



City of Independence, Missouri, commemorative marker of the temple site. The inscription reads: "August 3, 1831, Joseph Smith, Jr., Prophet and Founder of the Church of Christ, with seven other Church leaders, dedicated this site for the Temple in the City of Zion, where this Church believes the Lord will come to His people in the Last Days."

Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

“A Spot for the Temple”: Reclaiming the Temple Site in Independence, Missouri

R. Jean Addams

“There is not one who calls himself a Latter Day Saint that does not believe a temple is to be reared at Independence on the site of ground owned by the Church of Christ,” so stated the editor of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) newspaper, the *Evening and Morning Star*, in its July 1907 issue.¹ Twenty-six years later the editor of that renamed newspaper, *Zion’s Advocate*, proclaimed: “Now after one hundred and two years have passed by, it is still the dream of all Mormons to see the erection of a beautiful temple on the Temple Lot.”²

In February 1831, soon after Joseph Smith had relocated the headquarters of the Church to the region of Kirtland, Ohio, he received a revelation: “The time shall come when it shall be revealed unto you from on high, when the city of the New Jerusalem shall be prepared, that ye may be gathered in one” and “it shall be revealed unto you in mine own due time where the New Jerusalem shall be built” (LDS D&C 42:9, 62; RLDS D&C 42:17b).³ To the members of the rapidly growing church, this announcement carried with it considerable excitement and a great sense of anticipation. Later, in June 1831, Smith was instructed through another revelation: “And thus you shall take your journey . . . unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites,” where it was anticipated that the precise location of the New Jerusalem would be revealed (LDS D&C 54:8 and RLDS D&C 54:2b). Smith and his

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Relationship of the location of the original 63.27 acres purchased by Bishop Edward Partridge from Jones H. Flournoy on December 19, 1831, with the frontier settlement of Independence proper. Map courtesy John Hamer.

companions left Kirtland soon thereafter and arrived in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, in mid-July 1831 (RLDS D&C 54, preface).

Shortly after his arrival, Joseph Smith received a revelation indicating that the town of Independence, Missouri, was designated as “the center place” of Zion, and that the location for the temple was “lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse” (LDS D&C 57:1–3 and RLDS D&C 57:1a–d). In compliance with this revelation, on August 3, 1831, Smith dedicated the location for the temple on a small rise located about a half-mile west of the Independence public square.⁴ In December 1831, Bishop Edward Partridge purchased a 63.27-acre tract of land which encompassed the location where Smith had dedicated the “spot” for the temple.⁵ To the churches who claim Joseph Smith Jr. as the Prophet of the Restoration, the temple lot and the proposed temple (or temples) in the “center place of Zion” is a

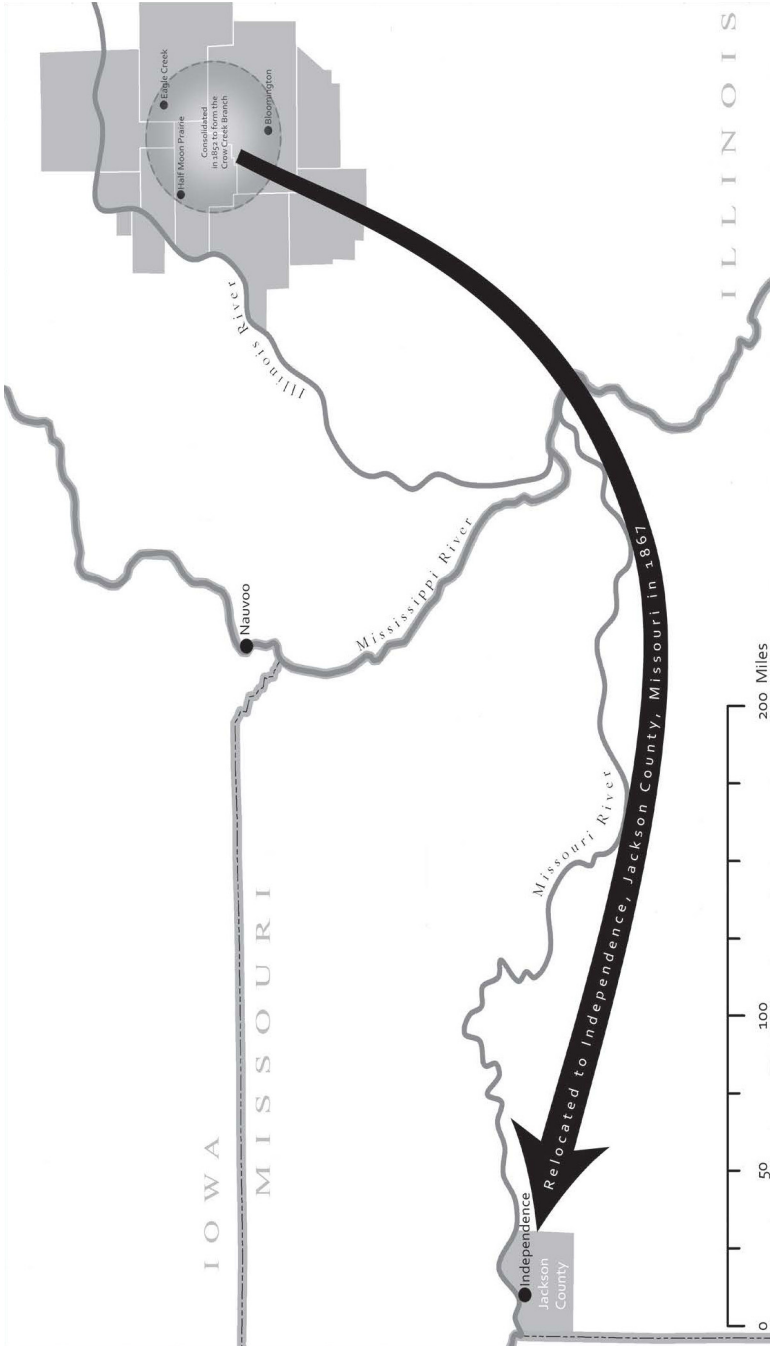


Aerial view of the 63.27 acres purchased by Bishop Edward Partridge from Jones H. Flournoy on December 19, 1831.

