, Anna, Emma and Eliza standing at the temple site noticing that the men’s clothes are wearing through. “Think of it. We have 12 bolts between us. If we get eight shirts for every bolt, that’s eight times two, carry the one, that’s ninety-five . . .” “Ninety-six.” “Even better!” “Now that’s a start!” “A prodigious start. Thank what we could do if we were organized . . .” “As an institution!” “As a society!”

We see Heber and George arrive at the Makepeace home with the load of wood with the announcement, “Sister Turley, Sister Kimball has sent me with instructions to assist with the repair of your roof and the

construction of a floor.” James runs excitedly up to John Taylor at the temple site, “Papa, papa! I gave Wilfie all my marbles!” Meanwhile, at the Smith home, Jane is in tears. “Brother Joseph, you and Sister Emma have been so good to let me stay but I need to find a home for myself . . .” “A home? Why Emma, haven’t we a home for Sister Manning?” Meanwhile, the stage right platform has been moved into a trough position and two children, Margarett and Wallace McIntire stand up to their shins in mud, crying. “Help! Help!” Joseph approaches them. “Hey there, young ones. What’s the matter?” “We’re stuck in the mud! We can’t get out.” Joseph lifts the children out and comforts them, wiping their shoes clean. “Well, you run along now. And don’t you mind the mud - we all get stuck sometimes.” Interspersed with each of these instructive scenes, Parley slips in a series of sermonettes based on scriptures, culminating with, “Charity never faileth.”

Emma laughs as she approaches Joseph: “Oh Joseph, all the people you rescue!” He protests that the sisters do far more than he. Emma admits that the sisters “have been thinking about organizing . . . Sister Eliza has even drafted a constitution for a charitable society.” “She has? Wonderful. I feel the Lord is in this, Emma. I need to study it out in my mind. Do you think I could meet with the sisters tomorrow?”

A lone fiddle “begins a graceful folk melody” as the cast begins entering for the Evening Dance. Joseph holds out his hand, inviting Emma to join him. Starting with a stately waltz, the adults lead out in the

dancing while the children dance and play at the edges of the stage.

Parley explains, “In coming together to build the temple, we also came together to celebrate the wonder and beauty of life . . . and to express it in the most praiseworthy ways - in music, and drama, and dancing.”

Heber interjects the dancing to announce, “Ladies and gentlemen! The Nauvoo Dramatic Company herby announces its first performance of the tragedy of Pizarro . . . (the audience cheers) . . . to be staged in the

Cultural Hall, featuring as an Incan priest our very own Brigham Young!”

The dancing starts back with a lively reel until William Weeks steps forward and challenges Robert and Becky Laird to “come and give us a taste of old Scotland!” All the cast gathers to see them dance a highland fling and then join in with a wild flurry of dancing. Everyone applauds and then slowly bid farewell as they reluctantly leave the dance.

A number of individuals run backstage and bring back lanterns for the Evening Prayer scene as families group together for family prayer. The lights are low, with the lanterns blinking and moving like fireflies as the cast sings, “Abide with me, ‘tis eventide. The day is past and gone. The shadows of the evening fall. The night is coming on.” The ensemble continues to hum as Parley speaks: “Here was heaven, whether we were attending a play or a concert, or just strolling the streets and visiting as our children chased each other under the stars - (looking up) -- these stars. Speaking of heaven, the Prophet Joseph taught, ‘That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there.’ Standing here

tonight on this green, in this place I love so well, I can still feel it.” The friends mingle and gather sleepy children. All sing a reprise, “O Savior, stay this night with me; behold ‘tis eventide.” Robert approaches Parley with a Book of Mormon, but hides it when Becky approaches as the Lairds join Parley and his family for prayer. “Awkwardly, Robert follows their example” as they all kneel and bow their heads. The families exit the stage.

The lighting changes as morning comes and the “industry theme” plays on a clarinet amidst the chirping of birds. Joseph is gathered on the center platform with Emma, Eliza, and eighteen other women as they portray the beginning of the LDS women’s organization, the Relief Society. Hyrum and John Taylor are also present. Joseph announces, “My dear sisters, with gratitude we acknowledge our Sister Eliza has written an excellent constitution for an organization. But, the Lord has in mind something even better for you. I now turn the key to you, and this society shall rejoice, and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time. . . Emma, Beginning with this contribution, all that I have to give the poor, I shall give to this society.” As the sisters prepare to exit, Emma urges them, “Sisters, we are going to do something extraordinary. Come . . .”

