The Geographical Landscape of Tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region

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The Geographical Landscape of Tabernacles in The Mormon Culture Region

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by
Crystal Wride Jenson
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This thesis, by Crystal Wride Jenson, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Geography of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

One of the major cultural regions recognized by geographers is the Mormon Culture Region centered on Salt Lake City. This region is a unique area where the cultural manifestations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are found on the visual landscape. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is also referred to as the Mormon Church). Several human landscape features of the region have been described and discussed by geographers. Topics such as the distribution of LDS (abbreviation for Latter-day Saints) Temples, the layout of Mormon cities, and the use of adobe as the major building material in the early Mormon settlements have been addressed. A subject that has not been explored by geographers is the study of Mormon tabernacles, which were one of the earliest landscape features to appear in the Mormon Culture Region. These buildings were large, rectangular assembly halls used for religious and community gatherings but not intended for classroom instruction. Indicative of the original settlement process and initial goals of the Church, tabernacles were an important element of the early Mormon
landscape. With continued Church growth, change in Church organization, and technological advancement, tabernacles have become relic features on the landscape.

**Questions to be Answered**

This thesis will attempt to clearly define what constitutes a "tabernacle", and explain the original impetus for building tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region. The study will examine the purpose of tabernacles in the early Mormon settlements, interpret why tabernacles were built in particular communities and portray how the use and importance of these structures has changed over time. The thesis will also describe why tabernacles are no longer built, distinguish which ones are remaining, and describe their present condition. Most importantly, the thesis will look at the change in importance and use of tabernacles as a result of the changes the Church has experienced as it has expanded into a world-wide religion.

The answers to these questions provide evidence concerning the kind of people the early Mormon settlers were, as well as give an indication of what kind of people continue to inhabit the Mormon Cultural Region. By looking at the tabernacles, many of the ideals and goals of the early colonizers are better understood.

The significance of this topic is timely as some of the tabernacles are threatened with destruction because of high
maintenance costs and limited utility. This work will fill a research gap, and provide a foundation for other geographers to build upon.

**Location and Extent of the Area**

The area of study is based on D.W. Meinig's research concerning the Mormons as a distinctive American subculture. He identifies a region as distinct to the Mormon religion because the basic ideals of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have long established their mark upon the life and landscape of this particular area. Meinig explains that the region's boundaries are set not only by numerical frequency of members, but also by the cultural manifestations in the landscape. Examples of traits that make this region a distinct subculture include: wide streets, irrigation ditches, adobe buildings, and hay derricks. While some of these elements may be found in regions outside of the Mormon Culture Region, these traits are found consistently in Mormon communities throughout the region.

Meinig identifies the domain of the Mormon Culture Region as the area in which the Mormon culture is dominant (Meinig 1965, 191-220). The domain of the region is the area chosen for this work because of the preponderance of tabernacles found throughout the region. The domain of the Mormon Culture Region includes all the areas of contiguous
The Domain of The Mormon Culture Region

Figure 1. Domain of the Mormon Culture Region as defined by D. W. Meinig.
colonization in which the Mormon settlers became and remained dominant. The region covers most of Utah, Southeastern Idaho, the extreme western portion of Wyoming and a small southeastern portion of Nevada (Figure 1).

Methods and Procedures

The research process began by conducting a literature search for work previously done on tabernacles. The findings suggested that very little has been done. The second step involved obtaining all information in the Church Historic Sites File concerning individual tabernacles, as well as consulting the Church archives for pictures and other relevant information. The next step was consulting State Historical Societies whose county histories were a valuable source of information. Library material, including Church histories, Church statistical data, books, periodicals and newspapers have been valuable sources as well.

Field work involved personal on-site analysis of the remaining tabernacles within the region. By doing this many important findings were obtained. Architectural styles were classified, as well as location within the community and present use. Visiting the tabernacles also provided the opportunity to talk with a few of the local people concerning how they feel about the structures today.
The data compiled from the above sources are the basis for the study of tabernacles within the defined region. An analysis of these sources provide the criteria for justification of the hypotheses.

Organization of the Thesis

This work follows a chronological organization of events influencing the building and function of tabernacles. Following the introduction, chapter two outlines the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. Chapter three gives a historical background of LDS buildings and defines what a tabernacle is. Chapter four identifies the major factors contributing to the diminishing use of tabernacles. Looking at tabernacles built between 1852 and 1877, chapter five illustrates the characteristics and traits these early structures shared. Chapter six looks at the changes the Church experienced as the end of isolation from the rest of the United States approached, and discusses how tabernacles built from 1878 to 1900 were affected by these transformations. With the end of isolation by the turn of the century, architectural styles in the Mormon Culture Region were greatly affected. Chapter seven describes the architectural styles and function of tabernacles built from 1901 to 1920. Chapter eight discusses the diminishing number of tabernacles built between 1921 and 1956, emphasizing the influence of the
Church building program and other changes in Church organization. The tabernacles of this era were greatly affected by the growth of the Church outside of the Mormon Culture Region. Chapter nine is a case study of the Wellsville Ward Tabernacle. Over ten years ago, this building was sold by the Church to the city. Now the city is unable to maintain the structure. This chapter identifies the major cost of maintaining old tabernacles. Lastly, the conclusion ties together all elements of the study, providing a summary of the findings.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The theoretical framework for the thesis is based upon the concept of "reading the landscape" discussed by several geographers including Peirce F. Lewis, J.B. Jackson and David Lowenthal. Reading the landscape involves much more than looking and describing. It is more than a sentimental attachment to place. Reading the landscape tells a story. It identifies culture, values, and demonstrates the ongoing process of change. Reading the landscape can illustrate how people deal with change. J.B. Jackson put it this way:

"Landscape is a reflection of the society which first brought it into being and continues to inhabit it" (Jackson 1952, 5).

Seven Axioms for Reading the Landscape

Pierce Lewis outlines seven axioms that can serve as guides in reading landscapes. He calls them axioms because they are basic and self-evident ideals that underlie reading the cultural landscape. They are:

1. The Axiom of Landscape as Clue to Culture
2. The Axiom of Cultural Unity and Landscape Equality
3. The Axiom of Common Things
4. The Historic Axiom
5. The Geographic (or Ecologic) Axiom
6. The Axiom of Environmental Control
7. The Axiom of Landscape Obscurity

These seven guides are helpful in understanding or reading the landscape created by humans. Geographers call such landscapes, "cultural landscapes". Lewis expands his "axioms" with several points that are important in understanding the ideas discussed throughout this thesis.

The first axiom of landscape as a clue to culture means that man-made landscapes provide strong evidence about who the people that created them are, were, and are becoming (Lewis 1979, 15). Along with the first axiom, Lewis outlines several corollaries tied to the main idea of landscape as a clue to culture. Three of these corollaries are very important to this work on Mormon Tabernacles.

The corollary of cultural change suggests that when there is a major change in the look of the cultural landscape, it is also likely a change in the culture occurred. The corollary of convergence means that the degree to which two areas become more alike results from different cultures converging. The corollary of diffusion implies that the look of landscape often changes because people see what is happening elsewhere and imitate it (Lewis 1979, 15-16).

The second axiom (cultural unity and landscape equality) suggests that all items in the human landscape are important and tell about the culture in some way. This
means that culture as a whole can be revealed by different features in the landscape. Nearly all elements in the human landscape reflect culture in some way (Lewis 1979, 18).

The axiom of common things means that common landscapes, though often over looked or ignored, are important in understanding culture. It is not hard to find information regarding famous buildings or symbolic structures, but it is hard to find books on such things as billboards, mobile homes or drive-in theaters. Yet these common elements of the landscape give important insight to different cultures and people (Lewis 1979, 19).

Lewis describes the historic axiom by suggesting that in order to understand human landscapes, we must try to understand the people who built them within their cultural context. A large part of the human landscape was built in the past by people with different tastes, habits, technology, wealth and ambitions than those common today. To them, these objects adequately met their needs; whereas today, these structures may seem inefficient and impractical (Lewis 1979, 22).

An important corollary to this axiom is the mechanical or technological corollary. Lewis points out that unless we know about the technology behind the landscape feature, we will not discover much about the feature itself (Lewis 1979, 23).
The geographic (or ecologic) axiom means that we must study a landscape element within its geographical context. To study a building outside of its surroundings, tells very little about the culture that built it (Lewis 1979, 24).

The axiom of environmental control suggest that most cultural landscapes are closely tied to the physical environment in which they are created. Thus, it is essential for the landscape reader to have some basic knowledge about the climate, landforms and soils where human landscapes are being studied (Lewis 1979, 25).

The axiom of landscape obscurity implies that although most items on the landscape convey all kinds of messages, they often do not convey those messages in a clear manner. Lewis suggests that the reader of human landscapes begin by asking questions such as: "What does it look like? How does it work? Who designed it? Why? When? What does it tell us about the way our society works?" By looking beyond the feature in front of us and asking questions, a greater understanding about the culture who created it can be achieved.

**Summary**

Analyzing the landscape according to Peirce Lewis's seven axioms, provides the basis for gaining a greater understanding of the landscape feature of Mormon tabernacles. This framework provides a model that will be
referred to throughout the text. Though all the axioms will be used in analyzing tabernacles as a landscape feature, the major axioms brought out in the text, include: the axiom of landscape as clue to culture, the axiom of cultural unity and landscape equality, and the geographic axiom. These particular axioms will help to illustrate that although unique in style, setting, and individual history, together the tabernacles provide insight on the distinctive characteristics of the Mormon people.
CHAPTER III

BUILDINGS OF THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Introduction

The significance of different types of LDS buildings is important in understanding the building patterns that have evolved since the Church was first organized. The axiom of cultural unity and landscape equality indicates that all elements in the landscape are important. The changing use and importance of tabernacles over the years correlates with the building patterns of other Church structures. Temples, tabernacles and meetinghouses have filled and continue to fill an important role, in enabling the goals of the Church to be realized.

Temples

Temples are considered very sacred houses of worship by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Temples are beautiful, large, monumental structures where important ordinances are preformed for both the living and for those who have died. Within the walls of the temples, important goals of the Church are being accomplished. Only those
Church members who have been recommended worthy by the local ward and stake leaders can enter the temples.

Because of the importance the members of the Church have always placed on temples, the Mormons have often been called a temple building people. Temples were the first types of buildings that the early Saints were commanded to build. The first temple was built in Kirtland, Ohio. Construction began in 1833 and the temple was dedicated in 1836, only six years after the Church was organized. The temple was designed by Joseph Smith adapted from Federal Georgian and New England Colonial styles (Church Almanac 1991-92, 255). This building was a significant undertaking for the Church members at that time. Great sacrifice was wrought in the construction of the Kirtland Temple.

Later the Nauvoo Temple in Illinois was built, and two other sites in Missouri were designated as locations for temples. Unfortunately, the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by arson, then a tornado and the temples to be located in Missouri have not yet been constructed (Church Almanac 1991-92, 243).

The importance of temples was further exemplified as the Saints reached the Salt Lake Valley. Immediately upon arrival in the Great Basin, Brigham Young designated the spot for the Salt Lake Temple (Jenson 1941, 762). Three other temples in Utah were completed before the Salt Lake Temple was completed in 1893 (Church Almanac 1991-92, 243).
The location of temples within the early Mormon settlements was either in the center of the city or upon a hill top, where it could rise high as a monument to the Lord. Still today, many of the temples are located where they can be seen for miles.

As the Church membership has grown throughout the world from six members in 1830 to 8,120,000 members in 1992 (Ensign 1992, 22), more and more temples have been built throughout the world. By 1990 there were 45 temples in use by the Church, with several others planned or in the process of construction (Church Almanac 1991-92, 243).

Temples serve different regions throughout the world. In areas where Church membership may be sparse, members may need to travel great distances to attend the temple in their region. However, in Utah, where Mormons are the dominant religious group, there are several temples nearby for the members to attend.

Tabernacles

Where temples serve a region, tabernacles originally served a community. Although tabernacles are not used for the same sacred purposes as temples, many of the tabernacles built are also monumental structures. They are monuments to the community of the successful settlement that occurred in the Mormon Culture Region. Tabernacles are symbolic of the early pioneer efforts. These buildings, also built in
central locations, state the importance of religion in the lives of the early settlers. They stand as monuments, of the sacrifices and beliefs, to those who built them, as well as to those who have continued to use them. The tabernacles built in the domain of the Mormon Culture Region include 63 structures constructed between 1852 and 1956. Of the 63 tabernacles originally constructed, 32 are still standing (Figure 2, Table 1).

The use of tabernacles by the Mormon people began before the Saints settled the Great Basin. Shortly before his martyrdom, Joseph Smith realized the Saints needed a large sheltered area in which to assemble; therefore he instructed the Quorum of the Twelve to build a canvas tabernacle in Nauvoo. In a letter written from the Quorum of the Twelve to the Saints in June 1845, the direction from the late prophet concerning the construction of a large general building was addressed (Roberts 1956, 7:427). The proposed tabernacle, to be located next to the temple, would be large enough to instruct members of the Church in a general assembly. The structure was to be a canvas building 250 feet by 125 feet. The tabernacle was not complete when the decision was made to move west. The four thousand yards of canvas purchased for it were instead used for tents and wagon covers (Luce 1990, 34).
Figure 2. Tabernacles of the Mormon Culture Region.
Table 1.
Tabernacles of the Mormon Culture Region.

