

Donald L. Enders, 2007.

---

# LDS Church Historic Sites: A Conversation with Donald L. Enders

*Interview by Mark Lyman Staker*

## **Introduction**

Few individuals have had as much of an impact on how Latter-day Saints interpret and envision many of the sacred early sites and locations in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as has Don Enders. Yet many of those familiar with early Mormon history are relatively unfamiliar with who he is and what he has done. Most of his work has not come with an authored byline in an article, book chapter, or book. Yet, since 1965, Don has been an active field researcher and historian in the Arts and Sites Division (later the Historic Sites Program) in the LDS Church Historical Department. During more than fifty years of intimate involvement with a number of significant early Mormon history sites, he has played a fundamental role interpreting how the structures and sites appeared, or how they functioned and operated when the early events of the Restoration occurred. During his employment, Don helped to implement a focused, professional program of research, interpretation, restoration, and maintenance related to the historical sites and properties which has enriched what visitors have both learned and felt while visiting these sacred places.

Don Enders was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1941. He was raised in Southeastern Washington State, graduated from high school there, served in the army, and then served an LDS Church mission in the Eastern States Mission, where he was active primarily in New York State. After his mission

---

MARK LYMAN STAKER ([stakerml@ldschurch.org](mailto:stakerml@ldschurch.org)) is a lead curator of historic sites in the LDS Church History Department. He received his BS in cultural anthropology from Brigham Young University, his MA in international studies from Brigham Young University, and his PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Florida.



The Donald L. and Loretta A. Enders extended family, 2001. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

he received a BS in history and archaeology from Brigham Young University, and later earned a MS in history and an MLS in library science from the same school.

Don's professional role in historic sites began at Nauvoo while he worked for Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., where he was involved from 1965 to 1971. During those years he continued his education at BYU, where he also met (and later married in June 1968) the love of his life, Loretta Joanne Anderson, a Latter-day Saint from Southern Alberta, Canada. Don and Loretta spent two summers in Nauvoo, then lived there full-time until fall 1971. Loretta served as a tour guide, while Don was involved in archaeological excavations, material culture studies, and research. He also served as a tour guide in the late afternoons and evenings. Their first child, Amy, "starred" as the baby in a cradle in a Church film produced at Nauvoo, which also included Don and Loretta. They soon had three additional children: Jenny, Tim, and Sara. Loretta earned an MA from the University of Utah in social work in 1987, then worked for twenty-eight years in the Davis County School District as a social worker/psychologist. Their children have married, and Don and Loretta have eleven grandchildren.

In the latter years of the Enders' residency in Nauvoo, as the emphasis of NRI became less history oriented, Don took a position in 1973 with the LDS Church Genealogical Department in Salt Lake City. In late 1977, he joined the newly organized Arts and Sites Division of the Church Historical Department. As that division evolved into the Museum of Church History and Art, he worked in the museum handling historic site issues until the Historic Sites Program developed in 2005; it continued to operate in the museum under the museum's stewardship. Don worked in the Historic Sites Program as it was shuttled around as a component of several divisions until he retired in 2010. In January 2012 the Historic Sites Division became its own entity, with Jenny Lund as its director. Don and his wife, Loretta, continue to serve historic sites as Church service missionaries.

### **The Interview**

Mark: I am grateful you've agreed to this interview because it is an important contribution to the historical record. Most people interested in Latter-day Saint history know very little about you or your work, even though they may immediately recognize your contributions. I think if people knew about the careful research you've done, and the skill you've brought to making that research inform your restoration work, they could better appreciate their experiences at the LDS Church's various historic sites. I hope you'll share with us some insights about the things you've learned through your experiences. Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and raised?

Don: My parents, Gordon and Ruby Nielsen Enders, married in 1935, during the Great Depression. I was their fourth child, born in Salt Lake City in March 1941. World War II soon followed. In 1943 we moved to Washington State. My dad, a welder, found employment at the Bremerton Navy Ship Yard. One of his jobs was welding on the USS Arizona.

I remember some events from the time I was three years old. For a time, Dad, Mom, and I and my four other siblings lived in the same house with an uncle and aunt and their children (eleven of us)—a small bungalow in a Bremerton neighborhood. In time, Mother and Dad had six children. I have a memory of Dad and my uncle periodically bringing home gunny sacks of oysters, which we all shelled and ate. They also occasionally brought home salmon they caught in the river. Mother, to help make ends meet, worked at Woolworths at the food service counter. Auntie watched the kids. The three youngest ones were fed dinner early each evening and put to bed by five p.m. I attribute my stunted intellectual growth and my caged-lion pensiveness to those early forced bedtimes.

My dad was also an experienced pilot, but he wasn't drawn into the full-time service in the war because he had a large family. He worked in the military with the air corps, teaching people how to fly. After the war, we moved for brief periods to other small towns in Washington State, settling in Kennewick, in the southeastern part of the state. It was a farming region, and my father did a lot of crop dusting. I was raised there. The town was near the Hanford Atomic Energy plant, so I'm a "down-winder," as were many of my classmates, and in time I lost my thyroid. Dad worked at Hanford in winters, but crop dusted with his wonderful little Piper Super Cub from spring through fall. As we matured, my three brothers and I became his ground crew.

We children always had our chores and jobs as early as I can remember. Beds always had to be made and dishes done. My brothers and I "drove truck" at grain harvest. Mother and Dad taught us well. Our wonderful mother and two sisters were great homemakers, and always had a clean and wholesome house and good meals. We mostly enjoyed happy family times. Yes, there were some struggles.

I could not sing, dance, or play an instrument—sports, scouting, family, and friends were my focus. I attended LDS Primary as a kid, and my life was touched for good by it. I felt the spirit of its intent. The local LDS Scout troop was a godsend for keeping me tied to the Church—it was a "Follow Me Boys" time. For a number of years in my early teens I did not attend church meetings, but the example of my oldest sister and an older brother and their church attendance was important to me. Something kept telling me there were meaningful things I ought to be doing, and that I would find them by attending church. When I was a junior in high school, a boyhood friend invited me to early morning seminary. I went and found the best of teachings and wonderful lifelong friends who were also finding the gospel for themselves. I've been active in the kingdom since.

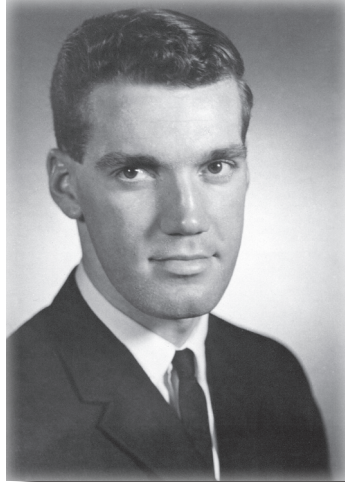
My family was hands-on. We enjoyed the out-of-doors, fishing, hunting, and discovering ancient things, such as Indian cultures, fossils, geology, pioneer trails, and sites like Mesa Verde. My Grandpa Enders was a ranger on the Olympic Peninsula, and Grandma was of the same mold. Mother's folks (my Nielsen grandparents) were a farm family in Cache Valley, Utah, who, as late as 1955, still used a team of horses and horse-drawn equipment to do their farm labor. No wonder they only eked out a livelihood. So genes for hands-on work and a love for material culture came quite naturally

### **LDS Missionary Service, 1961–1963**

In early 1961 I was interviewed by a General Authority in Richland, Washington, to serve an LDS mission. Three months later a letter came, and

I was called to the Eastern States Mission. Albany, New York, was my first area, but I served also at Ticonderoga, Crown Point, Long Island, Rochester, Queens, Manhattan, and at Asbury Park in New Jersey. I wanted to be a good missionary and my companions and I worked diligently. In the two years and two months of my service, we met, taught, and baptized some wonderful people, most of whom are still active in the Church. I keep in touch with them. I found joy with them when we first met, do so to this day, and wonder what added joy there may be with them after this life.

