A Time for Change: Improving Salt Lake City, 1890-1925

J. Michael Hunter

Brigham Young University - Provo, mike_hunter@byu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub

Part of the History Commons

Original Publication Citation

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1410

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
FEATURES

2 The City of Zion!
   by Jennifer Weiler

11 The Making of a Great Salt Lake City
   by Boyd Matheson

17 The Never-Ending Need for Water
   by William S. Maxwell

18 A Time for Change
   Improving Salt Lake City: 1890–1925
   by J. Michael Hunter

26 Tenth Annual Utah Pioneer Symposium

DEPARTMENTS

1 President’s Message
   by Louis Pickett

25 Guest Editorial
   by Mary A. Johnson

31 Pioneer Spotlights:
The Last of Their Generation
   Frank Swallow
   Kenneth Blair
   by Phoenix Roberts

33 SUP New Members

33 Legacy Trust Fund Contributors

Published by the Sons of Utah Pioneers

PUBLISHER
Louis Pickett

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
John W. Anderson

PRESIDENT-ELECT
Kent V. Lott

EDITOR & MAGAZINE DESIGNER
Susan Lofgren

EDITORIAL STAFF
Jennifer Grindle
Dayna Shoell

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD
Dr. F. Charles Graves, Chairman
Dr. J. Elliot Cameron
Dr. Raymond E. Beckham
Richard S. Frary

WEBSITE DESIGN
Patricia Schmuhl

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
3501 East 2920 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109
(801) 488-4441

E-mail: sonsofutahpioneers@actworld.com
Website: www.sonsofutahpioneers.org

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
Salt Lake City, Utah
Subscriptions: $15.00 per year.
For reprints and back issues, please contact the SUP.

MISSION STATEMENT
The National Society of Sons of Utah Pioneers honors early and modern-day pioneers, both young and older, for their faith in God, devotion to family, loyalty to church and country, hard work, service to others, courage in adversity, personal integrity, and unyielding determination. Pioneer Magazine supports the mission of the Society.

COVER ART
© Autumn, City Creek Canyon,
by James T. Harwood, collection of Mark Peterson. All Rights Reserved.
The establishment of Salt Lake City was not typical of most city settlements. The people who founded the city in 1847 were Mormons, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They did not come as individuals, but as a well-organized, centrally directed group. This unusual founding resulted in centralized city planning that was unique in the establishment of frontier towns in the United States.

In 1847, Brigham Young and the members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles present in the valley convened within the first few days after arriving in their covered wagons. Brigham selected a ground for his home between two forks of City Creek, and designated a 40-acre site for a new temple. From that religious center, the city was laid out in a grid of 10-acre blocks with 8 lots per block. Streets measured 8 rods wide with 20-foot sidewalks along each side. Houses were to rest 20 feet back from the sidewalk. Eventually canals would run along the streets, providing water for gardens and orchards. From the pulpit, Brigham Young and other Church leaders encouraged Latter-day Saints to beautify the city by planting trees and gardens. Visitors to the city in its
From 1872 until 1889, horses and mules pulled the city’s streetcars. In 1880 an estimated 6,000 work animals left behind 60 tons of manure and 3,000 gallons of urine during a normal working day. Animal-powered transportation necessitated a large crew of street cleaners to follow in their wake. Pictured above are the Salt Lake City’s street cleaners to follow in their tracks. Picture dated 1880, by Al panorama © Utah State Historical Society, usage is non-profit, non-commercial.
When civic mindedness began in Salt Lake City in 1890, the city had no paved streets. By 1925, Salt Lake City boasted 93 miles of paved streets and 440 miles of sidewalks.

Court of Honor at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, spawned the national City Beautiful movement, an enthusiastic revival of civic design and planning. Inspired by this movement, cities throughout the nation appointed special civic art commissions—foerunners of today's planning commissions—to carry out vast self-improvement projects. The City Beautiful movement was concerned with promoting civic beauty, efficient transportation, and regional systems such as parks.

Inspired by this movement, people in various Salt Lake City neighborhoods organized improvement or betterment leagues to lobby for civic improvements such as street paving, water systems, sewers, and parks. In 1893, women from Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Provo organized the Utah Federation of Women's Clubs to promote improved urban conditions similar to those promoted by the City Beautiful movement. Similar urban reform was promoted by men through various service clubs and the Chamber of Commerce. These movements resulted in the planting of trees in parks, improved walks, and a playground for children.