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<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Payson Tabernacle</td>
<td>Payson, UT</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Lehi Tabernacle</td>
<td>Lehi, UT</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Ogden Pioneer Tabernacle</td>
<td>Ogden, UT</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Church</td>
<td>Parowan, UT</td>
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<td>Juab Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Nephi, UT</td>
<td>1865</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Provo, UT</td>
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<td>Beaver, UT</td>
<td>1868</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Rock Church</td>
<td>Hyrum, UT</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Meetinghouse</td>
<td>Springville, UT</td>
<td>1870</td>
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<td>St. George Tabernacle</td>
<td>St. George, UT</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephraim Tabernacle</td>
<td>Ephraim, UT</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Rock Church</td>
<td>Salina, UT</td>
<td>1871</td>
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Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Tabernacle</th>
<th>Location of Tabernacle</th>
<th>Year of Completion</th>
<th>Existing or Destroyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manti Tabernacle</td>
<td>Manti, UT</td>
<td>1882</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Tabernacle</td>
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<td>Summit Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Coalville, UT</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
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<td>Cedar City Tabernacle</td>
<td>Cedar City, UT</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
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<td>Willard Meetinghouse</td>
<td>Willard, UT</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Heber, UT</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Existing - Not Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear Lake Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Paris, ID</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroni Tabernacle</td>
<td>Moroni, UT</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntington Meetinghouse</td>
<td>Huntington, UT</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Elder Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Brigham City, UT</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Logan, UT</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Panguitch Tabernacle</td>
<td>Panguitch, UT</td>
<td>1892</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Tabernacle</td>
<td>Price, UT</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provo Tabernacle</td>
<td>Provo, UT</td>
<td>1896</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sevier Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Richfield, UT</td>
<td>1898</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithfield Tabernacle</td>
<td>Smithfield, UT</td>
<td>1902</td>
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</table>
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year of Completion</th>
<th>Existing/Not Existing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Cassia Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Oakley, ID</td>
<td>1902</td>
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<td>Granite Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond Tabernacle</td>
<td>Richmond, UT</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timpanogos Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Pleasant Grove, UT</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebo Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Payson, UT</td>
<td>1906</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uintah Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Vernal, UT</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellsville Tabernacle</td>
<td>Wellsville, UT</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Existing - Not Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Loa, UT</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Valley Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Afton, WY</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehi Tabernacle</td>
<td>Lehi, UT</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bannock Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Grace, ID</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremont Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Rexburg, ID</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Existing - Not Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpine Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>American Fork, UT</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear River Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Garland, UT</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaysville Tabernacle</td>
<td>Kaysville, UT</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph Tabernacle</td>
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Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name of Tabernacle</th>
<th>Location of Tabernacle</th>
<th>Year of Completion</th>
<th>Existing/Not Existing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Spring City, UT</td>
<td>1914</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Falls Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Idaho Falls, ID</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malad Second Ward Tabernacle</td>
<td>Malad, ID</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigby Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Rigby, ID</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montpelier Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Montpelier, ID</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackfoot Tabernacle</td>
<td>Blackfoot, ID</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Existing - Not Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Price, UT</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanab Tabernacle</td>
<td>Kanab, UT</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanding Tabernacle</td>
<td>Blanding, UT</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richfield Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Richfield, UT</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granite Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Salt Lake City, UT</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teton Stake and Driggs Ward Tabernacle</td>
<td>Driggs, ID</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onieda Stake Tabernacle</td>
<td>Preston, ID</td>
<td></td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocatello Tabernacle</td>
<td>Pocatello, ID</td>
<td></td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogden Pioneer Tabernacle</td>
<td>Ogden, UT</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Existing - Church owned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the Saints began their trek towards the Great Basin, a few temporary establishments were settled along the way. In Pottawattamie County, Iowa on the east side of the Missouri River, the Saints settled Kanesville (present site of Council Bluffs). Here, a log tabernacle was built. It was forty by sixty feet and capable of seating about a thousand people. On December 24, 1847, the tabernacle was dedicated by Elder Orson Pratt as a house of prayer and thanksgiving. In a General Conference of the Church, held in the Log Tabernacle on December 27, 1847, Brigham Young was sustained as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards were sustained as counselors. This action was later ratified by unanimous vote of the Saints in Salt Lake City on October 8, 1848 (Roberts 1956, 7:623).

In 1849, another log tabernacle was built in Big Pigeon, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. This temporary building served the Saints until 1852, when most of the saints in Pottawattamie County went west (Jenson 1941, 859).

These first three examples of tabernacles in this dispensation correlate with the meaning of ancient tabernacles. Anciently a tabernacle was a tent (Isaiah 4:6) or temporary house of worship. However, this definition of a tabernacle is not to be confused with "the tabernacle of the congregation" which means "temple" (McConkie 1958, 699).
Figure 3. The Old Salt Lake Tabernacle and Bowery. Courtesy of the Utah Historical Society.

Upon the Saints arrival in the Great Basin, temporary houses of worship called boweries were constructed. The first bowery built in the West, was constructed in Salt Lake City (Figure 3). On July 29, 1847, the sick detachment of the Mormon Battalion erected a bowery on the Temple Block. The bowery was built by placing posts in the ground on which timbers were laid crosswise. Branches of trees and other foliage were placed over the timbers. In 1849, a more substantial bowery was built on the Temple Block and was used for general meetings until the Old Salt Lake Tabernacle built of adobe was finished in 1852. The Old Salt Lake Tabernacle was the first permanent religious building built in the Mormon Culture Region. The two boweries had been
adequate in summer, but the people needed more substantial buildings to meet in during the winter months. However, a few years after the completion of the Old Salt Lake Tabernacle, it became too small for the needs of the growing population and a third bowery was built behind the tabernacle to seat the overflow congregation (Jenson 1941, 82).

After the settlement of Salt Lake City in 1847, a systematic exploration for other possible settlement locations began. Each exploration party was instructed to look for places with adequate water, fertile soil, available timber and other building materials, as well as determine the average altitude of surrounding mountains and the possible presence of minerals. To establish control over the Mormon Culture Region's domain, Brigham Young's colonization program founded nearly 400 settlements before his death in 1877 (Arrington 1992, 2:616).

The areas first settled were located along the Wasatch Front in what became Davis and Weber counties to the north, and Utah Valley to the south. Tooele Valley, west of Salt Lake City, was also one of the first locations settled (Church History in the Fullness of Times 1989, 344). In 1849 two-hundred and twenty-five colonists left for the Sanpete Valley, about a hundred miles south of Salt Lake City. Around the same time, from 1849 to 1850, Elder Parley P. Pratt led a southern-exploring company which began the
establishment of communities along the "Mormon Corridor". This corridor follows the mountains southwestwardly toward Southern California. The first of these settlements were Parowan and Cedar City. By 1853, nearly all the sites recommended by Pratt's company were settled. (Church History in the Fullness of Times 1989, 361).

From the late 1850s through the early 1860s, settlements spread to the fertile valley chain lying east of the Mormon Corridor. Settlements were established in Cache Valley and spread into Southeastern Idaho (Kimball 1980, 35). By 1870, the expansion moved further eastward (i.e. the Bear Lake Valley), where the settlements were more widely scattered. The Uinta Basin had greater potential, but was unavailable because of an Indian reservation. Southward settlements became scattered because of smaller valleys and less irrigable land, thus many Mormon villages were isolated from other communities (Meinig 1965, 203).

As the Mormon settlers reached their new homes, building of the community began. Although there was great variance from village to village, the early settlements had some important characteristics in common. The settlements were each laid out similarly with wide, straight streets, large blocks, and big lots. Seeds were planted, irrigation was implemented and construction on individual buildings began. Most villages designated a large center block for public buildings. It was often called the temple block,
following the design of Salt Lake City. The first building built was usually a temporary multi-purpose meeting house. Often a bowery was the first temporary building built (Roberts 1975, 303).

In some areas the first meetinghouse was a log building. These buildings were small with no special architectural styling. Sometimes these buildings were erected in less than a day. Temporary in nature, they were only used until something more substantial could be built (Roberts 1975, 303).

By the mid-1850s adobe became the common building material within most Mormon settlements. Early adobe meetinghouses were small vernacular structures. Later adobe meetinghouses became more ornate, as more tools were brought with the pioneers who came west. Also, limekilns and sawmills were developed enabling artisans to use their plaster planes, molding knives, and other finishing tools (Roberts 1975, 307). Many of the first tabernacles built in the Mormon Culture Region, including the Old Salt Lake, Bountiful, Nephi and Ogden Tabernacles, were built of adobe.

The Old Tabernacle completed in 1852 in Salt Lake City was constructed to hold General Conferences of the Church. By the mid-1850s the leaders in Salt Lake City encouraged the building of tabernacles in surrounding communities. Some of these large meetinghouses were directly influenced by the leaders in Salt Lake City. Others were built more
out of local initiative and termed tabernacles by the people who built them. Because the leaders of the Church assured the Saints they would be permanently located in the Great Basin, these buildings were not temporary houses of worship, but large permanent structures designed to accommodate large general assemblies. In these buildings, the Saints had adequate space for meetings when Church leaders from Salt Lake City came to address them. The buildings were part of an important connection back to Salt Lake City. They were often the most imposing building in the community and an integral part of the colonization process. Tabernacles served as a central gathering place for religious instruction as well as a place where the early settlers could meet together to discuss the day to day challenges of the settlement process, such as irrigation, agricultural procedures and land distribution. The leaders of the Church directed the construction of tabernacles in locations which were perceived to become important central communities.

Later when more stakes were organized, tabernacles became the location of stake meetings and conferences. (A stake is an intermediate unit of organization between Church headquarters and the local wards. Approximately five to twelve wards comprise a stake. A ward is the basic ecclesiastical unit in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with a membership of approximately 300 to 600 people). Although General Authorities no longer resided in
the colonies, they continued to visit each stake for quarterly conferences. Tabernacles were important buildings for the strengthening and perfecting of the Saints in the early days of the Church.

For the purpose of this work, tabernacles found in the Mormon Culture Region can be identified by their size, outstanding architectural qualities and function. Tabernacles are large buildings, each maintaining a similar floor plan. Rectangular in shape, with the main-floor and balcony seating facing the pulpit (Figure 4), these buildings are typically able to seat 1,000 people or more. The early structures usually had few or no classrooms. These buildings, which employed various architectural styles (Table 2), are of elaborate design and workmanship and were constructed of the finest building materials available at the time. The function of tabernacles has varied through the years according to the changing needs of the local people. The original purpose of tabernacles was to provide a central gathering place where the Saints could receive general religious instruction. The structures were preacher-centered houses of worship, not intended for classroom instruction. With little separation between Church and State in the early days of the Church, the tabernacles accommodated religious and civic functions in the community. Later, when more stakes were organized, the major function of tabernacles was to house stake offices and
hold stake conferences. These buildings are called "stake tabernacles". In addition to stake tabernacles, often local communities built large meetinghouses of outstanding architecture which are called "ward tabernacles". Ward tabernacles mainly served the local ward, however some were also occasionally used for stake purposes. A few buildings in this study which meet one or more of the above criteria have been termed "tabernacle" by the Church, state historical societies, or the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers (The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers are private organization concerned with preserving Mormon history) but are not considered tabernacles by the local people.

Figure 4. Logan Tabernacle Floor Plan. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives.
### Table 2.
**Architectural Styles used in Mormon Tabernacles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek Revival</td>
<td>Symmetrical principal facade</td>
<td>Bountiful Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gable ends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedimented returns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic Revival</td>
<td>Vertical emphasis</td>
<td>Provo Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiplication of gables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wall buttresses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Gothic</td>
<td>Pointed gables</td>
<td>Coalville Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stained glass windows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pointed arched windows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanesque Revival</td>
<td>Buildings of substantial weight and mass</td>
<td>Paris, Idaho Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masonry walls with rock-faced arches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi circular arches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle English</td>
<td>Tall towering steeples</td>
<td>Afton, Wyoming Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symmetrical facades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear leaded glass windows</td>
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# Table 2 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prairie School</td>
<td>Low hipped roofs</td>
<td>American Fork Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide overhanging eves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brick masonry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Modern</td>
<td>Flat roofs</td>
<td>Montpelier, Idaho Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive use of glass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horizontal volumes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Eclectic</td>
<td>Irregular plan</td>
<td>Randolph Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymmetrical facade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dome roofs atop towers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance Italianate</td>
<td>Arched entrances</td>
<td>Rexburg, Idaho Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Square towers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Round windows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flat or low hipped roofs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Christian</td>
<td>Stone masonry alternating with brick coursing</td>
<td>Granite Tabernacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tile roofs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low rounded arch openings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meetinghouses

Where tabernacles served the community, meetinghouses served neighborhoods. These buildings were smaller than tabernacles with more vernacular architecture. They developed from single room buildings to multi-use complexes. Before 1847 most religious meetings were held outdoors or in private homes. However, in his article discussing early Mormon architecture, Luce points out that a few meetinghouses had been built or planned in outlying areas of Kirtland and Nauvoo (Luce 1991, 34). As the Church continued to grow in the Mormon Culture Region, more meetinghouses were built for the use of the local Saints. Wards met in meetinghouses, and when several wards combined for stake conferences they often met in tabernacles.

The single-room structures built in the Mormon Culture Region changed drastically with the addition of Sunday School, and other auxiliary organizations implemented for the youth of the Church. These programs needed classrooms for small group instruction and often recreational halls for social functions. The single assembly hall plan was no longer adequate and buildings with more classroom were constructed by the beginning of the twentieth century (Hamilton 1992, 2:876).

As the Church continued to grow beyond the Mormon Culture Region more wards and stakes have been organized. Wards which may now cover a large geographical area in some
parts of the world continue to need meetinghouses to meet in. However, with the growth of the Church, tabernacles are no longer built. Today, stake functions are held in the "stake center" which differs from a typical meetinghouse only by being slightly larger in scale. The stake center is also used to house one or more wards. In the Mormon Culture Region, the core may have numerous stakes in large cities such as Salt Lake, Provo and Ogden. The old tabernacle is no longer the norm of all these stakes as it was when the community of Saints was small.

Summary

Temples are beautiful sacred houses of worship where important Church ordinances are performed. Temples were the first type of Church structure members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints built. Tabernacles are large, often ornate assembly halls not intended for classroom instruction. Tabernacles were built as a central gathering place, where the Saints could receive general instruction. Meetinghouses are smaller than tabernacles, of more vernacular styling, to serve the needs of the local people.