fundamental tenet, which continues to be seen as a crucial element in preparation for the return of the Saints to Independence, Missouri, and the eventual return of the millennial Christ (LDS D&C 42:35–36; RLDS D&C 42:10c).⁶

Church of Christ (Temple Lot)

In the aftermath of the death of the Joseph Smith and the exodus of the main body of the Saints from Nauvoo in 1846, a significant number of Smith's followers remained behind or were scattered in nearby regions and states. Many of these followers aligned themselves with individuals who claimed to be successors to the Prophet. For example, in central Illinois, three post-1844 branches of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located in the vicinity of Woodford County (Eagle Creek, Half Moon Prairie, and Bloomington) remained generally aloof from the controversy swirling around these new claimants and their followers. By 1850 or 1851, the leaders of these independent branches concluded to meet together as one branch. In time,



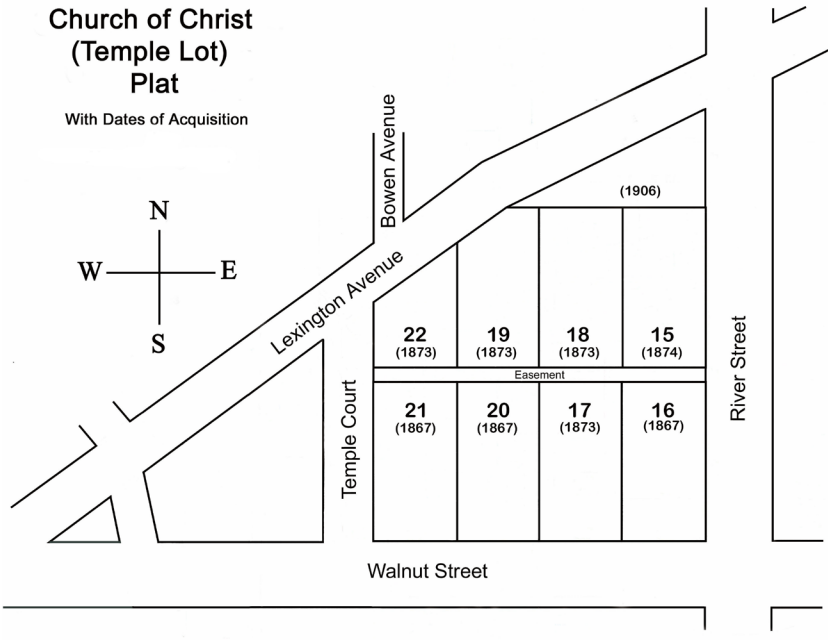
Beginning in 1867, members of the Crow Creek Branch of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) began locating in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Map courtesy Mark W. Jackson, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

they referred to themselves as the Crow Creek branch of the Church of Jesus Christ (of Latter day Saints). Later, the Crow Creek branch dropped “of Latter day Saints” from the name of the church and reverted to the original name, “Church of Christ,” as established on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York, although the parenthetical enclosure (Temple Lot) was added later to differentiate it from other denominations of the same name and in particular the Church of Christ (Campbellites), although it is not part of the legal or official name of the church.

The first recorded meeting was held at the home of Granville Hedrick, an elder in the original church, in Woodford County during the winter of 1852. Several years later, on May 17, 1863, Granville Hedrick was ordained an apostle by John E. Page, who had been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve from 1838, but had been excommunicated by Brigham Young and the Twelve in 1846.

On April 24, 1864, Granville Hedrick received a revelation which was promptly published in the church’s newspaper, the *Truth Teller*. Granville claimed he was visited by an angel who instructed him and his followers to gather to Jackson County in 1867 and reclaim the Center Place of Zion or, more specifically, the Temple Lot, and to fulfill the revelation given to Joseph Smith in July 1831. Among the diverse expressions of the Latter Day Saint movement, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), or “Hedrickites” (as members of their church have been called historically), is unique in its early claim to a specific revelation to return as a church to Jackson County, Missouri, and to redeem or reclaim the Temple Lot in the center place of Zion.

In compliance to Hedrick’s revelation, a vanguard of three families sold their farms and homes and moved to Independence, Missouri, in 1865 and 1866. After the arrival of several additional families in early 1867, John H. Hedrick, Granville’s brother and the leader of the small vanguard party of 1865/1866, initiated the purchase of three lots in 1867 in the immediate vicinity of original temple property dedication site of 1831. Each lot was acquired separately for \$250 each, or a total of \$750. In 1851, two developers had laid out the Maxwell-Woodson Addition to the City of Independence. This addition included lot 15, traditionally the very spot of the original dedication by Joseph Smith. The location was well known to local citizens and to such early church members as William E. McLellin, who returned to Independence prior to June 1869 and joined Hedrick and his followers for a brief period in 1869. By 1874, eight contiguous lots were purchased by either John Hedrick or William Eaton and subsequently quit-claimed to Granville Hedrick as trustee-in-trust for the Church of Christ.⁷



