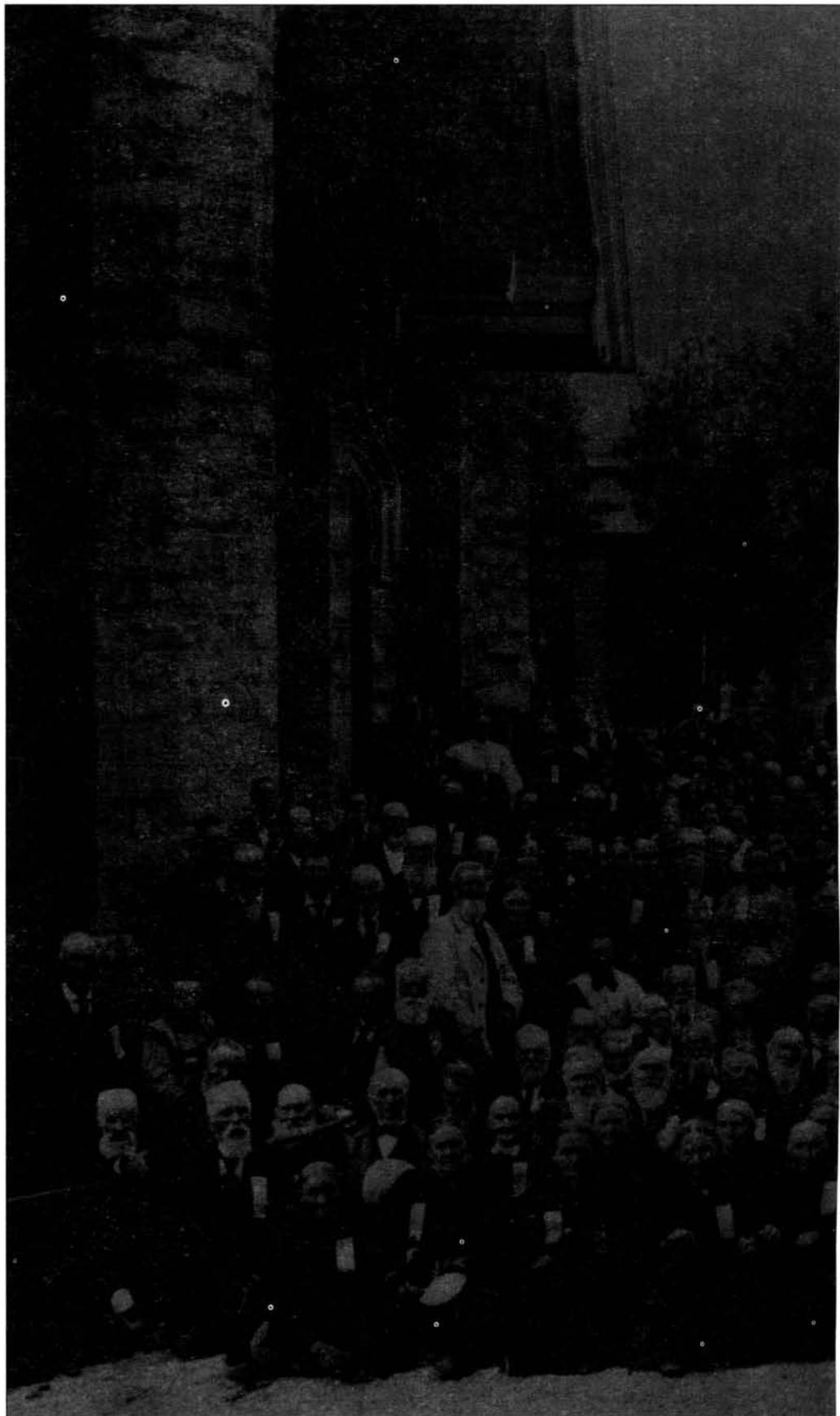
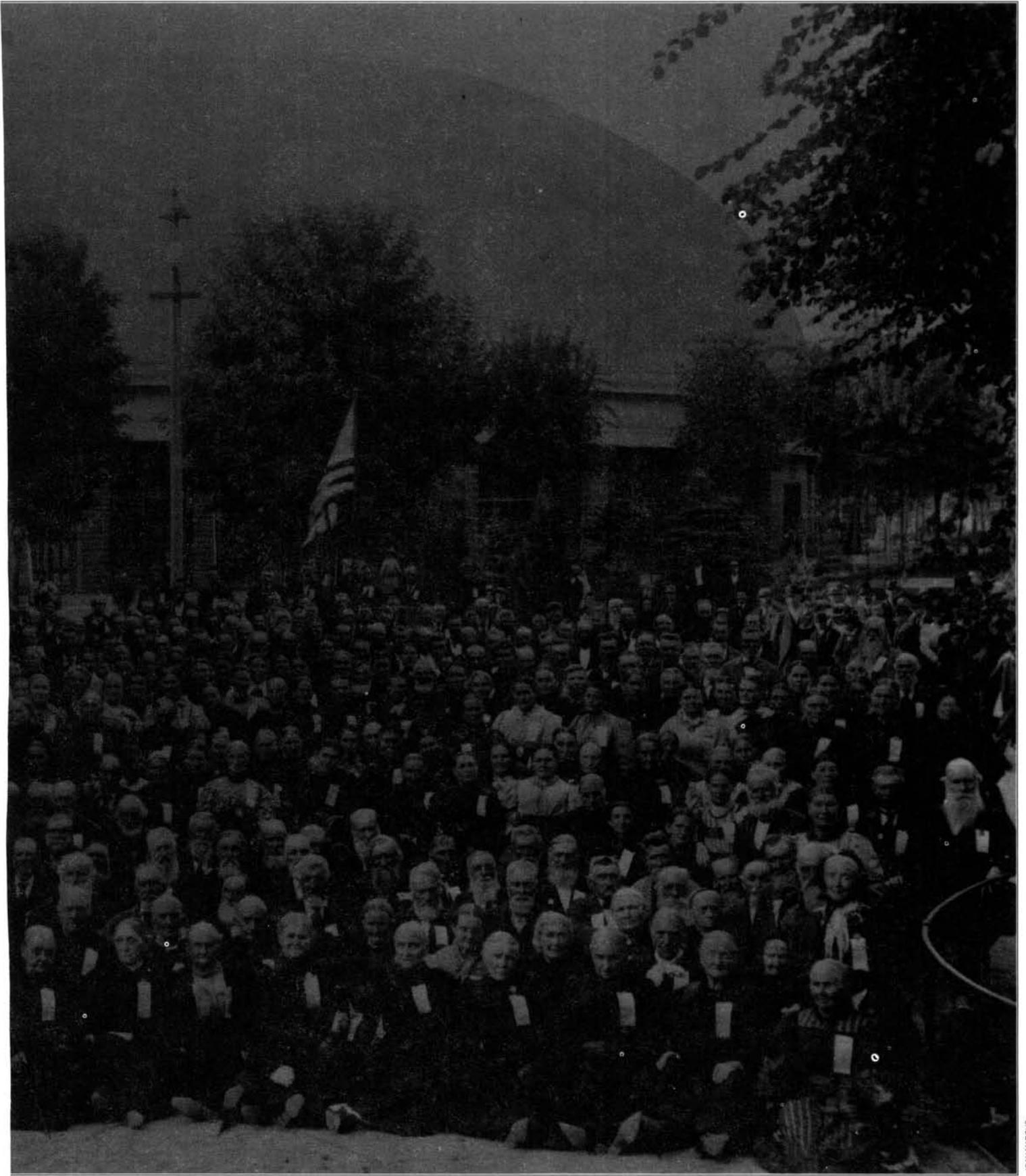


