



By Anne Baber

# Mizzou at Nauvoo



If you haven't heard of Nauvoo, you've missed a fascinating bit of American history.

Nauvoo, Illinois, on the Mississippi, is perhaps best known as the place from which the Mormons began their great trek to Utah.

It was a swampy flat at a bend of the River when Joseph Smith and his followers, fleeing persecution in Missouri, settled there in 1839. The Mormons drained the swamps and welcomed immigrant converts from England and Canada. By 1845, Nauvoo was the biggest city in Illinois. It had about 12,000 inhabitants, and 6,000 more Mormons lived in the surrounding countryside. In 1841, they began to build a great temple, the largest building north of St.

Louis and west of Cincinnati, at a cost of \$1 million.

Then in 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were murdered by a mob in the nearby county seat, Carthage. Internal dissent and outside pressure combined, and the Mormons abandoned the city. Most went west to Utah with Brigham Young, but others followed 15 other leaders to various places, including Independence, Missouri.

Though it had been used, the great temple was never completed. Burned by an arsonist, it was dismantled by later settlers from France who used the stones to make their wine cellars.

In only eight years, Nauvoo had boomed and become a ghost town.

Today, only 1,000 people live in

Nauvoo, but it can no longer be called a ghost town. In the summer, a dozen or so Mizzou students join Mormon workers to help recreate the old Nauvoo.

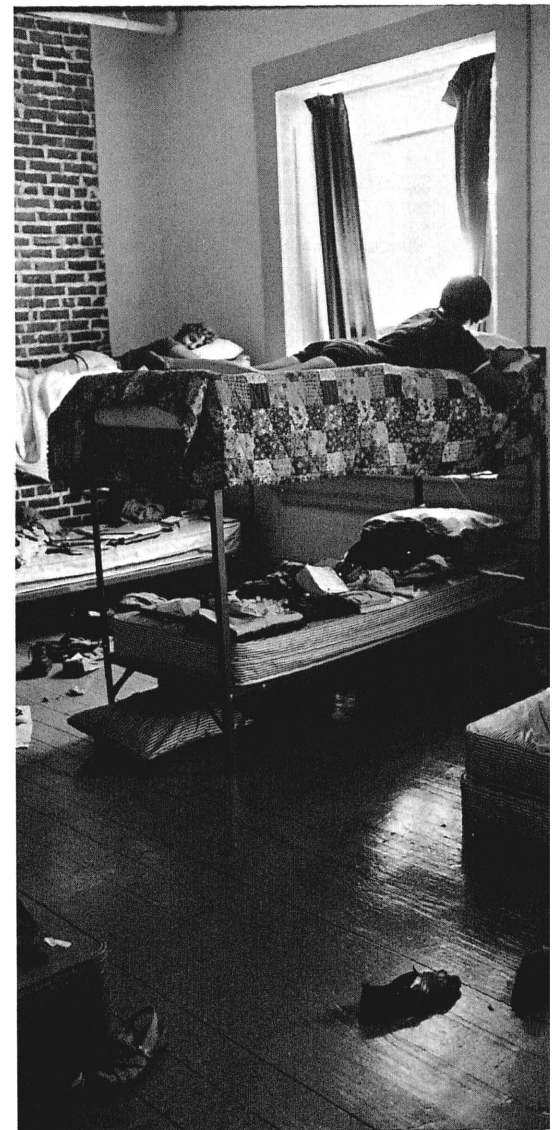
Since 1918, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Independence, Mo.) has been working to rebuild and care for the historic site. The Utah church also has restored a number of buildings.

The students are enrolled in Mizzou's summer field school in archaeology. Their work is helping to insure that the reconstruction proceeds with the painstaking authenticity that is the hallmark of other great restored towns in America such as Williamsburg and Sturbridge Village.

Jackie Boe excavates the surface foundation of a house thought to have been Hyrum Smith's. Later, a deeper foundation revealed that the site had been one of the city's outbuildings.

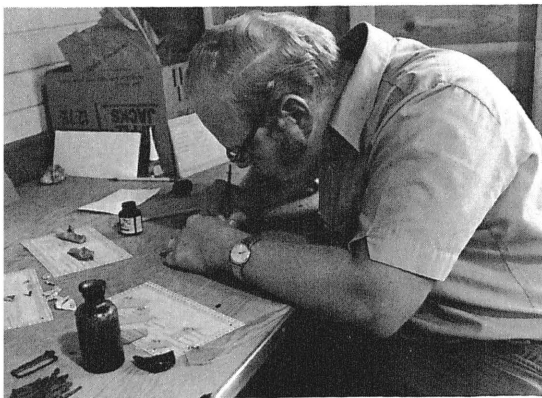


Dorms were in the picturesque Nauvoo House, built as an inn for Joseph Smith after 1841.