Some men enter stage left to work on the temple structure. A bustling city scene ensues as Parley returns from his mission. We see the growing and changing city through his eyes as he expresses astonishment

to “see so large a city rising out of the swamp I had left: shops, streets, and hundreds of brick homes!” Joseph greets him and together they admire the rising walls of the temple and converse with the men working. Robert comes forward and he and Joseph move downstage to talk on two stools. Joseph congratulates Robert on he and Becky’s new baby. “It’s just good to see Becky with a wee’un in her arm’s again.” “And you? Robert, you’ve made quite a contribution to the temple - I think those windows are perfection.” “Well, they let the light in, anyway.” “It seems there’s a little light coming in to you, too.” Robert then reminds Joseph of his promise of peace at a time that he “thought I’d never feel better again. . . . “But as I’ve lived here in Nauvoo, I find myself changin’, healin’ almost against my own will. . . . I feel somethin’. I canna quite explain it. I dunna exactly wha’ it is. But I know this: I like it. It tastes good. And I want it for myself and my family, always.” Joseph assures Robert that all good “comes from Christ” and that his journey has prepared him for baptism. Robert runs to find and tell Becky.

Children pour over the top of the stage with the sound of trumpets and shimmering violins, led by George Fordham. “Brother Joseph, wanna play stick ball?” Joseph joins them in a raucous game onstage as a joyous instrumental tune adds cinematic atmosphere. One of the little boys hits a homerun and Joseph lifts him triumphantly to his shoulders. An older boy invites Joseph to compete in a stick pull as the children watch and cheer. Parley narrates: “Men are that they might have joy, says the Book

of Mormon, and Joseph lived that truth. You've heard the stories: the wrestling, the stick pulls, the singing, the fun. Only a man with a conscience clear before God could have loved life so well." All shout their thanks and goodbye's as they exit and the center beams of the temple are being brought in from stage left.

The mood now changes as Parley shifts to the persecutions visited on the Mormons as the "city [Joseph] founded grew in strength and numbers. Again and again he was arrested on false charges." Hyrum, King, and Robert rush in to warn Joseph of danger and they go to stand on a stage to the side. A crowd gathers to hear Brigham read aloud Joseph's letter written from jail. It begins in Brigham's voice, but then shifts to Joseph: "Thus saith the Lord: Let the work of my temple be continued on and not cease. . . ." Meanwhile, men at the top of the stage silently raise the center section of the temple beams. Joseph, Robert, and King come to the center stage where they portray a scene of a night watch. George Fordham is kneeling and praying. ". . . please bless Brother Joseph that he will be safe tonight from the mobs." "Brethren, you can both go home now and rest. The Lord has heard this boy's prayer."

A tortured violin plays as Parley describes the hardships: "In June 1843, Joseph was arrested without legal process - kidnapped - and spared death only by the intercession of friends. His family bore the greatest burden." Stage left, a platform is raised to represent the Smith homestead. A constable knocks at the door and Emma comes to ask his

business. "I assure you, my husband is innocent." Parley then explains, "The Prophet Joseph Smith's crime? He was a prophet. And, as it had been in every age since time began, the instrument of God's light had stirred up the powers of darkness, bringing them full force upon his own head and upon the heads of all those who followed him. In the spring of 1844, Joseph learned that 200 men had formed a secret society against him." A band of rough looking men with flaming torches gather at the edge of the stage. "Do you swear on your life, your liberty, and all you possess the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party?" "Aye!" Joseph comforts Emma not to trouble herself. "Yes, I know: 'Thy days are known, and they years shall not be numbered less.'" They exit as the platform moves back into place.

Parley gives us a foreshadowing for things to come, saying "For all of us, our time on earth was uncertain." At the lower part of the stage Twizzleton Turley and King Follett are digging a well while reminiscing that the last time they were digging together it was ditches to get *rid* of water. Interrupting this light-hearted banter, Parley announces, "On March 9, 1844, just north of the temple, our dear friend and brother, King Follett was killed in an accident while working on a well." Louisa cries out, "No! No!" as George runs across the stage, "Brother Joseph, come quick!" A funeral procession carrying a casket enters the upper stage left followed by Louisa Follett, Joseph, Emma, Hyrum, and others. All gather around the casket as Parley narrates: "At Brother Follett's funeral, as the

darkness of mortality closed around us, it was the Prophet of God who opened our minds to a heavenly view and let the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ shine upon us.”

