

HIGH PRIEST MEETING

March 20, 1977

Heber Jones-----Historical remarks dealing with the building
of the St. George Temple.

Sister Doris Webb-----Her group, the Melody Moms will sing, "The
Temple Song," written by Sister Eva Miles
a member of this group.

Brother Sam Schmutz-----The son of Ray and Mary Lou Schmutz and
recently returned missionary will talk to us
about the Temple and its effects on the lives
of those who use it.

A special choral reading---"Where Love Is," written and presented by
Ruth Esplin assisted by Mary Grace Houston and
accompanied by Doris Webb playing the organ and
Elma Ann Snow at the piano and the following
singers: Arlene Huber, Dorothy Ruesch, Shirley
Seegmiller, Judi Pall, Veris Barlow, and Lois
Thomas will be our closing number.

Closing prayer-----Joseph E. Olsen Sr.

We want to invite you all to go into the cultural hall immediately
after this meeting and see some of the artifacts of the Temple collected
and displayed by Brother Leon Jennings.

We want to thank everyone for their participation on this program.

THE ST. GEORGE TEMPLE

The completion of the St. George Temple along with the death of Brigham Young essentially ends the Mormon pioneer story. The social, religious, and economic attributes that mark and identify Mormon society everywhere were for the most part complete.

There were two serious unresolved questions--would the nation accept polygamy or would Mormon society adhere to the demands of the nation? Who would govern in Utah--a free people voting their convictions or the Mormon priesthood? These questions were not to be resolved for more than a decade.

It had been a long difficult struggle, a time of experiment and change. There were persecutions, privations, pestilence, and pain, but success could be seen and felt as the unified and happy crowd gathered in St. George on that April day in 1877, to witness the final dedication of their new, gleaming white temple.

The year 1877 was both a beginning and an end for the people of St. George, and Mormons generally. On January 1 of that year, the lower part of the St. George Temple was dedicated, and the first ordinance work for the dead was performed on January 9.

On March 23rd of that year, and 30 miles to the north at the Mountain Meadows, John D. Lee was executed for the part he had played in the tragedy that occurred there 20 years earlier. This ritual marked the close of an era.

Why a temple in St. George in the 1870's? There were only about 1200 people in the area. They were already engaged in building a new courthouse and a large beautiful tabernacle, why in addition a temple? There are the obvious reasons associated with Church Doctrine concerning baptisms, endowments, and marriage, but why 1871? The answer seems to lie with circumstance.

Brigham Young was getting old. He wanted to see a temple established in the West in his lifetime. His ambitions had been frustrated in Salt Lake City by meddling Federal authorities. No significant work had been done on the Salt Lake Temple in seven years. President Young had been in and out of court or jail on several occasions and other charges were pending. He had visited St. George and knew that the people were restless and needed something to unify and sustain them when the Tabernacle was completed. It was a difficult mission in Dixie and some wanted to leave. He also knew that some of his most trusted, experienced and loyal followers were here. The place was relatively isolated and would be free from government and gentile interference. Skills, labor and materials were available. The people needed subsistence to see them through the pioneer period. The Cotton Factory was in trouble, and the natural scourges of flood, famine, and Indian fighting were competing with the sun as excuses the weak could use to question their call and go elsewhere.

Brigham Young wanted his empire to be self-sufficient and St. George was a key location for travel, supply, and defense. The colony had to be maintained.

President Young was pushing the United Order and the building of temples suited his plans for the success of this doctrine.

From two to three hundred persons were employed on temple projects continually during the United Order period, and many of the United Order projects were geared toward temple construction in Salt Lake City, St. George, Logan, and Manti. However, the Church-wide campaign to organize United Orders was abandoned after Brigham Young's death in 1877.

History and time had already tested the men and women who built the St. George Temple long before they started that project. Some had been with Joseph Smith in 1833 when the Kirtland Temple project was begun. It took revelations of Joseph Smith, about \$40,000, the labor and brains of about 1500 people, and two and one-half years to complete. It was small in relation to the St. George project and had an entirely different architecture. It was started as a school house and did indeed serve that purpose. It was 80 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 50 feet high to the square with a tower of 110 feet. It had two main halls, 55 x 65 feet each. It was completed March 27, 1836. The lower halls were used for religious purposes and the upper rooms were used for school. Between 130-140 students attended and studied mathematics, geography, English grammar, reading and writing. The School of the Prophets was also held here--both religious and secular subjects were studied. The building was a public works project, and was financed largely by the Law of Consecration.

In Nauvoo the Law of Consecration underwent a change to the United Order. The Church took on a national outlook--international to some extent. It adopted a nation building posture and launched a successful foreign missionary program that brought in thousands of converts with skills and labor who needed employment. The leadership wanted self-sufficiency and took on an exclusive nature. With abounding self-confidence they

organized the Nauvoo Legion which was virtually a private army legalized by state authority. Nauvoo was to be the "workshop of the Middle West." A concentration of shops and "factories" in the city proper was to be surrounded by a wide expanse of agricultural land for food. Those people who didn't find employment elsewhere were put to work building a temple.

