

Chapter 1

THE PEOPLE AND POWER OF NAUVOO

The experience of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo can not be understood nor appreciated without considering events that preceded their occupation of a prominent peninsula that penetrated the Mississippi. Events that transpired in New York, Ohio, Missouri, Washington, D.C. and other locations contributed to forces that governed the decisions and actions of the Nauvoo Saints. Who were these people? Why did they settle in Nauvoo? Why did they establish a distinct political, economic, and social structure in Nauvoo? And what was the relationship between these people, their leader and an unusual book? Answers to these questions are vital for an understanding of the Nauvoo experience of the Latter-day Saints.

Latter-day Saints who gathered in Nauvoo had experienced greater persecution than any other religious group in American history. Violence periodically erupted in early America when old settlers feared that their traditional way of life was being threatened. Indians, abolitionists, Catholics and many others felt the intolerant hand of oppression during the 1830s and 1840s. But no organized religious group in this nation endured the oppression experienced by early Latter-day Saints. Like others, members of this faith experienced verbal abuse and threats by mobs before and immediately after the restored church was organized and two lead-