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Spiritual Economics: Some Financial Considerations of Mormon Settlement in Illinois

Introduction

Thirty thousand Mormons Lived in Western Illinois in the 1840's, with only about half of them living in Nauvoo. Almost all discussion concerning Mormons between 1839 and 1846 is limited to Nauvoo. Researchers are lucky to find a handful of brief articles about Mormons outside the city. Upon further investigation, these settlements emerge as being far more important to the success of Nauvoo than this neglect indicates.¹

Most histories credit Mormonism's founder, Prophet, and eventually city mayor Joseph Smith with the implementation of a grand plan of colonization in Illinois starting with the establishment of Nauvoo in the summer of 1839 and then expanding from that center into other parts of the state. This scenario fails to account for the fact that the origins of a vast majority of Mormon settlements in Illinois trace back to before Smith's escape from a Missouri jail in the spring of 1839. To deny that Smith had any influence on Mormon settlement would be inaccurate. However, his role seems to primarily consist of providing a general framework for settlement and tacit approval of actions taken by others. The choice of locating the headquarters of the church in Commerce, Illinois² (later renamed Nauvoo) greatly influenced the settlement of others. His decision to build a Temple at Nauvoo and his mere presence there guaranteed a huge Mormon population in and around the city. However, a comprehensive plan for other settlements does not appear until at least four years after the purchase of Commerce in May of 1839.³

Smith's "Spokes of the Wheel" analogy has provided a mental picture for many, of Mormon settlement patterns from 1839 through 1846. It is used repeatedly to describe the settlement of the saints in Western Illinois. In the spokes of the wheel statement Smith described Nauvoo as the hub or center of Mormon settlements. Then he said, "We will drive the first spoke in Ramus, second LaHarpe, third Shokoquon, fourth Lima. . . ." However, Smith delivered this speech in 1843. With this statement, he describes the future direction of the church's emphasis on development and not the many communities and settlements that had already developed throughout the region and beyond.

Clearly in 1843 Smith's plans for church growth centered on Nauvoo. It is evident that Smith's interest in settlements other than Nauvoo developed over a period of time as he became aware of the needs of his central city. It is at this time that he first attempts to impose a coherent plan for church growth beyond Nauvoo. However, this plan, still centered on the building of Nauvoo and its economy. It is only after 1844 that church leaders appear to express an interest in expansion outside Nauvoo for its own sake and not just for the building up of the city.⁴ Ultimately, most settlements resulted from three causes: Mormon interaction and experience with Illinois before their expulsion from Missouri, overwhelming economic need, and proselyting successes. In many of their actions, church leaders assumed a reactive role in responding to these circumstances.

The Mormons did not choose to settle in Illinois voluntarily. Illinois was a place of refuge from mob and eventually state sanctioned violence in Missouri between 1836 until 1839. In 1838 Missouri Governor William Boggs's issued the Extermination Order demanding that all the Mormons must be driven from the state or be exterminated in response to the

mob violence in the state. Anti-Mormon mobs took this as a state sanction for them to wreak havoc on Mormon settlements. Then in early November of 1838, Joseph Smith agreed to a surrender of Mormon forces to the state militia. He then began a four-month imprisonment in the jail at Liberty Missouri. On the night of the surrender, the exodus of the saints began. Many men who had fought in the battle of Crooked River in October fled to avoid prosecution and retribution. They were the first to leave. To avoid capture by Missouri authorities, the fugitives traveled north to the mostly unpopulated Iowa territory. One man who took this route was Israel Barlow. Upon arriving in the Keokuk area, Barlow met Dr. Isaac Galland, a land speculator.⁵

The wealthier members of the Church were the next group to leave. They traded their farms for property in Illinois. Those who had cash used their wagons and horses for the trip or hired teamsters to move their families. Others traveled to Richmond, Missouri and booked passage on steamboats. Quincy became the main gathering place for the refugees. Soon the city was so full of Mormons that it stretched its resources to the limit. Eventually, as more Saints poured into the city, those who had the means traveled into the interior of the state to make room for new arrivals.⁶

As spring approached, it became apparent that they needed to purchase land so they could plant their crops. Those with the capital investigated offers from local real estate speculators. Edward Partridge, the presiding bishop of the Church, described the situation in a March 1839 letter to the jailed prophet.

This place is full of our people, yet they are scattering off nearly all the while. I expect to start tomorrow for Pittsfield, Pike County, Illinois, about forty-five miles southeast from this place. Brother George W. Robinson told me this morning that he expected that his

father-in-law Judge Higbee, and himself would go on a farm about twenty miles northeast from this place. Some of the leading men have given us [that is the Saints] an invitation to settle in and about this place. Many no doubt will stay here.⁷

Many Mormons stayed in and around Adams County. Others chose to stay in Pike County. Mormontown, about three miles east of Pittsfield, reportedly had a population of 300 voters in 1845. The community continued to survive until the 1846 exodus to Utah. Judge Higbee's farm in the Northern part of Adams County became a focal point around which the Lima, stake⁸ later formed.⁹

The fugitives and the wealthy managed to fend for themselves. The poorer members were a different story. Around 12,000 others did not have the means to leave Missouri.