A sound of wind and thunder rumbles in the distance. Joseph embarks on a well-known text, the King Follett Sermon, consoling the mourners that we “know that . . . they shall rise again to dwell in immortal glory.” In the audience, Robert and Becky remark aloud that this was the promise he made when he met them. Joseph goes on to explain, “Mothers, will you have your children in eternity? Yes! Yes! You shall, for they shall have eternal life. . . . This is the purpose of the temple - to bring together those who dwell in heaven, that the hearts of our family members may be bound together for eternity.” John and Leonora Taylor step forward singing a hymn favored at LDS funerals, “When I leave this frail existence, When I lay this mortal by, Father, Mother, may I meet you, In your royal courts on high.” All join in singing the remainder of the hymn’s verse, as bright spotlights illuminate King Follett and other angels dressed in white, standing above the funeral. The angels exit and some men carry the casket offstage.

The cast moves outward to the edge of the stage as Parley summarizes: “So this was the grand panorama. The blessings of the Restoration weren’t just for us. They were for the whole of God’s family, our fathers before us to our children after . . . The keys to unlock these blessing had first been given to the Prophet Joseph. Now they would be

laid on the shoulders of the Savior's apostles in these latter days." The Twelve Apostles have gathered around Joseph at the bottom of the stage as he walks among them, clasping a hand, or touching a shoulder. He makes clear to them that he is now passing the "keys of the work of God" onto them and gives them the charge to "bear off this kingdom - no matter what becomes of me." He pauses and says, "I have desired to see the Temple completed, but I shall not live to see it." Standing purposefully in front of Brigham he says, "You will."

The cast is still assembled along the edge of the stage as the light fades and Joseph and Hyrum walk into a square of light at the center of the stage as Parley muses: "The last time Joseph and Hyrum left Nauvoo, there was little to distinguish it from the times before . . . But this time was different." Music begins to play the melodies of "Oh How Lovely Was the Morning" and "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief." Reading from the Book of Mormon, Hyrum quotes, "And now I . . . bid farewell . . . unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment seat of Christ . . ." Joseph picks up the thread. "And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face . . ." Hyrum continues, "And now I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have [testified] . . ." Joseph finishes, ". . . that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever." Both end, "Amen." Still in the square of light, Hyrum grasps Joseph's

should in a pose that is modeled after the statue of the brothers outside Carthage Jail. Hyrum pauses and says, “What a beautiful morning.” “Yes Hyrum. This is the loveliest place and the best people under the heavens . . . Little do they know the trials that await them.”

The cast moves forward to line the perimeter of the stage platforms as John Taylor and Willard Richards walk downstage to either side of Joseph and Hyrum. Core cast stand out to tell the story of the martyrdom. Leonora Taylor: “That day, an unspeakable sorrow settled upon many in Nauvoo and abroad.” Heber C. Kimball: “On the afternoon of June 27th, 1844, Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor, and Willard Richards under protective custody, were ushered to the second story of a jail, into a bedroom belonging to the jailer’s family.” Vilate Kimball: “Hyrum asked John Taylor to sing a hymn.” John Taylor begins humming “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief.” Eliza: “Soon about 150 men appeared, their faces blackened with gunpowder to hide their identities.” Brigham: “Shortly after five o’clock in the evening, the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum were shot - martyred in defense of the kingdom of God.” As the light fades, John Taylor sings the end of the hymn, “These deeds shall thy memorial be; Fear not, thou didst them unto me.” John Taylor and Willard Richards walk away from center stage to join the circle of Saints and Joseph and Hyrum walk downstage in a spotlight and then disappear, exiting through the audience. Emma starts forward as if in pursuit and then is surrounded by family. Jane Manning takes her shawl

and puts it onto her shoulders. The music segues into a somber drum roll and the unofficial Joseph Smith anthem, "Praise to the Man," begins to play at a slow tempo with the cast gently humming along.

