



Reconstructed John Johnson Inn, Kirtland Flats, 2002. The original building, built by Peter French in 1813, was the first brick building built in the Kirtland area. The Church purchased the building from French in 1833. In 1834, John Johnson, who provided the funds for the purchase of the building, oversaw the management of the building. Several important early events took place in John Johnson Inn. In December 1833, the building served as the location where the first patriarchal blessings were administered by Joseph Smith Sr. In addition, following the destruction of the W. W. Phelps printing operation in Independence, Missouri, for a short time, the building housed the printing press whereon the last installments of The Evening and the Morning Star were printed. Furthermore, in May 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve met in the building just prior to taking their departure on their first quorum mission to the East. Finally, the Egyptian mummies acquired by Joseph Smith from Michael Chandler in 1835 were also housed and displayed in the building for a short time.

Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh 17 May 2003.

Historic Kirtland Restoration Completed

Mark Lyman Staker

The restoration and reconstruction of historic buildings within Kirtland Flats occurred on a tight schedule. After the dedication of Historic Kirtland in May 2003 by President Gordon B. Hinckley, many of the small details that make a site feel complete were still unfinished. Shortly thereafter, near the end of April 2004, the installation of finished appropriate implements into their proper settings and the burial of on-site power lines marked the completion of the Church restoration efforts in Kirtland village.

The Church carried out the restoration or reconstruction of significant buildings in Kirtland, Ohio, with major financial contributions from the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. Those contributions allowed the project team to accomplish twice as much as they would have otherwise. The reconstructed ashery and sawmill sites in Kirtland Flats have proven particularly popular attractions, drawing school groups from the surrounding community, with the number of visitors at Kirtland continuing to increase dramatically. The ashery is apparently the only such building restored in the United States and not only provides a place to talk about the significance of section 104 in the Doctrine and Covenants but also provides insights into a nineteenth-century chemical plant operation.

The sawmill provides an important site to discuss the construction of the Kirtland Temple and the role of skilled craftsmen in the erection of that building. Water turns the wheel, and visitors can see how the mechanical elements worked together to cut lumber for the temple. A lathe, mentioned in an early document, helps illustrate how the finishing room was used to

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complete elements of the temple. The sawmill helped build up the city of Kirtland as well and is an important symbol of much of what the Saints were able to accomplish.

In addition to a water-powered sawmill and an early nineteenth-century ashery, Kirtland boasts a rebuilt schoolhouse on its original 1819 site as well as the restored Newel K. and Ann Whitney home that recreates early Latter-day Saint family life. Early documents describe where Joseph's family stayed in the home and provide insight into his life while at the Whitney home. It was in the Whitney home that the Latter-day Saints held some of their earliest meetings in Kirtland.

In the initial orientation to the site, visitors are able to see what the newspapers have described as a "Hollywood-style film" that gives an entertaining introduction to the sites and helps visitors feel as though they are connected with the past. At the end of their experience, visitors can stop at the Johnson Inn. The exterior of the Johnson Inn provides space for a resource room where visitors can see, among other things, a rare second edition of the Book of Mormon that was printed in Kirtland and where visitors can explore the history of the Church in the area in greater detail.

Not only have various news reporters sung praises for the site and encouraged their readers to visit Kirtland but also the site has attracted the attention of various organizations, including the Ohio Builders Exchange Association that recently recognized Steve Pratt and Larry Montgomery for their exceptional craftsmanship in the furnishings of the sawmill and ashery. As the finishing touches fall into place on the Kirtland restoration efforts, everyone has more compelling reasons than ever to visit its sites and to relish Kirtland's past and its contributions to Latter-day Saint history.



The restored Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney home, 23 May 2003. The home was built by the Whitney's around 1824. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Reconstructed schoolhouse in the Kirtland Flats, 17 May 2003. The original schoolhouse was built on this site in 1819. Besides serving as a school, the building also served as a community center and meeting house. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Reconstructed ashery in Kirtland Flats, 17 May 2003. The reconstructed building is the only one of its kind in the United States. The original ashery was built by Newel K. Whitney in the early 1820s. Photographs by Alexander L. Baugh.



Interior of the reconstructed ashery, 25 June 2004. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

*Lathe and finishing room
in the reconstructed sawmill
located in Kirtland Flats,
17 May 2003.
Photograph
by
Alexander L. Baugh.*





*Portion of the reconstructed sawmill located in Kirtland Flats, 17 May 2003.
Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.*



*Kirtland LDS Visitors' Center, 17 May 2003. The building resembles an early mill.
Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.*