Newspaper accounts of the time painted a grim picture of these destitute Mormons. "The difficulties of this unfortunate sect are not yet at an end . . . hundreds of them driven from their homes are without shelter and wandering in the woods."¹⁰ Something needed to be done. At this time, the Church was in desperate need of leadership. Smith, along with his two counselors, were in Liberty Jail. The only available leaders were two Apostles, Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young. They ended up with the task of finding new leaders to replace the missing Apostles, and finding teams and organizing companies for the removal of the Saints from Missouri.¹¹

By April 1839, most of the Mormons were out of Missouri. They now faced the daunting task of rebuilding their Church and their lives. The Saints lay scattered over a wide area. Several communities received exiles either directly or by way of Quincy. Mormons

settled in Alton, Springfield, Geneva, Plymouth, LaHarpe, Keokuk, Fort Madison, and many other locations throughout Illinois and Iowa. Some stopped in St. Louis.¹²

Prior to the Missouri exodus, the saints had always received instruction from the prophet as to where to gather. In the case of Illinois, the saints arrived not in response to a call to gather but as refugees from the fiasco in Missouri. These saints were not responding to the call of their prophet but fleeing for their lives and being left to their own devices as to where to settle. One difficulty with studying Mormon settlement patterns in Illinois is the interpreting of the doctrine of "gathering" as applied to Nauvoo in the same way it was used in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and then Utah. The doctrine of gathering first appeared in New York when Smith instructed the Saints to gather in Ohio. It was again used in leading the Saints to Ohio then Missouri.

The principle of gathering has two aspects, the spiritual gathering, and a temporal gathering. The spiritual gathering is accomplished by bringing in new converts to the church. The temporal gathering pulls together the converts into "Zion." The most important aspect of this gathering is the pooling of resources to build a temple.

Most authors have focused on the spiritual aspects of gathering during the Nauvoo era and the missionary efforts by the twelve apostles. These were trusted church leaders chosen by the prophet, sustained by vote of the saints in a conference, and stood second in authority to the prophet and his councilors. From 1839 thru 1841 the preaching of these men in England resulted in a large number of English converts. As a result, thousands of English converts flocked to Nauvoo. However, many overemphasize the principle of spiritual gathering or misunderstand it as it pertains to Nauvoo.

Understanding the doctrine of gathering during the Nauvoo period requires the examination of economic factors.¹³

From his cell in Liberty Jail, Smith had difficulty in guiding the Saints in their decisions. However, he did suggest that they should "lay hold of every door that is opened to them," and they did. Recounting the Mormons' arrival in Adams County, during the spring of 1839 Esaias Edwards wrote about the large number of Mormons who arrived from Missouri. When writing of their activities outside of Quincy he said: "they settled in Adams County in great numbers, renting and leasing all the land that could be obtained. . . ." The Saints responded to their Prophet's counsel by settling wherever they could find employment or land that they could afford.¹⁴

Three plans eventually emerged for their settlement. One plan called for a scattering throughout the region. Echoes of the admonishment given by General Clark of the Missouri Militia, still rang in their ears: "I would advise you to scatter abroad, and never again organize yourselves with Bishops, Presidents, etc., lest you excite the jealousies of the people, and subject yourselves to the same calamities that have now come upon you."¹⁵ Some felt they could live in the surrounding Illinois communities as people of other churches did and avoid the "calamities" foretold by General Clark.¹⁶

There was an alternative to scattering presented at the February conference of saints in Quincy Illinois. Brother Mace, a member of the Church, expressed his opinion that the members should gather immediately. Some thought that the failures in Ohio and Missouri were not the result of gathering, but the result of not gathering according to the principles revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The notes of the meeting clearly imply that a

site in Iowa was being suggested for this gathering. No mention of Commerce is recorded.¹⁷

During a March meeting, the leadership had still not come to a decision as to whether to physically gather. Meanwhile, many Mormons continued to disperse in an attempt to find any means of support available. While presiding at this meeting, Young presented a compromise between gathering and dispersing. He proposed that the Saints settle in "companies" and "branches." Young wanted it to be easy to organize and gather the church at a later date if necessary. Expressing concern for their spiritual welfare, Young thought that members should stay where they could easily be taught so that they would not stray from the fold.¹⁸

The long awaited arrival of the prophet in April of 1839 promised to end the debate.¹⁹ He wasted no time in investigating the offer of Isaac Galland. On April 24, a council of church leaders resolved to send Smith and others immediately to the Iowa Territory "for the purpose of making a location for the Church." despite the saints current location in Illinois. Smith's party traveled to Isaac Galland's home, in Commerce Illinois. Upon reaching the crest of a hill, Smith was astounded by the picturesque landscape of Commerce and decided to purchase the town. A month or two later the half-breed tracts in Iowa were also purchased.²⁰

The purchase of Commerce and the Half-breed tracts appear to have been the result of economic need rather than careful deliberation. Quincy continued to strain under the burden of its recent arrivals. There was a shortage of jobs and housing that could provide the needed income and shelter to support the refugees. The time for planting crops

arrived and the Saints needed a place to live. One of the most attractive features of Galland's offer was not to build a new Zion but that there was no requirement for cash or even a down payment. With few alternatives the Saints who had not already purchased farms of their own or had not found gainful employment moved to the newly purchased city of Commerce.²¹

The next conference on May 6th of 1839 was held at Quincy. Smith decided to build a city at the site of commerce and encouraged Saints to begin moving there. He related this decision not as revelation but as a good idea because there was "no more eligible place presenting itself."²²

Some historians have interpreted Smith's purchase and removal to Commerce Illinois as tacit disapproval of all other settlements. Flanders in his seminal book *Nauvoo Kingdom on the Mississippi* refers to a letter to the Church written on December 8, 1839.