Parley comes forward to share the moment that he learned of Joseph and Hyrum's deaths. "At the time of the martyrdom I was on a boat with my brother. A strange and solemn awe came over me, and I was so overwhelmed with grief that I could hardly speak. As word came of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum, many gathered around me and asked what the Mormons would do now. I told them that we would continue the work Joseph had restored in all the world. I told them that nearly all of the prophets and apostles of earlier times had been killed, and also the Savior of the World, and that their deaths did not alter the truth!"

Brigham steps forward, encouraging the Saints that they must continue on and finish God's house, "that He may grant us knowledge and power from on high." This is a key moment because with Joseph's death comes the question of leadership. As Brigham speaks, the Apostles and the Saints step forward, one by one, to surround him and indicate their support. As the music swells, Eliza, Jane, Becky, Leonora, and Vilate carry in large baskets containing the temple panels downstage. Behind them, the sisters form lines and while singing with the music, pass the long cloth panels of the temple upstage to be fastened to the framework of the temple. "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah! Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer, Blessed to open the last dispensation,

Kings shall extol him and nations revere!" Once the panels are attached, the cast continues to sing the chorus as the men rhythmically hoist ropes to raise the cloth temple to its full height. This is a showstopper moment as the audience catches its breath at the visual power of the image.

Core cast step forward to explain the circumstances after the death of Joseph as individuals and couples enter and exit the temple at the top of the stage. The Saints "entered the temple rejoicing" and "emerged from the temple endowed with power to overcome the trials of life . . ." but "The persecution that had taken Joseph now turned on us." Families start to gather their possessions as they prepare to leave the city. The hymn "Abide with Me" plays beneath as Brigham stands at the edge of the stage and calls out, "Come brothers and sisters. Wherever the Lord leads us, we will build another temple." The Saints exit through the audience with their belongings, shivering to show the cold February of 1846.

We have an intimate moment with the Lairds as they pause onstage and sing, "O Savior, stay this night with me, Behold 'tis eventide." Their baby starts to cry and Becky tenderly takes the child from Robert's arms. The "Laird Theme" begins to play as Robert observes, "Well, Becky, I've had to give away all I have to get back everything I want." Becky responds, "You feel him, don't you?" "Jamie? Aye, and m' grandparents and great-grandparents too." Becky agrees. "To think we'd find them

here, when we bid farewell to them away over there.” They exit leaving only Parley onstage.

As he speaks, the temple structure behind him slowly and quietly falls to the ground backstage: “And so we walked down Parley Street, crossed the Mississippi, and with one last glance back at our beloved temple, we turned our wagons west. Over the years, time and the forces of nature erased all of what we had built here, with so much love and desire. One by one, the temple stones were scattered throughout these parts, and for decades the foundation was plowed over and used as a field. But nothing could erase what Nauvoo had given us. That we took with us. And we taught our children, and they taught theirs. Which is why when you’re here . . .” At this moment, the voice of Mary Ann calls, “Paar-leey!” He finishes, “We’re here also.” His three little children run out to meet him. Mary Ann comes out to scold him for taking so long, so he explains, “I’ve been sharing some stories of Nauvoo with these friends.” She suddenly notices the audience and reacts, “Friends? Oh, it’s you! And so many of you!”

The principle characters begin reentering the stage carrying props from daily work and speaking as they enter. Together they create a final stream of thought: “They’ve come to be with us . . . and to remember . . . Yes, we’ve been waiting. For you are more than friends. We know you, and you know us! . . . You know what it means to embark on the journey of life . . . to step into the darkness of uncertainty . . . to lose the one ye

love, and bear sorrow . . . and know the deepest grief . . . But in the darkness, there comes a light - a hope - in the One who bears all sorrow . . . In Jesus Christ - in whom we find the purpose in our lives. . . And on a night like this one ... when moonlight streams through your open window . . . or you hear the whistle of a riverboat far, far away . . . then you feel, you know, there's something more to life than what we see . . . and someplace yet to go . . . Beyond where we have been. . . It's true. We know you . . . And you know us . . . For we are all one family . . . Children of our Heavenly Father . . . Beloved in His sight, each one of us."

