

# *Small Historic Towns across America*

As presented by Mr. Stadt's online Freedom Project Education U.S. History classes in the Fall and Winter of 2014. You can learn more about our classes by visiting us at [www.fpeusa.org](http://www.fpeusa.org)

## **Brief History of Nauvoo, Illinois.**

Nauvoo is located near the horseshoe bend of the Mississippi River. It was originally a small, swampy trading town called Commerce. In 1839, Joseph Smith and his followers, the Mormons, settled here and began building up a city they called Nauvoo, being Hebrew for "Beautiful Place". In three years, the Mormons had turned the swamp into one of the largest cities in Illinois and tenth largest in the United States. Nauvoo was famous for its many shops, beautiful houses, and the Temple on a bluff overlooking the river. But in 1844, religious persecution grew. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were assassinated in the city of Carthage. The Mormons were forced to evacuate.



In 1849 a frenchman named Etienne Cabet and his friends bought a portion of Nauvoo and began to experiment with wine making. They discovered that the fertile ground was ideal for cultivating grapes and the industry grew rapidly.

In 1999, the President of the Mormon church, Gordon B. Hinckley, announced the rebuilding of the Nauvoo temple which was burned soon after the Mormons left. The Main portion of the city, also called the Flats, tells the story of those who left. The shops and some of the old historic homes are open to the public.

## **Location and Driving directions from closest major U.S. airport(s)**

The closest airport to Nauvoo is the St. Louis airport, about three hours away. To get to Nauvoo from the airport, take I-64 towards Springfield IL. Take exit 4 on the left to merge onto I-172 N toward Quincy. Take exit 19, then turn left onto US-24 W. Then turn right onto IL-96 N. Stay on IL-96 N then turn left onto Keokuk St. Slight right onto IL-96N/N Co Rd 0. Continue to follow IL-96 N. Turn left onto N Wells St and your destination will be on your right.



## Who was President when this town was founded? And what was the political

Martin Van Buren was the President at the time Nauvoo was founded. During that period of time, America was pulling through a depression following the Panic of 1837. The depression was forcing banks out of business and making employment scarce. Martin Van Buren was a Democrat from New York.



In 1839 there were only 26 states in the U.S. This is the official flag.

## Oldest businesses/largest businesses today

The oldest business in Nauvoo today is Baxter's Vineyards and Winery. It is now being run by the fifth generation of the same family who started it in 1857. It is also the oldest Winery in Illinois.



*Baxter's Vineyards and Winery*

## City government

The Nauvoo government consists of a Mayor, six aldermen, and a city treasurer. The mayor and aldermen are elected to serve a two year term.

## Historic attractions in the area. Festivals and Events

Historic Nauvoo has over 40 historic sites from the 1840 time period. The Visitor's Center is a good place to start your tour. You can get information and maps. You can then tour the many shops, old homes, and farms. There is a handcart trek, ox or horse cart rides, some games from the time period, and several shows, including the Nauvoo pageant and A Rendezvous in Old Nauvoo, both well worth seeing. Before the showing of the Nauvoo Pageant, there is a festival with games, dancing, and races.

Some annual events are The Eagle days, Mormon Exodus Re-enactment, Nauvoo Memorial day picnic, Baxter's Vineyards wine making contest, 4th of July fireworks, and the annual Nauvoo grape festival.

## Where can we stay if we visit Nauvoo?

If you are looking for a hotel, then there are a few options. There is the Nauvoo Family Inn and Suites, or you may prefer the Woodruff Hotel, a landmark located directly across the street from the stunning Nauvoo temple. It is also near all the specialty shops, art galleries, restaurants, antique stores and the Nauvoo Pageant. If you are more interested in camping, Nauvoo has several camping grounds with rustic log cabins and space for tents



## Why I would want to visit this historic small town

I'd like to visit Nauvoo again because there are so many great things to see and to do. I love touring the old city and having a glimpse into the lives of those who once lived here. Some of my ancestors were among these people and I feel closer to them every time I come here. I love watching the shows, doing the handcart trek, playing the games and just taking everything in. To the right is a picture of me and my friends on the steps of the Nauvoo temple.



## Links you may wish to visit

[www.nauvoochamber.org](http://www.nauvoochamber.org)

[www.historicnauvoo.net](http://www.historicnauvoo.net)

[www.beautifulnauvoo.com](http://www.beautifulnauvoo.com)

[www.lds.org/locations/nauvoo-visitors-center](http://www.lds.org/locations/nauvoo-visitors-center)