According to Flanders, this statement put "Heavy emphasis . . . upon the Nauvoo gathering" This letter, however, does not command the "Saints scattered abroad" to gather there. The only chastisement in the letter appears to be directed towards those who refuse the advice of the Church leaders not to return to Kirtland, Ohio.²³ Flanders suggests that the first official call for gathering was at a church conference on April 6-8, 1840. During that conference the Prophet encouraged the Elders of the church to help pay for the debts incurred with the purchase of Nauvoo.²⁴ An official report to the church written in October of 1840 is often interpreted as a call to the Saints to gather. The letter discusses gathering on the recently purchased lands in Illinois and Iowa but does not

appear to command the Saints to do so. This discussion primarily concerns itself with the economic development of Nauvoo and the need for financial assistance.²⁵

Many wealthy and influential people have embraced the Gospel, so that not only will the poor rejoice in that they are exalted, but the rich in that they are made low. We may soon expect to see flocking to this place, people from every land. . . . It was in consideration of these things that induced us to purchase the present city for the gathering of the saints. . . . We therefore hope that the brethren . . . will aide us in liquidating the debts which are now owing²⁶

At this point Nauvoo became one gathering site among many. Several communities with large Mormon populations petitioned for consideration as stakes. Each Stake consisted of at least 100 baptized members of the church a high council of twelve men and a stake presidency of three men. Immediately after the establishment of the Stake in Nauvoo, Smith organized a committee to "Organize stakes between this place and Kirtland" Hyrum Smith headed the committee with assistance from a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles Lyman Wight and recently appointed Kirtland Stake President Almon W. Babbitt.²⁷ Through the committee in October of 1840, Smith sanctioned the formation of Stakes between Nauvoo and Kirtland, Ohio. These early Illinois stakes were at Mount Ephraim, Lima, Quincy, Mount Hope, Steam Mills and Columbus, all in Adams County. Stakes were also established near Payson and Geneva in Morgan County and at Springfield in Sangamon County.²⁸

All of these early Stakes had their origins prior to Smith's escape from Liberty jail. These early stakes represented the largest concentrations of Mormons after the Missouri exodus. Smith's statement while in jail to "Fall into the places and refuge of safety that God shall open unto them, between Kirtland and Far West." seems to recommend scattering over a wide region. The commission to the committee to create stakes between Nauvoo and

Kirtland echoes this earlier sentiment to scatter. Smith's letter went on to say, "we further suggest for the considerations of the Council, that there be no organization of large bodies upon common stock principles, in property, or of large companies of firms, until the Lord shall signify it" His letter goes on to warn of the dangers of gathering for the saints.²⁹



Map Showing Areas of Mormon migration routes and Mormon Settlement Prior to 1841

Stakes

1. Nauvoo Oct. 1839
2. Ramus July 1840
3. Lima Oct. 1840
4. Mount Epraim Oct. 1840
5. Freedom Oct. 1840
6. Quincy Oct. 1840
7. Mount Hope Oct. 1840
8. Pleasant Vale Nov. 1840
9. Geneva Nov. 1840
10. Springfield Nov. 1840

These early stakes proved to be important to Nauvoo's survival. As we will discuss later Nauvoo depended on surrounding communities for food. However, they also provided important places of refuge. In the early years of Nauvoo's development, sickness and death ravaged the city. The first to gather to Nauvoo were the church leadership and those who had not found a home elsewhere. Conditions were terrible. Small paths connected various parts of the city where families camped in shelters made of split rail fences and quilts. The death toll was tremendous. Malaria ravaged the ranks of the beleaguered Mormons. It was clear to many the difference in health between those who spent their first summer in Nauvoo and those who had settled in other areas. William Draper described his first visit to Nauvoo.

I went [to the conference in Commerce] and another such sight my eyes never beheld; that portion of the assembly that had lived in Commerce during the summer looked more like ghosts that had neither flesh nor blood or but very little, yet they seemed to be satisfied and glad to think they were able to attend conference. They organized the place into a stake of Zion and changed the name of the place from Commerce to that of Nauvoo,³⁰

By staying clear of the city until it could be made healthier, many avoided the "Mortality that almost invariably awaits" those who moved to the city.³¹

Other places attracted the recent refugees because they had branches before the Missouri exodus. Geneva situated on the border between Scott and Morgan counties, probably had a branch as early as 1832. Brigham Young's sister lived in the area. Other Illinois branches, such as the one in Fulton County, started in early 1830 and attracted many Missouri refugees. Likewise, the two branches left behind by the abortive attempt to

settle in Missouri by the poor in Ohio in 1838 by Kirtland's Camp attracted several of the recent exiles. These included the stake at Springfield.

Finally, in January 1841, Smith issued the first official commandment for the Saints to gather at Nauvoo. It stressed the importance of buying farms in the area and building industries in the city. The directive also discussed the importance of concentrating the Saints' efforts on constructing a temple and university. Again, in May of 1841, in a letter to the Saints Joseph Smith gave another directive for them to gather. Like the previous directive, it lacked the Divine import given to earlier church gatherings. The earlier language of gathering to Zion emphasized preparations for the second coming of Christ. The directives during the Nauvoo period are described as economic necessities rather than spiritual ones.

The First Presidency of the Church . . . , anxious to promote the prosperity of said church, feel it their duty to call upon those Saints who reside out of this county [Hancock], to make preparations to come in without delay. . . . Should be attended to by all who feel an interest in the prosperity of this corner-stone of Zion. Here the Temple must be raised, the University built, and other edifices erected, . . . which can only be done by a concentration of energy and enterprise. Let it therefore be understood, that all the stakes, excepting those in this county, and in Lee County, Iowa, are discontinued, and the Saints are instructed to settle in this country as soon as circumstances will permit.³²

Even after this statement appeared, Smith still hesitated to have the Saints gather at Nauvoo. In August 1841, he established stakes at Zarahemla and Nashville in Iowa, and at Warren and Ramus in Illinois. It seems that pressing financial needs encouraged him to give the directive to gather. This fact is illustrated quite clearly in an August 1841 letter to one of the church's creditors.