During my mission I periodically visited the Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith farm at Manchester, New York—the boyhood home of the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. As young missionaries we were told that the frame home on the farm was where the Smith family lived when the First Vision occurred. We were also told that a specific bedroom upstairs was where the Angel Moroni appeared three times to young Joseph in late September 1823; also the same bedroom where Joseph and Emma stayed when they lived in the home with Joseph’s parents in 1827. I slept in that bedroom one night as a missionary and felt quite smug. Willard and Rebecca Bean were credited with having passed down the information, so we were told. I did not have an inkling at the time that one day I would play a role as a member of a team in trying to understand the history of that home and farm.



Elder Donald L. Enders while serving as and LDS missionary in the Eastern States Mission, March 1963. During his mission, Don visited the LDS historic sites in Palmyra, New York. Later, he would play a key role in the development and restoration of those sites. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

### **Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., 1965–1971**

When my mission drew to a close, I was asked to drive a car back to Salt Lake City. The mission president’s son and I drove together. The thought came to us that it would be a spiritually enriching experience to visit Church sites on the way home. We arrived at Nauvoo on a pleasant, beautiful, summer afternoon, and the sun was far enough into the western sky that it bathed the whole landscape in a gold light. The setting was beautiful. We explored the city for three hours. I had an experience which caused me to say to myself,

*Someway, sometime, somehow, I want to come back here and work for the Church.* The experience was a feeling, almost a voice, saying, *You can be used here.* The thought impressed me deeply—it was a message to me!

Within weeks of my returning home, I went back to BYU to continue my undergraduate work. Eighteen months later I learned that Nauvoo Restoration Incorporated was offering college students summer jobs as tour guides, where they would be given board and room and \$100 for their service. I wanted to work in Nauvoo more than I wanted to eat! I immediately wrote a letter to the NRI office in Salt Lake City. Every day I'd run home hoping there would be a letter. Three months after I applied, I received a letter from J. LeRoy Kimball. It was very brief, saying something like, "Dear Brother Enders, thank you for your inquiry about Nauvoo Restoration and your application. We'll give you some thought. We'll be in touch." That was it.

One evening, weeks later, I got a phone call from T. Edgar Lyon, the NRI research historian. He told me that if I could leave for Nauvoo in early May, NRI would hire me and that I could ride with him to Nauvoo and we could share driving and have a good long visit. I said I would do that. I arrived in Salt Lake City on a Greyhound bus on May 10, 1965, and T. Edgar Lyon came down to the bus depot to pick me up. That's when I first met him. That's where I also met his wife, Hermana—a noble lady. It took us three days to drive from Salt Lake City to Nauvoo. This was the beginning of a wonderful friendship for me with the Lyons. T. Edgar, as he was often known, was a great Mormon historian and scholar, and he had a wonderful sense of humor. He was such a kind and good individual, but he was also a no-nonsense person.

During the drive to Nauvoo, Brother Lyon opened my eyes both to NRI's history and Nauvoo history. He talked about Dr. J. LeRoy Kimball, the key figure in the organization of NRI. It began with Kimball's attending medical school at Northwestern University, his frequent visits to old Nauvoo, learning that his grandparents' home still stood, how in time he purchased it, the attitude of the leadership of the Church regarding "a Nauvoo project," and the establishment of NRI. Brother Lyon gave Dr. Kimball credit for sensible property purchases, not just key pieces, but for dealing fairly with Nauvoo citizens about the value and sale of their property. Dr. Lyon spoke of the quality of NRI board members—all nationally prominent citizens—and that their united focus was a Colonial Williamsburg approach—historical accuracy—both in terms of physical development and site interpretation.

T. Edgar Lyon also spoke of J. Byron Ravsten, NRI's site director, who had only recently been released as the Southern States Mission president, and who I would work for that summer. This raised questions in my mind about what my work would be. T. Edgar told me I would also work with him, but mainly with Brother Ravsten. Some twelve or fifteen young people, college

students, institute instructors, and two or three senior couples made up the NRI family that summer. Most would arrive about June 1, and I, like them, would take visitors on tours, but I would do mostly site maintenance. *Well*, I said, *there's no better way to learn about the physical site than working on it every day*. I was particularly looking forward to attending the early morning classes Dr. Lyon would teach about Nauvoo history, for which we received religion class credit.

Our early morning classes, walking tours around the city (day and night), fireside chats, reading assignments, and informal questions—all were ways Dr. Lyon used to teach us what to impart to visitors. These were all wonderful methods of instruction from a master teacher and Christian gentleman. It was a wonderful experience for all of us to sit at the feet of this modern day Gamaliel. His instruction helped us enrich the many visitors who came each day to visit the Church's Nauvoo sites.

The summer of 1965, my first in Nauvoo, I worked mainly as a grounds-keeper and as a guide to visitors. The next two summers I was a member of the archaeology crew—"diggers," as we were called. I also worked as a guide. After Loretta and I were married in 1968, we spent two summers in Nauvoo together, she as a guide, and I was a member of the archaeological team. From June 1970 through fall 1971, I worked full-time for NRI. I was also the branch scoutmaster. Loretta was mother to our first child, served as a Young Women's leader, was in the Relief Society Presidency, was a tour guide, and a homemaker to our family. During most of our time in Nauvoo we lived in the wood-frame home of Orson and Marinda Hyde, built in 1843. Many insects, birds, possums, skunks, hordes of mice, and even rats paid us unwelcomed visits. But it was a wonderful place for us to live. During the last year-and-a-half of our residency in Nauvoo, I did a modest archaeological assessment of Nauvoo's Main Street, while helping to dig and lay a mile-long sewer line from the LDS Visitors' Center to the Nauvoo House. I also researched and wrote much of my master's thesis about the impact of the Mississippi River's Des Moines Rapids on Nauvoo.

Mark: Had the archaeological excavations already begun before you arrived?

Don: Some archaeological work had been done. The day we arrived in Nauvoo, Dr. Lyon took me to the temple block and showed me where the temple once stood. The excavated site was overgrown with weeds and had suffered some erosion. The site, less cared for than when I saw it on my return from my mission two years earlier, was enclosed by a brown-painted picket fence. The very next day, with a shovel, a sickle, and a weedeater, I was sent to the temple site to tidy it up. I loved it.





Donald L. Enders excavating the Nauvoo Temple site, 1968. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

Exploratory testing had been done in 1961 by a Dr. Melvin J. Fowler of Southern Illinois University, to pinpoint the actual temple site. To do this, small test pits were dug which uncovered remnants of temple features. So the actual spot where the temple had stood was known and fenced.

Dee Green, also of SIU, followed up Fowler's work in 1962 with an extensive dig. His crew pinpointed foundation remains of exterior temple walls, interior stone piers, parts of basement partition walls, remains of the two circular stairwells in the west end of the temple, and evidence of a sloping sand floor—all of which gave insights into the lower-level floor plan and use.

In the two years, 1963–1964, no archaeology was done. Preparations for extensive work, however, were in process. In the summer of 1964, T. Edgar Lyon and Kevin Watts, NRI architect, had visually assessed some key historic properties owned by the Church to determine the kinds and quantities of architectural elements—wells, cisterns, walkways, privies, and fences—that had been built in the old Mormon city. They took measurements and made notes of features they hoped would shed light on the 1840s period construction and life habits.

When I arrived in the summer of 1965, good things were happening. J. C. Harrington and his wife, Virginia, had been hired to direct archaeological

work at Nauvoo. J. C. (Pinky) Harrington had done the excavations at the Jamestown, Virginia, site and planned to retire from the National Park Service in six months. Virginia had archaeological experience with several prehistoric sites, so they were both very skilled at their craft. Harrington was greatly respected in the archaeological community and was later designated “the Father of American Historic Sites Archaeology.” At the request of Harrington and NRI, Clyde Dollar, a developing historic sites archaeologist from the Fort Smith, Arkansas, historic site, started excavations of the Brigham Young family property before Harrington’s retirement.