Individual stewardships gave way to joint ownership of larger enterprises. Each member was to give to the Church one-tenth of all possessions and one-tenth of his annual increase. Those with no property were expected to labor one day in ten for the Church. After 1844, and the death of Joseph Smith, the temple project was kept alive to support Mormon workmen even when it was obvious that the city would be abandoned. They hoped to sell the structure for \$200,000, but it was burned.

Joseph Smith announced that he had received a revelation to construct a temple in Nauvoo on January 19, 1841. William Weeks was selected as architect and Joseph gave him detailed instruction on what to put in the plans. Joseph said he had seen the temple in a vision and continually went over the sketches until they met his specifications. The building was constructed of native limestone. A special temple committee was appointed to supervise the work. Timber and lumber were obtained from the Wisconsin Territory and floated down the Mississippi, by people called on "Timber Missions." The Relief Society raised money for glass and nails. The building was 123 feet long, 88 feet wide, and 60 feet high to the square with a tower of 157 1/2 feet. It cost about \$1,000,000. One life was lost.

The building was completed, dedicated, abandoned, and burned. It stood as a gutted landmark for several years, but most of the materials soon found their way to new buildings in the surrounding area.

The body of the building was lost, but the spirit--scattered, and subdued--was waiting in the hearts, minds, and muscles of the people in the Dixie Mission. It was awakened by an announcement in the form of a question asked in Erastus Snow's "Big House." Erastus, with a shout of "Glory Hallelujah," brought it to life. Body and spirit were about to unite. Brigham Young made it official with a letter to Erastus in April of 1871. After President Young and others had made remarks on the subject, the people voted to build on November 5, 1871. Work was to begin the next day, but the big moment waited until November 9, 1871, which was Erastus Snow's birthday. Some say the delay was due to bad weather, others claim it was Brigham Young's reward to Erastus for having started the tabernacle on his birthday some years before. In any event, the Swiss Band played, Macfarlane's Choir sang, and that ever present scribe, Charles L. Walker began to put it all in verse. The old crowd began to gather. Elijah Fordham who had spent eight months carving the wooden oxen for the Nauvoo Temple came. John Lytle, blacksmith, who had helped break up the press in Nauvoo--the act for which Joseph Smith was put in Carthage jail--was here. Henry Bigler, whose record announced to the world the circumstances under which gold was discovered in California, settled in Washington. Jesse Crosby came in with an old naval cannon from Commodore Stockton's fleet. It was soon filled with lead and converted to a pile driver. There were many others, too numerous to mention, coming in from throughout Mormon country to work on the temple.

Truman O. Angell, the architect had combined the English Norman style of Westminster Abbey with that of the abandoned Nauvoo Temple and decreed that the structure be 141 feet 8 inches long, 93 feet 4 inches wide, 84

feet to the square and 175 feet to the top of the Weather Vane on the dome. Brigham Young had picked the site and had it surveyed. As the crowd had gathered, he removed a spade of dirt from the side of the southeast stake and directed that a stone be prepared for placing a box containing sacred records directly beneath it in the foundation. He then directed that another stone be prepared to be put directly above the stake to house the records of the temple. George A. Smith, Erastus Snow, and Joseph W. Young each removed a scoop of soil from the other sides of the stake and after other dignitaries had disturbed the earth, Ellis Sanders plowed the first furrow. The foundation trenches were to be 12 feet wide and 12 feet deep. It soon became apparent that only the north side had mass and strength enough to hold the heavy walls of the structure and the other three sides would have to be drained and reinforced. Some wanted to move the site, but Brigham Young directed that the work continue and drains be established to carry off the water and the spongy trenches be filled with small volcanic rock. This was accomplished with considerable difficulty. Erastus Snow pointed out that the ground where the drains were to be built was too hard to pick and too soft to blast so the work moved rather slowly.

The Church authorities organized a St. George Temple District as they did in the case of the other Utah Temples. The purpose was to organize the labor, produce, and cash resources within the district. Stakes and wards were assigned responsibilities for construction needs. Each bishop selected a temple committee to be responsible for providing the needed assistance when notified. Appropriate industries were established--saw-mills, lime kilns, rock quarries, carpentry shops, and so forth. These industries had a dining hall, meat market, laundry, and general store.

The people who were assigned to work on the temple were called as temple missionaries.

A crew was assigned to build a road to the top of the West hill to obtain the black rock. It was soon being pounded into the soft earth, and when the old cannon bounced three times the footings were declared firm enough to hold the foundation. The foundation rocks were 10-12 feet long, 3 to 4 feet wide, and weighed two to 4 tons each. The foundation was finished February 21, 1874. The crowd gathered in the basement of the uncompleted Tabernacle and began two days of festivities which included speeches, singing, visiting, food, pies, cakes and Dixie Wine. On April first the box of records, literature, coins, and other artifacts, was placed in the southeast corner as directed by President Young. A huge stone was placed on it as a seal.