We have not been able in consequence to realize any valuable consideration from it

[Nauvoo], although we have been keeping up appearances and holding out inducements to encourage emigration that we scarcely think justifiable in consequence of the mortality that almost invariably awaits those who come from far distant parts, at that with a view to enable us to meet our engagements [debts]³³

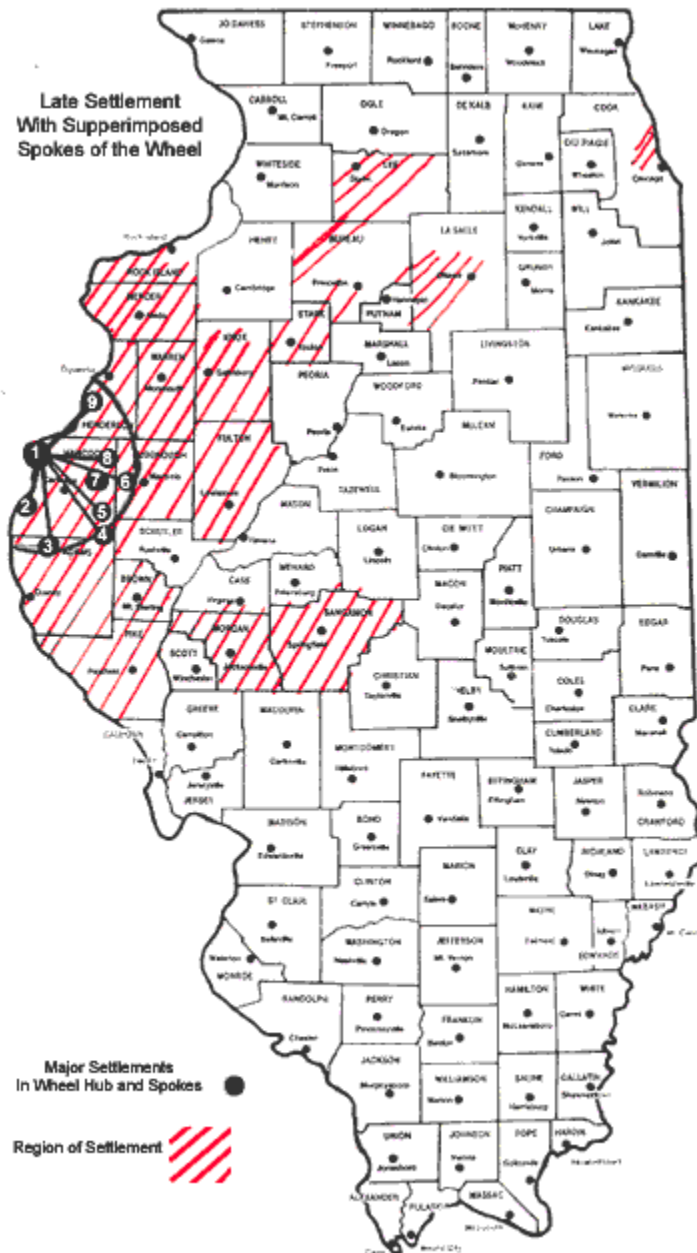
The sudden change of position in 1841 to command the saints to gather took the Church by surprise.³⁴ In a meeting of the highest officials of the Church, Smith defended himself and denounced recent murmurings that he was a fallen prophet because of this change of direction.³⁵

Even after the discontinuance of stakes outside of Hancock County, Illinois, and Lee County, Iowa, many Mormons remained in communities outside of the designated gathering place. For example in a history of Pike County, the population of Mormontown is recorded as 300 voters in 1845. Since only men could vote at the time, this suggests that the population of this one settlement was at least 1000. Pike County also had Branches in Griggsville, Perry, Pittsfield, Mormontown and the Stake at Pleasant Vale.³⁶

Eventually Joseph Smith began to again expand his directives of sanctioned boundaries of settlement. In March of 1843 he likened Nauvoo to the hub of a wheel. The spokes included not only the Stakes in Hancock County, Illinois, and Lee County, Iowa, but also Shokokon in Henderson County, Illinois and Lima in Adams County, Illinois.³⁷

Apparently, the economic need described in the edict issued in January of 1841 necessitated an expansion of his vision of the gathering. Finally, during a conference in April 1844, Smith once again expanded his vision of gathering. By this time Smith seems to be thinking of expansion for expansion's sake and not for the support of Nauvoo. He said that Zion included all of North and South America. Furthermore, he went on to say

that after the temple was finished, the Elders of the Church would spread out and build up cities with temples all over the United States. Brigham Young would later begin this work with the establishment of Norway in LaSalle County, Illinois.³⁸



Map Shows settlements that are part of the spokes of the wheel mentioned by Smith and other settlements supporting Nauvoo, superimposed over larger settlement pattern after 1843.