The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

A second group of scattered Saints emerged in June 1852, under the early leadership of Jason W. Briggs and Zenos H. Gurley Sr. These two men, ordained elders in the original church, had sought divine guidance after they rejected the claims of Brigham Young and the Twelve in the years that followed 1844. Briggs and Gurley continued to preside over church branches in Wisconsin after Smith's death. Beginning in late 1851, both men independently said they received visions or revelations directing them to reject all claimants to Smith's prophetic mantle, and both men proclaimed that Joseph Smith's successor would be Joseph's eldest son, Joseph Smith III. After some correspondence, the two agreed to hold a conference in Beloit, Wisconsin, in June 1852. The Briggs and Gurley group initially called itself the New Organization. On April 6, 1860, the church was officially "reorganized," and Joseph Smith III was appointed and ordained as prophet-president.⁸

The announcement in 1864 by Granville Hedrick that members of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) were planning to return to Jackson County naturally had an unsettling effect on RLDS members. Not surprisingly,

that same year, Joseph Smith III counseled the members of the Reorganization: “We would caution all our readers against going to that land before God commands His saints to go there by His prophet Joseph.”⁹ Smith and the RLDS Church held to this position over the next decade.

But by 1877, the RLDS Church was developing its own “gathering” strategy. In January 1877, Joseph Smith III stated: “We now state that we are decidedly of the opinion that those who may so desire, can move into that state (meaning Missouri) in safety. . . [But] no immigration in a mass can be safely carried forward, neither is it at present advisable, for two reasons, distress would ensue; and, it is stated, there is an order on the statute book of Missouri, unrepealed, preventing it. This, however,

need not affect those who may choose to cast their fortunes as individuals in that State.”¹⁰ Eighteen months later, in June 1878, Joseph Smith III published his “spiritual vision” of the “temple” on the sacred Temple Lot in Independence.¹¹ Almost certainly, this announcement not only caused great excitement among members of the RLDS Church but concern and anguish to members of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Thus, two divisions of the Restoration had made it clear to their respective members (and indirectly to LDS Church leaders and members living in the West), that a return to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, was in order. In so doing they reemphasized the importance of the “center place” and “a spot for a temple” in their understanding of the Prophet Joseph’s early revelations on this subject.

Maneuvering for Control of the Temple Lot

During the October 1885 conferences of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the RLDS Church, representatives from both organizations were assigned “to confer in a friendly discussion over the differences, real or supposed, existing between the two bodies.”¹² When the proposed negotia-



RLDS members began relocating to Independence in the 1870s. In 1888, the Stone Church was completed. Beginning in 1921, the building served for many years as the headquarters of the RLDS Church.



Church of Christ (Temple Lot) 1889 meetinghouse, east side, circa 1890s. Photograph courtesy Bill Curtis.

tions did not produce meaningful results, in 1887 the RLDS Church filed a “Notice to Quit Possession,” which claimed that the acres in possession of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) should be relinquished to the RLDS Church as the rightful owner/successor of the original trust created when Edward Partridge purchased 63.27 acres for the church in 1831.¹³ To no one’s surprise, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) moved quickly to solidify its ownership. For twenty years, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) had planned to build a chapel on the property, but the plans had never advanced beyond discussion. No doubt having heard of the action planned by the RLDS Church, during the April 1887 conference of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) a committee of three was appointed “to superintend the building of a house of worship and to locate the same on the temple grounds.” Construction began sometime thereafter and was completed before October 5, 1889, at a cost of \$377.41.¹⁴ From the point of view of RLDS church leaders, this was an act of overt defiance of their “Notice to Quit Possession.”¹⁵

Litigation—Temple Lot Suit

Meanwhile, on June 9, 1887, the RLDS Church acquired what is referred to as the Partridge-Cowdrey-Johnson deed, which the church hoped would prove its ownership of the contested Temple Lot. However, Joseph Smith

III was specifically counseled against using the recently acquired deed as a means of validity. William W. Blair, a counselor in the RLDS First Presidency, wrote Edmund L. Kelley, a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, that “the deed by E. Partridge to the children of O. Cowdery . . . is doubtless a fraud.”¹⁶ Smith next sought legal advice from RLDS Church counsel George Edmunds, who also questioned the deed, noting: “It seems that organization [Church of Christ (Temple Lot)] has title.”¹⁷ Regardless, Joseph Smith III was personally dedicated to the proposition that the RLDS Church was the rightful successor to the original church; and he intended and was determined to prove that in a court of law, notwithstanding internal and external advice.¹⁸

As a result, on August 6, 1891, the RLDS Church filed a Bill of Equity in the U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Missouri, against the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).¹⁹ This action initiated a tangle of litigation known historically as the Temple Lot Case. The litigation consumed the attention of both organizations for the next four-and-a-half years. At the time of the filing, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) had fewer than a hundred members, while the RLDS Church had over twenty-five thousand.²⁰

Counsel for the RLDS Church developed a twofold strategy in its efforts to secure the Temple Lot. First, counsel intended to prove that the RLDS Church was the legitimate successor to the original church founded by Joseph Smith Jr. on April 6, 1830. By so doing, the RLDS Church was therefore, the rightful possessor of the Temple Lot, since the property had been purchased with church funds in December 1831, by Bishop Edward Partridge, acting as a trustee-in-trust. The second point of argument was that the RLDS Church now held the rightful deed to the property, notwithstanding internal communication to the contrary.

