



Donald L. Enders

The 2014 Junius F. Wells Award: Donald L. Enders

The Mormon Historic Sites Foundation presented the 2014 Junius F. Wells award to Donald L. Enders for nearly five decades of service in preserving and restoring Mormon historic sites. This recognition was made November 13, 2014, at a banquet held in his honor at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building attended by family, friends, historians, and LDS Church dignitaries.

Known within historical circles as “Mr. Historic Sites,” Don’s “restorative fingerprints” are all over major sites of importance to the Latter-day Saint people such as: the Smith family log home in Palmyra, New York; the Smith frame home in Manchester, New York; the Newell K. Whitney Store in Kirtland, Ohio; the Deuel log home outside the Church History Museum in Salt Lake City; the Brigham Young home in Nauvoo, Illinois; the Browning home and gun shop in Nauvoo; the E.B. Grandin press (where the Book of Mormon was first printed) in Palmyra, New York; the sawmill and ashery in Kirtland, Ohio; and Cove Fort in Utah. In short, Don Enders was a central figure in this generation’s public awakening of the Mormon people and their significant and sacred spaces.



Kim R. Wilson, Chairman of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, describing the Junius F. Wells Award. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.



Don and Loretta Enders accepting the Junius F. Wells Award. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.

A video tribute to Enders was presented at the banquet that included, as reported in Salt Lake City's *Deseret News*, LDS Church Historian and Recorder, Steven E. Snow's affirmation: "I don't think one can overstate the importance of our historic sites for the membership of the Church. These are places where families can go with their children and receive a real faith-promoting experience as they learn what the pioneers did, what the early members of the Church experienced. The stories we're so familiar with come alive when we actually walk the ground where they were, and it builds faith." And, according to Elder Marlin K. Jensen, former Church Historian and Recorder, "That is where Brother Enders shone." Elder Jensen continued, "The most advantageous way to build faith is by creating something that the Holy Ghost can testify of. We know that His role is to testify of truth, and whether that truth is contained in a quotation we use from someone out of the past or whether it's the truth we find in the authenticity of the way something is historically replicated, it's truth. I think to get the maximum spiritual impact out of historic sites, they have to be truthful."

In tribute, Elder Jensen commented that "the Lord touched him [Enders] somehow with a desire to qualify himself to be such a valuable tool when it comes to putting the history of the Church back together. . . . He became a historian. He became an archaeologist. He became a wood-

worker. He became a stonemason." Jennifer Lund, Don Enders' colleague and current director of the Church History Department's Historic Sites Division, said, "Sometimes I jokingly say it now takes ten of us to do what Don Enders used to do alone. Now that's quite an exaggeration, . . . but in a way that is an accurate statement, because Don was the sole individual who was assigned full-time to historic sites, and I think probably more than most of the rest of us he left an impact on the Historic Sites program and helped build it in a way that now takes ten of us full time to do much of that same work that he was working on for all those years."

Assistant Church Historian and Recorder, Richard E. Turley Jr., a long-time associate of Enders lauded his work stating, "Don Enders was the man who not only researched our historic sites but he was the one who figured out how to take these historic sites back to the period. He was the one who would look at the structures and decide what needed to be done in order to restore historic sites or to take the sites as they still existed and peel off the exterior that had been added and take them back to the way they were at the time."

Don's passion for LDS historic sites was born in 1963 when following his service in the Eastern States Mission, he drove a car home to Utah for his mission president. On the trip he spent time in Nauvoo, the "City of Joseph." It was there that he first felt the desire to return some day and help restore many of the sites. His dream was realized from 1965 to 1971 as he worked in one capacity or another as a member of the archaeological team for Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. He later went to work for the Church, first in the Genealogical Department and then the Historical Department where he continued his service until his recent retirement after forty-five years of significant impact upon the preservation of the Mormon past.

It was during the Nauvoo period of Don's life that he married his talented wife, Loretta Anderson, who shared his interest and work in Latter-day Saint history and historic sites. They have four children: Amy, Jenny, Tim, and Sarah.

The Junius F. Wells Award, first bestowed on President Hinckley in 2005, is named after a man known as the father of Church historic sites preservation. It was Junius Wells who in 1905 purchased for the LDS Church the 283 acres in Sharon, Vermont, where the Prophet Joseph Smith was born. Later, the Joseph Smith Memorial was erected on that site, and still later, Junius Wells oversaw the erection of the monument to the Three Witnesses in Richmond, Missouri.