1. Nauvoo
2. Warren
3. Lima
4. Bear Creek
5. PLymouth
6. Colchester
7. Ramus
8. La Harpe
9. Shokoquon

While Nauvoo might have been a "beautiful place" it was also a place of shortages. Most of the Mormons had gardens on their town lots but these did not provide for all of their nutritional needs. Almost every letter from the period talks of the difficulties in getting enough food.³⁹ Currency was also in short supply. The destitute conditions of the Mormons after their expulsion from Missouri resulted in little or no money to purchase food and other goods. Likewise, the debt incurred by the church in purchasing the city continually drained it of capital. The explosive growth added to the money shortage. Often when individuals with a significant amount of capital arrived, they used their money for land speculations and house construction instead of investments in industries or mills.⁴⁰

The economic well being of the city was inextricably tied to the rest of the region. During this time the whole state suffered from a shortage of currency and bank failures. Nauvoo's sudden appearance and spectacular gathering and growth overwhelmed the resources of the region. Financial, political, industrial and transportation institutions, which had evolved over the previous twenty years to provide for the needs of hundreds, were suddenly called upon to provide for thousands. Nauvoo or any other city of its size could not survive independent of its hinterlands. The lack of infrastructure for such a large city in Western Illinois forced the Mormons to create their own. This included the gathering of Saints to create other Mormon settlements.⁴¹

The lack of an industrial base in Nauvoo is painfully evident when we look at the situation concerning grain and lumber mills. Mills were a vital part of frontier life. They ground grains into flour and cut logs into lumber. However, the subsistence economy of

most frontier communities barely made the mills profitable. Mills were erected to "principally accommodate the community", and functioned almost as a public service. They were often community centers as well as places for work. Farmers sometimes would have to wait for days for their turn at the mill. A horse-powered gristmill could be expected to grind eight bushels of corn in a day. As a result, mill owners often ran taverns and distilleries on the side, to provide a diversion for waiting farmers as well as earn more profit.⁴²

Because of the borderline profits of the mills, entrepreneurs constructed just enough of them to fulfill local needs. As a result, there were just enough mills in the area of Commerce to provide for its needs, as they existed prior to the Mormons arrival. With the arrival of several thousand new inhabitants in a matter of months, the demand on local mills soon overreached their capacity. In December of 1841, Smith wrote a letter describing the drastic shortage of mills, in an attempt to convince a recent convert to build a mill near the city.

As respects steam engines and mills, my opinion is, we cannot have too many of them. This place has suffered exceedingly from the want of such mills in our midst, and neither one nor two can do the business of this place another season. We have no good grain or board mill in this place; and most of our flour and lumber has to be brought twenty miles; which subjects us to great inconvenience. The city is rapidly advancing, many new buildings have been erected ..., and many more would have arisen, if brick and lumber could have been obtained. There is scarcely any limits which can be imagined to the mills and machinery and manufacturing of all kinds which might be put into profitable operation in this city, and even if others should raise a mill before you get here, it need be no discouragement ..., for it will be difficult for the mills to keep pace with the growth of the place, and you will do well to bring the engine.⁴³

With the acute lack of industry evolving and growing over time to meet the needs of the community, Smith desperately needed to create some. As stated in the letter he needed to look outside the city for help. Nauvoo depended on food and lumber harvested and milled in other communities. One of the more drastic examples of this is the settlement known as the "pinery" in Wisconsin. Lumber harvested by Mormons in Wisconsin supplied Nauvoo with desperately needed building materials. Smith intentionally sent some of his followers to the region for this purpose. He also hoped that some of the church's financial troubles could be alleviated with money raised through the lumber trade. The project met with mixed success. However, the use of Mormon settlements outside of Nauvoo to raise money and supplies was not limited to the Wisconsin Pinery.⁴⁴ Smith realized that Nauvoo's survival in the short term depended on surrounding communities. As a result, the satellite communities took on greater significance. The acquiring of mills either through Mormon ownership or by Mormon settlement in the area of a mill became extremely important until Nauvoo's own industries and mills could be built.

Ramus took on early significance in this regard. Joseph Holbrook, an elder, escaped from Missouri in March of 1839 and took his family to Fountain Green, Illinois about twenty five miles due west of Nauvoo, to settle among the Saints already there. In May of the same year, he visited Smith in Nauvoo. Smith asked him if he could get corn meal because "there was no one bringing in any for sale". Holbrook immediately borrowed seven dollars and purchased some corn. After shelling it, he had it milled and then sold the meal in Nauvoo. He continued the business night and day for six weeks. He was the only one selling grain to the impoverished city. Later the Stake of Ramus would become a major supplier of food for the city.⁴⁵

Mills also played an important role in the failed community of Warren. Most of the Mormon settlements in Illinois were the result of efforts made by individual Mormons. There are however at least two community efforts besides Nauvoo undertaken directly by Smith. Warren was one such community. Among the many overtures for the sale of town sites made to the saints, was one made to Smith in the fall of 1839. Daniel S. Witter owner of a mill at Warsaw along with Mark Aldrich and Calvin A. Warren negotiated with Smith until the signed an agreement on July 19 or early July 20.⁴⁶

Smith hoped to raise money to help pay off the debt incurred with the purchase of Nauvoo. This was to be done with profits from the sale of town lots in Warren and with lumber harvested from the wooded areas on the purchase site. Another obvious benefit to the purchase was access to Witter's mill at Warsaw. With this in mind, church leaders settled a group of 204 recent immigrants from England on the new town site.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, Warren did not become a profitable venture. Soon after settlement, word came from Isaac Decker, the presiding elder at Warsaw, of troubles at the Warren settlement. It seems that Witter, in an attempt to get out of financial difficulties of his own, raised his rates at the mill by \$1.00 a barrel for the Mormons. He also was selling his sweepings from the mill to the Mormons at \$2.50 per hundred. Given the margin on which most frontier mills operated, this sudden increase was an obvious effort at price gouging. As a result, the potential benefits of Warren as a source of milled grain vanished. The other expected source of income also failed. Witter and Aldrich forbade the Mormons from clearing the land of its timber. These developments eliminated the

money making potential of the site. In December of 1841, Smith recalled the Mormons at Warren and Warsaw to Nauvoo.⁴⁸

Smith's next venture in town building began on February 10, 1843. John B. Cowan, a land speculator from Henderson County, came to Nauvoo with an offer from the inhabitants of Shokokon.⁴⁹ His mission was to "invite a talented Mormon Preacher" to "take up residence with them". The people of the town promised to provide him with a good house and support. The townspeople also offered to allow the preacher to "invite as many Mormons to settle in that place as they pleased so to do".⁵⁰ What followed was several days of salesmanship by Cowan, and on February 14, 1843, Smith agreed to visit the town site.