Escalating the controversy was Charles A. Hall, a member of the RLDS Church since 1878. Unexpectedly, Hall left the RLDS Church in the spring of 1885 and became a member of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) that same year. Four years later, on April 7, 1889, the talented Hall was chosen “presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church,” which in essence made him the president of the church.²¹ As president, Hall threw all his energy and skill into resolving the Temple Lot Case for the benefit of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

During the early years of his leadership, Hall made at least one trip to Salt Lake City, Utah, where he developed several important relationships with LDS Church officials, including John M. Cannon, an attorney in Salt Lake City. (Cannon, counsel for the LDS Church, was a nephew of George Q. Cannon, a counselor in the Church’s First Presidency.) Through Cannon, Hall arranged for loans in his own name so as not to encumber the Church of Christ

(Temple Lot), in order to pay the legal fees required to defend the church's title to the property.²²

Depositions were taken in Kansas City, Denver, and Salt Lake City. These depositions provide rich historical detail and insight regarding the early history of the Church during the years of Joseph Smith's leadership. In total, the transcribed official record of the Temple Lot Case consists of over one thousand pages. Events and personalities, travels and revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. and other early leaders, missionaries, and ordinary members are remembered and discussed. The subsequent actions and interpretations of doctrine following Joseph Smith's death, and direction taken by Brigham Young, Joseph Smith III, Granville Hedrick, and others, are examined by the attorneys of both the plaintiff and defendant. The legal maneuverings, depositions, and travel to Salt Lake City and Denver dragged out the litigation for two-and-a-half years.

Charles Hall resigned his position in the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) on February 19, 1894; however, much to the dismay of RLDS officials, he did not abandon his efforts to see the Temple Lot Case through to its conclusion.

Published transcript of John F. Philips's decision in the Temple Lot Case. In 1894, Philips ruled in favor of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. However, the following year, a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision.

IN THE
CIRCUIT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES,
FOR THE
WESTERN DIVISION OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT
OF MISSOURI

DECISION
OF
JOHN F. PHILIPS, JUDGE,
IN
TEMPLE LOT CASE.

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
VERSUS
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ET AL.

LAMONI, IOWA:
PUBLISHED BY THE REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER DAY SAINTS,
1894.

Following Hall's resignation, the local press speculated that he was drawn to the LDS Church, which church was the actual "power behind the throne in the Temple lot controversy"; and that the Latter-day Saints headquartered in Utah would eventually build the temple in Independence.²³ Significantly, Hall joined the LDS Church four months later.²⁴

On March 4, 1894, the RLDS Church obtained a favorable ruling at the U.S. District Court level from Judge John F. Philips, who ruled that the Temple Lot be relinquished to the RLDS Church.²⁵ However, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) appealed the decision, financed by additional loans from LDS Church officials, and in 1895, the U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the earlier decision.²⁶

Meetings with LDS Church First Presidency

On January 18–19, 1900, a joint meeting was held in Lamoni, Iowa, between representatives of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), namely George P. Frisbey and John R. Haldeman, and Joseph Smith III, Alexander H. Smith and Edmund L. Kelley of the RLDS First Presidency. The call for the meeting came from the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) officials who said that they "had been moved upon" to see what could be done to "unite in an effort to prosecute the work of gathering, and the building of the temple at Independence, Missouri." During the meeting, the elders from the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) proposed that two of their number travel to Utah and meet with the First Presidency of the LDS Church. Their objective was to obtain from the leadership of the LDS Church a commitment to participate in a proposed historic meeting by representatives of the three churches, to be held in Independence, Missouri, where they hoped to reconcile differences and commence a joint effort to build the holy temple as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the summer of 1831. The RLDS First Presidency wished them well but specifically chose not to send representatives to Salt Lake City.²⁷

On February 8, Elders George P. Frisbey and George D. Cole of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) arrived by train in Salt Lake City and called on LDS Church President Lorenzo Snow. They were accompanied by Elder Charles W. Penrose, who appears to have arranged the meeting. Frisbey and Cole stated "that they had come from Independence, Missouri, for the purpose of ascertaining if it is not possible for a delegation of our [LDS] Church, a delegation of the 'Reorganite' church and a delegation of their own organization . . . [to] meet together for the purpose of trying to harmonize their views on doctrine with a view of coming together and uniting into one body." In discussing their objectives more specifically they admitted that "they were but custodians of the Temple ground in Independence" and that



LDS Church President Lorenzo Snow and his counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith, Fox and Symons photographers, September 18, 1898. In February 1900, George P. Frisbey and George D. Cole, representing the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) met with the LDS First Presidency to discuss the possibility of making joint plans regarding the temple property and a temple in Independence.

“the Spirit seemed to manifest to them . . . that they ought to take some steps towards placing this ground [the Temple Lot] so it can be used for the purpose indicated in the revelations.” The meeting lasted “fully an hour, during which time these men manifested a very good spirit.” At the conclusion of the meeting, President Snow appointed a meeting for the following day, “at which President [George Q.] Cannon and whoever of the Apostles in reach may be present.” However, this meeting ended up being postponed to the following day due to the absence of President Cannon.²⁸

On February 10 the three members of the LDS Church First Presidency, and William B. Preston of the Presiding Bishopric, met for a second time with Elders Frisbey and Cole. It appears the meeting focused on two main points of discussion: the present ownership of the property by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and RLDS interests in building the temple. Frisbey indicated they were not inclined to sell the property, noting that the “Temple would be built there in Independence, and that they [the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)] believed that money could not induce them to part with the land although

they had received offers even as high at one time as . . . \$100,000.” In regard to RLDS participation, Frisbey replied that “the Lord might enable them to work together for the carrying out of this purpose, that is, the building of the Temple; and if the Temple could be build [sic], his idea was that the Savior would come to the Temple and He would set all things in order.”²⁹

On the morning of February 21, a third meeting was held. Those in attendance included the three members of the First Presidency, seven members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and two members of the Presiding Bishopric. President Snow briefly outlined the meeting’s purpose and again asked Elders Frisbey and Cole to express their feelings; the LDS leaders also asked many questions. At the meeting’s conclusion, the First Presidency advised the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) representatives that they wished to discuss the proposal privately. In another meeting held later that day, Snow discussed the matter with his counselors, members of the Twelve, and members of the Presiding Bishopric. Following a thorough and frank discussion, Snow reached a decision not to accept Frisbey and Cole’s proposition, which decision was sustained by all present. Following the meeting, President Snow met with Frisby and Cole privately in his office, where he indicated to them that their proposal would not be accepted. However, in the spirit of goodwill, he offered to pay their travel expenses, which offer was graciously accepted.³⁰ The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) representatives returned to Independence soon thereafter, disappointed but not surprised.

