

R. Jean Addams. *Upon the Temple Lot: The Church of Christ's Quest to Build the House of the Lord*. (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010, v + 167 pp., photographs, maps, notes, index, \$14.95., paperback.)

Reviewed by H. Michael Marquardt

Published in *Mormon Historical Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2011):179-81.

This important book on the effort to build the temple in Independence, Missouri, by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) is a welcome work on the history relating to the progress and circumstances toward this project. The author, R. Jean Addams has devoted many years in gathering hard to find sources in understanding the history behind this attempt.

The “spot for the temple” in Zion was designated by Joseph Smith in 1831 (see D&C 57). The author provides a brief history of emergence of what became the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), which is nicely presented (7–17). Some members had been associated with the original Church as early as 1831–1833. After a few families gathered to Independence in 1867, they commenced purchasing city lots where they anticipated the temple was to be located.

George D. Cole, who had been baptized in April 1870, said he received a dream or vision regarding the location where the temple would to be built. Addams indicates that the vision included the construction of the temple, which is incorrect (18, 46). A court case, known as the Temple Lot Case, is discussed between the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) during the 1890s. The outcome was in favor of the latter group.

After the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) firmly gained possession of the property, it was only a matter of time before an attempt was undertaken to build the Independence Temple of Zion. An apostle in the church, Otto Fetting, proclaimed that he had been given instructions concerning its construction. The messages were accepted, including the dimension of the structure, which would be 90 feet by 180 feet. Plans were produced on how the exterior and interior of the temple would appear when completed. During the years 1929–1934 the ground was excavated and a foundation was prepared upon which the temple would be constructed. However, no further progress beyond this point was ever completed.

One interesting idea regarding the temple basement, not mentioned in the book, was that of church member Willard J. Smith, who explained the original concept:

In closing I may also observe that in the basement of the Temple now in process of building by the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), there is to be a baptismal font placed on the backs of Twelve oxen, the oxen to be bronzed, or overlaid with gold; three of the oxen facing the east, three to the south, three to the west, and three to the north, beautifully symbolizing the great Apostolic commission to Go into all the world preaching to and baptizing the nations. 1

Construction on the temple came to a halt due to lack of funding; thereafter “the excavation site continued to deteriorate and became overgrown with weeds and, apparently, an eyesore and potential safety hazard to the citizens of Independence” (155). Because of this problem, in 1946 the site was filled in. Since then the site for the temple has been beautified and a portion of the land includes a church building (the third constructed on the site) with a worship

area for the local congregation and a visitors' center. Visitors are shown the two stones excavated in 1929 which church members believe were placed to mark the location for the temple. In more recent years, Church of Christ (Temple Lot) leaders and members have shifted their emphasis from building the temple to proclaiming the latter-day gospel.

For those interested in the history of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) centered in Independence, Missouri, I recommend this book.

Notes

¹ Willard J. Smith, "The Pattern of Heavenly Things," *Zion's Advocate* 7 (November 1, 1930):174.