The core cast and their families move to the edges of the stage as the lights go out. In the darkness we hear the voice of President Gordon B. Hinckley speaking as the restored Nauvoo Temple suddenly blazes to light on the hill far beyond the stage: "Today, facing west, on the high bluff overlooking the city of Nauvoo, thence across the Mississippi, and over the plains of Iowa, there stands Joseph's temple, a magnificent house of God. Here in the Salt Lake Valley, facing east to that beautiful temple in Nauvoo, stands Brigham's temple, the Salt Lake Temple. They look toward one another as bookends between which there are volumes that speak of the . . . thousands who made the long journey from the Mississippi River." Light returns to the stage as both the family cast and training cast sweep onto stage singing full volume a hymn traditionally sung at all temple dedications: "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning! The latter-day glory begins to come forth; the visions and blessing or old

are returning, And angels are coming to visit the earth.” The singing pauses as Joseph Smith steps forward to give his last testimony of Jesus Christ, and then all sing again to completion, “Henceforth and forever, Amen and amen!” with the flourishing of trumpets, bright lights, raised hands, and fervent countenances.

As the finale ends, the cast pours off the front of the stage to meet with the audience and to encourage their engagement in a post-show recap.

Jill Hemming Austin

Education

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
Ph.D. Folklore Studies, 2015
Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
School of Environmental and Public Affairs, 2006
Nonprofit Fundraising Certification

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
Masters of Arts, Folklore Curriculum, 1995

Brigham Young University, Provo, UT
Bachelors of Arts, English, 1991

Ricks College, Rexburg, ID
Associate Degree, English, 1989

Professional Experience

2008

Instructor, Curriculum in Folklore, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Taught 485 Introduction to Folklore, a survey course for 90 undergraduates.

2006-2007

Assistant Director, Traditional Arts Indiana
Worked with Executive Director, Jonathan Kay, to develop a statewide network of programs and support for traditional arts in Indiana. Developed traveling exhibit series, co-produced public programs and performances, and evaluated organizational structures for improvement.

2001-2005

North Carolina Mammography Project, Lumbee Breast Cancer Oral History Project, *Consultant*. With a team of health care specialists from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and UNC-Pembroke, I oversaw the development of an archive of 30 interviews with Lumbee breast cancer survivors that examine the experience of breast cancer from a Lumbee perspective with the goal to inform

and influence the procedures and policies surrounding treatment of Lumbee breast cancer patients. This involved research, conceptualization, interview development, training of Lumbee interviewers, and ongoing analysis.

2002-2004

Researcher and co-coordinator of North Carolina's representation at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival program "Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Culture." Developed community support and profiles for the Albemarle Sound region and helped define and coordinate programming to represent North Carolina's maritime cultures and traditions to festival visitors. Acted as interpreter and presenter at festival.

1999-2001

Southern Oral History Program, *Project Coordinator*

A major oral history initiative, "Listening for a Change" was launched across the state by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers seeking to elicit a more inclusive state history. As one of the project coordinators in the initiative, I worked with colleague Alicia Rouverol to develop a project focused on the changing neighborhoods of Northeast Central Durham where large numbers of Latinos are settling into historically African-American communities. Managing a team of graduate students and neighborhood folks and using a collaborative approach that seeks to engage community leaders in the planning and implementation of the project, we completed a community mural, a community history booklet, and a housing advocacy video. The emerging impact of the project has been the engagement of area residents in a dialogue about community challenges, solutions and visions for the future.

Student Action with Farmworkers, *Folklife Consultant*

SAF administers an internship program each summer to give college students an opportunity to work within the farmworker community on advocacy issues. Over three years, I helped the organization develop a documentary structure for surveying folklife among farmworkers. In a workshop format, I trained interns in both oral history techniques and identifying, documenting and recording folklife using fieldwork methodology and the tools of photography and tape-recorded interviews. Resulting intern projects are used as educational outreach tools by SAF and are submitted to the Southern Folklife Collection at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH).

1998 American Folklore Society, *Public Sector Folklorist in Residence*
A prestigious appointment, the Public Sector residency seeks to bridge the division between folklorists working in academic and public realms. Hosted for two weeks by Utah State University, I conducted a fieldwork seminar for graduate students in folklore and presented a regional folkways class for undergraduate students. I also pursued a personal research project on Mormon Genealogy quilts in the Utah State Archives, Fife Folklore Archives, and through fieldwork in the surrounding counties.

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, *Folklife Consultant*
Reviewed existing oral histories with artists, writers and tradition bearers within the state for references to North Carolina landscape and natural resources and recommended portions for auditory component of museum exhibit space.