The field school headquarters are at the Lyman Archaeological Research Center near Marshall. The students normally spend about three-fourths of the eight-week summer school at the pre-historical (Indian) sites near the center.

But historical archaeology is a faster growing field in the United States today. And the director of



Russ Miller catalogs artifacts in the lab.

the field school, Robert Bray, is especially pleased that his students have the opportunity to participate in bringing Nauvoo to life again.

Bray has been taking students to Nauvoo for five years. When they arrived at Nauvoo this summer, his group could see the results of the labors of previous students.

Last summer, students looked for the remains of the foundations of the Turley house, the first house built by the Mormons. But the remains had been badly disturbed by modern cultivation. Earlier, they excavated the foundations of Joseph Smith's store. They also established the site of the stable. After reconstruction, the stable will look like the original Nauvoo building and will be a visitor's center.

Mormon teenagers, who also act as tour guides through the restored homes, helped supply the labor to rebuild the summer kitchen behind The Homestead, Joseph Smith's first home in Nauvoo. Mizzou students had established its dimensions and location in a dig three years ago.

This summer, Bray's students excavated the foundations of what

they hoped was Hyrum Smith's house. When the students first saw what the historians said was the Hyrum Smith site, they could see foundation stones sticking up through the grass. It looked like an easy excavation. "There's not much mystery at an historical site," one student said. Bob Paul, a senior from Mizzou disagreed. "I like the historical sites better than the pre-historic. There's more to go on—like written records and perhaps photographs."

They divided the area into square plots with string. Each student was responsible for one plot. As he dug, each student mapped his area and put the artifacts he found into a marked paper sack. (Artifacts are everything but the soil—bits of pottery and glass, wire, metal, nails, bones.) The artifacts were taken to the lab to be sorted and catalogued. The lab was built a couple of years ago for the Mizzou crew. Their other building is a tool shed on skids that can be moved to the site.

The small rectangular foundation emerged from the ground, and an old cistern yielded English pottery and china fragments, animal bones, bottles, a pair of rotten rubber boots and even a collection of children's marbles.

But none of these artifacts was very old, and Bray was not convinced that the cistern went back to the Mormon period. He tested the cement between the bricks. It was pre-portland. Perhaps the cistern was Mormon.

Jo Amato from the University of Wisconsin climbed down into the damp hole and handed out bucketsful of debris. The other diggers looked up from their plots each time a bucket came up.

The students kept on digging. At the site at 8 a.m., they took an hour's lunch break at noon. A couple of girls got into bikinis and sunbathed until one of the males bombarded them with water balloons. Others took siestas or worked on their site maps.

By 1 p.m., they were back filling up their wheelbarrows. Some worked in the lab, washing and sorting artifacts or busy with in-

dividual projects. Mary Adams of Moorhead State College in Minnesota cleaned a rusty horseshoe for museum display. Ed Fulda was putting an Indian skull together. He'd found more than 5,000 artifacts at the Indian site earlier in the summer, but decided to make "Roger" his special project. He called the skull Roger because "the bones, when I found them, were laid out like a Jolly Roger."

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the students had an evening class. They studied for an end-of-the-semester test. They became friends with the Mormon tour guides and learned about Mormon history and beliefs from them.

It was interesting, but there were no surprises—until two days before they were to leave. They discovered an earlier foundation about six and one half feet below ground. Summer school was ending, but Bray persuaded three students to stay on. Some of the Mormon tour guides who had been helping with the dig also agreed to work longer, and Greg Waselkov, the graduate assistant, stayed on the job. The dig went on into mid-August.

"The deeper foundation is definitely Mormon," Bray said. "But the building was an outbuilding, not a home. We still don't know where Hyrum Smith's house is. That's disappointing, but it was fascinating archeologically."

Several of the students who had said that they preferred the pre-historic sites "because you never knew what you were going to find" changed their minds about the lack of excitement at an historic site. One of the Mormon students said, "I think it's exciting to discover your roots. It's important for all Americans to know where they came from. This reconstruction of Nauvoo will tell people about their past. It's part of the story of America."

Every year, more than 50,000 people come to see the Nauvoo of the 1840s. But most of them will never know that a dozen dirt-covered Mizzou students in sneakers and cut-offs and tee-shirts helped find that history for them. □