Temples, tabernacles and meetinghouses all reflect the Mormon culture. An understanding of the significance of these landscape features individually and combined gives
additional insight on the ideals and goals of the LDS Church members.
CHAPTER IV

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE USE OF TABERNACLES

Introduction

The first axiom of landscape as clue to culture is illustrated by correlating the diminishing importance of tabernacles, and three major events that have led to changes in Church organization. The three major elements that have contributed to the change in importance and use of tabernacles include: the growth of the Church membership, expanded auxiliary programs, and technological advancement. The growth of the Church has affected the practicality of tabernacles. With Church membership growing throughout the world, more meetinghouses have become a priority. It is more practical to build standardized meetinghouses than large ornate structures such as tabernacles. With expanded auxiliary programs, tabernacles have become unable to facilitate the members' needs. The design of tabernacles with a large assembly hall and few or no classrooms is not functional for the additional activities members of the Church now participate in. Technological advancement and mass media have enabled members, world-wide, to be instructed by the leaders of the Church. Where General
Authorities used to visit stakes in the tabernacles four times a year, now they attend stake conferences once every other year. Tabernacles no longer provide an important link with the headquarters of the Church.

**Growth of the Church**

The growth of the Church throughout the world has led to many new congregations needing meetinghouses. The 1991 Church statistical report indicates that the total membership is over eight million with organized wards or branches in one-hundred and thirty-eight nations (Ensign 1992, 22).

Up until the 1920s the design and construction of meetinghouses, tabernacles and other church buildings was mostly a local responsibility. Often Church leaders in Salt Lake encouraged such projects, and occasionally provided designs and financial assistance, but usually the responsibility of constructing buildings remained with the local leaders. In 1923, the Church Architectural Department began furnishing plans for meetinghouses built throughout the Church (Anderson and Jackson 1992, 1:237). The plans were for ward meetinghouses as well as stake centers. The Church gradually exercised more control over the building of Church structures. In an effort to minimize construction and maintenance costs, the building department now uses a series of standardized plans for meetinghouses that can be
adapted to different locations. The standardized plans can also be expanded if needed. By 1990, local financial contributions to construct buildings were no longer required. Money that might have been used to build more expensive buildings, such as tabernacles, is now used to provide comfortable places of worship throughout the Church. Between 1948 and 1990 the centrally directed building program oversaw the construction of more than 8,500 Church buildings throughout the world (Anderson and Jackson 1992, 1:238).

The world-wide membership of the Church has also required the building of more temples in various countries throughout the world. When the last tabernacles were constructed in the 1950s, a greater number of temples were being planned for construction. Between 1955 to 1958 there were temples built in Switzerland, Los Angeles, New Zealand, and London. By the early 1970s, smaller temples were built in other parts of the world. Tremendous expansion of temple building occurred in the 1980s when twenty-six temples were built in seventeen different countries (Church Almanac 1991-1992).

**Expanded Church Auxiliary Programs**

Another major reason tabernacles are no longer built, and why some of the old tabernacles have been replaced by modern stake centers, deals with the change in Church
programs over the years. By the 1940s, the tabernacles no longer contained the necessary facilities to meet the needs of the members. Where amusement halls and Relief Society buildings had once been built as separate structures from meetinghouses and tabernacles, the new stake centers had recreation halls for basketball, dances, socials, and other activities of the auxiliary organizations. They also had more classrooms, a library, and modern kitchens. The tabernacles, though beautiful structures, could not functionally compare with the modern stake centers.

**Technological Advancement**

Tabernacles were once the key locations where the Church could spread its spiritual message. Located in large central communities throughout the Mormon Culture Region, leaders of the Church traveled to these buildings to instruct the people. The members were strengthened through meeting together often in such a capacity. This was one of the major methods the General Church leaders communicated with the members spread throughout the region.

Today, the Church's message can be spread throughout the world by means of various mass media. The effect of radio and television on Church communication has been tremendous. In 1924 KSL radio in Salt Lake City began broadcasting conferences. General Conferences of the Church
were first broadcast on KSL Television in Salt Lake City in 1949 (Burnett 1992, 1:308).

Satellite communication has enabled General Conferences to be broadcast to stake centers throughout the world. President Gordon B. Hinkley in a General Conference address said:

"We are now expanding the miracle of satellite transmission... to develop the means whereby the membership of the Church, wherever they may be, can be counselled in an intimate and personal way by the Lord's chosen prophet. Communication is the sinew that binds the Church as one great family" (Christensen 1992, 3:1261).

From the mid-1800s until 1979, General Authorities of the Church presided at most quarterly stake conferences. In 1979, quarterly stake conferences were changed to semi-annual conferences. Today General Authorities only visit a stake once every other year (Bateman 1992, 1:308).

Technology has also enabled the Church to more readily pursue their most important building goal; the building of more temples. With computers, genealogical research becomes easier. Motion picture and video technology has also allowed temple instruction to be presented more efficiently as well as facilitate the building of smaller temples. Thus more temples can be built throughout the world (Allen and Cowan 1992, 2:645).

Technological advancement has greatly reduced the use and importance of tabernacles. Once an important place where the Saints were instructed and strengthened, today
tabernacles are not needed as they once were. This progress in technology has also enabled the pioneer Saints in other countries of the world to be instructed by leaders of the Church as the early Saints who met in the tabernacles were.

Summary

By looking at the landscape feature of tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region, the changes the Church has experienced over time are better understood. Thus, tabernacles or the absence of them are an expressive visual feature of the Mormon culture, indicating the goals and ideals of the members of the Church. Growth of the Church, expanded auxiliary programs, and the use of mass media are elements that have affected the Mormon landscape.
CHAPTER V

TABERNACLES BUILT IN THE EARLY PIONEER PERIOD
1847-1877

Introduction

This chapter describes the use of the early tabernacles and gives a brief description of the individual structures including their present condition. The geographic axiom is an important guide for looking at the early tabernacles. By studying the early tabernacles within their geographical context two major findings are evident. First, the location of tabernacles gives an indication of a Church leader's perception of the environment. Richard Jackson, in his article discussing Mormon perception of settlement, indicates that the environmental perceptions of Brigham Young and other Church leaders provided the basis for the settlement pattern (Jackson 1978, 317). The location of tabernacles gives insight about which communities were perceived to become large central communities.

Secondly, by looking at the location of tabernacles within each settlement, ideas concerning the emphasis of community living during the early days of colonization are better understood. From the time the Church was first organized in 1830, its teachings have placed an emphasis on
principles of unity, cooperation, and mutual assistance (Jackson 1992, 1:299). By establishing a central gathering place in the community, the Saints could meet together to establish the unity essential for successful colonization. Here, the settlers could gather to be spiritually strengthened and receive instruction concerning the day to day settlement process. Located in the center of the Mormon village, tabernacles reflected the importance of the religion in all aspects of community life.

Lewis' corollary of diffusion is helpful in understanding the architectural designs of these buildings. The corollary of diffusion is based on the idea of imitation. People take ideas from one place and imitate them elsewhere. The early pioneer tabernacles are examples of geographic diffusion. Architectural styles employed in the early tabernacles, such as the Greek Revival style, were imitated from the popular architectural styles used in the Eastern United States in the early Nineteenth Century. Characteristics of Greek Revival architecture include such things as: a symmetrical principal facade, columns, and pedimented returns and pedimented window heads (Carter and Goss 1988, 99). However, how this style was diffused to Utah is somewhat unclear, considering that at the height of Greek Revival popularity in upstate New York, the Mormons moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and then on to Missouri and Illinois. Greek Revival architecture did not become popular
in these states until after the Mormons left. Greek Revival may have found its way to Utah through pioneer carpenter-builders such as William Folsom or Truman O. Angell, who used builders or carpenters guides that contained plates of classical details for the designing of various types of structures (Goss 1975, 217).

The First Tabernacles

The bowery and tabernacle built in Salt Lake City set the pattern for future tabernacles built in the outlying agricultural communities. By quickly establishing a place to meet together, unity was fostered. There was a central meeting place where local saints could organize, communicate, support and strengthen one another. After the communities were somewhat settled and temporary meetinghouses became inadequate, larger buildings were erected. These larger meetinghouses were also called tabernacles. The first tabernacles built outside of Salt Lake City were started in the 1850s.

The Church wanted the Saints in the outlying communities to maintain close contact with the headquarters in Salt Lake City. The strong link between Church leaders in Salt Lake and each Mormon settlement was one of the fundamental reasons for the colonization process being a success. Katz and Lehr suggest that institutional backing and interconnectivity of the settlements were critical.
elements of the successful Mormon colonization (Katz and Lehr 1991, 128).

Wards were established, and a few stakes were organized to help maintain unity among the local people and care for their individual needs. The leaders of wards maintained close contact with Church leaders in Salt Lake City.

Wards were first established during the 1840s in Nauvoo. A bishop was assigned to preside over each ward. The bishop's responsibilities were for the temporal welfare of the Saints. When the Saints left Nauvoo and gathered in Winter Quarters (located near present day Florence, Nebraska), Brigham Young again set up ward organizations. The basic organization of the ward helped the people care for one another as they crossed the plains to the Great Basin.

Upon arrival in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young divided the area into several wards and called a bishop to preside over each. Initially, worship meetings were held in the bowery, located on the temple block; but, as the population increased, the various wards began erecting their own buildings.

As the immigrants spread into outlying areas, the pattern continued. The Mormon villages were eventually organized into wards, with bishops presiding over the local people. The bishop also became the community leader, serving as the judge and mayor. Soon, bishops became the
spiritual leaders as well as the temporal leaders (Alder 1992, 4:1541). This change is important because up until this time the General Church leaders had been the spiritual leaders over all the members of the Church. As the Church grew beyond the Salt Lake Valley, bishops were given this responsibility, indicating the importance the Church placed on spiritual well being of the people in outlying communities. With few stakes organized in the Early Pioneer Period, most direction from the General Church Authorities proceeded directly to the local ward bishops (Albrecht 1992, 3:1412). Buildings were quickly erected for worship services within each ward. Eventually, some of the larger central communities built magnificent meetinghouses which were called tabernacles. These early tabernacles served the local members on a regular basis, as well as being the meeting place for larger assemblies when the leaders from Salt Lake City came to address all the members in the surrounding communities.

The nature of religious services held on Sunday, in the pioneer period consisted of Sunday School in the mornings and Sacrament Services in the afternoons. Weekly, ward Priesthood Meetings were held on Monday evenings, and Fast and Testimony meetings were held the first Thursday evening of each month (Smart 1992, 3:1242). Auxiliary organizations were not widely established until the late 1870s (Hartley and Sessions 1992, 3:623). Thus, the design of early
meetinghouses did not include many classrooms or large recreation halls.

Use and Characteristics

Tabernacles built during this era include both Salt Lake Tabernacles, the Old Ogden, Bountiful, Old Provo, Nephi, St. George, Beaver, and Ephraim Tabernacles. Other large meetinghouses that have been referred to as tabernacles, by the local people or in literature, from this era include the "Old Payson Meetinghouse" (1855), the "Old Kaysville Meetinghouse" (1863), the "Old Rock Church" (1866-1869) in Hyrum, the "White Meeting House" (1855-1870) in Springville, the "Old Lehi Meetinghouse" (1855), the "Old Rock Church" (1864-1871) in Salina, the "Willard Meeting House" (1866-1888) and the "Rock Church" (1857-1863) in Parowan (Figure 5).

Tabernacles built from 1852 to 1877 were built mainly of local materials and required a great deal of work and sacrifice from the local people. The tabernacles were built in the largest communities, providing a central gathering place for the surrounding area. They were rectangular in shape with the main floor, and often balcony, facing the pulpit. The buildings were preacher-centered houses of worship. Although this style was declining in popularity in the Eastern United States, the pioneers still employed a mixture of Early American Meeting House and Gothic Revival
Early Pioneer Tabernacles 1852-1877

- Salt Lake City
- LaFay
- Provo
- Payson
- Nephi
- Ephraim
- Salina
- Beaver
- Parowan
- St. George

Figure 5. Locations of the Early Pioneer Tabernacles.
architecture styles in the design of the early tabernacles (Hart 1981, 8). The difference in function between a tabernacle and a regular meetinghouse was tied to the size of the building. Tabernacles were large buildings capable of accommodating large general assemblies. However, tabernacles of this era were also regularly used for weekly ward meetings and community functions.

Old Salt Lake Tabernacle 1851-1852

The first tabernacle built in the Mormon Culture Region was the Old Salt Lake Tabernacle (Figure 6). It was built for the gathering together of the Saints and General Conferences of the Church. The construction began on May 21, 1851. It had a stone foundation and walls built of adobe. (Stone foundations were necessary on adobe buildings to prevent ground water from destroying the adobe). The tabernacle was located on the southwest corner of the temple block where the Assembly Hall stands today. Truman 0. Angell was the architect of the structure which measured 126 feet by 64 feet. It had a sloping roof, covered with wooden shingles. On April 6, 1852, its dedication day, the Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was held in the building.

Even before the tabernacle was finished its seating capacity of 2,500 persons had become too small. A bowery built next to the tabernacle helped to seat the growing
number of Church members until the present Salt Lake Tabernacle was completed in 1867. For seventeen years, the Old Tabernacle served as the central meeting place of the Saints. This illustrates the point that tabernacles were large meeting places where the Saints could gather for general religious instruction. The Salt Lake Tabernacles have always had a general or Church-wide purpose.

Figure 6. Old Salt Lake Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
The Old Salt Lake Tabernacle organ was built by Joseph H. Ridges. A recent English convert to the Church, he was asked by an elder to donate an organ he had made in Australia to the Church. It was shipped to San Pedro, California then hauled by wagon team to Salt Lake City where it was used in the Old Salt Lake Tabernacle until the building was no longer used (Carter 1967, 3).