At the first joint council meeting between six representatives of the RLDS Church and six representatives of the Church of Christ, held on March 6, 1900, Frisbey and Cole reported their lack of success in obtaining any commitment from the LDS Church leadership to participate in the proposed plan to address the possibility of the three churches working together to build the temple in Independence. However, this did not come as a surprise to either group of representatives. One of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) elders remarked that the results were “about as [we had] expected,” and that “Snow stood in the way.”³¹

The LDS Church Returns to the “Center Place”

During the aforementioned February 21, 1900, afternoon meeting of LDS Church leaders (in which Frisbey and Cole had been excused so that their proposition could be discussed privately), President Lorenzo Snow instructed all present that they were to speak freely about the proposed meeting and temple construction in Independence. George Q. Cannon remarked, “Our hearts for years have inclined towards the center stake of Zion,” and then

commented further that a fund had been created during the administration of John Taylor for the purpose of building the temple and buying land in Independence.³² Following Cannon's remarks, President Snow observed that it was clear to him that "it would not take long to create [or add to] a fund, and when this should be done it would be in order to purchase the land as opportunity presented without creating excitement. In this way, Zion would be redeemed."³³ The significance of the visit by Elders George P. Frisbey and George D. Cole of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) to solicit a possible cooperative venture by the three restoration churches to build a temple in Independence cannot be understated, since their visit was the primary catalyst in the LDS Church's efforts to begin a "return" to Jackson County and inaugurate the physical Redemption of Zion. Significantly, in May 1900, only three months following Frisbey and Cole's visit to Salt Lake City, James G. Duffin was called to be the president of the Southwestern States Mission, headquartered in St. John, Kansas; and in December of that year, Duffin moved the offices of the mission to Kansas City, Missouri. This "relocation" was the first official move by the LDS Church to return to Jackson County since the dark days of the forced 1833 exodus.³⁴ Duffin also soon made significant land purchases in behalf of the Church. On April 14, 1904, he acquired a twenty-six acre parcel of land from the Swope Estate in Independence, which property was located immediately southeast of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) property and included approximately twenty of the twenty-six acres originally purchased by Bishop Edward Partridge in 1831.³⁵ In addition, in October 1905, a smaller parcel was purchased adjoining the 1904 purchase fronting Walnut Street.³⁶ Both acquisitions were acquired using Church assets from a fund established for the "purchase of land in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, and the redemption of Zion."³⁷

The acquisition of property was soon followed by the move of the LDS Central States Mission headquarters (renamed in 1904) to Independence in 1907. That same year, the LDS Church established a printing and publishing company in Independence and also launched a business venture known as the Danielsen Plow Company on property acquired directly south of the original Independence temple property.³⁸ While the LDS Church had officially "returned" to Independence by 1907, it was "late to the gathering." Nevertheless, the LDS Church had reestablished itself in the "center place," thus becoming the third restoration church to do so. Over the next several years the RLDS Church acquired most of the remaining land of the 63.27 acres originally acquired by Partridge in December 1831. Today the approximate breakdown of that property is as follows: Community of Christ (formerly RLDS) 40.5 acres; LDS Church 20 acres; and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) 2.75 acres.³⁹

Church of Christ (Temple Lot) Plans to Build a Temple

On February 4, 1927, at his home in Port Huron, Michigan, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) apostle Otto Fetting launched the most dynamic movement toward building a temple on the temple property since the dedication of the site by Joseph Smith in August 1831. Fetting reported he had received his “First Message” from an angelic visitation, wherein he was told: “The revelation that was given for the building of the temple was true and the temple soon will be started.”⁴⁰ The historic “Fifth Message” was announced on March 22, 1928, instructing the church to begin construction on the temple in 1929, and to complete it within seven years.⁴¹ In accordance with the divine directive, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) held an impressive ground breaking ceremony on Saturday, April 6, 1929, in conjunction with the annual conference of the church.⁴²

Efforts to build the temple, while determined, were slow. By the fall of 1934 the excavation was more or less finished. However, the reality of the Great Depression, and a serious schism within the church, had a tremendously adverse effect on the ability of the church to solicit funds and labor. With the commencement of WWII the temple project was curtailed. At the 1946 April



View of the temple lot excavation by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Ed C. Miller photograph, courtesy Church of Christ (Temple Lot). The excavation was filled in by the City of Independence in 1946.

conference of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), a motion was presented to “take up the matter of filling in the excavation on the Temple Lot.” Apparently, an offer had been presented by the City of Independence to church officials to fill in the excavation at the city’s expense. The motion to accept the city’s offer was unanimous, and a committee was appointed by the conference to call upon the city planning commission to “accept their offer to grade the excavation for the Temple, and to work with the City in a supervisory capacity over this work.”⁴³ As promised, the city back-filled the excavation site for the temple. Currently, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) has no plans for the physical construction of the House of the Lord, even though the church does continue to maintain a temple fund. Today, the temple project is not considered a “primary focus” of the church.⁴⁴

RLDS Plans to Build a Temple

During the same period when the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) was heavily involved with its temple project, the RLDS Church was deeply committed to the construction of the Auditorium. Faced with many of the same challenges and concerns of their Church of Christ (Temple Lot) neighbors across the street (i.e., the Depression and WWII), construction on the Auditorium was drawn out but finally completed and dedicated on April 1, 1962.⁴⁵ Meanwhile the expectation of building a temple had not been forgotten by the RLDS leaders.