In 1906, a group of Salt Lake citizens organized the Civic Improvement League (CIL). The top priority of CIL was expansion of the city's sewers and water systems and the adaptation of the new form of city government. At that time, Salt Lake City only had 138 miles of water mains and less than 60 miles of sewer lines. In 1908, CIL called for the consolidation of Salt Lake City and County governments and advocated the reorganization of city government into a commission system. Under this system, usually five commissioners develop policy, pass ordinances, and manage city departments. The chair of the commission is designated as mayor, but the mayor has no more authority than the other members. This form of government was finally approved in 1911.

In 1913, Salt Lake City organized the Civic Planning and Art Commission. While the mayor served as chair, the commission was made up of prominent citizens, representatives of women's organizations, business people, artists, and architects. The commission plunged into various civic improvement projects, and in 1914 improvement statistics jumped greatly over previous years. From the turn of the century to 1913, the city laid less than 10 miles of water mains...
In December 1909, a group of women and men met at the home of Corinne and Clarence Allen to organize the Park and Playgrounds Association. By 1910 the city established its first playground for children and in the years following established playground improvements in Liberty and Pioneer parks (pictured below). By 1920, Salt Lake City had 13 public parks and an extensive year-round recreation program.

Early Pioneer Mills

By Mary A. Johnson
President of DUP

With the water shortage of the past year, we can understand more fully the problems the pioneers confronted as they tried to establish communities throughout the Salt Lake Valley and other western regions. Water is necessary for survival, and getting the water to particular areas was a problem for these early settlers.

Harnessing the water was another problem. I grew up in Virgin Valley, Nevada, where water was a scarce commodity, except during summer floods. When the snowpack in Southern Utah melted, the water would rush down the canyons, felling trees and dragging other debris. The current was forceful enough to break the dams that residents had built to harness water for irrigation. Citizens in my community and others like it then had to place new dams and repair irrigation ditches.

While we were in the British Isles on the DUP tour in September, the tour guides pointed out the terrible drought England was suffering, which was made more devastating because British farmers depend almost entirely on rainfall or dew for their moisture. The tour guides wished England had an irrigation system like we have in the Western U.S.

In the early days, water in Utah’s ditches and canals also turned the waterwheels that provided power for the mills, the lifeline for the production of food and building materials for the pioneers. The settlers built flour mills, lumber mills, woolen mills, sorghum mills, sugar mills, and so on. In a few instances, experienced millers who had previously operated mills in Nauvoo were able to bring a small amount of machinery west. Such was the case for the builders of the first mills in Utah, Charles Crisman, Archibald Gardner, John Neff, and Isaac Chase. Each of these men brought a wagon full of mill iron in 1847, and each put up a mill.

Since the irrigation system was so important, these builders had to find mill sites that would not interfere with irrigation. The mouth of City Creek Canyon was the location for the first grist mill in the Territory, built by Charles Crisman. Called a “chopping mill,” it produced rough meal. Archibald Gardner, with his brother, Robert, built a mill near Warm Springs. The mill was built using “wooden pins and mortices” rather than nails. But the water did not flow swiftly enough to power the mill, so in 1849 the brothers moved it to Mill Creek. John Neff built the third mill, the first “white flour” mill in Utah. Isaac Chase built the fourth mill in the territory, a grist mill.

The Chase mill is perhaps the most famous of these early mills and has been upgraded over the years to preserve it and keep it functional. In 1933, after a seven-year effort by the Daughters of Utah Pioneers to secure caretaking rights to the mill, the Salt Lake City Council leased it to the group for $1 dollar per annum. The mill is standing in Liberty Park and visitors can tour it. DUP is no longer affiliated with the mill, but we are grateful that it is preserved and being shown.

While these early mills were primitive, they were the stepping stones for the greater ones to come and played an essential role in the survival of the early pioneers. We, too, may lay the stepping stones for something greater to come, but we must remember that, like the early mills, we are an important, integral part of the fabric of our time. We, too, can look to the future for bigger and better things because of the stepping stones we are laying.

Notes
1 Chase Mill and Pioneer Mills and Milling, pamphlet compiled by Daughters of Utah Pioneers.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 47.

Bibliography
Biographical Record of Salt Lake City and Vicinity. Chicago: National Historical Record Co., 1902.
Salt Lake City Engineering Department. Annual Report of the City Engineer. 1907–1920. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.