Joseph Ridges also built the first tabernacle organ in present Salt Lake Tabernacle. Some pipes and parts of this organ are incorporated in the organ that is used today (Bethards 1992, 4:1436).

Old Ogden Tabernacle 1855-56

On Sunday, January 25, 1851, the Weber Stake of Zion was organized and Ogden was divided into two wards (Jenson 1941, 606). A few years later in 1855, construction began on the Ogden Tabernacle (Figure 7). William Nicol Fife was the architect, assisted by Walter Thompson, both of Salt Lake City. The two men were sent to Ogden by Brigham Young to take charge of the construction. This fact illustrates the importance the leaders in Salt Lake City placed on building tabernacles in outlying areas.

The foundation was made of rock and the two feet thick walls were made of adobe. The red pine logs used for lumber were found in Strong's Canyon and floated down the Ogden River. The roof arches were fastened together with wooden
pegs, and the finishing and flooring were done by hand. The finished tabernacle had a seating capacity of 1,200 persons. No account of the cost was kept since the whole job was donated by the local people. The settlers sacrificed greatly to build it. Chamberlain Critchlow wrote:

"The men worked hard and faithfully with food and clothing scarce. It was not uncommon for a man to work all day with only milk as food. Most of our clothes were so patched that you could hardly tell the original, and we wore homemade shoes that, when they became wet, they spread, and when dried they were so hard we could hardly get them on" (Hunter 1966, 449).

Figure 7. Old Ogden Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
The tabernacle was used by the Ogden division of the Utah Militia when Johnston's Army invaded Utah in 1857. There were no floors in the building at this time, but meetings were held there soon after the trouble ended. The tabernacle was dedicated on October 10, 1869.

In 1896 the tabernacle was remodeled by adding the east facade and cupolas on the roof. The tabernacle was used for stake meetings until 1952 when the new tabernacle was completed. In 1971 the building was demolished because of its visual conflict with the Ogden temple (Deseret News, 1971, 10A). The decision to raze the building was made by the twenty-six stake presidents of the Ogden area. The decision was then approved by the First Presidency of the Church and the Church Building Committee (Church Historic Sites File - Ogden Tabernacle).

The demolition of the Old Ogden Tabernacle illustrates some important trends concerning the preservation of old tabernacles. First, instead of improving the Old Tabernacle, the building had been replaced by a new tabernacle on the same block, which left it empty for several years. It deteriorated quickly while it was not used. Secondly, the importance the members of the Church place on temples is illustrated here. It seemed more important to improve the aesthetic surroundings of the new temple, than to preserve the old historic building.

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Bountiful Tabernacle 1857-1863

Bountiful, just north of Salt Lake City, is the second oldest settlement in the state of Utah. Perregrine Sessions arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 26, 1847 and three days later he encamped in Bountiful, which became his permanent home. In the spring of 1848 more settlers came, and the village quickly grew. The first house of worship in Bountiful was a 20 by 30 foot log structure which was also used as a school house. In 1852 it was replaced by an adobe building which was also used for several purposes (Jenson 1941, 80).

With the rapid population growth in the area it became necessary to construct a larger meetinghouse. On February 11, 1857 Lorenzo Snow dedicated the plot of land for the Bountiful Tabernacle located on the corner of Main and Center streets. The Greek Revival style building was designed by Augustus Farnham, a convert from Andover, Massachusetts (Figure 8). The means of diffusion of new styles into the Mormon Culture Region is illustrated by the fact that the architect was from an area where Greek Revival Styles were popular.

The dimensions for the structure were 86 by 44 feet. It was built primarily of local material. The stone foundation was six feet thick with a layer of cut sandstone running around the foundation to keep the water out. The adobe for the walls was made in the adobe yard about two
Figure 8. Bountiful Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer
miles southwest of the meetinghouse. The completed walls were three feet thick. Timber for the building was from "meetinghouse hollow" in Holbrook Canyon. Red pine timber, held together with wooden pegs, was used for the roof. The tower has five spires ascending twenty additional feet. The construction, which lasted for six years, was interrupted during the first year because of the Utah War. During the last year of construction, Brigham Young, who had a special interest in the building urged the saints to finish the building within the year. The building was quickly finished. The dedication lasted for two days on March 14, and 15 1863, with Brigham Young presiding and Heber C. Kimball offering the dedicatory prayer (Foy 1978, 103-106). It is the oldest tabernacle of continuous use standing today. With recent additions it serves as a stake center and ward building, accommodating two wards.

Provo Meeting House (Old Tabernacle) 1856-1867

In 1852, the first attempt was made to erect the Provo Meeting House on the Public Square at Fifth West and Center. Until then, Church services had been held in private homes, boweries, and in the log school house that was erected in 1850. Elder George A. Smith who had been appointed to preside over the Saints in the Utah Valley spearheaded the effort. Brigham Young was to furnish the plans, drawn by Church Architect Truman O. Angell. On August 16, 1852, the
ground was dedicated. When the foundation was partly laid, the work was interrupted, likely due to an Indian war.

In 1856, a new location was dedicated as the site for the Provo Meeting House. Brigham Young advised changing the location to the north east corner of the present tabernacle block (located between Center Street and First South Street). As for the plans and architect, it is assumed that they remained the same as the original design of 1852.

Construction on the building moved slowly as times were hard and money was scarce. There were several examples of deep dedication to the building of the meetinghouse including the story of John Watkins:

"John Watkins, one of the experienced builders who donated freely of his time and talents on the project, at one time had no food in his house. Exhausted from hunger, he fainted while at work on the building. Meanwhile, a friend came to his home that same day with a bushel of wheat and told Margaret, one of John Watkins' three wives: 'I had a presentiment that you were without food.' A tearful Margaret admitted he was right. The women quickly ground the wheat and had bread ready when John returned" (Christensen 1983, 58).

The building had a stone foundation and adobe walls. Handmade bolts fastened the trusses that supported the roof. The dimensions were 81 by 47 feet, with the ceiling 24 feet from the floor (Figure 9). The tabernacle was capable of seating 1,500 people. The pulpit was situated on the south end of the building with winding staircases on each side. The basement was used for Priesthood, Sunday School and educational meetings.
The building was dedicated by John Taylor on August 24, 1867. Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith and George Q. Cannon were all present (Christensen 1983, 49-68).

When the new Provo Tabernacle was built, conferences seemed to alternate between the old and new buildings for several years. When the new building was steam-heated in
1893, conferences were no longer held in the old building. The building was used for religious and cultural activities until the early 1900s. In 1917 J. William Knight of the Utah Stake Presidency made a motion in a presidency meeting that the Old Tabernacle be removed because there was no longer a need for the building. The Old Tabernacle was torn down in 1918 (Christensen 1983, 86-87). Here again, as in the case of the Old Ogden Tabernacle, a larger tabernacle replaced the Old Provo Tabernacle as it became too small to meet the needs of the growing community.

**Juab Stake Tabernacle 1860-1865**

Nephi was settled in 1851 by Joseph L. Heywood and others who located on Salt Creek in Juab County. In 1860 the construction began on the tabernacle. Zimri H. Baxter was the architect, and it is said that Isaac Sowby walked to Salt Lake City to get tools to work on the building. The building was built of adobe and cost $15,000. It measured 45 by 55 feet, with a seating capacity of 800. A tower was built on the front, or west end, which was large enough to hold a band of thirty men. The building was dedicated in 1865. In 1877 a vestry was built onto the east end of the building. In 1930, the tower was removed and the front was given a more modern appearance. The building has since been razed because modern meetinghouses were built and it was no longer used (McCune 1947, 102).
Salt Lake Tabernacle 1863-1867

In April 1863, Daniel H. Wells, counselor to President Brigham Young announced plans to build a new tabernacle on the temple block. The new Salt Lake Tabernacle (Figure 10) was to be 150 feet wide and 250 feet long, capable of seating ten thousand people. The cornerstone was laid on July 26, 1864 (Anderson 1992, 4:1433).

William H. Folsom was the architect, Truman O. Angell planned the interior and Henry Grow designed the roof structure and supervised its construction. There are no architectural plans in existence today, nor is it known how the unique design was decided upon (Carter 1967, 7). But it truly was an incredible undertaking for the early settlers.

Forty-four masonry columns support the dome-type roof. The trusses were constructed of timbers, pegged together with wooden dowels. The completed building had a roof structure nine feet thick, with the plaster ceiling 68 feet above the floor (Anderson 1992, 4:1433).

On October 6, 1867 the first meeting was held in the tabernacle. It was the Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference of the Church. At that time only one-third of the pipes for the organ were finished, and permanent seats were not yet installed. However, people came from all parts of the territory to attend the meeting (Carter 1967, 31).
The building was finally dedicated on October 9, 1875. This building has become an architectural gem with worldwide recognition. General Conferences of the Church are still held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle today, and with the Salt Lake Temple, it is one of the most important visual symbols of the Church.

Saint George Tabernacle 1863-1871

Shortly after the Saints settled Saint George, Brigham Young instructed them to build a suitable house of worship
capable of holding at least two thousand people (Figure 11). Miles Romney, who had been schooled in English architecture supervised the building of the tabernacle. William Folsom acting as Church architect at the time also consulted in the design of the tabernacle (Anderson 1975, 249).

The dimensions of the tabernacle are 50 by 108 feet, measuring 134 feet to the top of the tower. The foundation is made of limestone, the lumber came from Pine Valley, and the walls are made of vermillion sandstone which was hauled by oxen from a quarry two miles away. Lighting was originally provided by three huge chandeliers and numerous coal oil lamps which could be lowered from the ceiling by ropes on pulleys.

One of the beautiful features of the Saint George Tabernacle is the small panes of glass that were shipped from the Atlantic seaboard around Cape Horn and hauled by wagon from Wilmington, California. One of the last features to complete the building, there was little money left to purchase the glass. Legend tells of Peter Neilson from Washington, Utah who paid for the glass. He had recently received a large sum of money, with which he planned to improve his own humble dwelling. One morning he walked to St. George and gave the money to the brethren. As a result of this donation, the Saints were able to go to California and secure the glass (Church Historic Sites File - St. George Tabernacle).
Figure 11. St. George Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
The building was dedicated on May 14, 1876, under the direction of Brigham Young. At the dedication the four-faced clock was placed in the tower. The clock still works.

At a meeting held in the tabernacle in May 1899, President of the Church, Lorenzo Snow promised that faithful compliance to the law of tithing (giving 10% of personal income to the church) would bless the members, and free the Church from its debts. A year later, the Church's income had doubled (Walker and Sadler 1992, 2:630). The building continues to be used for stake conferences and community functions.

**Beaver Tabernacle 1865-1868**

Beaver County was settled in 1856 by Latter-day Saints, principally from Parowan. The population grew substantially in 1858 when the Saints vacated San Bernadino, California and moved to Utah. Several of these families settled in Beaver (Jenson 1941, 52).

The early settlers built a log Church building located in the center block of the city. This building could seat 100 people and was heated by a fire place on each end. This structure served the community for nine years, until in 1865 it burned down. Shortly after it burned, another building was constructed on the same site. This substantial brick building was later termed a tabernacle. The tabernacle, facing the east, had a large auditorium and a full size
basement with two rooms which served for Sunday School class rooms.

Funding for the church was made possible by assessments levied on all the families in the area. Much of this was paid for in labor. The stone for the foundation was hauled from a rock quarry six miles south of town. The brick was made by local people, and the lime was produced at the kilns in the West Mountains. All the lumber used for the building was brought from the Beaver Mountains.

The tabernacle was used for public and mass meetings, and Church gatherings for many decades. In the late 1920s, the structure was condemned as unsafe. The building was torn down in 1931 and replaced by a new ward chapel at a different location. A log building, erected by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, stands on the site of the Beaver Tabernacle (Church Historic Sites File - Beaver Tabernacle).

**Ephraim Tabernacle 1870-1871**

The first settler of Ephraim was Isaac Behunin, who claimed land there in 1852. Because of Indian trouble he moved his family to Manti in 1853. In 1854, a few families from Springtown settled in Ephraim and began building a fort for protection from the Indians. "Fort Ephraim" contained only 1-1/2 acre of land in what is now the center of Ephraim. They built a number of small adobe and rockhouses
inside the fort as well as a meeting house (Jenson 1941, 233).

By 1860 the saints witnessed the dedication of a large stone meeting house. President Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Daniel H. Wells, George A. Smith, and Joseph Young attended the dedication. In 1870 the building was removed
to build the tabernacle (Centennial Book Committee 1954, 29). Little information is recorded concerning the tabernacle (Figure 12) except that it was built of white sandstone, with a forty foot tower, and was completed in 1871 (Roberts 1974, 51). The building was torn down and in 1954 a new Stake Center was dedicated on the former site of the tabernacle (Centennial Book Committee, Ed. 1954, 31).

Summary

After the Old Salt Lake Tabernacle was built to accommodate the entire Church for General Conferences, the leaders of the Church encouraged building tabernacles in surrounding communities. These buildings were large meetinghouses which served the local community on a regular basis and often surrounding areas when the people were instructed by General Authorities. By utilizing the geographic axiom, and looking at the location of these early tabernacles, it is evident that Brigham Young encouraged the building of tabernacles in these areas to establish not only a nice meetinghouse for the local Saints, but to confirm a sense of permanency in these communities. He perceived that these locations would become large central communities.

Of the original tabernacles built in the early pioneer period only four are standing today. The others have been replaced by other tabernacles or other meetinghouses to meet the changing needs of the members.
CHAPTER VI

STAKE AND WARD TABERNACLES 1878-1900

Introduction

There was a definite change in the architectural styles employed in tabernacles beginning in the late 1870s. Using the axiom of landscape as clue to culture as a guide to understanding what caused these changes in tabernacles, suggests that a major cultural change likely occurred at the same time. It was during this same time that the Church implemented new organizational changes to strengthen each community, which affected the building of tabernacles. This restructuring of the organization was a result of the approaching end of isolation.

