

THE FORUM



Mansion House gets repairs.

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Historic Sites Foundation



Preserving & Sharing
Church Heritage

March 2011

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This Can't Happen Again

By Barbara Walden

For Community of Christ members, the sesquicentennial anniversary was a historic year of celebration.

We reached into our shared past and remembered Joseph Smith III's march to

Amboy, Illinois, and the 54 years he served as our president/prophet. As I led classes at various reunions in 2010, I often found myself learning more than the students. I discovered powerful lessons inside Joseph Smith

See Walden on Page 6

Commentary



Barbara Walden, executive director of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation



No matter the weather, the Kirtland Temple always looks inviting.

175! Kirtland Temple to Hit Milestone

By Greg Clark

The Kirtland Temple, christened as the House of the Lord and born of the Saints' wish to worship with fervor, commitment, and hope, began its journey as a focal point of faith 175 years ago.

Now, as officials prepare to celebrate the milestone anniversary on March 27, leaders continue to carry similar sentiments into the future.

"Since its dedication 175 years ago, the Kirtland Temple has acted as a center for engagement and community building," said Barbara Walden, executive director of the Community of Christ

See Kirtland on Page 5

Robison Finds Role at Heritage Plaza

By Greg Clark

He plays Santa Claus, revels in pump organs, and yearns to portray Joseph Smith III.

Nobody ever will say Charlie Robison's life is ordinary.

Recently, he added another twist to it. On New Year's Day, Charlie became the site coordinator of Heritage Plaza in Independence, Missouri, replacing Ken Mulliken. Charlie sees it as an opportunity. So does Lach Mackay, team lead for Community of Christ's Visitor and Heritage Services.

"Charlie is quite interested in church history," Lach said. "He'll make a great storyteller, and he's very willing to continue a lifelong pursuit of knowledge."

"My hope is that Charlie will help Heritage Plaza be a place not just to learn about Jones Flournoy, but a place to learn more about Independence and church history."

Flournoy owned land bought by the church's early leaders. His home is one of two structures on Heritage Plaza that Robison wants to maintain and present for tours. The other is the F.M. Smith Study. Meanwhile, Charlie, 68, and his wife, Pam, will live in the site's third structure, the Joseph Luff Home.

The move brings Charlie's life full circle. He grew up nearby and was blessed as a baby at Stone Church, just a few steps from Heritage Plaza. Pam, who also lived nearby as a child, now works in Worship and Music Support Ministries at the Temple, just a block away. They attend the Open Arms Congregation, within eyesight of Heritage Plaza.

Charlie's new position will enable him to further explore his love of history, which was triggered by another passion: pump organs. At any given time, he may own up to 20 organs of various sizes and states of repair.

Yet, he hardly can play. He leaves that to Pam, an accomplished musician who often plays the Auditorium and Temple organs.

"As a child I loved mechanical things...and I got interested in pump organs," Charlie said. "I wanted to know not just about the object, but its history."

Charlie said he carried that love of history throughout his religious upbringing.

"I've always loved the church and the stories of the church."

He actually considered taking the position years ago, but the timing wasn't right. Two years ago, he and Pam looked at the idea again. But at that time the home had poor heating and cooling, which the couple feared could aggravate Pam's health.

"Then last year at World Conference, Lach said, 'Oh by the way, I have something to tell you. There's now a new furnace and air conditioning. Does that make any difference?' I said, 'All the difference in the world.'"

Now, Charlie said, the home has an excellent ventilation system. And it recently received another upgrade.

"Our first day we spent six hours pulling up worn-out carpet, pad, and tack strips," so workers could replace it, Pam said.

But the real joy for Charlie isn't so much moving into the house as the prospect of immersing himself in church history. Charlie, who spent 28 years as



New Hours for Heritage Plaza

Heritage Plaza, about a block west of the Temple in Independence, Missouri, will feature new hours this year, accentuating the summer tourist season.

From Memorial Day through Labor Day it will be open 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday

In March, April, May, September, and October it will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturday

See Robison on Page 3

Ken, Wendy Say Good-bye to Heritage Plaza

By Greg Clark

Two people suited well to their position recently ended their stewardship of Heritage Plaza after spending roughly a decade at the Independence, Missouri, site.

