

Work on Nauvoo Temple like deja vu

BY DUANE CARLING

Clipper Guest Columnist

FARMINGTON — When I walked onto the Nauvoo Temple Construction site after an all-night drive from Indianapolis, I felt like I had walked into a parallel universe.

The dawn light was just enough to make out the outlines of the building, and there it was, *the* Nauvoo Temple, not just a picture, not a scale model, but the real thing. In the right place, the right size. It looks just like all the pictures I've seen since I was a toddler. But the temple was destroyed about 1848, and the Mormons were forced to Utah. It can't be back, can it?

Well, here it is, and I'm not dreaming. At least I don't think so.

One of my ancestors on my father's side, John Carling, carved the wooden model for the baptismal font using his farm ox as a model, before devoting his talents to building wagons for the trip west.

On my mother's side, Orson Spencer (the first president of the U of U) and his family had large holdings, but left with just their wagon and the clothes on their backs. Orson's wife Catherine died three days out, and was carried back and secretly buried in her beloved Nauvoo. I've heard the stories all my life, but here is the actual temple rising out of the pre-dawn darkness. All of a sudden I feel out of place wearing my work clothes. I wonder if this is what it will feel like, walking out of the darkness toward the pearly gates.

I was privileged to spend a week working on the temple this past May, doing basic carpentry work and whatever else needed doing at the time. My son and I go to the Indy 500 every year, and I had arranged last year when the foundations were being poured to work for a week following this year's qualifying runs.

Lots of apocrypha surrounds the temple. One story goes that a few years ago a couple of missionaries were tracting in California, when a man invited them in and said, "I have something you young men may be interested in." He had three pages of original

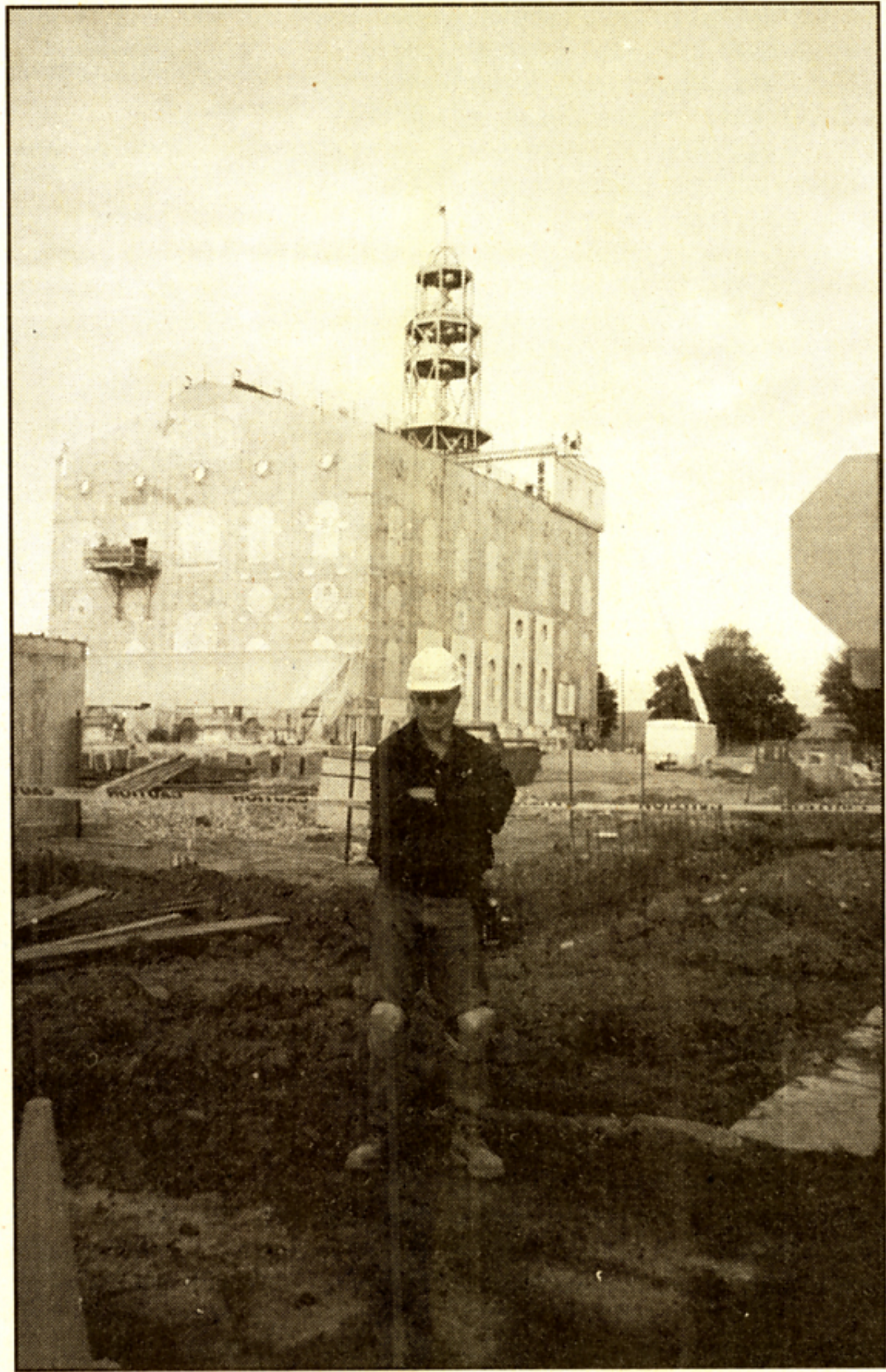
plans for the Nauvoo Temple, drawn in ink on linen fabric, as was the practice then. The plans were whisked to Salt Lake City and a committee of historians, researchers and architects was formed to pour over old journals and the few photographs that existed, and with the old plans draw up a new set. The reconstruction would blend the old design with modern building codes and the requirements of a present-day temple. When it was all done, a donor heard of the project and offered to pick up the cost, which at the time was more or less a "rough estimate." Since then, many people have contributed time and money to the project.