Mr. Cowan proceeded to make his sales pitch to Smith. Shokokon seemed to have all that the Mormons needed in a satellite community. One of the landowners of the town, Robert McQueen owned a mill just south of town along the road between Shokokon and Nauvoo. Not only was there a mill but there was easy access to transportation. The town was the terminus of the stage line running from Macomb to the Mississippi River.⁵¹ The sloughs in the region offered a port for riverboats and for lumber floated down river from Wisconsin. The invitation for a Mormon preacher in the area appears seemed attractive considering the problems encountered in Warren and in other states.

Ultimately, Shokokon failed. Access to the Mississippi was only available to riverboats during high water. The town site, which may have appeared healthy in February, in the summer, turned into sickly swamp. It was for this reason that the original owners (before Cowan) of Shokokon abandoned the city in 1836.⁵² While McQueen's Mills did help

alleviate problems in Nauvoo, Shokokon never grew profitable and failed to attract a significant Mormon population.

Nauvoo needed a transportation network to support the rapidly growing city. In the case of most cities, transportation routes gradually grew along with the city. Alternatively, in the case of most boomtowns they grew to meet the needs of the market that created the boom. Unfortunately, Nauvoo's boom consisted of thousands of pauper immigrants from Missouri and England. Coupled with the state's recent fiasco with internal improvements circumstances guaranteed little or no development of transportation networks such as railroads until well into the 1850's.

One obvious exception to this is the interstate waterway of nineteenth century America, the Mississippi river. Nauvoo being situated on a bend in the river would seem to be in an excellent position to take advantage of the river. Unfortunately, the river proved to be of little help and may have even been a hindrance to the city's economy. From early in the river's history, St. Louis capitalists dominated steamboat traffic on the upper Mississippi. As a result, almost all traffic, even the local packet ships, promoted the interests of St. Louis. As a result an intricately balanced and highly competitive situation existed between river communities along the upper Mississippi.⁵³ While practically all steamboat traffic on the river acted to profit St. Louis capitalists other cities along the river also benefited from this situation because of the exports they provided for resale by St. Louis merchants. Galena occupied the northern end of this trading network and exported lead. The communities in between exported lumber, grain and other farm commodities. Unfortunately, Nauvoo had little capital and few business connections with which to take

advantage of the abundance that daily floated by. At Nauvoo boat after boat arrived carrying poor immigrants from England and other parts of the United States but instead of bringing in needed capital, these new arrivals tended to lower the city's per capita income.

Nauvoo's economic immaturity also made it continually dependent on manufactured goods imported from St. Louis and agricultural goods from the surrounding countryside. These imports represented a drain on the city's meager money supply. With all the city's resources tied up in the building of houses and selling of town lots little was left over for the development of industry. Because of the city's rapid rise it failed to realize the natural development of industry seen over time in other cities. Church leaders made extensive efforts to encourage industrial growth. However, the lack of capital in Nauvoo prevented the development of craft or manufactured goods. Because of Nauvoo's size, they did meet with some success and there were several small manufacturers in the city. Still, Nauvoo was never able to meet its own demands let alone produce enough for export. As late as October 1844, several months after Smith's death, church leaders still struggled to develop plans to salvage the Nauvoo economy.⁵⁴

The saints cannot gather together in large numbers, and be able to enjoy the comforts and necessaries of life, without the necessary calculations and preparations for their employment and support. Not only must farms be cultivated, houses built, and mills to grind the corn, but there must be something produced by industry, to send off to market in exchange for cash,....⁵⁵

The obvious alternative to the river for bringing goods into the city was the roads. This was not an attractive alternative because land travel on the prairie was slow and difficult.

Travel times were often four times as long as on the rivers. A wagon carrying produce took twelve hours to travel twenty miles. In Western Illinois, the major roads provided access to the main river ports of Quincy, Warsaw, and Oquawkua. The roads allowed these cities to control the surrounding countryside in a way similar to how St. Louis, controlled them with the river.⁵⁶ However, it was this alternative that helped to sustain the city. Prior to 1839 the road system in the Military tract focused on servicing important river ports like Warsaw, Quincy, and Fort Madison. The best roads in Hancock County were the roads linking communities with the county seat at Carthage and the port at Warsaw. One important exception was a road platted in 1834 originating at Beardstown on the Illinois River passing through Macomb then Fountain Green and finally terminating at Venus (Commerce) on the Iowa Rapids. This became the first and most important artery of supplies flowing into the city. It provided access to mills and farms around Crooked Creek in Hancock County. As Nauvoo's needs increased, it provided access to the mill at Spring Creek and the coal mines near Colchester, both in McDounough County.⁵⁷

Mormon settlements acted as a trade network for the city. The settlements most important to the city were those located on roads linked directly to Nauvoo. Provisions from LaHarpe, Plymouth, Augusta, and especially Ramus were often requested and received. When combined with the communities of Shokokon and Warren we begin to see the Spokes of the Wheel talked about by Smith.