Although J. C. Harrington was in charge, he directed the work from a distance until his retirement. Clyde Dollar was the first of the Nauvoo archaeologists I became acquainted with. Dollar was a good looking young man in his early thirties, and a flashy bachelor. He drove his Porsche around while wearing his racing gloves and was horrendously self-confident. He was generally very pleasant, and one could not help but like him.

Mark: Tell us about work at the Brigham Young home site.

Don: When Pinky Harrington excavated at Jamestown, he felt to give the visiting public a good experience. They were able to come close to the excavation, view what was happening, and ask questions. He did this at Nauvoo as well. It was learned from the start that excavation at archaeological sites was of tremendous interest to visitors—the archaeological crew kept at their work; and Mr. Harrington responded to the questions. The most significant LDS site in Nauvoo is the temple. The Brigham Young home site is the second—President Young being a nationally prominent personality in the nineteenth century. The “BY” property was excavated first and in its entirety to help NRI get some archaeological experience “under the belt,” and this is why Harrington took charge of the work there in 1966. He wanted to assess every aspect of the site to insure a good start for archaeology in Nauvoo.

During the summer of 1965, Clyde Dollar and the crew found what was thought to be the Young family’s springhouse, a structure mentioned in the Young family records. Considerable 1840s cultural material was unearthed there. In the second season of archaeology it was learned that the supposed springhouse was really the Young family’s five-hole privy. The key to discovering this was by removing and testing soil from the limestone pit. Raspberry and strawberry seeds were found in the soft easy-dug soil. Now consider, berries, when picked are not stored away like potatoes, but eaten fresh, then sluffed off by the body into the ground, most usually into a privy. The privy served the Youngs as a trash heap too, a goodly amount of broken dishware and debris was thrown by the Young family into the hole.”

Mark: So you learned that what was thought to be a springhouse was actually a privy?

Don: Yes. In the 1966 season, Mr. Harrington took charge of the excavation at the Young site. I was a crew member. The entire site was excavated. Exterior house features, as well as the springhouse, privy, well, cistern, paths, walkways, fence lines, garden and orchard were all discovered and defined. Questions remaining from the 1965 dig were resolved.

Harrington's perspective was that artifacts themselves did little to give insights about a site's physical layout, architectural elements being the key to understanding a site. Harrington's comprehensive excavation of the Young site in 1966 and 1967, defined in his detailed report, supplied the data for restoring exterior elements of the home, its out-buildings and features, and the landscape

BYU archaeologist Dale Berge, principally a prehistoric specialist, but having historic site experience, came aboard in 1968 and was groomed to be J. C. Harrington's successor. Dale worked at Nauvoo long enough for Harrington to realize he was the correct heir apparent. Dale's first task was to direct the work at the Jonathan Browning complex, followed by excavations at the Winslow Farr, Seventies Hall, and Chauncey Webb sites—and perhaps other sites I don't recall at the moment.

I worked under the direction of both the Harringtons and Dale Berge. I worked for Pinky and Virginia Harrington for four seasons assisting in the excavations at the Brigham Young property, the Webb blacksmith and wagon shop, and the Nauvoo Temple site. During one of the seasons at the temple I was asked to assume responsibility for all the artifacts excavated at that site and to prepare them for cataloging and assessment. It was a joy for me to piece the many fragments of temple stone together. Fitting together moldings and elements of the baptismal font was particularly rewarding. In 1968 I spent considerable time with Dr. Berge excavating at the Browning complex. It proved to be an extensive and complex site.

Mark: You were married during this same time period. I've seen Loretta show up in some of the films that were made in Nauvoo.

Don: Loretta and I married in June 1968. I had spent three summers at Nauvoo before Loretta and I married, and after our marriage we spent three summers in Nauvoo together until fall 1971.

Mark: What about Rowena Miller, the NRI research historian who teamed up with Dr. Lyon? Was she already involved when you were hired?

Don: To the best of my knowledge, Rowena joined with NRI at its inception in June 1962, three years before my time. She had been President J. Reuben Clark's private secretary for years, and was a little in limbo following his death in 1961. She told me that it took but a short time for her to appreciate the quality of the man and the historian-teacher that T. Edgar Lyon was, and that she came to feel that the two of them together could do a

first-rate work for Nauvoo. She was already deeply involved in researching the Hancock County tax records and compiling the data when I came on as a digger. Her contribution in compiling those records into a series of volumes is a significant source for understanding Nauvoo's settlement pattern and wealth distribution. Steve Baird also contributed as the project's architect.

Mark: Jim Kimball, J. LeRoy's son, also played a significant role in those early years. How did he fit into NRI's development?

Don: Jim was a wonderful person, easy to like, a dear friend. He was helpful to those who sought data about Nauvoo, and he knew a lot of facts. He was a little sluggish when it came to interpretation about Nauvoo's history; but who was not? Jim was the third member of the Lyon, Miller, and Kimball research team. When I first met him at Nauvoo in the summer of 1965, he was pursuing a PhD in history at Iowa State University. At Nauvoo, beginning in 1966, he taught early morning classes to the guides each summer. Tuesdays and Thursdays were his days. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays were Ed Lyon's time. Jim's subject matter was Nauvoo's role in Illinois history. I learned some good things from him. On a number of occasions his father said in my hearing that Jim's principal role was to develop an interpretive framework, a master plan, for Nauvoo. Unfortunately, that never happened. It is an ambitious undertaking that is still in process to this very day.

Mark: You eventually became involved in developing Nauvoo sites. How did that unfold?

Don: During the Harrington years at Nauvoo (1966–1969), I worked under their direction as a member of the archaeology team. From them and also George Miller, their lab man and artifact specialist, I began to learn to assess artifacts and features at archaeological sites, a wonderful preparation for me for future responsibilities at Church sites.

During the time I worked full-time for NRI (1970–1971), I was given opportunity to work some with restoration projects. There is no substitute for professional understanding and experience when studying and restoring sites. In its early years, NRI had some gifted people on staff. The quality of their work is a reflection of their abilities and commitment—T. Edgar Lyon, the historian, J. C. and Virginia Harrington, George Miller, and Dale Berge, the archaeologists. There were others like Mel Lavender and Phil Condra. Mel, born and raised in England, learned the masonry trade there. He was a master brick mason, had restoration experience in England, and came to Nauvoo to assist, bringing his abilities. Phil was born and raised in the Midwest and was trained in stonework—a master stone carver and mason, second to none. Orlan Cox knew wood. He could make anything in wood, and with quality. Ed Kendrew, from Colonial Williamsburg, went to the Woodruff house to

inspect a replica of a historic door Orlan had made. Kendrew returned to the wood shop and said to Orlan, “I viewed all the doors but could not tell which one you made.” Orlan responded, “I’ve looked for it too, but I can’t tell which one it is either.”

Nauvoo Restoration had a board of very competent people—J. LeRoy Kimball, who headed the board; A. Edwin Kendrew Sr. (vice president of Colonial of Williamsburg); A. Hamer Reiser (manager of Deseret Book Company); J. Willard Marriott (hotel chain owner); David M. Kennedy (future U.S. Treasury Secretary); George Romney (former governor of Michigan and then the U. S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development)—many quality people who had a good understanding of American history. Eventually, when Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. was brought under the Correlation program, all of these wonderful people were notified that their service would no longer be necessary. Thereafter, the direction would shift from primarily a historical focus to a missionary one.

### **Arts and Sites Division**

Mark: Shortly after this you became connected with Florence Jacobsen. How did that all unfold?

Don: On a summer day in 1970, Florence Jacobsen, soon to be appointed director of the Church’s Arts and Sites Division, showed up in Nauvoo with a big U-Haul full of early to mid-nineteenth century furnishings to place in the recently restored homes of Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff. She invited me to assist in placing the pieces and instructed me about each piece as I did so. The furnishings, principally with painted and grained finishes, were in fashion during the LDS residency of Nauvoo.