This chapter discusses the different architectural styles employed in tabernacles after the railroad came to Utah and isolation declined. It will also discuss the slight change in purpose and importance of tabernacles.

Restructuring of Church Organization

With the coming of the railroad in 1869, Brigham Young became very aware of the approaching end of isolation, as well as the threat to Utah's economic and political
independence. He thus initiated a series of programs to reinforce spiritual strength and economic independence. In Salt Lake City the School of the Prophets was re-organized in 1867, which not only gave instruction on theology, but also instructed the people in economics. The School contracted with the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads to grade the transcontinental line in Utah, in order to limit the number of non-Mormon laborers within the state and provide a welcome source of income for the workers and money for the Mormon colony (Arrington 1992, 2:620).

The women's axillary organization, the Relief Society, which was originally established in 1842, was reestablished throughout the Great Basin by 1877. Brigham Young also established an organization for young women called the "Young Ladies Department of the Cooperative Retrenchment Association (Arrington 1992, 2:620-621).

Prior to 1877 there were only ten stakes organized within the Mormon Culture Region. During 1877, Brigham Young began a major restructuring of the Church organization. In 1877 alone, ten new stakes were organized (Church Almanac 1991-92, 176). Stake presidencies were called from the local area, eliminating General Authorities serving in that capacity. At this time stake presidencies were given responsibility for all Church matters within their stake boundaries. They were instructed to hold quarterly conferences, which would be visited by General
Authorities (Albrecht 1992, 3:1413). The organizational changes influenced Church building patterns. More buildings to accommodate the newly organized stakes were needed in addition to local ward meetinghouses. During this era many splendid stake tabernacles were erected. Separate halls were also built adjacent to many meetinghouses for the activities of the auxiliary organizations.

During this era tabernacles in the agricultural colonies became an important part of Brigham Young's procedure of maintaining strong ties with the Church headquarters. By instructing members to build large monumental structures in their communities, the people established their religious ideas and beliefs on the landscape. The human landscape the early settlers created, distinguished them as a unique culture. The Mormon landscape provided a visible boundary between their culture and the rest of the United States. Possessing a beautiful building to meet in, strengthened the communities and stood as a monument to their pioneer efforts.

**Use and Characteristics**

With the arrival of the railroad greater exposure to the design trends of the outside world spread into the Mormon Culture Region. This period brought a shift from vernacular architecture to more high style architecture. Even though these styles were by then outdated in other
parts of the United States, many of the tabernacles built in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century reflect the Gothic Revival and Victorian influences. Most of the tabernacles built from 1878 to 1900 were rectangular with a central tower, and decorative top. It also may have taken the Saints this long to obtain the necessary technology to build such structures (Roberts 1975, 314).

The function of a tabernacle was still as a central gathering place where the Saints could meet in large general assemblies, but by now these large assemblies were termed stake conferences. Stake tabernacles therefore had the added function of being the headquarters of the stake. Now the stake was the intermediary link between the members of wards and the headquarters of the Church. Prior to this, communication from the General Authorities of the Church proceeded directly to the local bishops.

Many of the tabernacles built from 1878 to 1900 extend beyond the Wasatch Front to outlying areas settled shortly after the main core was settled (Figure 13). The tabernacles built include several stake tabernacles. Most of these buildings were used for stake and ward functions. The stake tabernacles built between 1878 and 1900 include the Provo, Heber, Brigham City, Logan, Morgan, Coalville, Panguitch, Richfield, Utah Tabernacles and the Paris, Idaho Tabernacle. There were also ward tabernacles built during this era which may have occasionally held stake functions.
Stake and Ward Tabernacles
1878-1900

Figure 13. Locations of Stake and Ward Tabernacles built from 1878 to 1900.
Ward tabernacles were ward meetinghouse large in size and outstanding in architectural design. These buildings were termed tabernacles by the proud Saints who built them. The ward tabernacles include the Manti, Smithfield, Cedar City, and Moroni Tabernacles. The "Old Meetinghouse" built in Huntington, Utah during this period has also been called a tabernacle.

STAKE TABERNACLES

Logan (Cache Stake) Tabernacle 1865-1891

Construction of the Logan Tabernacle began in the Early Pioneer Period and after several years of construction was completed in 1891 (Figure 14). In 1864 Apostle Ezra T. Benson proposed the building of a large meetinghouse capable of accommodating the growing population. In 1865, construction of the tabernacle, located on Main Street commenced. However, beyond the 60 by 106 foot cobblestone foundation nothing was done on the building until June 29, 1873, when Brigham Young visited Logan and urged the construction of a tabernacle. He said:

"Another item which I wish to urge upon the people is the building of this meetinghouse. We have a bowery here, which is very comfortable to meet in this warm weather, but when it is windy, stormy, cold or wet the people should certainly have a house to meet in instead of out of doors. This, of course, will require labor" (Simmonds).
This quote illustrates the point that the Church leaders in Pioneer times encouraged the building of tabernacles. The idea of building outstanding places to meet in spread into outlying communities, where often by local initiative, members of the Church built splendid meetinghouses. Often these meetinghouses have been termed "tabernacle".

The tabernacle was enlarged to 65 by 130 feet and from 1874 to 1878 many people contributed to its construction. The upper story of the tabernacle, made mainly of sandstone
and limestone, was completed in August 1878. Though not yet completely finished, it was a used thereafter to hold meetings. Work slowed with the start of the Logan Temple in 1876. Not until 1885 was major work resumed on the tabernacle. Finally, in 1891 the building was dedicated by President Wilford Woodruff. Because of continued remodeling after its dedication, it was rededicated in 1915. With a seating capacity of 4,000 people, it has been used for stake conferences and other large gatherings. Recently restored for its 100th anniversary, the building is in immaculate condition and is used for stake conferences, organ recitals, firesides, seminary graduations, and other non-profit programs. There is a genealogical library in the basement, and often new convert baptisms are performed in its baptistery (Simmonds).

Heber (Wasatch Stake) Tabernacle 1887-1889

Ten years after the stake was organized, the Wasatch Stake Tabernacle (Figure 15) located in Heber City was erected to provide a meeting place for all the people of the valley. The entire project was built with donated labor and materials. The building measures 50 by 95 feet, has a seating capacity of 1,500 and is built on a five feet thick foundation with two feet wide red sandstone walls. The central tower is about ninety feet to the top of the weather
Figure 15. Heber Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
vane. In 1889, the interior was described in the following manner:

"The floor was scrubbed and bleached with home made soap. Home made carpets were laid down the aisles. Coal oil lamps hanging from the ceiling furnished light. Pot bellied stoves stood in each of the four corners. There were balconies on both sides and the end. Posts stood on either side to support the gallery which had three tiers of seats on different elevations. The stand had three elevations of seats - the top row was always occupied by the stake presidency and the General Authorities. The middle row by the high council and the lower row by the ward bishops" (How Beautiful upon the Mountains, 48).

The building was dedicated Sunday, May 5, 1889 by Elder Francis M. Lyman.

On May 22, 1965 the Deseret News stated that the Wasatch Stake Tabernacle would be razed and a new two-ward stake center would be erected on its site on Main Street. By June 18, 1965 the Deseret News claimed that the building would be saved. The tabernacle was deeded by the Church to Heber City, with the restriction that activities and uses comply with Church standards. The building is maintained by the Wasatch Historical Society, and is used as a cultural center (Padfield 1965). This building stands in average condition, not being maintained as well as other tabernacles which are still owned by the Church.

Provo (Utah Stake) Tabernacle 1883-1896

When the Old Provo Tabernacle was dedicated in 1867, President Brigham Young alluded to the fact that the building was already too small for the growing number of
Saints in the Utah Valley (Christensen 1983, 99). In the spring of 1883, work commenced on the building of a new Utah Stake Tabernacle (Figure 16). At that time the boundaries of the stake included the entire county and Saints from all its communities donated money and service to its building. The building is located on University Avenue between Center Street and First South Street. The tabernacle's dimensions are 152 by 86 feet, with a 64 by 126 feet auditorium. Its architect, William Folsom, designed it in the Gothic style with red brick and cathedral windows giving it octagonal towers on each of its four corners and a central tower that rose to a height of 140 feet. This last tower was later removed, because it proved to be too heavy for the roof.

Although it was not yet dedicated, in April 1886 the new Utah Stake Tabernacle was the location of the 56th annual General Conference. After years of struggling to complete and pay for the tabernacle, it was finally dedicated in April of 1898 (Christensen 1983, 95-145). Today the building, which is still owned by the Church, is used for stake conferences, concerts, lectures and other cultural activities. The most recent renovation took place in 1982 and 1983 and was designed to preserve the tabernacle in its original character, while keeping the building functional for modern-day use (Christensen 1983, 165).
Brigham City (Box Elder Stake) Tabernacle 1876-1890, 1897

In 1865, Brigham Young visited Brigham City and observed men beginning an excavation for a tabernacle. He objected to the site, and identified the spot known as Sagebrush Hill as the location he wished for the new
Figure 17. Brigham City Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
tabernacle. During the next eleven years, rocks were hauled to the site, and actual construction began in 1876. When completed it was 50 by 95 feet and had a tower rising above each of the four corners. By 1881, the building was sufficiently finished to hold meetings in but was not completely finished until 1890. Wilford Woodruff dedicated the building in October of that year (Figure 17).

On February 9, 1896, the tabernacle caught fire and burned down, leaving only the four sturdy walls standing. Reconstruction began on March 27, 1896 adding sixteen brick buttresses with steeples topping each one. A major tower was built on the front. The style was then described as neo-Gothic. On March 21, 1897 George Q. Cannon offered the dedicatory prayer. The tabernacle stands today in excellent condition. It is the location for stake conferences, as well as for civic programs and seminary graduations. The building is also open to the public on a restricted basis (National Register of Historic Places, 1966).

Morgan Tabernacle 1878-1882

The Morgan Stake Tabernacle (Meetinghouse) built of local blue limestone was begun in 1878 (Figure 18). Though not completely finished, the first stake conference was held there on May 21, 1882. The building was completed at a cost of $8,000 and was dedicated by President John Taylor. In April 1893, the building was destroyed by fire. It was
rebuilt and again dedicated on December 15, 1901 by President Joseph F. Smith. In the 1930s, the building was remodeled for the growing needs of the stake. President Heber J. Grant rededicated it in 1938. Again, in 1953, major additions were made to the Morgan tabernacle which was dedicated by Elder Marion D. Hanks on September 25, 1955.
(Morgan Stake 1988). The building is used for weekly, ward functions as well as for stake purposes.

**Coalville (Summit Stake) Tabernacle 1879-1899**

Summit Stake was organized on July 9, 1877, taking in much of the high country, east of the Salt Lake Valley. Under the direction of architect Thomas L. Allen the ground for a tabernacle was broken in 1879 (Figure 19). The basic plan of the building was modeled after the Assembly Hall on Temple Square. It was of simplified Victorian Gothic design, made of brick and stone and cost $65,000 (Leone 1973, 32). The size of the building was 55 by 100 feet, with a height of the main building 35 feet and the tower extending 117 feet. It had a seating capacity of fifteen hundred people and was an impressive building visible for miles around (Improvement Era 1914, 775).

The local people worked hard and sacrificed greatly in building the tabernacle. Relief Society ladies earned $1,500 from fund raisers during the 1890s to send to Belgium for stained-glass windows. A Scandinavian immigrant, M.C. Olsen painted on the ceiling portraits of six presidents of the Church. On May 14, 1899, the building was dedicated by President Lorenzo Snow. He prayed that the tabernacle would "be preserved until the Son of Man will come" (Haggerty 1980, 57).
Figure 19. Coalville Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.

The building quickly became inadequate to meet the needs of the members when Church functions shifted from the era of large Church assemblies to more classroom instruction and auxiliary activities. The large assembly hall was
converted into a small chapel and additional classrooms in 1940. These modifications saved the building then, but may have been a cause to its ultimate destruction. Had the large assembly hall remained, the building could have been altered into a new stake center without excessive costs (Geary 1970, 43). In the early 1970s, the tabernacle was threatened with destruction. After several months of controversy, the building was torn down on March 3, 1971.
(Figure 20). The First Presidency issued a statement explaining the decision to demolish the building. They said that the building had neither historical, nor the architectural significance to justify the cost of its preservation, since there was no unusual Church history connected with it, and it was similar in design to the Assembly Hall (Geary 1970, 48).

**Panguitch Tabernacle 1881-1892**

In 1849 Parley P. Pratt's exploring company passed through Panguitch, but considered it too cold for farming purposes. Therefore, it was not settled until the spring of 1864 when fifty families came from Parowan to settle the area. In 1867, because of Indian hostilities, the settlement was temporarily vacated. In 1871, Panguitch was resettled with George W. Sevey serving as bishop (Jenson 1941, 633).

On April 23, 1877, the Panguitch Stake was organized, and in 1882 the building of a stake tabernacle began. It was a Gothic-style building measuring 35 by 62 feet, with an 80 foot tall tower (Roberts 1974, 51). Although incomplete, the brick building was used for a quarterly conference on November 23, 1885. At a quarterly conference on February 25, 1900 a motion was put before the people to turn the stake tabernacle over to the Panguitch ward. The building was dedicated in 1901 by Apostle Reed Smoot (DUP 1949, 307).
The old tabernacle continued to hold stake meetings for several years (Jenson 1941, 635). The building has since been demolished because it was condemned as unsafe.