Conclusion

Clearly, the gathering at Nauvoo was not a prerequisite of salvation. The language used to promote the gathering stressed economic need and lacked the Divine mandate accompanying the gatherings at Kirtland Ohio and Jackson County Missouri. As Flander's pointed out the purchase of Commerce and the half-breed tracts was clearly due to economic, need. However, after the church bought these properties economic concerns for the welfare of Nauvoo continued to effect decisions about gathering and settlement in the entire region. In the case of Nauvoo and the surrounding communities, the primary considerations in the gathering were the economic welfare of Nauvoo and the completion of the temple. Doctrinal and spiritual concerns centered on the blessings that would follow the completion of the temple. While many calls were made for assistance in the building of the city and the liquidation of the Church's debt, they were mostly limited to requests. The boundaries for gathering were continually in flux. These fluctuations were adaptations made to meet the economic demands of the times.

¹ A more complete discussion of Mormon settlement in Illinois can be found in R Philip Reynolds "Spokes of the Wheel": Mormon Settlement Patterns in Illinois Between 1838 – 1846 (MA. Thesis, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois 2000) To avoid the to frequent use of the term Mormon, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) will be referred to as Mormons, Saints and LDS. People who are not members of the LDS church, will be referred to as, Gentiles, Illinoisians, anti-Mormons and Old Settlers. These terms, except LDS were in use by the people of the period. Cecil A. Snider. "A Syllabus on Mormonism in Illinois From the Angle of the Press" Newspaper Source materials, bound (typescript) Illinois State Historical Library. Theodore L. Carlson. *The Illinois Military Tract: Study of Land Occupation, Utilization and Tenure* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1951), 80. Carlson's estimate of 15,000 for the city of Nauvoo is consistent with most current estimates of the city. Unfortunately the 1845 Illinois State Census is missing. Population reports from the census give numbers for each county but do not give figures for individual townships or cities.

² Commerce Illinois was originally platted as Venus, Illinois Schuyler County Clerk's Office "Map of Road through McDonough County to the Iowa Rapids 1834" Illinois Regional Archives Depository found in Schuyler County Clerk's Subject Files. Later the name was changed to Commerce and then it was named Nauvoo by Joseph Smith

³ For the few attempts at overviews of Mormon settlements outside of Nauvoo see Donald Q. Cannon, "Spokes on the Wheel :Early Latter-day Saint Settlements in Hancock County Illinois" *Ensign: The Ensign of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, February 1986, 62-68. and Donald Q. Cannon, "Hancock County Illinois" in *Historical Atlas of Mormonism* ed by S. kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon and Richard H. Jackson, (New York: Simon & Schuster 1994), 56-57. Articles discussing individual Illinois settlements are limited to Marshall Hamilton, ""MONEY-DIGGERSVILLE-" The Brief, Turbulent History of the Mormon Town of Warren" *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989) 49-58. and an excellent paper by Susan Sessions Rugh, "Conflict in the Countryside: The Mormon Settlement at Macedonia, Illinois" *BYU Studies* 32 (1,2) (1992) 149-174

⁴Smith, Joseph Jr. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Period One*. 2d ed. rev. 7 Vol. Ed. Brigham H Roberts. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 5:296. Reproduced in; ---- *LDS Historical Library CD Rom 2nd ed*. Orem, Utah: Infobases INC. 1993.

⁵Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi*, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1965), 12. Smith, Joseph Jr. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Period One*. 2d ed. rev. 7 Vol. Ed. Brigham H Roberts. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), Smith, letter Liberty Jail, Clay County, Missouri, March 25, 1839 . To the Church of Latter-day Saints at Quincy, Illinois, and Scattered Abroad, and to Bishop Partridge in Particular: reprinted in Smith, 3:302.

⁶William G. Hartley. "'Almost Too Intolerable a Burthen': The Winter Exodus from Missouri, 1838-39" *Journal of Mormon History* 18:2 (Fall 1992), 19. LeSueur, 239. James B. Allen, and Glen M. Leonard. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992) 153. John P. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints from the State of Missouri. Under the "Extermination Order"* Cincinnati Ohio: R. P. Brooks, 1839, 40. Quoted in; Hartley, 18.

⁷Letter of Edward Partridge to Joseph Smith. March 5, 1839. Smith *HOC*, 3:272.

⁸A stake was a subdivision of church government that contained the local ecclesiastical authority.

⁹Chapman & Co.. *History of Pike County Illinois . . . Biographies of Representative, Citizens*. (Chicago: C. C. Chapman, 1880) 536. During the this part of the nineteenth century women were not allowed to vote. Therefore the figure of 300 voters reflects male Mormons only. If each male had one wife and two children this would make the Mormon population in the area at least as high as 1200. However it is very unlikely that the community of Mormontown had this many inhabitants. After comparing this figure with newspaper journal and other historical accounts, it appears that the figure of 300 voters applies to all of the Mormon voters in the county and not just Mormontown. This would mean that the Mormons living in the Mormon and non-Mormon communities of Pleasant Vale, Mormontown, Pleasant Hill, Perry, Pittsfield and Griggsville totaled at least 1200 Mormons. Joseph Smith Jr. *An American Prophets Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*. Ed. Scott H. Faulring. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989) 325.

¹⁰ Sangamo Journal, (Springfield, Illinois) January 19, 1839, 18:13:1.

¹¹ Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership. 1830-

1841" (Ph. D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981) 361.