I also began to get a good introduction to early and mid-nineteenth century building construction, heavy timber framing, woodworking, masonry, and tools. The restoration of the Jonathan Browning complex began in the late months of my employment for NRI. As a member of the archaeology team, I excavated much ground on that property and had come to know the site well. When restoration of the buildings began, I hewed oak timbers with an adze—a tool similar to an ax with a curved blade—to prepare timbers for the Browning log home; and I assisted craftsmen Orlan Cox and Jack Young in raising and placing them. I helped sheath the roofs, nailed the shingles to the roofing of the Browning buildings, and mixed historic lime mortar for laying brick. I learned that “restoration brick” is never as good in appearance as is brick of the actual period. So from a number of competent people, I had most of my first lessons in restoration work; learning that prepared me for other restoration and preservation tasks.



Archaeological team at the Jonathan Browning home, Nauvoo, Illinois, 1971. Front row (l-r): Terry Walker, John Nelson, Dale Berge, J. C. Harrington, and Virginia Harrington. Back row (l-r): Back row, Bruce Lothan, George Miller, unknown, Raleigh Davis, Donald L. Enders, Bill Johnson. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

Mark: So you moved on. Florence Jacobsen hired you to be part of the Arts and Sites Division?

Don: In the fall of 1971, Loretta, Amy (our little daughter), and I moved back to Utah so I could go to BYU and finish my masters in history. I completed the degree and began working for the Church Genealogical Library. It proved to be a wonderful four-year opportunity to learn in detail about tax and property records, census and county and state records, and other sources that would prove very valuable when I was invited to work with the Historic Sites Division of the Church Historical Department.

While working in the Genealogical Department I read in the *Church News* that Florence Jacobsen had been appointed director of the Arts and Sites Division, where she would serve as the Church's first curator. One day I received a phone call from Paul Anderson, who had recently been hired as the building specialist for the Arts and Sites Division to work under Florence's direction. Richard Oman had also been hired to be the art specialist. Paul asked me to come over and interview with him. I had a brief interview with Florence as well. While Paul was overseeing some work with historic buildings, they determined he needed an assistant to help with parts of the process, and I was interviewed to fill that role. Paul said, "Probably in two or three days or a week we'll have a good idea of what we're going to do."

Other people were interviewed. G. Homer Durham, head of the Historical Department, liked somebody else who knew more about Corinthian columns than I did, but I had the support of Florence and Paul and was offered the position in the Arts and Sites Division in the fall of 1977, where I remained until I retired in 2010.

## Early Projects

Mark: What was your first project with the Arts and Sites Division?

Don: My first project was to work with Paul Anderson in acquiring furnishings for a historical exhibit to be placed in the Independence Visitors' Center. We went together on a couple of buying trips to Missouri for that purpose. Paul was very helpful directing my focus, not only for the Missouri exhibit, but for future needs as well. He'd say, "You need to read this book. You need to read that one. This will give you some really good insights on building architecture, design, and furnishings, about Federal, Georgian, Greek Revival, or other structures." I read books on early American material culture, architecture, regional designs, and construction methods, to help me get a feeling for how Mormon buildings fit in. Our chats were probably the most helpful. Paul was a great encourager, and it was really good traveling and working with him. Each day with Paul was a learning experience, whether in the office or on the road. I particularly enjoyed visiting historic American houses with him as I began to learn some things.

After the Missouri project, because of Paul's involvement in planning exhibits for the new Museum of Church History and Art, Florence and Paul decided that I should take the lead in the restoration of the Deuel family



Don Enders erecting Deuel log home, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985. Don's first project as lead was moving and restoring the 1847 log home of the Deuel family, situated between the LDS Family History Library and the LDS Church History Museum in Salt Lake City. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

log home to be placed between the LDS Church History Museum and the LDS Family History library. That was a pleasant experience. I met frequently with Paul and Florence to discuss the work and periodically worked with Tom Carter, a knowledgeable and informative scholar of vernacular architecture.

### **Newel K. Whitney Store**

My first major project was the study and restoration of the Newel K. Whitney Store in Kirtland, Ohio. I had finished the Deuel family log home in winter 1985, and about that time we were told we would have the opportunity to restore the Whitney Store. Paul and Richard (Dick) Jackson of the Church Building Department were put in charge of the architectural issues and the restoration of the building. T. Michael Smith, Steve Olsen, and I, of the Historical Department, would assist them in the study of the store. One day I was called in and Florence said, "I want you to travel with Paul and Dick to Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts and meet and talk with the staff who have restored a store and furnished it." I was told I had six months to furnish the building before the dedication. A week later, Paul, Dick, and I flew to Massachusetts to visit the Old Sturbridge Village and meet with the staff at that site. Our main contacts were Eric White, director of Education and Programs, and Jane Nylander, the principal historian. We asked Jane, "What's it going to be like for us to try to recreate a store? What about the inventory? What about the packaging of goods? What about getting a real sense of a store at that time—its sights, sounds, aromas, whatever it might be?" She was a competent and experienced person who had helped recreate the store at their site over a period of years. When Paul and Dick said we only had six months, and that we had not even started the acquisition of furnishings or a store inventory, her response was that we were crazy, that it would be impossible to do it in that time. Paul and Dick worked with Siegfried Buerling of Hale Farm and Village at Bath, Ohio, to accomplish their work. I was pretty well on my own to furnish the store. Wow! And all in just six months.

In the meantime, the building needed to be studied. Paul directed that huge task. Dick's age prohibited him from helping at this point, so Steve Olsen, who was new on the staff and a grand find; T. Mike Smith, who was competent in many aspects of historic sites work and our archeologist on staff; and Paul and I went out to Kirtland and began a step-by-step study of the Whitney Store. Just previous to our visit, the full-time missionaries had lived in the store as their living quarters. This was all quite new work for the four of us. In the grueling days ahead, we removed everything from the store which post-dated Newel K. Whitney's occupation. For example, there were four layers of flooring from post-Whitney times, nailed hard and fast. We had





Restored Newel K. Whitney Store, 2007. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Main storeroom of the restored Newel K. Whitney Store, 2002. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

to remove it. It was like taking plaque off of teeth—a horrendous job. Besides removing flooring, we studied the walls and ceiling, but did not get clear answers. We learned quite a bit about the structure, but we were left without a good understanding of the main floor’s historic layout. We debated the data. Was the store entered through the west gable end or from the side? Data supported both perspectives. We also discussed whether it should be restored to its Newel K. Whitney era, or should its full history, including later occupation, get attention? So that kind of thinking was discussed. Ultimately the decision was to restore it to its 1870s appearance while furnishing it to its presumed 1830s condition.

The store is exhibited as most museums are, everything placed nicely, appearing clean and crisp—the “cleanliness is next to godliness” idea prevails. Hopefully, the time will come when that store can be looked at by competent historic site experts and presented more in keeping as a store would have appeared in the 1830s.

Mark: Mention briefly the School of the Prophets room, and how you worked out that space?

Don: Much of the room survived, so dimensions were definable. In addition, much of the room’s fabric remained intact. The original flooring was there, and the wood paneling on the walls and ceiling remained. Only the fireplace in the room needed a complete restoration because little of it survived. An original window survived, but it was stolen during restoration work.

Mark: In a sermon by Brigham Young he gave the dimensions of that room and it turned out that, based on marks from original walls left in the flooring, those were precisely the dimensions the room was found to be.

Don: Good point. That’s correct. So yes, that was insightful, good data for reconstructing the space.

## **Nauvoo Projects**

Mark: There were other projects. You helped furnish a number of buildings in Nauvoo.

Don: The presidency of the Church’s North American Central Area, which administered Nauvoo, invited the Arts and Sites Division in 1988 to assume responsibility for a number of projects recently approved by the First Presidency. The historic buildings needing attention included the Carthage Jail, the Riser Boot and Shoe Shop, the Sylvester Stoddard home, the Stoddard Tin Shop, the *Times and Seasons* Printing Office, the Pendleton log home and school, the post office, a pottery and hardware store, the Windsor P. Lyon Drug and Mercantile, and a period-looking barn (which would serve as a restroom). These ten projects were begun in 1988 and finished in 1990.



