I REMEMBER
ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS
Cupolas first became part of the Mormon landscape in 1836 when the Kirtland Temple was constructed. It was followed by the Nauvoo Temple in 1846. In Utah, the cupola concept was continued on the St. George, Manti and Logan Temples, as well as on several stake tabernacles and public buildings. After the turn of the century, new architectural forms were introduced and the cupola was abandoned. But the unique cupolas remain for us to contemplate as features in Mormon Country that were basic to the design of church and public buildings in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The craftsmen who built these structures used native wood from the canyons, seasoned and fashioned to perfection. It seems obvious that the cupolas of wood were cheaper to construct and were much lighter in weight than those of other materials, thereby eliminating the need for extra supports that stone and masonry would require.

I suppose I love these architectural gems because I have what Eric Sloane calls "a reverence for wood." I also have great respect for those craftsmen who built them. Coming from Kirtland and Nauvoo, as many of them did, I believe these artisans found fruition of their work in Utah.
AN AGE of CUPOLAS

Logan Temple

Cache Tabernacle
Logan
WEATHER VANES

The Utah settlers occasionally placed weather vanes on their barns and other structures; however, the weather vane as known among eastern farmers didn't seem to be plentiful here. Some notable exceptions still remain. They are located on church and public buildings.

For many years I have been fascinated with the weather vane on the courthouse at Panguitch. It's still there as it was many years ago when a companion and I made a foray into southern Utah to visit the canyons and southern Utah towns. Still pointing the direction of the wind, this weather vane has aged gracefully. The vane itself is a wooden figure of a fish, cleverly carved, complete with fins, eyes and mouth.

Its silver patina attests to the weathering process over many decades. Maybe at some time it was painted, but if it was, the paint is long gone. From the ground, it appears that it has been spared the indignity of shot-holes from small caliber rifles, a common plight among weather vanes. Perhaps this is because no one has dared to desecrate an ornament on the building that houses the local seat of government.

Panguitch Court House

A fish in a sea of air...
Over the hill from Panguitch, to the west, lies the town of Parowan. The old rock church there, which dates back to settlement days, also has a unique weather vane. The pointer is a sturdy arrow of iron which rotates on the central shaft. The shaft is embellished with intricately-wrought ironwork by some Mormon artisans of the period. The artistry seems somehow less conservative than one would expect for that time and place.
The weather vane atop the St. George Tabernacle has pointed the way of the wind since it was constructed in 1866.

What drew my attention to it was its unique horizontal lyre-like pointer design. The double pointed arrow may seem confusing because it points in both directions. In this case, the wind will be coming from the direction of the short end of the arrow.

Most of the remaining vanes reflect the plain and direct treatment by the builders of the temples and churches. They are represented as plain arrows for pointers. An example of this latter group is the weather vane on the St. George Temple.
Most of the weather vanes in church and public buildings in Utah were in a manner resembling a vane but were actually a plain arrow pointer that reflected in a metallic sheath the winds from the Logan Temple. There are also a few that are quite unusual in appearance and don't follow any particular pattern. They are found on the St. George Temple, the old Logan Temple in Salt Lake City, and the Spring City Chapel.
Weather vanes in earlier times helped the farmer to interpret the weather and to forecast the wind, rain and snow. Each region of Utah had its peculiarities, which today are about the same as they were years ago.

The Great Salt Lake, for example, can serve as a guide to the weather—depending on observed conditions. A northwest breeze and a clear sky across the lake often means fair weather. On the other hand, the sailor will keep a weather-eye open for conditions to the south: in the Tooele Valley. Heavy clouds there often seem to accompany sudden and violent winds which rush northward toward the lake with great fury and quickly churn the waters into four-foot whitecaps that sweep the unfortunate vessels before them.

The Uintahs, the canyons, the plateaus all respond differently to the air currents. Likewise the canyons with their temperature changes have diurnal fluctuations in wind and weather conditions. Seasonal changes, too, make the weather patterns extremely hard to predict at times. There is the old story about the changeable Utah weather—"If you don't like the weather, just wait ten minutes..."

SUMMIT TABERNACLE,
HEBER CITY