Ken Mulliken and his wife, Wendy, recently ended their term and were replaced by Charlie and Pam Robison. Ken and Wendy took with them the gratitude of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation and Lach Mackay, team lead for the church's Visitor and Heritage Services.

They earned praise from Mackay for the professional gifts they brought to the site. Ken is a PhD candidate who teaches history at the University of Saint Mary, and Wendy works as a business trainer.

"Both Ken and Wendy are people of vast talent, which they have shared generously with the church as they interacted with visitors to Heritage Plaza," Mackay said. "Besides volunteering as site coordinator, Ken taught Latter-day Saint history to Nauvoo interns for a period of years and was a student favorite."

They also received praise from Barbara Walden, the foundation's executive director.

"With their combined talents, Ken and Wendy have improved Heritage Plaza immensely," she said. "Whether preserving the physical structures or sharing the story in an engaging and compelling way with hundreds of visitors, Ken and Wendy have made Heritage Plaza an important site on the Restoration Trail."

Ken said he moved into the site's Luff House in the summer of 2000. He married Wendy in October 2001, and she moved in shortly afterward.



After moving into the Luff Home in January, Charlie Robison removed worn-out carpet.

Robison

Continued from Page 2

a teacher and elementary principal before retiring, still loves learning. In giving tours, he'll share that passion with others. He even fantasizes about portraying some historical figures.

"Because of my build and beard, I'd love to do something with Joseph Smith III."

Charlie already carries acting experience of another sort, and he deals well with the public. Every year he dons a Santa suit and puts in long hours at Independence Center, one of the city's largest shopping areas.

Regardless of Charlie's acting future, Lach feels confident he'll bring zest to his new role.

"I first met Charlie and Pam when their son, Mark, served as an intern in Kirtland years ago," Lach said. "The friendship continued as Charlie helped us track down an 1840s melodeon for the Mansion House in Nauvoo. Their interest in church history, coupled with their desire to live close to the Temple, made them good candidates.

Donations Help Preserve, Share Heritage

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How to volunteer

The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation needs volunteers for the properties it supports. The experience can be greatly rewarding.

For more information about volunteering, contact Lachlan Mackay. Call him at (217) 453-2246 or send e-mail to lmackay@CofChrist.org.

"Our goal is to make Heritage Plaza a place to learn not just about the history of the two houses, but a place to explore church history throughout Jackson County."

Planned Fall Tour Draws Raves in Board Discussion

By Greg Clark

A historic sites and fall foliage tour, fund-raising, a new budget, and personal testimonies were among the topics at the November 2010 board meeting of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation.

Almost all of it dovetailed into efforts to provide more interest and better support for the places the foundation aids.

The meeting, at the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri, brought together board members, some site coordinators, and others.

The tour, with its promise of blending history, fall beauty, and other entertainment, generated a lot of interest.

"We are working on a...bus tour for the fall so we can get people to go to the historic sites," Board Vice President David Byrn said. The tour won't be limited to the historic sites. Other stops will include Niagara Falls and the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Leaders said the tour, scheduled October 10-19, could raise funds, connect people with the historic sites, and perhaps bring members to the Heritage Club.

Another key discussion revolved around seeking new sources of donors. Board members want to extend the reach beyond Community of Christ members.

Board President Jeff Naylor suggested that congregations, with an eye toward the Kirtland Temple's 175th anniversary this year, might contribute \$175 a month.

"Hopefully if you identify the different pieces of the puzzle and put them all together you can come up with a picture that enhances our fund-raising," Byrn said.

Treasurer Kirk Cross, in presenting the budget, stressed the importance of



Properties aided by the foundation provide historic and community service through events like the Kin Club, with Marge Thompson and Kay Blair, at Liberty Hall in Lamoni, Iowa.

fund-raising. "We have two decisions: whether to increase income or cut expenses. We have to choose which path we're going to follow."

Steve Jones, presiding bishop for Community of Christ said he learned early on that "if you have no bottom line, vision doesn't matter." He offered a testimony of how important the foundation's efforts are.