Donald L. Enders refining his cordwainer's (leather shoemaker) skills during a session at Eastfield Village, East Nassau, New York, 1992. Don developed a decades-long relationship with Don Carpentier, the founder of Eastfield Village, where eighteenth and nineteenth century trades and skills are taught. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

It was quite a thing for a Church division, still in its infancy and still trying to define its role, and not yet having a clear “mission statement,” to tackle such a big assignment, considering the staff possessed little training in building and site restoration, furnishing, preservation, interpretation, and/or maintenance. But we were thrilled by the trust and opportunity.

During the restoration of Carthage Jail, we rediscovered the quarry where the original stone was cut to construct the jail and found appropriate pieces to fill in window openings not part of the jail in historic times. We recreated the dungeon room based on data found in written sources, then furnished it with appropriate artifacts—shackles, leg irons, straw ticks, and night pails. We re-furnished the rest of the building based on data we found in the sources about the Illinois county jail system.”

It is well to mention that there are criteria we follow when selecting furnishings for an historic building: (1) Is the piece time period correct, either as an artifact or replica? (2) Is it geographically correct (something obtainable in the area)? (3) Does it fit the family's or proprietor's economic status? (4) Does it agree with the family's or proprietor's likes or dislikes? Over the years the Historic Sites Division has established a network of competent craftsmen and historians who are knowledgeable about material

culture to give us input about period furnishings as well. Ledgers and account books of the era are among the best kinds of sources to consult when gathering data about furnishings for a site. In obtaining the inventory for the Newell K. Whitney Store in Kirtland, Ohio, nothing proved more valuable than Whitney's "Day Book."

We have learned that when furnishing a historic building, the space for both furnishings and visitors needs to be defined. Visitor space generally requires half the space, and since all of the furnishings that were likely in a building cannot be placed because of needed visitor space, furnishings which best support the key message of the site should be acquired and placed.

Acquiring furnishings for restorations has had many good rewards. For example, we learned through George Miller, a ceramic historian, that a steamboat hit a snag and sank on the Mississippi River in the mid-1840s, some distance above Nauvoo. Considerable freight was lost, including a crate of English ceramics numbering about 220 vessels. That crate was discovered and salvaged a few years ago. We were able to purchase the crate of goods and placed it in the Windsor P. Lyon Drug and Mercantile, which greatly adds to the historic ambiance of the store."

### **E. B. Grandin Printing Office**

Mark: Perhaps the most significant projects that you were involved in were the Smith farm at Manchester, New York, and the Egbert B. Grandin building in Palmyra. Tell us about those two particularly.

Don: Following experience with the Newel K. Whitney Store, my sites work perspective sharpened. I began to understand what I should be doing and sensed I was growing in my responsibility. Florence gave Paul responsibility for temples, tabernacles, and meetinghouses and assigned me to assume responsibility for historic buildings and properties. I had been to Palmyra a few times with Paul and examined closely the frame home on the Smith farm. We had also taken a close look at the printing space in the Grandin building in 1979. We learned some things. The Smith frame home was all built at one time—foundation timbers ran the full length of the house. The home had had a central chimney, and we found the evidence for its framing in the basement. More discoveries followed. We were able to find the five bays of the Grandin building, the walls, flooring, and stairwells. We honed in on the third floor printing office and learned a great deal about where the printing furnishings stood in historic times.

In 1980, T. Mike Smith and I did a comprehensive study of the E. B. Grandin Printing Office. We removed the post-1830s building material and exposed the four original walls, floor, and ceiling to view. We found printing



Restored Egbert B. Grandin Printing Office, Palmyra, New York.



Third floor pressroom, restored Egbert B. Grandin Printing Office, Palmyra, New York, 2001. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

ink and wear patterns, which suggested where the various printing activities were conducted. When the printing office was approved as a restoration project, New York building specialists were invited to assess the building with us. Their input, along with ours, established what parts of the original building had survived and helped us determine a restoration plan. I think we came to a good conclusion as to what the press room was like. We found that in addition to the original flooring, the original plastered brick walls had survived.

Mark: You found some of the lead type in the cracks between the floor boards?

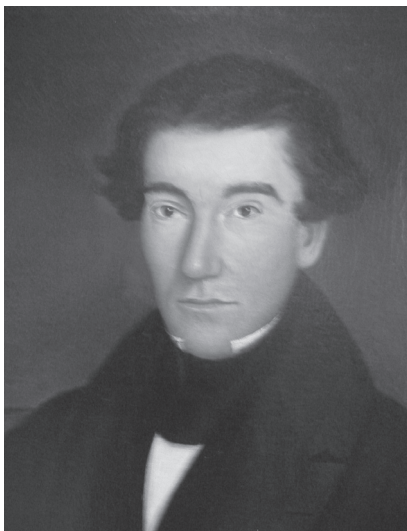
Don: Yes. We probed in the cracks and found many pieces of type, some of which proved to be of the same font used to print the Book of Mormon. We also gathered data from printed sources and talked with printing historians about how printing offices functioned at that time. We began to build a network of people who could give us insights about the press room. Don Carpentier, a respected building specialist in New York, gave considerable input about the printing industry in New York. We visited with the folks at the Farmers Museum in Cooperstown, at Old Sturbridge Village, and at the Genesee Village near Rochester, New York, about press rooms. So bit by bit, a perspective of how our shop probably functioned came to light, and became the basis for restoring the printing office.

We found an access into the attic above the press room where there was a wooden platform on which we found fragments of letters of Pomeroy Tucker and Egbert Grandin. We also found leather ink balls that would've been used to ink the type for the presses.

Mark: This style of ink ball application went out of use shortly after the Book of Mormon was published, so they could have been used in that project.

Don: Yes. Egbert Grandin wrote in his journal on April 12, 1831: "Worked at press in office in forenoon. Worked with some new composition rollers instead of Balls, worked exceedingly well." So this suggests that thirteen months after Grandin finished printing the Book of Mormon, he began using composition rollers to ink his type. The ink balls left up in the attic with 1829 and 1830 letters may have been used to print the Book of Mormon, but we can't be certain.

We learned more about Egbert B. Grandin. T. Mike and I were in Albany, New York, at the New York State Archives and Library, when we had found reference to paintings having been rendered of Egbert and his wife, Harriet Grandin. So we went one day over to Auburn, New York, to the widow of a grandson of Egbert Grandin. We knocked on the door, introduced ourselves, had a pleasant little visit, and then asked, "We understand that paintings were rendered of Egbert and Harriet Grandin. Do you have any idea if that's true,



Photographs of the original portraits of Egbert B. Grandin (left) and Harriett R. Grandin (right). The original paintings are displayed in the restored Egbert B. Grandin Printing Office, Palmyra, New York. Photographs by Alexander L. Baugh.

and if so, where they might be?" She said, "Well, why don't you come in and look on my living room wall and see?" She had a nice portrait of each. We learned from her that they actually belonged to a second-great-granddaughter of the Grandins, Helen Etzkorn, who lived in Escondido, California, and that she would be the recipient of those two works in a short time. She gave us Helen's number and address.

When I got back to the office in Salt Lake City, I wrote and told Mrs. Etzkorn about the work the Church was anticipating doing at the printing building and our appreciation of the significant role played by her ancestor in printing the Book of Mormon. She immediately became very positive and offered her services. She said she had six apple boxes of papers and wondered if they may not be of value in helping us to get a better handle on Egbert Grandin. She was very kind and sent them to me in Salt Lake. Nearly all of the items were genealogical data, a wee bit of family stuff, some things about Egbert Grandin, and a couple of limited pieces on the Book of Mormon. We microfilmed all of the papers and donated most of the original materials to a library and archives in Battle Creek, Michigan, where a descendant of Egbert Grandin lived who had been the director of the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra. I found through researching that the artist who rendered the paintings was an itinerant painter named Parks, who rendered them in 1845.