Richfield (Sevier Stake Tabernacle) 1888-1898

The Sevier Stake was organized on May 24, 1874. Shortly thereafter, plans to build a stake meetinghouse began. On the southeast section of the original town square, work began. After a few years, the ground upon which it stood was determined unsuitable to support the structure. In 1888, a new location, forty feet to the south and a little to the west of the old location was chosen as the place to build the tabernacle. Niels Mortensen Skougaard, a Danish architect and builder was chosen to design the building and later, R.C. Watkins, a Provo architect, replaced him. On October 24, 1898 when the building was nearly completed, it was destroyed by fire. History suggests that the cause may have been arson (Sevier County Historic Sites 1978, 107). The Saints immediately began rebuilding, and in nine months, the tabernacle was completed. The Gothic Revival building was 80 by 160 feet, with an 187 foot tower. On July 16, 1899, President Lorenzo Snow dedicated the it.

In 1901 the building was damaged by an earthquake. The damage was repaired and the people continued to use the building for religious and public meetings but by 1906 it
became apparent that the earthquake had caused more damage than was originally estimated. In 1912, at a stake priesthood meeting, plans were made to sell the tabernacle property and erect another structure off of Main Street. Although the unsafe condition persisted, nothing was done until in 1914 when a large piece of plaster from the ceiling crashed to the floor during a public meeting. After this mishap, the building was no longer used. The tabernacle was torn down in 1923 (Sevier County Historic Sites 1978).

Paris (Bear Lake Stake) Tabernacle 1884-1889

The Bear Lake Stake, organized on June 20, 1869, was the first permanent stake organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints outside the territory of Utah. It was reorganized in August of 1877 and shortly thereafter construction of the tabernacle began (Idaho State Historical Society).

The building was designed by one of Brigham Young's sons, Joseph Don Carlos Young, and constructed under the supervision of Thomas G. Lowe of Logan. With Victorian influences emerging in the Mormon Culture Region during the late 1800s, the tabernacle is built in the Romanesque Revival style (Figure 21).

Red sandstone was quarried in Indian Creek Canyon, eighteen miles away, and hauled around the lake by horse and ox teams. In the Winter, the stone was transported across
Figure 21. Paris Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
the frozen lake by sled. All of the wood used, was cut from
the nearby canyons (Idaho State Historical Society). The
ceiling built by shipbuilder, James Collings Sr. is very
unique and was developed from a style used in seafaring
vessels and in homes in New England. The doors were
finished using a Victorian technique which involved painting
the wood white, then varnishing over the paint. While the
varnish was still wet, they used special tools to change its
appearance to walnut, oak, birch or mahogany. (This
technique was also used in the construction of the Nauvoo
Temple and on the present Salt Lake Tabernacle's benches and
pillars). Square, handmade nails were used in much of the
construction (Paris Idaho Stake Missionaries).

The building was dedicated on September 15, 1889 by
George Q. Cannon. President Wilford Woodruff presided
(Church Historic Sites File). Guided tours under the
direction of the Paris Idaho Stake missionaries are
conducted daily from Memorial Day to Labor day. The
building is now used for stake conferences, large reunions,
music programs and other community functions.

WARD TABERNACLES
Manti Tabernacle 1878-1882

In 1876, while Manti had only one ward, the members
were called to consider the building of a tabernacle.
Although not a stake tabernacle, this building was termed a
tabernacle due to its size and outstanding architectural characteristics (Figure 22). It was built on the temple block in the center of town and is made of the same oolite limestone as the Temple, quarried in the nearby mountains. The dimensions of the building are 90 by 55 feet, with a seating capacity of 1,200. William Folsom was the architect. The tabernacle was dedicated on November 22, 1903 by Joseph F. Smith (Roberts 1974, 31). Additions to the building make it usable for the members of the Church living in Manti today.

Smithfield Tabernacle 1881-1902

Smithfield was settled in October of 1859, and was originally called "Summit". Later the town was named "Smithfield" after John Glover Smith who was called as the first bishop in 1860. In 1880 Bishop George L. Farrell and his counselors spearheaded the building of a ward tabernacle (Figure 23). Construction of the Gothic styled tabernacle, located in the center of Smithfield, began in April 1883. The lumber and framing timber was sawed from logs taken from Main and Birch Canyons. The rock for the foundation was taken from an abandoned, half-built church. The sandstone came from a quarry north-east of Franklin, Idaho and the brick was manufactured locally from sand clay taken from a nearby sandbank. The construction was slow, lasting nearly twenty years. Although the building was used in a partially
Figure 22. Manti Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
Figure 23. Smithfield Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
completed condition for several years, it was not completely finished until 1905, being dedicated on February 19 of that year by Apostle Rudger Clawson. Today, the building is in ill repair and is used as a gymnasium and community hall (Toolson and Gregory 1958, 1-2).

Cedar City Tabernacle 1878-1885

On November 2, 1877, the cornerstone for the Cedar City Tabernacle was laid on the corner of Main and Center Streets. The building was 42 by 72 feet with a large tower, 110 feet high (Figure 24). All the men of Cedar City are listed as donating time or materials towards the building of the tabernacle. The women helped also, by promoting concerts, dinners, and plays to raise cash for windows and other items. The first Sacrament Meeting minutes recorded were on March 20, 1887, alluding to the fact that this was a ward tabernacle. It also may have been used for stake functions. The last meeting was held in it on March 13, 1932, and shortly thereafter it was torn down (Dalton 1973, 128).

Moroni Tabernacle 1879-1889

The Moroni Tabernacle, built of rock, was started in 1879 (Figure 25). A home-made winch was used to put each heavy rock in place. The mortar was a mixture of clay and sand. This was a ward tabernacle, with dimensions of 35 by
Figure 24. Cedar City Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
Figure 25. Moroni Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
85 feet but was capable of seating 1,000 people (Roberts 1974, 51). The first meeting was held in the tabernacle in August, 1889 (DUP 1947, 204). The quaint, rock building, with its central tower has since been torn down.

Summary

With the end of Mormon isolation, the Church leaders made some important changes that were intended to strengthen the outlying communities and maintain control over all the settlements. Tabernacles built from 1878 to 1900 were an important instrument in maintaining strength in the colonies in the Mormon Culture Region, as well as being a mechanism that served as a link with the headquarters of the Church. The restructuring of the Church's organization and its expanded auxiliary programs are reflected in features of the Mormon Landscape. The leaders encouraged building stake tabernacles throughout the region in areas where new stakes had recently been created. These buildings were large monumental structures, indicating the strength of the Church and permanency of each settlement.

Also with the end of isolation came exposure to the design trends of the outside world. Tabernacles of this period reflect Gothic and Victorian influences, that were previously popular in other areas of the United States.

Of the fourteen tabernacles built from 1877 to 1900, half are still standing. Of the seven existing tabernacles,
five are owned by the Church. Three of the tabernacles owned by the Church have been restored to their original condition, and the other two have had additions made to them, enabling them to be used for stake and ward purposes. Whether a tabernacle is sold, torn down, restored or added on to, largely becomes a local decision. The Brigham City, Logan and Paris Tabernacles continue to be used for stake conferences, and other community functions. The local people justify saving these buildings, through their continuous use and importance in the community. With modern additions, the Morgan and Manti Tabernacles serve as places for stake and ward purposes. Additions to these buildings, include gymnasiums, more classrooms, modern kitchens and libraries. The buildings that are no longer Church owned, are not maintained as well as the other tabernacles.
CHAPTER VII

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TABERNACLES
1901-1920

Introduction

The corollary of convergence is illustrated by looking at the tabernacles built in the early twentieth century. The landscape features built in the Mormon Culture Region by this time were beginning to converge more with architectural styles employed in other areas of the United States. The style of tabernacles emerging in the early nineteenth century suggests an important cultural change in the region. Instead of trying to remain in isolation, the Church now desired to become more "Americanized".

Political, public, and legal pressure on the Church was relieved by the Manifesto of 1890 which ended Church sanctioned polygamy. Utah achieved statehood in 1896 which united the Mormons with the rest of the United States, as well as facilitated the separation of Church and State. These factors influenced individualism which effected the architecture during this period (Roberts 1975, 321).
Use and Characteristics

Tabernacles built in this period are monumental structures combining several classical styles. In addition to the Gothic, Classical and Victorian styles that continued from previous years, Renaissance forms were often mixed together, creating several unique structures. New building materials now available, including concrete and steel, gave builders greater latitude in designing their structures. Emerging modern styles brought boldness and a massive look in some of the tabernacles built. Architects turned away from traditional forms and designed some of their buildings in a contemporary manner. However many members of the Church found it difficult to relate to the modern architecture, because it looked "unchurchlike" (Roberts 1975, 321-325).

The function of stake tabernacles remained the same as it was during the previous era, the buildings continuing to serve as large central meeting places for their stakes. Many of these buildings were used only for stake purposes and local community functions and were not used for weekly ward purposes as some of the early stake tabernacles had been.

The location of tabernacles built in this era extends from growing areas on the Wasatch Front to several outlying communities including some found in Wyoming and Idaho (Figure 26). Stake tabernacles built in Utah include the
Tabernacles built from 1901-1920

Figure 26. Locations of Tabernacles Built from 1901 to 1920.
Vernal, Loa, Grace, Payson, Pleasant Grove, American Fork, Granite, Price, and Garland Tabernacles. Stake tabernacles built in Idaho include those of the Oakley, Rexburg, Idaho Falls, Rigby, Montpelier, Blackfoot, and Malad Stakes. There was also one stake tabernacle built in Afton, Wyoming. Ward tabernacles include the Randolph, Richmond, Spring City, Wellsville, Lehi, and Kaysville, Utah tabernacles.

EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF ARCHITECTURE (1901-1920)

Vernal (Uintah Stake) Tabernacle 1900-1907

The Uintah Stake was organized on July 11, 1886 and within a few years a stake tabernacle was erected (Figure 27). The building, with a rock foundation and brick walls, has more the character of a civic building than a religious one. The town-hall look is derived from the combination of Roman and square windows. The door bays are also Roman with corbeled stone arches. On the roof is a large wooden, octagonal lantern tower with a cupola dome. The lantern provides ventilation through Roman arched bays. The tabernacle has a basement and two full stories, its main assembly hall having a seating capacity of 1,400. The building was dedicated on August 24, 1907 (Roberts 1974, 48). It still stands today and is owned by the Church.
Figure 27. Vernal Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
Oakley (Cassia Stake) Tabernacle 1902

The Cassia Stake was organized on November 19, 1887. The Gothic styled stake tabernacle was completed in 1902. It was dedicated in November of that year by Elder John Henry Smith. The structure, built of native brown and white lava rock, with a shingle roof, self-supporting girders, and metal ceiling, cost $12,000 (Figure 28). The size of the building measured 107 by 38 feet with a seating capacity of 700. The architect was William Allen of Ogden. The five rooms in the building included a main hall, vestry, council chamber, and two rooms in the basement (Improvement Era 1914, 779).

In November 1952, Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve was the official visitor. He was quoted as saying:

"You people here have ample buildings but surely they are not adequate" (Church Historic Sites File, Cassia Stake Tabernacle).

He then recommended that once a central modern stake and ward building was completed, the other stake and ward buildings would no longer be needed. Thus, the Cassia Stake Tabernacle was torn down and replaced with a new modern stake and ward building (Church Historic Sites File, Cassia Stake Tabernacle). Here, an obvious shift from the emphasis on tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region is seen. The leaders of the Church were now placing an emphasis on how
Figure 28. Oakley Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Idaho Historical Society.
adequate or functional a church building should be, not on its size or superior workmanship.

Afton (Star Valley Stake) Tabernacle 1904-1909

Although the Star Valley, in Wyoming, had been traversed for many years by pioneers and trappers, it was not until 1879 that the valley was settled by Mormon colonizers. Because Afton was the largest town by the late 1800s and was located in the most central part of the valley, it was chosen to be the place of the stake headquarters. On August 14, 1892 the Star Valley Stake was organized and twelve years later the construction on the stake tabernacle began. The building was made of sandstone quarried ten miles away on Poison Creek. The structure follows a middle English design, with a central tower extending 140 feet above the ground (Figure 29). The building was dedicated on August 15, 1909 by Joseph F. Smith (Call, 5). Additions were made in the 1940s with the same native stone (Figure 30). The original chapel has been converted into a gymnasium. Today, two wards meet in the renovated stake building.

Loa (Wayne Stake) Tabernacle 1906-1909

The Wayne Stake was organized on May 27, 1893 and the construction of the tabernacle (Figure 31) began on November 23, 1906. The building was designed to be used for all
Figure 29. Afton Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Archives.
Figure 30. Afton Tabernacle After Additions and Renovations. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
stake and ward purposes and measures 90 by 50 feet having grey stone walls finished with red sandstone on the corners and trimmings. The central tower, symmetrical facade, and steep pitched roof indicate characteristics of the colonial revival style (Carter and Goss 1988, 147). The original building had three rooms, including a basement, amusement hall, and chapel seating 1,000 people. There is also a small prayer room in the tower. The tabernacle was finished in 1909 and dedicated on October 24th of that year by President Joseph F. Smith (Roberts, 1974, 44). The structure has been renovated over the years to meet the changes and growing needs of the local members. In the 1960s the entire roof, steeple and belfry were removed and restored, and the chapel was refinished with exposed beams, oak trim and oak benches (Figure 32). The most recent renovation of the tabernacle occurred in 1991, being re-dedicated on March 31, 1991 (Rees 1991). This building is a good example of excellent historic preservation. The additions have been made using the same type of stone, and compatible architectural styling.

Grace (Bannock Stake) Tabernacle 1910-1911

On July 25, 1898 the Bannock Stake, in Grace, Idaho, was organized. Twelve years later, the Bannock Stake Tabernacle was erected (Figure 33). The building had a
Figure 31. Loa Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
Figure 32. Chapel of Loa Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
concrete and stone foundation and walls built of cement blocks. The size of the building measured 38 by 80 feet, with a seating capacity of 900. The cost, including the grounds, was $18,000 (Improvement Era 1914, 733). The design of the building included several Victorian Romanesque Revival characteristics, such as the semi-circular arches used in the windows and doors and the rock faced foundation (Carter and Goss 1988, 122). The building has since been razed.