"I have a personal passion for the sites that keeps me connected. When I walked on the site of the Kirtland Temple for the first time, I was appalled at

"Even though we're in very challenging financial times, we are seeing a vision that is reachable."

*—Karen Wade
board member*

how desecrated the Temple site was. It almost made me (ill). It just was not acceptable. We ought to feel proud that when you walk on the sites you can meet the Holy Spirit there in a way you haven't met the Holy Spirit before."

Much work has been done since then, including opening the Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center in 2007. However, work remains at many sites.

With that understanding, the board unanimously passed an annual budget of just under \$180,000. Karen Wade noted the importance of that decision.

"We're at a crossroads. We have been inspired.

"Even though we're in very challenging financial times, we are seeing a vision that is reachable. It's difficult to make that plunge, but I feel if we don't take some risks, we're not going to be good stewards."



The Kirtland Temple, whether part of a community Thanksgiving Service (left) or seen at night with candles in the windows, is a revered site.

Kirtland

Continued from Page 1

Christ Historic Sites Foundation. “I hope it will be a model of community long into the future.

“I hope the Kirtland Temple continues to be place where visitors and history seekers are encouraged to ask the difficult questions and experience the depth and meaning of history.”

Others share those outlooks.

- Ron Romig, the site coordinator: “God does not appear to be done with Kirtland Temple yet. The Kirtland Temple continues to renew and refresh the spirits of its many visitors who tour and worship within its walls.”

- Bruce Crockett of the Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center: “It has been and will always be a place of worship, and this house of worship has a story that will benefit all generations into the future.”

- Lach Mackay, team lead for Community of Christ Visitor and Heritage Services: “Lessons learned from the Temple and its builders can make the world a better place. The Temple was built for worship, education, and as a place where we could focus our efforts to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. I see it continuing to fill these roles in the future.”

Those are high hopes. For them to

reach fulfillment, donors and volunteers—as well as church and site leaders—will need to play key roles.

“Preservation of the Temple is primary, but also the upkeep of the grounds and facilities,” Crockett said. “They all need consistent and sustainable financial support. The Spiritual Formation Center will also need budgetary support to increase programming.

“Volunteers are what sustain our ability to make presentations for our tours and offer the Temple for groups to worship. Without volunteers we could not function.”

That’s a tall order for a National Historic Landmark. Especially when you consider the site now also includes the Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center, dedicated June 9, 2007. It has helped countless people connect with the Divine.

“I realize that we could have easily built a shrine to the early Saints, but

instead, our people chose to build a place where we might learn from their lessons,” Walden said. “In the Spiritual Formation Center, we continue to extend an invitation for others to experience the breadth and depth of a God that inspired the Saints in the 1830s, just as the Creator inspires us today.”

Nobody knows that better than Crockett.

“The Spiritual Formation Center is becoming known as a place for an individual, a congregation, a group of priesthood, a mission center staff, or a field staff to come for spiritual renewal.

“It is a place to learn and practice spiritual disciplines, a place where the veil is thin in drawing closer to God, a place to be honest, transparent, and vulnerable. This is the present and the future of the center: the marriage of history and spirituality.”

Over the last 175 years many people have felt pulled to the place where “the veil is thin.” Men, women, and children all have left testimonies of feeling God there. One of them was Lach Mackay.

“During the 15 years I spent in Kirtland, I saw many people overwhelmed by the sense of sacredness that can be found in the Temple, and I was one of those people. Although I was baptized at age 10, I consider my conversion to have occurred the first time I walked into the Temple’s lower court.”

You're Invited

The public is invited to a special service March 27. It will commemorate the 175th anniversary of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Doors will open at 10:00 a.m., and the service will begin at 10:30 a.m. This is a ticketed event; please call (440) 256-1830.

Walden

Continued from Page 1

III's life story. I gained strength by learning how he overcame personal struggles through faith. I was empowered as I read about how he patiently gathered the scattered and diverse Saints toward unity.

The more I read, the more I understood who we are today as a faith community. His emphasis on common consent and empowering all members in decision-making helped create the diverse community in which we worship. It was Joseph Smith III who began our journey from being a people with a prophet to becoming a prophetic people.