North Carolina Arts Council, *Folk Heritage Award Program*
Fieldworker
Researched and interviewed recipients of the 1998 North Carolina Folk Heritage Awards: country gospel singers The Wilson Brothers and weaver Ossie Phillips. Processed documentation, highlighted key materials, and drafted biographical sketches for program book.

Museum of the Jewish Family, *Researcher and Writer*
Researched and wrote text for an exhibit, booklet and brochure on Israel's culture and history as expressed through stamp images in celebration of Israel's 50th anniversary: "The Running Stag: Images of Israel in Postage Stamp Art" exhibited at Duke University in Durham.

1997 North Carolina Arts Council, *Northeast Folklife Survey Coordinator*
Working with state folklorists, developed a comprehensive survey strategy for the coastal counties of North Carolina with the goal of establishing contacts and cultural resources for both the state arts council and for people living in these communities. Generated hundreds of images and fifteen interviews in twenty days of fieldwork and co-authored a written report for use by community development groups in the region.

North Carolina Museum of Art, *Festival Participant Coordinator*
Assisted the museum's Events Director in orchestrating a fiftieth anniversary festival for the NC Museum of Art that highlighted connections between culture, art and celebration. Managed arrangements and stage needs for participants and performers.

1996 The Southern Oral History Program, *Oral History Interviewer*
Completed four interviews with four Native American women of leadership in the Waccamaw-Siouan and Coharie tribes of North Carolina. The processed interviews are part of a Women's Leadership and Grassroots Activism Project that culminated in a documentary video and in oral history performances throughout the state.

North Carolina Museum of History, *Folklore Consultant*
Gathered contemporary stories of health and healing for upcoming exhibit on the cultural systems and attitudes that surround health and sickness. Generated interviews on health issues such as AIDS, cancer and migrant health; processed and analyzed the stories for use in the written and interactive portions of the exhibit.

1995 Idaho Commission on the Arts, *Fieldworker for Traditional Arts Survey*
Traveled nine-county region of southeast Idaho gathering resources for the Idaho State Folklorist. Interviewed, photographed and gathered traditional music, stories, handicrafts and other folklore of the region to be used in programming by the Commission. Completed twenty-three interviews with tape logs, generated and labeled hundreds of slides and B&W images and maintained detailed field notes for fifty-five days.

1994 The Western Folklife Center, *Archive Consultant*
Created archival system for existing and incoming audio, image, artifact and text collection. Researched and installed Filemaker Pro database management software. Participated in documenting Native American ranching traditions in preparation for the Center's annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

Festival for the Eno, *Assistant Coordinator*
Engaged and managed a large number of staff and volunteers. Designed and handled publicity mailings and press releases. Conceived and procured grant funding for a hands-on pottery event and demonstration which introduced festival visitors to North Carolina's pottery traditions. 1993-1994.

Grants

- 2002 North Carolina Arts Council, *Documentation Grant*
Developed a community narrative of the Southern Albemarle region of North Carolina for inclusion in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2004 program "Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Culture." This included facilitation of community planning meetings, fieldwork, processing, interpretation and recommendations to Smithsonian staff.
- 2001 North Carolina Humanities Council Grant
Co-written grant to fund public programs and publication associated with the New Immigrants in Northeast Central Durham Project.
- 1998 North Carolina Arts Council, *Documentation Grant*.
Fieldwork documentation of commercial fishing culture in Albemarle Sound region--specifically the pound netting and boat building traditions of the Davenports, brother fishermen regionally recognized as extraordinary practitioners of traditional fishing. This work led to the Davenports receiving a prestigious NC Folk Heritage Award in 2007. Resulting interviews, field notes, and slides housed in the Southern Folklife Collection at UNC-CH.
- 1997 North Carolina Arts Council, *Folklife Projects Grant*
Grant co-written with Waccamaw-Siouan tribe to fund the publication of a booklet on quilters and quilting traditions in the Waccamaw community. Copies have been sold locally and given to participating quilters and their families.
- 1996 North Carolina Arts Council, *Documentation Grant*.
Fieldwork survey of traditional culture in the Waccamaw-Siouan tribe, including church music and worship, cornhusk weaving, and fishing. Also under this grant, worked with tribal leaders to procure funding for a publication on quilting as follow-up to a previous quilt documentation project. Documentation housed in the Southern Folklife Collection at UNC-CH. 1996.
- 1994 North Carolina Arts Council, *Documentation Grant*.
Used fieldwork techniques to survey, interview and photograph quilters from the Waccamaw-Siouan tribe of North Carolina. The documentation from this project has enriched state quilt history and introduced Waccamaw-Siouan culture outside their region. Waccamaw quilters showed quilts and demonstrated quilting at the 1995 Eno River Festival in Durham, NC--an event attended by over

30,000 people. Also, through my nomination, Waccamaw quilter Lee Jacobs received a prestigious 1996 North Carolina Folk Heritage Award. Documentation housed in the Southern Folklife Collection at UNC-CH. 1994.