THE SILVER PLATES

***D**uring the Pioneer Jubilee held 20–24 July 1897, those still alive from the nearly two thousand pioneers who arrived in the Salt Lake Valley the first year gathered on Temple Square for a class of '47 reunion.* 





JOAN MARCUS



A MATTER OF SACRIFICE

When we scaled a Mayan-carved cliff
 in some long-forgotten canyon,
 our stalagmite ascent was fortified
 by flies and streamed with sweat.
 I wondered what lured men and women
 to these labs (for I was but a pack mule).
 Buoyed by brushes and surgeon-like
 trowels, they unearthed more
 than jaguar-headed architecture.
 Beneath the bowels of dirt and dust
 were relics of children, skewered
 by shards on stucco-laden floors.
 I was repulsed like any Western wife
 to the blood-letting waterfalls
 of the high priests. They vivisected
 their victims with obsidian knives;
 offering their beating hearts to the gods.
 But I was assured by archaeologists,
 inured to injustice, that the holy men
 deciphered their screams and tears
 as a sign for a healthy, rainy season.

And in the night, when the rains
 gave birth to a nation of gnats,
 scientists paid no heed, so rapt
 were they, to make the stones speak.

—MIKE CATALANO



BURDEN

What shall I do with all these?
 The spring-bright eves, the smile-thin
 light from stars, the oneiric moon?
 Every nailed moment
 makes me bleed. I gasp for breath,
 and am woken to the whiteness of bones.
 No sign of wound. Yet an uneasy
 fear scallops my loosening skin.
 Whom shall I show this burden?
 My six-year-old son, Ritwik, sleeps
 beside his mother. The quietude
 teasing, straggling on the fence
 of my bones. He would not sleep
 that way any more. And his broken
 toys would slip into petty history.
 Is this burden a silent part
 of my waking to myself?
 A tendril, winding around me, like silence?
 Perhaps, the wings of a bird,
 the crazy eyes of a crafty eagle,
 the dark shade of a shore
 of a whirling, reiterating moment,
 make me believe that there's no burden.
 And this is perhaps the gap, the burden!

—NIRANJAN MOHANTY