As the sesquicentennial year unfolded, I found myself looking forward to seeing the place where Joseph Smith III was ordained. The annual John Whitmer History Association Conference, scheduled in the Amboy area in September, included a bus tour to the ordination site. The trip began to feel like a pilgrimage.

I knew the mechanics hall had not been preserved. But I still found myself looking forward to standing near the hallowed ground.

I wanted to picture what it was like in 1860 for Joseph and his mother, Emma, as they stepped off the train and gathered with Saints in a prayer meeting the evening before his ordination. I wanted to imagine sitting in the prayer service and watching Joseph when he discovered the Spirit leading this new faith community was the same Spirit leading his own faith journey.

For me, Amboy was becoming a symbolic place, a sacred place.

As the historians took their seats on the double-decker bus and began the 45-minute trip to Amboy, I felt excited. The feeling grew as we listened to Mark Scherer and Alma Blair share the story of the Amboy Conference over the bus' speaker system.

As we arrived, Mark turned our attention out the window to the ordination site. The view staggered us.

We saw a long row of bars and liquor establishments. Up and down



A bar sign overshadows a historical plaque that marks a milestone in church history.

the street, neon liquor signs glared as far as we could see. Thoughts flooded my mind, but one question overpowered them: "How could we have let this happen?"

As we slowly left the bus, rain quietly began. Our group gathered around a small historic marker for photographs and to stand near the spot that established the Community of Christ's identity among many Mormon traditions.

As I stood there, sadness overwhelmed me. How can we not grieve for the history lost in Amboy?

As I consider the mission of the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, I remember that day. We have a significant responsibility to en-

sure we don't lose more history as important as that in Amboy. This generation must ensure future generations will be able to experience the joys of historic and sacred places—just as we have benefited from the gifts of those who went before us.

We must link arms with those from our past and look toward our shared future. It's where our past and present friends have experienced the Divine and glimpsed zionic community.

I invite you to join me in preserving and sharing our rich church heritage by generously giving to the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation. Together we can ensure that what happened in Amboy does not happen again.

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Donors Deserve Our Thanks

By Greg Clark

In Nauvoo, Illinois, an elderly couple visits the Red Brick Store, linking their faith to the past.

In Lamoni, Iowa, guests to Liberty Hall admire the brightly colored building and the warmth of ministry there.

In Kirtland, Ohio, visitors marvel at the Temple as they imagine what ministries it will bring in the future.

In Plano, Illinois, a tourist gazes at the historic pulpit used by every Community of Christ president.

And in Independence, Missouri, visitors see the Flournoy House and F.M. Smith Study and imagine church forefathers crossing the thresholds.

All of these sites function because of the generosity of donors. The 2010 donors listed on this page deserve our gratitude. Through their donations, the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation has helped preserve and share our church heritage.

If you'd like to help in 2011, visit the foundation's website at www.historicsitesfoundation.org.

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Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation

P.O. Box 338

Nauvoo, IL 62354

By Greg Clark
The Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation board wishes to thank a former comrade who recently left her position as a site coordinator.

Terri Edwards served on the board for several years before resigning to volunteer as the site coordinator for the Plano Historic Site, a position she handled about five years.

"It was a joy to work with Terri in both of her roles," said Lach Mackay, team lead for Community of Christ Visitor and Heritage Services.

"As a former museum professional, Terri brought with her expertise not often found in smaller historic sites. Not only was she willing to share her gifts and talents at Plano, she offered advice on

the care and preservation of textiles in the Nauvoo collections."

Terri, a Kansas State University graduate, also did museum work in Massachusetts and Chicago. After taking the

position in Plano, she was especially helpful with major restoration of the Plano Stone Church exterior. The work involved roofing, painting, drainage tiles, asbestos removal, and more.

She also worked with the congregation to move important artifacts from the church basement to a safer environment.

Barbara Walden, the foundation's executive director, also has praised Edwards' help with artifacts and materials at other places, including the Joseph Smith Historic Site and the Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center at the Kirtland Temple.

Mackay noted that while much remains to do, the Plano Stone Church is in far better physical condition than before Terri became involved. He stressed that "Terri will be missed!"



Plano Seeks Site Leader

Board Extends Thanks to Terri Edwards