Professional Affiliations

American Folklore Society
Oral History Association
North Carolina Folklore Society
American Quilt Study Group

Publications/Exhibits

- 2009 Austin, Jill Hemming. Book Review. Unmasking Class, Gender, and Sexuality in Nicaraguan Festival. *Oral History Review* 36:2. 261-262.
- 2008 Austin, Jill Hemming. Book Review. Waccamaw Legacy: Contemporary Indians Fight for Survival. *Indigenous Nations Journal* 6:1. Spring,
- 2007 Austin, Jill Hemming. Book Review. *Shadow and Shelter: The Swamp in Southern Culture*. *Journal of Folklore Review*. Bloomington, IN.
- 2006 Austin, Jill Hemming. Exhibit Review. From Cambodia to Greensboro: Tracing the Journeys of New North Carolinians. *Journal of American Folklore* 119:473.
- 2004 Hemming, Jill. "Family Narratives: Reflections on *From Cambodia to Greensboro*." *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 51:1. 34-35.
- 2002 Hemming, Jill. "As I Was Talking, Fresh Ideas Came to Mind of Things that I Could Do." *NC Humanities Newsletter*, Spring 2002.
- 2001 Hemming, Jill Alicia J. Rouverol, Angela Hornsby. *Neighborhood Voices: New Immigrants in Northeast Central Durham*. Laser Image Corporate Publishing: Durham, NC.

- 1998 Hemming, Jill, William Mansfield and Ann Kaplan. *The North Carolina Coastal Folklife Survey*. *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 45:1 (Winter-Spring).
- Hemming, Jill. *Waccamaw Siouan Quilters: Piecing the Past and Future*. Collaborative writing and editing with quilters. The News Reporter: Whiteville, NC.
- , and Lenora Ucko. *The Running Stag: Images of Israel in Postage Stamp Art*. Durham: Museum of the Jewish Family.
- . *Round Net and Rockfish*. NCArts (Spring): covers. Photographs.
- 1997 Hemming, Jill, William Mansfield, and Ann Kaplan. *The North Carolina Coastal Folklife Survey*. Edited by Beverly Patterson. Raleigh: North Carolina Folklife Institute.
- . "Waccamaw-Siouan Quilts: A Model for Studying Native American Quilting." *Uncoverings* 18:187-93.
- . "Waccamaw-Siouan Quilts and the Craft of Identity." In *To Honor and Comfort: Native Quilting Traditions*. Edited by Marsha MacDowell. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press.
- 1995 Hemming, Jill. "The Craft of Identity: Waccamaw-Siouan Quilts." Masters Thesis. 1995.

Conference Papers/Presentations

- 2007 Communities Transformed? When Scholars Become Activists. Paper presented at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting. Oakland, CA. 24 October.
- 2002 Uses of Oral History in a Community Development Setting." Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Meeting. Rochester, NY. 21,October.
- 2000 "Listening for a Change: Community Research and Collaboration in the New Immigrants Project." Paper presented at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting. Durham, NC. 11,October.

- 1999 “Temples and Trees: Mormon Quilting and the Material Culture of Belief.” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting. Memphis, TN. 22, October.
- “Listening for a Change: Oral History in North Carolina Communities.” Panel presentation at the Southern Oral History Program’s 25th Anniversary Event. Chapel Hill, NC. 8, April.
- 1997 “Waccamaw-Siouan Quilts: A Model for Studying Native American Quilting.” Paper presented at the American Quilt Study Group 1997 Seminar. Lawrence, KS. 10-12 October.
- “Towards Self-Definition: The Waccamaw-Siouan Quilt Project.” Paper presented at the second annual conference of the Southern Oral History Organization. Durham, North Carolina, 10-12 March.