Figure 33. Grace Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives.
Rexburg (Fremont Stake) Tabernacle 1911–1912

The Fremont Stake was organized on August 6, 1898, and thirteen years later a stake tabernacle was constructed. The Fremont Stake Tabernacle was built of native stone and patterned after the Nebo Stake Tabernacle in Payson, Utah. (The Nebo Stake Tabernacle (Figure 34) built in 1906, has since been demolished.) The dimensions are 120 by 62 feet, with six rooms found in the interior. It is a Renaissance structure of Italianate style with two square towers flanking a three-arched entrance. The construction was

Figure 34. Payson Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.
financed and paid for by funds from the local members and cost $33,000. Construction of the building began on July 15, 1911 and the dedicatory services were held on January 6th and 7th, 1912. President Joseph F. Smith pronounced the dedicatory prayer. Today the building is used as the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society (Crowder 1983, 162-165).

American Fork (Alpine Stake) Tabernacle 1909-1914

The Alpine Stake was organized on Jan 13, 1901. In 1909, construction began on the stake tabernacle (Figure 35). The structure has a cement basement, and walls of pressed brick. The massive building measures 84 by 132 feet and has a seating capacity in the auditorium of 2,000 people.

The modern style, reflecting the Prairie School look developed by Frank Loyd Wright, was seen by some as outstanding architecture. (The Idaho Falls Stake Tabernacle, constructed in 1915, also follows the Prairie School Design) Dr. Joseph M. Tanner in an article on "Architecture in Religion" made the following statement:

"Measured by this standard of beauty, and charm of architecture, a beauty that has come now to be recognized as the most lasting in its effects upon the human family, the tabernacle of the Alpine Stake, located in American Fork, is perhaps the most beautiful tabernacle in the Church. When other styles grow old and are out of fashion, that tabernacle will stand as a unique instance of imperishable beauty, in other words, of correct geometrical proportions" (Roberts 1975, 20).
This statement illustrates how the relative attractiveness of a building is a cultural phenomenon. Very few members of the Church considered this tabernacle a beautiful architectural masterpiece, yet an expert saw what the masses did not appreciate. This building exemplifies the "Americanization" process that began to occur in the Church in the early nineteenth century. The style shifted away from the look of the typical tabernacle in the region, and
moved towards the design trends currently employed in the outside world.

The building has served continuously since it was built for religious and community purposes. It is well maintained and also houses the local LDS employment services.

Garland (Bear River Stake) Tabernacle 1913-1914

The Bear River Stake was organized on October 11, 1908. Construction of the tabernacle began in February, 1918
(Figure 36). The building, built of red brick and trimmed with white sandstone, measures 65 by 113 feet and has a seating capacity of about 1500 people. Though it carries a modern appearance in overall style, there are a few Gothic elements in the design (Roberts 1974, 21). With several additions made to the original building, today the building is called the Garland Stake Tabernacle.

**Rigby Stake Tabernacle 1914-1915**

The Rigby Stake was organized on February 3, 1908. In 1914, under the direction of the second stake president, John W. Hart, the construction of a tabernacle was initiated. The modern design of the Rigby Stake Tabernacle was without steeple or steeply pitched roof. (The Price, Utah Tabernacle (Figure 37), also built in this era, was of similar modern design). The seating capacity was 1600. The rostrum area was large enough to seat the Bishoprics, High Council, Auxiliary heads, and the choir. The building also had offices for the Stake Presidency and High Council. A baptismal font was in the basement along with a small recreation hall and kitchen. The building was torn down in the spring of 1970 to make way for a new stake center constructed at the same location (Rigby Stake Presidency Letter 1973).
Montpelier Stake Tabernacle 1918-1919

One year after the stake was organized on December 23, 1917, the erection of the stake tabernacle began (Figure 38). Semi circular in shape, the Montpelier Tabernacle is one of the best remaining examples of early modern style.
architecture (Hart 1981, 10). The cornerstone was laid on June 22, 1918 and dedicatory services were held under the direction of President Heber J. Grant on September 14, 1919 (Utah Historical Society, Montpelier History). The Blackfoot Tabernacle (Figure 39) completed in 1921 was patterned after the Montpelier Tabernacle. The Blackfoot Tabernacle is no longer Church owned.
Figure 39. Blackfoot Tabernacle. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives.

Randolph Ward Tabernacle 1898–1914

Although built as a ward building, the Randolph Tabernacle was often used for stake purposes (Figure 40). The form of the building is somewhat unusual with an asymmetrical facade, an offset tower, and Roman arched windows. It could easily be characterized as Victorian Eclectic in style, combining elements from other styles (Carter and Goss 1988, 127). The building measures 102 by
50 feet, had five rooms, and was constructed of brick at a cost $25,000 (Roberts 1974, 37). Although finished to usable condition by 1905, the building was not dedicated until July 26, 1914 by Elder George Albert Smith (Thomson et al. 1962, 185). Several additions have been made to the building, and it is still used for ward purposes. It is in excellent condition, with the chapel looking nearly the same as it did originally. Local people do not call it a tabernacle.

Spring City Tabernacle 1902-1914

The Spring City Tabernacle was designed by Richard C. Watkins of Provo (Figure 41). Built of oolite limestone, it has a Romanesque Revival style (Peterson and Bennion 1987, 115). The building is T-shaped, the main hall measuring 60 by 40 feet, and the annex 25 by 60 feet. The tower rises to a height of 75 feet. The main hall is able to seat 1,000 people. The interior of the Spring City Tabernacle is impressive with the original wood floors and a vaulted beamed ceiling. The woodwork follows a Gothic theme. The building was dedicated on March 15, 1914 (Roberts 1974, 40). The tabernacle has had additions made to it of the same type of stone and materials. It continues to serve as the location for weekly, ward meetings.
Figure 40. Randolph Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
Figure 41. Spring City Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
Kaysville Tabernacle 1912-1914

The Kaysville Tabernacle is an interesting mixture of architectural styles (Figure 42). Though modern in design, it includes with it several Greek Revival characteristics, such as pedimented returns and columns (Carter and Goss 1988, 99). Designed by William Allen, the building measures approximately 50 feet by 131 feet, and has eighteen different rooms. The main auditorium seats from 850 to 900 people. The building was constructed of buff brick, stone and cement (Improvement Era 1914, 792). It continues to serve as a stake center and ward building.
Summary

As the Mormon Culture Region began converging with the rest of the United States the architectural styles employed in tabernacle building were also more readily influenced by the outside world. Tabernacles built by the end of this era became symbolic of the Church's acceptance in the American society, as well as being a distinguishing feature of the Mormon landscape, illustrating the uniqueness of the Church from the rest of the world.
CHAPTER VIII
THE LAST TABERNACLES BUILT
1921-1956

Introduction

By 1920, the desire of the LDS Church to become more "Americanized" was becoming a reality. The integration of Church members into the larger, American society resulted in establishing a positive image for the Church. The Church continued to grow in areas beyond the Mormon Culture Region. For example, during the 1920s, the percentage of Latter-day Saints living in the Mormon Culture Region declined while those living on the West Coast increased (Walker and Sadler 1992, 2:633). The growing number of members, and their new mobility and dispersion, contributed to the declining number of tabernacles built.

This chapter discusses the changes that occurred from 1921 to 1956 which contributed to the end of tabernacle construction. By looking at the common landscape feature of the present Mormon meetinghouse, the demise of tabernacles is better comprehended. Also related to the decline of tabernacle construction, was the increasing number of LDS temples being built throughout the world shortly after the end of this era.

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Of the few tabernacles built during from 1921 to 1956, many were built outside of the Mormon Culture Region. Thus it is evident, that the diffusion of tabernacles from the Mormon Culture Region to other areas was initiated in the early days of Mormon mobility. However, the diffusion was thwarted as the common Mormon meetinghouse replaced the need for tabernacles in all areas where Church members resided. Examples of tabernacles built outside the region include the Oakland Tabernacle built in 1922, the Hollywood Tabernacle dedicated in 1929, and the Honolulu Tabernacle built in 1941.

**Church Building Priorities**

Since 1920, standard planning has characterized LDS architecture. Standard planning came in response to Church growth, and the need for a more cost effective use of Church funds. Tabernacles no longer seemed to be a necessary priority and were replaced by modern stake centers that served ward and stake needs in one building.

In the early 1920s, the Church Architect, Joseph Don Carlos Young, designed a plan for meetinghouses that structurally joined the previously separate chapel and recreation hall through a foyer. Additional classrooms and offices were also a part of this plan. By the 1950s a new plan was devised by architect Theodore Pope, which connected the cultural hall to the back of the chapel. This
arrangement allowed for large assemblies in the chapel to overflow into the cultural hall. This meant that large general assemblies could meet in a regular meetinghouse rather than using the old tabernacles (Hamilton 1992, 2:877).

By the end of World War II, the Church had experienced international growth. In 1947, Church membership reached one million, with much of the growth occurring outside of Mormon Culture Region and even beyond the borders of the United States (Allen and Cowan 1992, 2:639). This growth led to the need of temples in areas outside of the Mormon Culture Region. The cultural phenomena of growth outside the Mormon Culture Region is indicated in the human landscape. This change is evidenced in the end of tabernacle construction in the Mormon Culture Region and the increase of temple building outside of this region. Because modern stake meetinghouses replaced the function the old tabernacles filled, money which would have been spent to build new tabernacles could instead be used to build temples in areas throughout the world.

Use and Characteristics

Tabernacles built in Utah from 1921 to 1956 include the Blanding, Richfield, Granite, Kanab and Ogden Tabernacles. Tabernacles built in Idaho include the Preston, Driggs,
The Last Tabernacles Built
1921-1956

Figure 43. Locations of Tabernacles Built from 1921 to 1956.
Pocatello Tabernacles (Figures 43, 44, 45). All of these tabernacles, except the Ogden Tabernacle are used for ward purposes. The Ogden Tabernacle is used today to hold stake conferences, seminary graduations, and community functions. It is also the headquarters for the Utah Ogden Mission. The local people in Blanding, Preston, Kanab and Pocatello do not call these buildings tabernacles, but refer to them simply as stake or ward buildings.

Great detail about the construction of these buildings has not been recorded, but generalizations can be made according to the time they were built and the architectural styles employed. For example, the Granite Stake Tabernacle, built in 1929, is typical of the buildings constructed in
the late twenties and early thirties (Figure 46). The structure is well built and lavishly decorated. The Early Christian design was done by architect Lorenzo Snow Young. The style is typified by the stone and brick masonry and the decorative terra-cotta details (Carter and Goss 1988, 153).

The Blanding Tabernacle built in 1928 follows a Gothic design (Figure 47). The numerous buttresses and Gothic windows give the large building character and balance. It

**Figure 45.** Richfield Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
is a split-level, with a T-shape, built of stone and brick (Roberts 1974, 22). It was built with classrooms and other facilities typical of regular meetinghouses. It is likely that this particular building has been termed tabernacle by the Church and Utah Historical Society due to its size and unusual architectural qualities.

Among the last tabernacles built was the Ogden Tabernacle (Figure 48). The building was completed in 1952 and dedicated in 1956. The exterior design follows a plan similar to the temples built in the same era, such as the

Figure 46. Granite Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
Figure 47. Blanding Tabernacle. Courtesy of The Utah Historical Society.

London, Switzerland and New Zealand Temples. It has a towering steeple, and inside, a large assembly room with a balcony similar to the early tabernacles. In the entrance is a beautiful painting of the Savior.

Summary

The growth of the Church led to standardized planning for all Church architecture. Following the Depression and World War II, the Church Building Committee was organized in 1946. Under this committee, funding for Church buildings
Figure 48. Ogden Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
became a 50-50 share between the local Church members and general Church financing. The Committee supervised the preparation of building plans by independent architects, and the local bishop became the contractor for the project. Several meetinghouses were built under this procedure. Meetinghouses were constructed to house two or more wards. Stake centers were built to house wards, as well as the stake. By 1965, the Church Building Committee instituted more centralized control of the building program. Most buildings built today, are from standardized plans, financed completely by the General Church instead of the local members (Anderson and Jackson 1992, 1:236).

The Church Building Committee emphasized the building of temples and standard plan meetinghouses throughout the world. Thus, more members of the Church in many areas of the world have the opportunity to attend the temple. And, the common meetinghouse could meet the needs of large general assemblies as well as facilitate classroom instruction and the auxiliary program's various activities (Figure 49).
Figure 49. Floor Plan of a late 20th Century Stake Meetinghouse.
CHAPTER IX

THE WELLSVILLE TABERNACLE
UNDER THE THREAT OF DESTRUCTION

Tabernacles: A Disappearing Feature on the Landscape

Over the years, several tabernacles have been razed or sold. The reasons why they have become a disappearing feature on the landscape include: poor structural designs making them unsafe, other tabernacles replacing them and modern stake centers serving the members needs more adequately than the old tabernacles were able to. Within the last few decades, great controversy has evolved over the fate of some of the old Mormon tabernacles. Tabernacles have become one of the most important subjects of debate between preservationists, who want to save the old buildings, and modernists, who prefer replacing the tabernacles with modern meetinghouses.

In 1965, the Heber Tabernacle was threatened with destruction. The Coalville Tabernacle was destined for destruction by 1970, and the Bountiful Tabernacle was also nearly razed in 1975. Dependent on the decisions of the local Church leaders, the fate of these three tabernacles each turned out differently. The Heber Tabernacle was deeded into public hands, the Coalville edifice was torn
down and the Bountiful Tabernacle was renovated, expanded and modernized for continued Church use.

Once the Church ends its support for a building, it is very difficult to generate revenue to maintain the old structures. For example, in the case of the Coalville Tabernacle, with renovation for Church purposes out of the question, the stake was informed by Church headquarters in Salt Lake City that work could not begin on the new stake center until the disposition of the old tabernacle had been settled. So, in the end the choice was either to go on using the inadequate tabernacle, or they could have it demolished and build a new stake center suited for their needs (Haggerty 1980, 60).