¹² Minutes of the Adjourned Meeting of the Democratic Committee of Quincy. Smith, *HOC*, 3:275.

¹³ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church Educational System, *Church History in the Fullness of Times* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989) 89. Bruce R. McConkie *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd. ed., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979,) 305-307.

¹⁴ Esaias Edwards, "Autobiography (1811-1847)," Typescript BYU-S, (Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah). <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/EEwards.html> ;INTERNET. Smith, *HOC*, 3:295, 298.

¹⁵ Smith, *HOC*, 3:203-204.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:260-261.

¹⁷ Smith, *HOC*, 3:260-261.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*,3:283

¹⁹ An account by Hyrum Smith of their escape from Missouri officials. *Ibid.*, 3:321 notes.

²⁰ Pearson H. Corbett *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 223. Lyndon W. Cook "Isaac Galland - Mormon Benefactor" *BYU Studies*, spring 1979 19:271. Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* indicates that the Iowa purchases were made prior to May 4, 1839 (3:345). The deed records of Lee county Iowa however list the transactions as occurring on May 29 and June 26. In either case the Iowa land was bought several days after the future sight of Nauvoo, which until its purchase was never seriously considered.

²¹ Thomas Ford *A History of Illinois From its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* reprint annotated by Rodney O. Davis (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), n.264-265. The "Half-Breed Tract" was a section of land between the Des Moines and Mississippi rivers granted by congress to the children of Caucasian fathers and Native-American mothers in a treaty with the Sac and Fox indians in 1824.

²² Smith, *HOC*, 3:375.

²³ Flanders, 45, 45 n.

²⁴ Smith *HOC*, 4:109. Minutes of the General Conference of the Church at Nauvoo on April 6-8, 1840.

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- ²⁵ David E. Miller, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974) 71. Flanders, 47.
- ²⁶ Smith *HOC*, 4:215-214.
- ²⁷ Smith, *HOC* 4:205.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:233, 236, 4:205.
- ²⁹ Smith, *HOC*, 3:301
- ³⁰ Edwards, 20.
- ³¹ Letter of Joseph Smith to Horace R. Hotchkiss Esqr. Nauvoo August 25, 1841. Located at the Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts *Joseph Smith* folder. Reprint available in Smith *HOC.*, 4:406-407.
- ³² Smith *HOC.*, 4:362.
- ³³ Smith "Letter to Hotchkiss".
- ³⁴ Flanders, 49-50.
- ³⁵ Smith *HOC.*, 4:478-479. "Minutes of a meeting of the Twelve in the House of the Prophet." From the Journal of Wilford Woodruff.
- ³⁶ Chapman & Co.. *History of Pike County Illinois . . . Biographies of Representative, Citizens.* (Chicago: C. C. Chapman, 1880), 239.
- ³⁷ Flanders, 140.
- ³⁸ Letter from Brigham Young to Reuben Hedlock, Church Immigration agent in England, May 3, 1844, Reprinted in, Smith,*HOC.* 6:353.
- ³⁹ Kenneth W. Godfrey "Some Thoughts Regarding an Unwritten History of Nauvoo" *BYU Studies* Summer (1975), 420.
- ⁴⁰ Flanders, 117.
- ⁴¹ *IBID.*, 227-228
- ⁴² John Mack Faragher *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 1986), 67-70.
- ⁴³ Smith *HOC* 4:482.
- ⁴⁴ Flanders, 183-185.

⁴⁵ Joseph Holbrook, *The Life of Joseph Holbrook: Written by His Own Hand* photocopy of typescript found in Western Illinois University Special Collections, unaccessioned materials "Novouiana". (Also available at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JHolbrook.html>).

⁴⁶ Hamilton, 54. Smith *HOC*, 4:470.

⁴⁷ Letter of Joseph Smith to Horace R. Hotchkiss Esqr. Nauvoo August 25, 1841. Located at the Illinois State Historical Library, manuscripts *Joseph Smith* folder. Reprint available in Smith *HOC.*, 4:406-407. *Ibid.*, 4:460.

⁴⁸ Smith *HOC.*, 4:471.

⁴⁹ There are many spellings for Shokokon. I chose to use Shokokon because it seems to be the most common spelling on maps, county histories and other records from the time and is the current spelling on modern maps. However, it appears in *Illinois Place Names* as Shokoken and many Mormon sources spell it as Shokoquon. The site of Shokokon lies between the current town of Carman and the Shokokon Slough of the Mississippi River.

⁵⁰ Faulring p. 301. Smith journal

⁵¹ Sutton, Robert P. *Rivers, Railways, and Roads: A History of Henderson County*, Raritan, Illinois: Henderson County Historical Society 1988, 84.

⁵² *History of Henderson County* H. H Hill And Company: Chicago, 1882, p. 37.

⁵³ Timothy R. Mahoney *River Towns in the Great West: The Structure of Provincial Urbanization in the American Midwest, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 122-125. also see map in *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁴ Mahoney, 228.

⁵⁵ "An Epistle of the Twelve: To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" reprinted in *HOC*, 7:280.

⁵⁶ Mahoney, 128-131.

⁵⁷ June Moon "*Mulrum in Parvo*" "*Much in Little*" *A History of Colchester Illinois* (Colchester, Illinois" The Colchester Chronicle, 1956), 14. "Died in Iowa" *Macomb Daily Journal* (Macomb, Illinois) 12 May

1900, 3. Schuyler County Clerk's Office "Map of Road through McDonough County to the Iowa Rapids
1834" Illinois Regional Archives Depository found in Schuyler County Clerk's Subject Files.