As early as 1942, President Frederick M. Smith asked church historian Samuel Burgess to “look into” whether the temple “might be shifted considerable from that spot [the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)’s 2.75 acres] and still be in the confines of the sixty-three acres.”⁴⁶ Burgess’s answer is unknown, but RLDS members rejoiced in 1968 when President W. Wallace Smith announced a revelation at the Church’s world conference that “the time has come for a start to be made toward building my temple in the Center Place. It shall stand on a portion of the plot of ground set apart for the purpose many years ago by my servant Joseph Smith, Jr.” (RLDS D&C 149:6a). In 1972, an additional revelation stated: “Continue your study toward . . . selecting a place for a temple in my name” (RLDS D&C 150:8).

That site—the RLDS property located directly east of the Temple Lot on part of the Partridge purchase in December 1831—was selected by 1974; and on April 10, 1984, at the world conference of the church, the long-awaited revelation was canonized: “The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit. It shall also be for a strengthening of faith and preparation for witness. . . . Therefore, let the work of planning go forward, and let the resources be gathered in, that the



Community of Christ Temple, Independence, Missouri, 2002. Construction began in April 1990 and was completed in April 1994. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

building of my temple may be an ensign to the world of the breadth and depth of the devotion of the Saints” (RLDS D&C 159:6). Ground-breaking was held April 6, 1990, and the edifice was dedicated April 17, 1994.

LDS Church Development of Their Property

The original temple property repurchased by the LDS Church in 1904 remained undeveloped until 1968, when ground-breaking ceremonies were held for an LDS Visitors’ Center.⁴⁷ After two different attempts by the Board of Education of the City of Independence to purchase the property from the Church (both efforts were met with polite refusals and contributions of \$25,000 in 1950 and \$50,000 in 1967 by the LDS Church), the LDS Church, perhaps fearing eminent domain by the City of Independence, moved ahead with and approved plans for the present Visitors’ Center.⁴⁸ The Center stands on the northwest corner of the twenty-six acres, at the intersection of Walnut and River Streets, and south of the Community of Christ Temple, east of the Auditorium, and southeast of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) property. The edifice was dedicated on May 31, 1971.



Aerial view to the east-southeast of the original temple lot and surrounding property originally purchased by Bishop Edward Partridge on December 19, 1831. Pictured in the photo are Church of Christ (Temple Lot) meetinghouse (1992), the Community of Christ Stone Church (1888), the Community of Christ Auditorium (1962), the LDS Visitors’ Center (1971), the LDS meetinghouse (1978), and the Community of Christ Temple (1994). Photograph courtesy Intellectual Reserve.

Notes

1. John R. Haldeman, "An Important Report," *The Evening and Morning Star* 8, no. 3 (July 1907): 1. In the early 1900s the *The Evening and the Morning Star*, published in Independence, Missouri, was the official newspaper of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). The name was derived from the name of the first newspaper of the original church published in the early 1830s, also in Independence, Missouri. *The Evening and Morning Star* began publication in May 1900, replacing the *Searchlight*, which had been published beginning in 1896. *The Evening and Morning Star* ceased publication in late 1916, perhaps due to printing costs and reduced membership of the church. Beginning in May 1922, the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) began publication of *Zion's Advocate* as the official newspaper of the church, and it has been published continuously to the present time.

2. Walter L. Gates, "The Church of Christ and Jackson County: A Brief Historical Review," *Zion's Advocate* 10, no. 7 (July 1933): 103.

3. For purposes of this article The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be cited as the LDS Church and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will be cited as the RLDS Church. In the April 2000 world conference, the RLDS Church approved changing its name to Community of Christ, effective April 6, 2001, while legally retaining its incorporated name.

4. See Joseph Smith, "To the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints" *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 12 (September 1835): 179.

5. Jackson County, Mo., Property Records, Jones H. Flournoy and Clara Flournoy to Edward Partridge, December 19, 1831, Book B1, Independence, Missouri. The legal description of the parcel is "63 and 43/160th acres in Section 3, Township 9, Range 32." The temple lot or temple block is generally understood by the various factions of Mormonism to be the two and three-quarters acres owned by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). See Richard and Pamela Price, *The Temple of the Lord* (Independence, MO: Price Publishing, 1982), 87–92.

6. See Joseph Smith, Plat of the City of Zion, June 25, 1833, MS 2568 [fld] 1, text and drawing by Frederick G. Williams, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter referred to as CHL). See also Joseph Smith Jr. Plat of the City of Zion, circa August 1833, text by Oliver Cowdery, drawing by Frederick G. Williams, MS 568 [fld 2], CHL.

7. For historical examinations on the origin of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) see R. Jean Addams, "Reclaiming the Temple Lot in the Center Place of Zion," *Mormon Historical Studies* 7, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Fall 2006), 7–20; R. Jean Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Its Emergence, Struggles and Early Schisms," in *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 206–23; R. Jean Addams and Alexander L. Baugh, "'Upon a Lot . . . Not Far from the Courthouse': A Photographic History of the Temple Lot in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri," *Mormon Historical Studies* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 88–113; and R. Jean Addams and Alexander L. Baugh, "Historical and Geographical Beginnings of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)," *Mormon Historical Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 87–103.