Mark: So you later went on to study the second floor and the first floor of the Grandin building as well. You had learned enough that you could restore the entire building with a great deal of confidence.

Don: That's correct. The Grandin building was one of five bays in the row; a central door and stairwell is one bay, and there were two additional bays on each side of the central stairway. We were able to get permission to look at all five bays of Grandin's brick row in various areas. We looked at the original doorways, trim and hardware, the fan-windows at each end of the building, and the flooring that survived in the bays. This gave us very good data about how Grandin's bay looked. We had Don Carpentier, the New York building specialist, on site to look at our work with us. We also had the New York State preservation officer look at the building. His assessment of the structure was: "This is one of the most significant structures in New York State surviving from the early canal era. They just don't exist anymore in Albany and New York City. Early canal buildings (1825–1830) are gone. So it's not only an important and historic building for the LDS Church because the Book of Mormon was published there, but also for New York State."

Mark: So you have carefully restored that building. There are some new elements. A little bit of broken brick was replaced, but most of it is an original structure that you were able to bring back to its original grandeur?

Don: There is some new brick. For example, at the rear of the building, the brick on the third floor is original. The brick below it on the second and first floor was all removed nearly a hundred years ago. An iron I-beam holds the original third floor brick into place, and the brick of the first and second floor is new on the rear. Someone said, "Oh, all of the brick on the front of the Grandin Building was taken down." But that's not correct. What they saw was open areas where the big plate glass windows on the first level were added in Victorian times. That brick was removed, leaving open spaces, which were filled in with new brick. All of the brick on the front of the building of the second and third floors is original, as well as a considerable amount of brick on the first floor.

Mark: And the penciling on the front brick was a replication of the original work.

Don: Yes. When Don Carpentier examined the front of the building, he discovered there had been penciling on the brick on the front wall. The front wall was painted with a red glaze, and then the mortar joints were carefully penciled with white lines. As we removed some of the trim that had been added around a doorway, the penciled white lines were there, still intact. The original penciling still survived in that location, and we were able to replicate it on the entire front façade.





Archaeological dig at the Joseph Smith Sr. log home site, Palmyra, New York, 1982.  
Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.



Artifacts from the archaeological dig at the Joseph Smith Sr. log home site, 1982.  
Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.



Donald L. Enders chinking the exterior logs of the restored Joseph Smith Sr. log home, Palmyra, New York, 1998. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

### **Joseph Smith Sr. Palmyra Log Home**

Mark: When you finished that project then you were able to turn to the Smith home on the Smith farmstead?

Don: That's right. Attention turned to the Smith Palmyra property. The first site that we had the opportunity to examine was where the log home once stood—the home where the Smiths lived when the First Vision occurred, where the Angel Moroni visits occurred, and where the Smith family lived when the Book of Mormon went to press, so a very significant place. In 1982, the BYU Religious Studies Center and the Church Historical Department joined forces to excavate the site. G. Homer Durham, director of the Historical Department, supported it, as did Florence Jacobsen. Dale Berge, from BYU, who had had considerable historic archeology experience by then, was the director for the dig and put a crew together. T. Mike Smith and I represented the Historical Department. We did a summer's work. There were probably eight or ten of us on the crew at the time. A data point, a zero point, was established and the site laid out like a checkerboard pattern. We had a pretty good idea of where the log home stood, because in June 1820, a survey crew from the town of Palmyra noted in their log book that from the Palmyra-Manchester town line they were going to survey Stafford Road back to Main Street in Palmyra village. It indicated that their starting point was so many



Restored Joseph Smith Sr. log home, Palmyra, New York, 2002. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

chains and so many links southeast of the Joseph Smith dwelling house. That gave us the location of one corner of the home. Some infrared aerial photography had been done which suggested this same site would be a good one to look at. The aerial photography indicated thirteen other possible sites, but it turned out the site noted by the surveyors proved to be the only one of significance. It was the only site that had surface artifacts of the historic period, suggesting itself as the site of the Smith log house.

In 1982 we began the excavation. We came up with remnants of the root cellar, and found evidence that a wing or small room addition had been added to the home, which had been mentioned by Lucy Mack Smith in her memoirs. Lucy Smith's history proved to be a good source to look to. There were other sources that helped as well, documentary sources. We excavated about half of the site in 1982, and still had questions about the footprint of the log home, so further excavation was needed. It would be another fifteen years before we were able to do that.

Mark: And when you were finished, you were confident that you knew where the home originally stood, but you were still puzzled about its footprint? You had its dimensions and knew other details, such as the nature of the cellar. You also had historical data, such as a visitor mentioning the

garret in the home, which helped you clarify the home, but you still needed more understanding about the floorplan?

Don: That's right, Mark. I began a document search in late 1982 that provided data for our focus as we did the second half of the dig. Pomeroy Tucker, an acquaintance of the Smiths, mentioned features of the log home in his history of the origins of Mormonism. These and other sources added to our understanding of the Smith family and their log home on Stafford Road. In 1997, fifteen years after the initial dig, we were able to finish the excavation. I can't stress enough the value of T. Mike Smith's role in preparing for the second excavation. He directed the 1997 dig, and what we accomplished in that year was to define the length and the width of the home and the details of the bedroom wing. We began to build a network of good people like Randy Nash, a log structure building specialist, who gave us good insights and helped us prepare to reconstruct the home. We had good data, and not only understood the length and width of the home, but the interior as well: the two main rooms, the bedroom wing, the back, and the garret above. The documentary research, archaeological work, and expert input all came together to help us understand the original structure.



Donald L. Enders and President Gordon B. Hinckley on the occasion of the dedication of the restored Egbert B. Grandin Printing Office and the Smith family log home, Palmyra, New York, March 26, 1998. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

### **Joseph Smith Sr. Manchester Frame Home and the Sacred Grove**

Mark: Once you were able to understand that home, you could turn your attention to the Smith frame home?

Don: Yes. President Hinckley arrived in Palmyra on March 26, 1998, to dedicate the finished sites. He presented a wonderful message about the significance of the Smith farmsite and the Grandin printing building, and dedicated the printing office. The next day he dedicated the log home. The completion of that project opened the way for tackling the restoration of the frame home. Not only were we interested in the buildings, but also the landscape. This was one of the first times in my experiences with Church Historic Sites where understanding the landscape was critical to our work as well. What about the orchards, gardens, fields, cultivated areas, pastures,



Donald L. Enders removing surface materials in the Joseph Smith Sr. frame home, Manchester, New York, 2000. Photograph courtesy Donald L. Enders.

meadows, woodlands, wells, cisterns and fencing? When I had initially studied the Smith frame home with Paul some years before, we discovered data about the roof's construction and size of the basement root cellar. Now, I began to study the early documents with an eye toward understanding the frame home and the larger landscape. The Church contracted with Crawford and Stearns, a historical restoration architectural firm in Syracuse, New York. Their field man, Ted Bartlett was a god-send, because he had a great deal of experience with early western New York homes. I was privileged to be with him on a number of occasions as he studied the frame building and we spotted things together. Ten owners occupied the home after the Smith family, and these occupants had made only a few modest changes to the structure over one hundred and fifty years. We saw outlines in the framing where stairwells to the upper level were changed, and we could see nail holes and impressions in the flooring where a couple of partitions were adjusted. Working with Ted and others that were involved, we felt extremely comfortable that we had the correct data together. The Smith frame home is the sole surviving building built by the Smith family and we wanted to preserve their work. We carefully identified what was original and what was not, what had to be replaced, and what remained intact. We had wonderful input from such people as Bob Parrott, a forester, who taught us about the historic landscape.

Mark: You were fortunate in that most of the building was still intact, even original paint colors in the interior, and a left hand print that appears to have been made at some time by little Lucy.

Don: That's right. Maybe eighty-five percent of the home survived.