A current example of a tabernacle under threat is the Wellsville Tabernacle. In 1981, the Wellsville Tabernacle was sold to the city, and today, it is again under the threat of destruction. The cost to keep the structure may be greater than the local people can afford.

**Wellsville Tabernacle 1902-1908**

In 1856 Peter Maughan was appointed by Brigham Young to take a colony of Saints into Cache County and make a settlement. The Saints settled in present day Wellsville, which was the first town founded in Cache Valley, and on November 13, 1859 a ward was organized (Jenson 1941, 935). By the turn of the century, the ward had grown to 1,251
members. Because of the crowded meeting quarters, the people undertook the building of a suitable house of worship, which has since been termed a tabernacle (Figure 50).

The location for the tabernacle, designed in the Gothic Revival Style by C.T. Barret, was in the center of town, on the Public Square. Ground was broken for the 65 by 115 foot structure, on April 3, 1902 by the town's former Bishop William H. Maughan. After fourteen months of hard labor, the basement walls of stone, reinforced with brick and cement, were finished. On June 13, 1903, the cornerstone was laid.

All the local people contributed to the building of the tabernacle in one way or another. The men contributed time and labor in the actual construction of the building. Young girls cultivated beets to earn money to turn into the tabernacle fund. Ward members sent hay, grain, veal, cheese, butter, and eggs to Salt Lake City to raise more money. The Relief Society made sixty quilts in one year to earn money to contribute towards the building.

The walls of the tabernacle were built of red brick, with cement trimmings. A brick tower, with a five pointed steeple, rose one-hundred and thirty-five feet above the ground. By 1904, the roof was on, and work continued in the interior. On June 12, 1907, the Relief Society held their
Figure 50. Wellsville Tabernacle. Conrad Jenson Photographer.
first meeting in the Tabernacle's new Relief Society Room. Two hundred and seven members attended. The first time the building was used for public worship was at a Hyrum Stake Quarterly conference held in December of 1907.

On June 28, 1908 the Wellsville Tabernacle was dedicated by President Anthon H. Lund, second counselor to President Joseph F. Smith. In the dedicatory prayer he said:

"May it stand as a monument of the faith of the people who live here, which faith they have shown in their works, and that their children and their children's children may enjoy what they have wrought" (Wellsville History Committee 1985, 385).

The Wellsville Tabernacle was perhaps the last major edifice erected in the Cache valley by pioneer methods. Virtually everything was produced locally and all the work was done by the local members.

**Wellsville Tabernacle Through the Years**

In 1928 the tabernacle had a new two manual Pilcher pipe organ installed at a cost of $7,000. During the 1930s, the interior walls were painted, new benches were installed, a small amusement hall was made in the basement, and indoor plumbing became a new luxury. In 1936, a wind storm rubbed electrical wires bare and a fire started in the tower which was promptly removed because the damage made it unsafe. For several years the tabernacle stood without a tower.

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From 1951 to 1956 the tabernacle underwent extensive remodeling to meet the needs of the local members (Figure 51). Classrooms were added, colored glass windows were installed, and the building was painted white on the outside. Other important changes included adding a library, updating the heating, lighting, and public address systems, and removing the baptismal font in order to make a scout room.

In 1973, the Wellsville Tabernacle was selected for official registration as a Utah State Historic Site, and later was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. By 1978, a movement to raze, sell, or remodel the building got underway. Controversy began between those wishing to preserve the building and those favoring a new stake center. The media became actively involved in the debate. Finally on December 30, 1979, in a meeting for Melchizedek Priesthood holders, a vote was taken on the proposal of building a new stake center rather than restoring the tabernacle. One hundred and seventy-nine voted in favor of the new building with only fourteen opposing.

The last Church meetings were held in the Tabernacle on July 19, 1981. The tabernacle was sold to the city for the sum of $65,000, which was the exact amount that had been used to construct the building (Wellsville History Committee 1985, 380-390).
Figure 51. Wellsville Tabernacle Floor Plan. Courtesy of Wellsville City.
Figure 51. (continued)
The Wellsville Tabernacle in 1992

When the City obtained the tabernacle, it received a grant from a State agency to make improvements and/or purchase the building. One condition of the grant was that the city maintain the building until 1994. As 1994 approaches, the city is now involved in deciding the fate of the tabernacle in the future.

Over the last six years the city has annually spent an average of $16,501.87 for all cultural property. To simply heat and light the tabernacle the city annually spent an average of $6,208.06, which is almost 38% of their total expenditures for cultural purposes (Wellsville City Corporation 1991).

In November 1991, the city sent a letter to the residents explaining the cost of maintaining the old tabernacle. Also included in the letter was a survey to obtain the people's opinion of the tabernacle. The results of the survey show that the majority of the people would not be willing to have a monthly assessment added to their utility bill to help maintain the tabernacle. Of the four hundred and nine people who responded to this part of the survey, one hundred and ninety answered that they would be willing to pay the assessment, and two hundred and nineteen responded that they would not.
For those who answered yes to the assessment question, they were then asked to indicate how much they would be willing to give on a monthly basis (Table 3).

Table 3.

Monthly amount residents would be willing to pay to maintain the Wellsville Tabernacle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE</th>
<th>MONTHLY AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>UNDER $1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey also asked what the people felt should be done with the building. The following options were given:

1. Maintain the building as has been over the past five years.
2. Assess the residents on a monthly basis and improve the building.
3. Sell the building.
4. Give the building away.
5. Tear the building down.
6. Other

The answers to these questions indicated that the option receiving the most votes was that of having the building torn down (Table 4)

Table 4.

Public opinion regarding the fate of the Wellsville Tabernacle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTIONS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN FAVOR OF THE OPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining the Building</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Assessment</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling the Building</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving the Building Away</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tearing the Building Down</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Options</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On April 28, 1992, a city council meeting was held where a "Plausibility Study of the Wellsville Tabernacle" was presented by the JACH Architectural Firm of Logan. This firm had recently been hired by the city to evaluate the current state of the building and give possible recommendations for its future. The six week study and
analysis of the tabernacle looked at every aspect of the building's structure.

The study suggested four different options for the Wellsville Tabernacle. The first phase consisted of very basic improvements with an estimated cost of $71,936. Phase two would include functional improvements to meet current building codes. The cost of this phase would be an additional $38,630 to the cost of phase one. The third phase would be a complete restoration, which would cost $1,963,466. The fourth option is to have the building demolished and removed for a total cost of $60,349. The general opinion of the architectural firm was to either completely restore the building or have it torn down.

Although a decision has not been made regarding the fate of the old building, it seems likely that it will be torn down. Unfortunately it is one of the last physical links to the pioneer history of Wellsville.

Summary

The history of the Wellsville Tabernacle illustrates the impact that Church growth, expanded auxiliary programs, and technological advancement have had on the use and importance of Mormon Tabernacles over time. When the building was completed in 1908, it was more than adequate for the needs of the local members. However, because of the cultural changes experienced throughout the Mormon Culture
Region over time, this building became inadequate for the needs of the members.

After the turn of the century, the Church was characterized by its expansion and internal consolidation. During the first half of the century, there were several changes made affecting the local people. This era saw a steady increase of enlarged authority turned over to the local stake and ward leaders. The Church reduced the size of stakes to make them more functional. The Church's auxiliary programs, which were once locally administered, became more centrally directed with more unified curriculum and directed age group programs. With the Sunday School and Priesthood quorums providing doctrinal instruction, the MIA (Mutual Improvement Associations) increasingly turned to activities such as dance, drama, music and sports (Walker and Sadler 1992, 2:635). These activities were intended to strengthen the youth and provide fun activities in a wholesome environment. Such activities required recreation halls or gymnasiums. Because the tabernacle was unable to serve many of these changing needs, it experienced three major renovations to facilitate the steady changes in Church programs.

Technological advancement influenced the change in importance of the Wellsville Tabernacle over time. It once was an important gathering place for the members of the Church in Wellsville and surrounding areas. The
significance changed as quarterly conferences were changed to semi annual conferences, and General Authorities only visiting the stakes every other year. Much of the instruction received from the General Church leaders is now broadcast via satellite to stakes throughout the world.

Because the Wellsville Tabernacle was purchased by the city when the new stake center was built, the community has been able continue to enjoy its beauty and early pioneer significance. However, now again threatened with destruction, those same values employed by the pioneers in building the tabernacle may be the same type of ideals that contribute to its demolition. The Church encourages its members to be practical, conservative people. With the general income of rural Utah towns being low, and the rate of contribution to the Church high, many would oppose raising taxes to maintain the building.

Although the building still stands as a monument to the pioneer efforts, because it is now owned by the city, it no longer maintains a religious significance for the current residents. The tabernacle no longer serves as a symbol of the Mormon Community, which leaves few people willing to contribute in saving it.
CHAPTER X
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

By utilizing some of Lewis' axioms for reading the landscape to analyze the visual landscape feature of tabernacles, several conclusions about the Mormon culture have been drawn. The fundamental research process employed in this work was based on the axiom of landscape obscurity. In order to link the visual feature of tabernacles to the settlement pattern and cultural attitudes of the LDS people, several questions concerning the size, shape, design, function, original purpose and fate of the buildings were addressed.

The axiom of landscape as clue to culture was helpful in establishing how tabernacles were and are indicative of different elements of the Mormon culture. The geographic axiom was used to view tabernacles in both local and regional settings to better understand the early settlement process. With the use of both of these axioms, it was found that tabernacles were an integral part of the early colonization process. The tabernacles were located in communities which were perceived by the leaders of the Church to become large central areas of settlement. The
buildings served as a mechanism to help foster unity in the community. They also provided a central location where the Saints could gather in large assemblies to be instructed in both temporal and spiritual matters by the leaders of the Church from Salt Lake City. The tabernacles became monuments in the Mormon Culture Region signifying the successful settlement process, and intended permanency in the area. The structures were symbolic of the importance of religion in the early pioneer's lives, emphasizing their faith in God and belief in the principles the Church emphasized.

Because the buildings were constructed to hold large assemblies, the tabernacles only had a few classrooms located in the basements of the structures. Over time, the basic design of the tabernacles became inadequate for the changing needs of the members. With more uniform Church curriculum and expanded auxiliary programs, it was necessary to have more classrooms and space for recreational activities. Some tabernacles were added on to, and others were replaced according to the needs of the local members.

By the late 1950s, tabernacles were no longer built and many of the old buildings could not be kept because of their high maintenance cost and low practicality. Tabernacles have become relic features on the landscape.

Tabernacles did fill an important role, enabling many of the goals of the Church to be accomplished from 1847
until the 1950s. However, with continued growth in Church membership, change in Church programs and technological advancement, the need for tabernacles changed. These changes also affected other Mormon landscape features such as temples and meetinghouses.

By utilizing the axiom of cultural unity and landscape equality, relationships between different landscape features and on-going cultural changes are better understood. Each feature on the landscape is important and can indicate how cultures adapt to growth and change. The changes the Church experienced, as a result of growth and progress, are evident in how meetinghouses have changed over time. These changes in meetinghouses also affected the need for tabernacles. The meetinghouse plan, adopted by the Church in the 1950s, is very efficient in housing both stakes and wards. This basic plan has been improved and adapted over the years to construct buildings which are functional and practical for the members of the Church. The standard meetinghouse design has the recreation hall adjacent to the rear of the chapel where the two rooms are separated by a curtain or removable wall. When the curtain is opened, the two rooms function together as a large assembly hall. Classrooms are built around the chapel and recreation hall to facilitate the needs of the Sunday School and other auxiliary programs in which the members participate. Therefore, the new,
practical meetinghouse has replaced the need for the old tabernacles.

Temples have also become a growing visual landscape feature symbolizing the presence and strength of the Church in the Mormon Culture Region and throughout the world. These sacred houses of worship have always been considered the most important visual element of the Mormon landscape; however, there were very few temples in comparison to the number of tabernacles in the early days of the Church. Today, the frequency of temples in many countries throughout the world indicates the permanency and establishment of the Church the world over. These buildings fill the visual role previously held by tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region.

Although it may not be possible to save all of the remaining tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region, the buildings that still exist, will stand as an important feature on the Mormon landscape. They are visual symbols of the pioneer heritage and cultural values of the early settlers in the region. This thesis demonstrates how changes in the Mormon culture are reflected in a visual landscape feature. The early tabernacles were an important element in the growth and development of Mormon settlements in the region. Over time, the importance and need for tabernacles has diminished. Tabernacles, or lack of them, standardized meetinghouses, and temples all reflect the basic values of the Mormon culture.
Viewing a part of history in a town or city that may be completely modernized in all other aspects, provides a link with the past. David O. McKay spoke the following words at a dedication of an addition to the Bountiful Tabernacle. What he said is equally applicable to other tabernacles in the Mormon Culture Region:

"This house becomes more than just a house of worship. It is a monument, a link in the golden chain uniting the present with the past. It is only a means to an end, and that end is the development of character,...instilling testimonies of God's existence..." (Simmonds)
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The Geographical Landscape of Tabernacles
in The Mormon Culture Region

Crystal Wride Jenson
Department of Geography
M. S. Degree, August 1992

ABSTRACT

Although tabernacles do not hold the sacred meaning of Mormon temples, they are symbolic landmarks of the culture of the early Mormon Saints. Tabernacles were once an integral part of each community in which they were located. They were often the main buildings in the community, reflecting the coherent, orderly nature of a Mormon town. Today, many of the original tabernacles have been torn down and others are under the threat of destruction.

The first tabernacles built in the Mormon Culture Region were constructed in the 1850s. They were large meetinghouses built for the purpose of holding large general meetings. They were preacher centered houses of worship with few classrooms or recreational facilities. Over time the tabernacles became larger and often more ornate. Because of the growth of the Church, change in Church programs and technological advancement tabernacles are no longer built. Those remaining are threatened with destruction because of high maintenance costs, and low practicality.

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