8. See Joseph Smith III and Heman C. Smith, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 4 vols. (Lamoni, IA: Herald Publishing House and Bookbindery, 1896), 3:196–204, 209, 264–65 (hereafter cited as the *History of the RLDS Church*); and Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, ed., *Memoirs of Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1979), 72–75; first serialized in the *Saints' Herald*, November 6, 1934–July 31, 1937.

9. Joseph Smith [III], "Truth Vindicated," *Herald* 6, no. 4 (August 15, 1864): 49. Shortly after Hedrick's April 1864 revelation, Joseph III counseled the Saints at a special conference at Amboy, Illinois, on June 25, 1864: "You are forbidden to receive his [Hedrick's] teachings." Minutes, Special Conference held at Amboy, June 25, 1864, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

10. *History of the RLDS Church*, 4:166–67; Joseph Smith III and Henry Stebbins, "Notes on Travel," *Herald* 24, no. 2 (January 15, 1877): 25.

11. Joseph Smith III, "The House of the Lord, as Seen in Vision," *Herald* 25, no. 11 (June 1, 1878): 161–63. Artist Ernest Webbe painted the temple as Joseph III described it, and a rendering of the painting was published at a later time.

12. Anderson, *Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 314; see also Bert C. Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* (Independence, MO: Board of Publications, Church of Christ, 1953), 117; *History of the RLDS Church*, 4:480–81.

13. Notice to Quit Possession, served by G. A. Blakeslee, by attorney, bishop and trustee for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, June 11, 1887, Independence, Missouri, exhibit 24, in *The Temple Lot Case* (Lamoni, IA: Herald Publishing House, 1893), 247–48. The 1893 printing did not include the decision of John F. Philips, presiding judge in Temple Lot case, since his decision was not announced until March 3, 1894.

14. Church Record (Independence, MO: Church of Christ), 65, quoted in Flint, *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 114–15.

15. R. Jean Addams, "The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: 130 Years of Crossroads and Controversies," *Journal of Mormon History* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 73.

16. William W. Blair to Edmund L. Kelley, May 12, 1887, E. L. Kelley Papers, P16, f15, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

17. George Edmunds to Joseph Smith III, June 22, 1887, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f341, Community of Christ Library-Archives.

18. Anderson, *Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III*, 310.

19. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Complainant, vs. The Church of Christ at Independence, Missouri: Richard Hill, Trustee; [et al.], Bill of Equity, United States Circuit Court, Western Missouri District, Kansas City, August 6, 1891 (hereafter cited as RLDS, Complaint). See also Ronald E. Romig, "The Temple Lot Suit after 100 Years," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 12 (1992): 3–15; and Paul E. Reimann, *The Reorganized Church and the Civil Courts* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing, 1961), 149–64.

20. John R. Haldeman, "Secretary's Report," *Searchlight* 1, no. 7 (August 1896): 56; *History of the RLDS Church*, 5:643.

21. Membership Record, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Book B, 272 (Henderson Grove, Illinois) and Book B, 296 (Burlington, Iowa), Community of Christ Library-Archives; and Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Minutes, April 7, 1889, typescript, Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Independence, Missouri.

22. Charles A. Hall to John M. Cannon, March 26 and May 27, 1893, J. M. Cannon Papers, MS 2625, CHL. Over time, these loans were repaid by church members to Hall, who in turn repaid Cannon. However, after Hall left the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), there was a small amount of unpaid obligation, which in Hall's absence fell to the LDS Church. On June 24, 1896, John M. Cannon "called on the Presidency [of the LDS Church] in behalf of the Hedrickites of Independence, Missouri, in relation to assistance rendered that body in defending their title to the Temple lot at that place. Part payment of the amount was made and it was understood that the balance, about \$1,000, would still be held against

them as a debt of honor, as the Church (LDS) rendered assistance without desire to engage in or be responsible for the law suit of the Hedrickites against the Josephites, and with no intention on the part of the Church [LDS] to claim or gain possession of the Temple lot.” *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, June 24, 1896, 2, CHL (hereafter cited as *Journal History*).

23. “News at Independence: President C. A. Hall Renounces the Hedrickite Belief,” *Kansas City Times*, February 20, 1894.

24. See Charles A. Hall, *Diary*, June 24, 1894, LDS Family History Library, MS 596, f2, Salt Lake City, Utah. At the conclusion of the Temple Lot Case in 1896, but sometime before 1900, Hall relocated his family to Pueblo, Colorado. He died in California in 1946. This information was provided to the author by Tracey Long of Las Vegas, Nevada, a great-granddaughter-in-law of Charles A. Hall.

25. RLDS, Complaint, March 1894 (60 Fed 93); see also “Temple Lot Case Decided: Josephites Rout the Hedrickites and Certain Possession,” *Kansas City Times*, March 4, 1894, 5.

26. *The Church of Christ, [et al.], vs. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit, St. Louis, Missouri, September 30, 1894 (70 Fed 179), 188–89 and “rehearing,” (71 Fed 250). See also “Judge Philips’s Decision Reversed in the US Court of Appeals,” *Deseret Evening News*, September 30, 1895. The second circuit court citing is a request for a “rehearing,” which was dismissed, which also set the stage for the appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. See Addams, “The Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Its Emergence, Struggles, and Early Schisms,” 215.

27. *History of the RLDS Church*, 5:488–89. At the meeting it was agreed that if the LDS Church should choose to participate in the proposed assembly in Independence, each of the three churches would send four representatives. If the LDS Church chose not to attend, then the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the RLDS Church would each send six representatives. In either case the number of participants at the proposed historic gathering would be the symbolic twelve.