Mark: Which is unusual for this kind of work. Usually you have to bring a lot of your own skill and expertise in re-creating what would've been there, but you had much of the original structure to work with.

Don: Yes, significant parts of everything they did survived to give us the kind of input we needed to restore the home. It always helps when you have sensible, thoughtful contractors doing the work who will look at the data with you instead of just slamming things together.

Mark: Certainly, a big part of what you do is to look at the historical record, which you had done for years before you began to study the home. But I imagine as you're looking at the building and seeing things right before your eyes, it actually helped you understand the historical record better as well?

Don: Yes. When we came back from the 1982 dig at the Smith log home we gave our report to G. Homer Durham and Florence Jacobsen. A day or two later, Florence called me and said, "Come down and we'll go see Brother Durham for a minute." Brother Durham said: "Don, now that you're back from this dig and you've given your report, you have an assignment. You are to learn all that you can about the Smith's residency in Palmyra and Manchester and document their lives." This was an interim assignment, though it has continued for the remainder of my time in the department.

Mark: One of the challenges you face in doing something like this is that people have already grown to love and appreciate that building as they think it existed. It had its beautiful Victorian elements. People had come to appreciate the landscape as it then existed. They felt they knew where the Sacred Grove was because there were trees at a specific location when the Church acquired the property. They thought they knew how the farmstead looked. As you began to learn more and more about this, how did you come to understand things very differently? How do you approach that kind of tradition that was already established, and what did you come to understand about the home?

Don: In June 1961, when I was a new missionary in the Eastern States mission, I had only been serving for six weeks when it was time for the Hill Cumorah Pageant. During pageant time we had the opportunity as missionaries to go on tours of the Smith farm. Wonderful missionary couples interpreted the home for us. They told us this was the home where the Smiths were living when the Angel Moroni visited. It was even suggested that it was the home where they were living when the First Vision occurred. I didn't have enough sense to determine what the age of the building was, or its history. So I came away from my missionary experience sensing that it was the structure



Restored Joseph Smith Sr. frame home, Manchester, New York, 2002. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

where those first events occurred. That feeling became strong tradition. Some missionaries who served there were ready to stretch me out by the noose for what we'd done in its restoration. When one reads the documents of the time (the reminiscences of the acquaintances), and visits the home, and studies it carefully, the original structure unfolds to them. It looks and feels right. It is a marvelous restoration.

Mark: Caring for the Sacred Grove was also a major task that needed attention. You also addressed that while studying the home.

Don: Visitors to the Sacred Grove were "loving it to death," carrying away leaves, rocks, bark, wildflowers, rocks, and branches, whatever they could find. Even these seemingly small encroachments were damaging to the grove. After storms, any loose branches were gathered up, and the woods kept clean to the point that the trees could not regenerate themselves. They were not getting the nutrients they needed. Caretakers rushed to cut down any tree that didn't look healthy and hauled it away. Visitors also held events in the grove. All of this was slowly killing it. The Church hired Bob Parrott, a local forest manager, who grew up within site of the Smith farm, to help educate us about the grove. When we began the study, the grove of trees was

about seven acres in size, and it was struggling to survive. Through Parrott's management program the grove has expanded significantly so that it is now about 150 acres. He lets the grove take care of itself, and with his educated assistance it's healthier than it has been for many generations. It will take decades to see the full results of these efforts, but we're already gratified to see the woodlands begin to develop a healthy environment. Of course, we don't know where Joseph Smith went to pray, but the trees that remained were what had been left after more than one hundred years of farming. But we feel that people can now continue to visit those woods for generations to come and appreciate the experiences Joseph had when he first went to pray.

Mark: Perhaps we should note here as well that one of the challenges we face in historic site development is a lot of different departments in the Church have interest in and stewardship over these sites, each with its unique perspective. There are safety considerations, for example. Do you have any comments or thoughts about how that might impact your work?

Don: It's true that each Church department—Historical, Missionary, Physical Facilities, or others that may be involved—has to look at the situation carefully and try to do the best job it can to maintain as much as possible the historical accuracy of the structure or site. For example, when we made plans to restore the Manchester frame home, we thought that visitors would have the opportunity to go upstairs, but we learned that New York State building codes and requirements stated that if we allowed people upstairs, we needed to provide two access routes in case of a fire in the building. Such routes would have destroyed the integrity of the home. Although there was some push to provide a second access, and have it run down into the main area of the home, we determined not to allow visitors in the upper level. Little of historical significance had occurred on that upper level that needed to be shared at the expense of keeping the home intact—the Smith family's wood, nails, and paint. We couldn't jeopardize their work. Now, years later as I look back, I'm confident it was the right thing to do. So yes, we work with various departments and approaches on how the site or property is to be interpreted so we can appropriately and pleasantly combine historical perspective with the sacred perspective. I think the departments of the Church have been able to work out the differing perspectives well.

### **John Johnson Home, Hiram, Ohio**

Mark: As you're finishing the landscaping on the Smith farm, putting up fencing, and building the cooper's shop and the barn, projects in Hiram and Kirtland, Ohio, needed attention. We were rushed into things when the second floor of the John and Elsa Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, collapsed.





Restored John Johnson home, Hiram, Ohio, 2004. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Second floor “translation room” located in the southeast portion of the restored John Johnson home, Hiram, Ohio, 2002. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

Don: True. A tour group was on the second floor of that home when a floor joist gave way and cracked the ceiling below. The home was closed and we had to move forward quickly to restore the home while we were still doing research. T. Mike orchestrated archaeology at the site as we excavated the cistern under the home. A partially dug well had also been started and buried while the Johnson family lived on the property that we excavated. We looked at those things carefully. Elwin Robison came on board to do a structure report of the home. We thought the rear of the home was a later addition but learned it was original to the structure. It changed our thinking about sleeping arrangements, home use, and the larger history of the site. We also learned that the Stevens family that purchased the home from the Johnsons and had lived there for generations had done very little work on the home. The original brick for the rear fireplace on the home had been taken down and used to line the heat duct that was put into the building. Almost all of the original home was still there; the original paint was even still on the walls and floors just a few layers under the current coat of paint.

Mark: There was a little concern by some about the paint colors.

Don: Yes, the historic colors were pretty bright and vibrant—green, red, yellow, and orange from mother nature’s pallet—different colors from what people today usually think of when they think of color. But we carefully reproduced the original colors. The home is just as it looked when Joseph Smith lived and worked there. As we were finishing the home, we then could look at Kirtland.

### **Kirtland Sawmill and Ashery**

Mark: Tell us about that Kirtland sawmill and your work with Steven and Ben Pratt in Cove Fort, Utah?

Don: Mark, you and I specifically had responsibility to help rebuild the sawmill. What was it going to look like? The archaeology contributed significantly toward helping us understand that. We also relied heavily on a book by Oliver Evans titled *The Young Millwright*, widely published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We found the millrace. The wood floor to the powertrain had survived, buried in the ground. We even found a saw blade from the mill. Who was going to help us rebuild it? We contracted with a sawmill specialist in New York who lived along the Hudson River to help us. Unfortunately, he was never able to meet our schedule. We got within six months of the proposed dedication date of the Kirtland sawmill and the entire Kirtland site, and wow, we were in trouble. We visited with Steven Pratt and his son Ben, who lived near Cove Fort and had helped with the Cove Fort project and other historic sites projects, making tools and other



Newel K. Whitney ashery, Kirtland, Ohio, 2003. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.



Sawmill operations, Kirtland, Ohio, 2003. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

types of replicas. Steve said, “So you’re asking me to save your hides in six months, not just building the sawmill, but building all the powertrain, the up and down saw, the power system that would drive that saw from the mill wheel to the water, turning that mill wheel, and generating the power?” He said, “I don’t even know how to spell sawmill.”