A road was made to Mt. Trumbull and a steam engine was brought in from Salt Lake City to saw the lumber under the watchful eye of Robert Gardner. Fred Blake's hauling crew then brought the lumber to the temple site. It is estimated that the temple consumed about 1,000,000 feet of lumber, most came from Mt. Trumbull, lesser amounts from Pine Valley and the Kaibab.

Red sandstone for the superstructure was brought in from the tabernacle quarry on the Red Hill where the golf course now is. By March 5, 1875, the building was up to the square. After appropriate ceremony and celebration the carpenters began the job of placing the huge joists and studding necessary to hold the ceiling and the roof. The work on the floors, stairways, and interior walls went rather rapidly. Large timbers 14 inches wide and two inches thick were crisscrossed and pinned together with wooden

pegs in order to brace the studding. By August the baptismal font was ready for dedication. It had been cast in Salt Lake City and brought in by ox team. It was necessary to bring it in pieces and assemble it here. The oxen on which it rests were made from iron produced by The Great Western Iron Mining and Manufacturing Company located in Iron County. The font was almost a duplicate of the font in the Nauvoo Temple, but made of different materials. The font was put in place under the direction of George Jarvis who was also in charge of the scaffolding.

The font section, along with other parts of the building, was dedicated and used before the building was completed. This had been true of the other temples also.

A cistern was placed north of the temple. It was filled from a ditch. A tower was built with a tank in the top. The water was pumped by a steam engine that also heated the water for the font. This system was used for 25 years. George Woodward gave \$4,000 to pipe in the water and modernize the plumbing. In 1909-10 it was hooked on to the city system.

By January 1, 1877, the basement section was completed and dedicated by Wilford Woodruff in the presence of about 2,000 people. Erastus Snow dedicated the main floor the same day, and Brigham Young, Junior dedicated the Sealing Room.

The plastering was under the direction of William Burt--The master craftsman who also did such a beautiful job on the interior of the tabernacle. While working on the temple, Burt's son John had the misfortune to fall 75 feet from the scaffold. Fortunately, he struck a brace on the way down. He was administered to immediately and removed to the "Big House" of Erastus Snow where he was examined by a physician.

They found extensive bruises, but no broken bones. He eventually returned to work.

By January 1877, the interior was ready for use. The temple was dedicated April 6, 1877. Eleven of the twelve apostles were there. It was Brigham Young's last conference. Wilford Woodruff was appointed the first temple president. There have been ten since.

The cost of the project is in dispute. Most local accounts put the figure at about \$800,000. Dr. Arrington lists it at \$450,000.

Brigham Young didn't like the tower. It was struck by lightning five years after completion. You can make what you like of that, but when it was repaired the tower was raised. It has been changed slightly since.

Over the years many changes have been made--both to the structure and the grounds. The annex was built, remodeled, and last year (1975) replaced. As you know, the entire building was renovated and modernized, and a new fence constructed in 1976.

There are many interesting things associated with the temple that we will not have time to consider here, however, I would like to mention just a few. For example, in 1886, a St. George Temple Association was organized for the purpose of placing the legal custody of the temple in the hands of local Church authorities so as to avoid possible forfeiture to the United States Government.

All was not harmony, during the construction period, among the workers or the leaders. At this time I would like to play a tape to illustrate some of these points.

First Uncle Rhone (Moroni) McArthur will tell us how the rock was split. He was born the month and year that the temple was dedicated. Then, Uncle George Miles will tell us about Brigham Young's disagreement with Erastus Snow and how Uncle George's brother, John had a fight on the walls of the temple. He will then tell us how George Jarvis put up the scaffolding and hoisted the font onto the oxen. Arthur K. Hafen will then tell us a little about how people received their pay for working on the temple.

After the recordings I will show a series of slides which will begin during the construction period and show some of the changes that have been made up to the present time.

For those of you who are interested in more detailed information on the temple, I have attached a list of available references.

This talk was given to the St. George Utah East Stake High Priests on March 20, 1977 by Heber Jones.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Nels Anderson, Desert Saints The Mormon Frontier in Utah, pp. 37, 43, 247, 296, 355.
- Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom, An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints 1830-1900, pp. 13, 17, 18, 19, 136, 221, 316-362.
- William E. Berrett, The Restored Church, pp. 125, 173-174, 212-213, 364.
- Hazel Bradshaw, editor, Under Dixie Sun, pp. 329-343.
- "Early Buildings" Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, July 1961 pp. 49-64.
- A. K. Hafen, Beneath Vermillion Cliffs, pp. 18-19, and Appendix II.
- Andrew Jensen, The Historical Record, (See time and subject--Example Nauvoo 1841-46).
- Andrew Karl Larson, Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church, pp. 453-82.
- Andrew Karl Larson, I Was Called to Dixie: The Virgin River Basin: Unique Experiences Pioneering, pp. 565-92.
- Albert E. Miller, The Immortal Pioneers, pp. 91-113.
- David E. and Della S. Miller, Nauvoo: City of Joseph, pp. 8, 38, 64, 69, 74, 48, 81, 84-86, 88-90, 98, 107-121, 125, 187, 191, 197, 204, 207, 208, 213, 214, 241.
- H. Lorenzo Reid, Dixie of The Desert, pp. 233-239.