28. *Journal History*, February 8, 1900, 2. George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith were Snow’s counselors in the First Presidency. It is unclear from the notes whether George Q. Cannon was present for this initial meeting.

29. See *Journal History*, February 10, 1900, 1–6. During the meeting, President Snow stated that he believed that the time was fast approaching . . . when the Lord would require the building of the Temple at Jackson county.”

30. See *Journal History*, February 21, 1900, 2–24.

31. Minutes of Joint Council Meeting of the Church of Christ and Reorganized Church, March 6–May 4, 1900, holograph, unnumbered pages, P19, f54, Miscellany Collection, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri. See also *History of the RLDS Church*, 5:489. Note: There are two independent sets of minutes. The minutes use “joint committee” and “joint council” interchangeably. Printed references which discuss these meetings also use the terms interchangeably.

32. In the 1880s, under the direction of LDS Church President John Taylor, the Church invested in the Bullion-Beck Mining Company to specifically generate funds to be used in financing the redemption of Zion. See R. Jean Addams, “The Bullion, Beck, and Champion Mining Company and the Redemption of Zion,” *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 158–234.

33. See *Journal History*, February 21, 1900, 2–24.

34. William J. Curtis and Annette W. Curtis, eds., *The Missouri Independence Mission: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1883–2000* (Independence, MO:

n.p., 2001), 158. In 1902, the LDS Church began publishing an edition of the Book of Mormon in Kansas City, Missouri. See See Chad J. Flake and Larry W. Draper, eds., *A Mormon Bibliography: 1830–1930*, vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 84.

35. Jackson County, Missouri, Property Records, Maggie C. Swope to James G. Duffin, April 14, 1904, 251:66, Independence, Missouri. See also *Jackson Examiner* (Independence, Missouri), April 22, 1904, 1. While the deed is dated April 22, 1904, the quit claim deed it was not recorded until 1907. See Jackson County, Missouri, Property Records, James G. and Mary Jane Duffin to Joseph F. Smith, July 5, 1907, 273:152–53, Independence, Missouri.

36. Jackson County, Missouri, Property Records, Robert D. and Mary W. Mize to James G. Duffin, October 11, 1905, 265:323. Independence, Missouri.

37. William H. Smart made a significant contribution to the fund, which monies had been used to make the two purchases. In a letter from the First Presidency to Smart, they acknowledged his generous contribution and then noted: “We . . . have great pleasure in saying that we have recently purchased nearly twenty six acres of this temple lot property for which we paid \$25,000.” Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund to William H. Smart, April 18, 1904, copy in possession of the author, courtesy William B. Smart. For information on the life of Smart see William B. Smart, *Mormonism’s Last Colonizer: The Life and Times of William H. Smart* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2008).

38. See R. Jean Addams, “The Danielsen Plow Company and the Redemption of Zion,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 51–97.

39. On July 17, 1906, the City of Independence sold Richard E. Hill, acting as trustee-in-trust for the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), a small, triangular strip of land (approximately .25 acre) lying just north of the 2.5 acres the Church already owned for \$75. The small triangle had originally been platted as part of a street that had been abandoned by the city. See Jackson County, Property Records, City of Independence to Richard Hill, July 17, 1906, 264:621–22, Independence, Missouri.

40. See “A Message from ‘The Messenger,’” *Zion’s Advocate* 4, no. 5 (May 1927): 69; *The Word of the Lord* (Independence, MO: Church of Christ With The Elijah Message, 1943, reprint 1971), 7–8 (hereafter cited as *Word of the Lord*). Fetting sequentially numbered all subsequent “Messages” as they were received.

41. See Otto Fetting, “Manifestation Received By Apostle Otto Fetting,” *Zion’s Advocate* 5, no. 5 (May 1928): 69–70; *Word of the Lord*, 13–16; and Otto Fetting, “Second Visit from the Same Messenger on March 4, 1927,” *Zion’s Advocate* 4, no. 5 (May 1927): 70; *Word of the Lord*, 9–10.

42. Julius C. Billeter, *The Temple of Promise: Jackson County, Missouri* (Independence, MO: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1946), 139; see also “Sacred Soil Broken for the New Temple: Bishop Frisbey Sinks the Spade into the Tough Sod While Multitude Looks On,” *Independence Examiner*, April 8, 1929, 1.

43. “Minutes of Ministers’ Conference, 1946,” *Zion’s Advocate* 23, no. 5 (May 1946): 70–71.

44. William A. Sheldon, Interview by R. Jean Addams, April 2006; also William A. Sheldon to R. Jean Addams, December 2006.

45. Roger Yarrington, *The Auditorium* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1962), 87.

46. Frederick M. Smith to Samuel A. Burgess, August 21, 1942, P22, f111, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri.

47. “Church Center Planned Here,” *Kansas City Times*, April 20, 1968, 14; “Latter

Day Saints Visitors Center: Work Set for Fall,” *Independence Examiner*, April 20, 1968, 1; “Mormons Plan Independence Visitors Center,” *Herald* 115, no. 12 (June 15, 1968): 7; Curtis and Curtis, *The Missouri Independence Mission*, 111.

48. The first gift was in direct response by the LDS Church to the potential process of eminent domain by the City of Independence, Missouri, wherein the city could take possession of the vacant land to build a new high school. The mayor of Independence and the city’s school board president traveled to Salt Lake City in 1950 to discuss the matter with President George A. Smith. The donation was \$25,000, ironically the same amount the LDS Church had paid for the twenty-six-acre tract of land in 1904.