But we knew from experience that he would learn, that he would find out. We got Steven Pratt to commit. We got him in touch with the right people, and he visited a sawmill or two. In a matter of six months, with help from his son Ben, and Dixon Hyde, a marvelous historic builder, Steven was able to build the powertrain, load it up, take it out to Kirtland, Ohio, and put it together in the sawmill that had been created. The only time I heard him even come close to suggesting that he had had problems was when he said, “Please don’t do that to me again.”

Mark: Tom Kelleher, the curator of Historic Trades and Mechanical Arts at Old Sturbridge Village, tells me it’s the best sawmill reconstruction he’s ever seen.

Don: In fact, he was one of those who gave such good input to Steven Pratt, as I recall.

Mark: Tell us about your role with the ashery.

Don: I remember that you and I had had quite a few talks about asheries. You were the one that found a document, a French document, in Canada somewhere, all about asheries. There was quite a bit of that data which I felt had influence, as you did, on Kirtland. I remember going to Mr. White, the chief curator at Old Sturbridge Village, seeking for additional insights about asheries. He said, “Well, Don, nobody’s ever restored an ashery.” And then he said, “God bless you, hope you can do it.” The Lord provided good craftsmen. There was a fellow who knew a lot about metal castings (doorways for furnaces and things like that), who gave wonderful input. There were things we learned about the kettles, there were things we learned about the ovens and flues, and things we learned about black ash and potash, as well as pearl ash and how it was made. So we learned a great deal. I’m not sure how historians have evaluated it, but I think that the ashery comes across relatively well in the historical field, don’t you think?

Mark: Yes. My experience is that scholars who are familiar with that kind of industry are very pleased with the work done there.

Don: I know that just being able to hire Ron Fedor, who did the brick work on the flues and ovens, found early brick, and did the finish work on all that masonry—all that helped make the building what it is. It has a feeling. When I think of the brick chimney on the Newel K. Whitney home—what an unfortunate circumstance that ultimately turned out to be, when compared to the ashery—I think we can salute the fellow who did the ashery’s masonry. As

a team, I believe we can feel pretty good about that. These were never one-man projects. On any given historic site restoration there's going to be two dozen, three dozen, four dozen different kinds of craftsmanship.

Mark: A lot of the best thinking from all around America was brought together on these projects.

Don: Whether it's blacksmith work, tinsmith work, textiles, baskets, fireplaces, furnishings, cultural clues of the people—how they acted and felt and dealt with things—one person can't possibly be proficient at more than one or two skills, and there's a need for accuracy on dozens of different kinds of things. I think that that's what the Historic Sites Division has been learning to do over the years. I believe the people today who work in the Historic Sites Division are as good as they come.

### **Cove Fort**

Mark: We skipped over Cove Fort, but chronologically it works well here, because, as it happens, it was a structure built much later than Kirtland or the other buildings you were involved in restoring. Let's explore that a little bit. Share with us the history of your involvement at Cove Fort.

Don: Of course, we were fortunate that Cove Fort survived. It was one of 120 forts built by the Church from Canada to Mexico, Colorado to the Pacific, the great bulk of them being built along the Wasatch Front. It's one of two stone forts that I'm aware of that have survived and are places for people to visit—Cove Fort and Pipe Springs. Cove Fort played such a significant role in the movement of Latter-day Saints along the Wasatch Front into new settlement areas. We had the good fortune to hire and work with Wally Cooper and Alan Roberts, architects and restoration people who had been involved with other Church projects before, particularly the restorations of such tabernacles as Manti and Brigham City. Alan had studied extensively on the mill in Salt Lake City, so he had good perspectives on working with stone structures, and it was good to work with both of those men. There was a lot of data that survived in the south rooms of the fort that allowed them to determine how the north side of the fort originally looked, since it had been burned out to a large extent. The original front and back gates survived, as did most of the stone structure walls. The rooms still had much of their woodwork. So the actual reconstruction of the fort was not an overly difficult task. Archaeology around and within the fort added to our knowledge. We identified the blacksmith site and rebuilt it. Historical documents gave insights into the placement of gardens and other details. One of the big projects on the site was the barn. We had pictures of the barn which the Hinckleys built down



Cove Fort, 2006. Photograph by Alexander L. Baugh.

there, but it was long gone. Archeological data defined the length and width of the building. It also indicated the placement of horse stalls and other details.

Mark: President Hinckley, who was serving as a counselor to President Ezra Taft Benson, was particularly concerned because this was a family site. He wanted to make sure, did he not, that he was doing things not just for his family but for the Church as a whole, and this site had great Church relevance? Didn't you feel it was important site for the whole Church?

Don: He did feel that way. I had a little more administrative responsibility for the Cove Fort project than I have had at other sites, and so President Hinckley called me a time or two or three on the phone and chatted about some matters. One day he called and said, "Don, I've just been to the meeting of the Committee on Expenditures where we discussed the proposal to build the Cove Fort barn. Do you know that if we build that barn that will be the most expensive barn ever built in Utah?"

I replied, "Well, president, I'm not surprised because we think it was so when it was built in territorial times."

He said, "I can't go in and ask my brethren to spend money on a project like that, when I'm a Hinckley and it was built by my folks."

“Well, president, perhaps you remember that at the time Cove Fort was accepted as a historic sites project, the Benson Mill at Tooele was also being considered. And who was the president of the Church at that time? President Benson. Both of these projects were considered at the same time and Cove Fort was accepted, while the Benson Mill was not. When the Benson Mill was built, it was a family effort. Cove Fort was a Church project which President Young and his counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve approved and pushed.”

President Hinckley said, “Well that’s right.”

“It is. President you didn’t happen to be the deciding factor. It was voted on and accepted because it was a Church project of great significance to help tell the story of the settlement of the Intermountain West”

“Well, thank you for that. I feel better that that idea is understood.”

Mark: It’s proved to be a really popular site. A lot of people visit the fort every year as they travel north and south along Interstate I–15.

Don: I can’t help but think how the furnishings for that site were principally built in territorial times by a mix of Scandinavian and English craftsman here in Utah. There was a lot of hand-painted graining, kind of our own style in a way. There was a brief list of inventory items that were in the fort, including a double-oven stove for the kitchen. We located one of the time period in Maine. T. Mike Smith and I drove out, picked it up, and brought it back. So every effort was made to be as accurate as possible, not only with the dishware that represented examples found in the archaeological work, but the furnishings that were created within the territory as well. Dealing with issues like the Deseret Telegraph and how that was set up required us to find people who knew telegraphy. Numerous craftspeople helped us to bring Cove Fort together in an appropriate way.

## **Conclusion**

Mark: I appreciate you letting me talk with you and learn about your contributions. Often as authors write articles and books, their names are attached to them, so we knew who did that work, but with historic sites, your name is never attached to what you have done. You’ve been very generous in letting us learn a little bit more about your role in these sites.

Don: Well, you know, that’s the best thing, Mark. It’s not about us. It’s nice to know that we can play a role and then let the site manifest itself.

Mark: In that vein, what do you think members of the Church can learn from these sites? How do these sites play a role in understanding the unfolding of God’s work here on earth?

Don: I think people not only like to read and hear the truth, but they also like to see the truth, or the setting as it really was. I think Latter-day Saints and non-members want to go to the sites or see them on the web, or whatever it may be, so they can vicariously know through the Spirit what occurred there and under what circumstances. Rather than someone having just thoughts in their mind about what the Smith frame home may have been like, for example, there it is, restored as accurately as the data would give us. Visitors can feel as though they were on the site as much as possible, and people seem to like that kind of experience. We have come to appreciate that the Spirit bears witness more powerfully in accurate settings, because there is more truth to bear witness too. That's why the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have approved the accurate restoration of these sites: they know the value of people being on site and having that kind of experience. Whether it's in the Sacred Grove, in the ashery or sawmill in Kirtland, or in Nauvoo where Joseph Smith finished his great work in laying a foundation for the restored gospel, I've had many people express to me their gratitude in visiting a site where effort has been made to reproduce it correctly.

Mark: Thank you, Don. You've been generous in taking time to sit down for this interview.