The Conference Center in Salt Lake was being constructed at the time by a partnership of three contractors known as Legacy Builders. After the official announcement, they, plus two others placed bids for the work. Following several unproductive meetings the Legacy partners decided they'd rather have some of the work, than none of it, and offered to go to Nauvoo. It seems that's what the church had in mind all along.

While the original Nauvoo Temple was built of locally quarried limestone, the new building is constructed using poured-in-place concrete. The Conference Center is one of the largest poured-in-place concrete structures in the world, and the Legacy partners by now have lots of experience in the technique.

During the last days of 1846, there were so many people huddled in the assembly room the floors started to crack and the walls were forced outward. Several hundred people tried to escape, some jumping out of the windows. That would have been at least a 10-foot drop. Probably none of the women attempted the window escape in the dresses of the day. The modern temple has hallways and smaller rooms on the north and south sides to fit the present needs.

Once I had been working on the building a few days, it started to feel more friendly and not so intimidating. It's actually quite small by today's standards. The footprint is about



FARMINGTON RESIDENT Duane Carling stands in front of Nauvoo LDS Temple, on which he worked.

10,000 square feet (about the size of the chapel on Shepard Lane) and the bell tower is 165 feet off the ground. On the third day I went up into the bell tower to take some pictures. Standing in the cramped space, looking west, I realized most of my people had stood in the exact spot. Not almost that spot, but right there, and looked west to an unknown future. I wondered what they thought of then and what would they think of us and our world today.

The bell tower is made of prefabricated steel and hoisted in one piece by the all-powerful crane. The original was made of wood, assembled by guys standing on scaffolding made of tree limbs. They finished the entire building, including every piece of hand-planed trim and coat of paint.

Their farms and families were threatened by mobs and knowing they were going to leave it all and go west, they completed it, locked the doors and left. If they had just "sorta" finished it, or 99 percent finished it, it would have sent a quite different message to the guys (and girls) working on its reconstruction today.

It was a great privilege to work on the temple and I am grateful for the opportunity. One mystery still exists though. The original temple had an angel flying horizontally over the bell tower blowing a trumpet. The first plans for the new temple had the angel in the original position, but some of the change orders have a vertical angel like the one on the Salt Lake Temple. What will the configuration be? We'll have to wait and see.