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The Mormon Village: Genesis and Antecedents of the City of Zion Plan

Richard H Jackson

As settlement in the United States progressed beyond the Appalachians, establishment of cities became the focus of intense speculative activity. From the 1790s until the land had been settled there was a “city-mania” among Americans, contemporary observers noting that nearly every person in the Ohio-Mississippi Valley had in his pocket a grandiose plan for a city that he wanted to sell in whole or part. The claims for these newly established, proposed, or imagined cities were eloquent. All maintained the advantages of city life with its opportunities for education and social interaction. Some of these cities—Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, Pitts-

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3Claims by city promoters in newspapers led to a certain degree of cynicism concerning them as early as the 1820s, as may be seen in the following advertisement for the city of Skunksburgh, published in a Cincinnati paper in the fall of 1819: "This charming place, better known as Log-Hall, heretofore the residence of Fiddler Billy, is situated in Wilks county, not far from the junction of Pickett’s main spring branch, and a Western fork, called the Slough, which runs in the rainy season, and washes the confines of Farnsworth’s lower hog pens. This noble stream, by the use of proper and sufficient means, may be made navigable to the sea. It abounds in delicate minnows, a variety of terrapins, and . . . frogs, which, in size, voice, and movement, are inferior to none. . . . A noble bluff of 18 inches commands the harbor, and affords a most advantageous situation for defensive military works. This bluff slopes off into nearly a level, diversified only by the gentle undulations of surface, as will give a sufficient elevation for the principal public edifices. Commodious and picturesque positions will be therefore reserved for the Exchange and City hall, a church, one Gymnastic and Polytechnic foundation, one Olympic and two Dramatic theatres, an Equestrian circus, an observatory, two marine and two Foundling Hospitals, and in the most commercial part of the city will be a reservation for seventeen banks, to each of which may be attached a lunatic Hospital. . . . The future advantages of this situation is now impossible to calculate; but already it is the emporium of all the water melons, ground pease, and suck collars, and all the brooms, chickens, and baskets, that are bought and sold among the before mentioned places, in the course of commerce. To mercantile men, however, a mere statement of its geographical position is deemed sufficient, without comment. It stands on about the middle ground between Baltimore and Orleans, Charleston and Nickajak, Savannah and Coweta, Knoxville and St. Mary’s, Salisbury and Cusseta, and between Little Heil on the Altamaha, and Telfico block house. A line of Velocipede stages will be immediately established from Skunksburgh straight through the O-ke-fin-o-cau Swamp, to the southernmost
burgh—prospered. Others, such as the Town of America, New Lisbon, Port Lawrence, and Palermo, were not so fortunate.

The cities and towns which were founded during this period were remarkably similar. With the exception of Circleville, Ohio, most town plats consisted of a regular grid pattern with straight streets crossing at right angles. The pattern of America's cityscape was not random, for although the initial settlements of New England had an irregular pattern, the vast majority of all cities of the United States were laid out according to a definite plan. Early examples of planned cities include Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1683), Savannah, Georgia (1733), and Washington, D. C. (1791). These and nearly all others were based on a rectangular grid pattern, normally modeled after that of Philadelphia.

Out of this milieu, Joseph Smith proposed the City of Zion plan. The basis for the City of Zion plan is unclear; sent to the brethren in Missouri on 25 June 1833, it is nowhere given the status of a revelation, though it is possible that it was in part inspired by descriptions of the New Jerusalem in Revelations 21 or Ezekiel 48. In general, however, the grid pattern layout and the reasons given for establishing the city in its prescribed form vary but little from those used elsewhere in the trans-Appalachian region.

General instructions relative to the city plan were included in marginal notes:

Explanation—This plot contains one mile square all the squares in the plot containes ten acres each being 40 rods square you will observe that the lots are laid off alternate in the squares in one square running from the south and North to the line through the middle of the square and the next the lots runs from the east and west to the middle line each lot is 4 perches in front and 20 back

point of the Florida peninsula; and, as soon as a canal shall be cut through the rocky mountains, there will be direct communication with the Columbia river, and thence to the Pacific Ocean. Then opens a theatre of trade bounded only by the Universe!

Andrew Aircastle
Theory M'Vision
M. L. Moonlight, Jr., & Co.
Proprietors

(Liberty Hall Cincinnati, 1 October 1819, as cited in Wade, The Urban Frontier, pp. 32-33.)


making \( \frac{1}{4} \) [an error, it makes \( \frac{1}{2} \)] of an acre in each lot so that no one street will be built on inturly through the street but one square the houses stand on one street and on the next on another except the middle range of squares which runs North and south in which range are the painted squares the lots are laid off in these squares North and South all of them because these squares are 40 perches by 60 perches being twenty perches longer than the others the long way of them being east and west and by runing all the lots in these squares North and South it makes all the lots in the City of one size the painted squares in the middle are for publick buildings the one without any figures is for store houses for the Bishop and to be devoted to his use figure one is for Temples for the use of the presidency the circles inside of this square are the places for the temples you will see it contains twelve figures Figure 2 is for the Temples for the lesser Priesthood\(^6\) it also is to contain 12 Temples the whole plot is supposed to contain from 15 to 20 thousand people you will therefore see that it will require 24 buildings to supply them with houses of worship schools & none of these temples are to be smaller than the one of which we send you the draft\(^6\) this Temple is to be built in square marked figure one and and to be built where the circle is which has a cross on it. On the north and south of the lot where the line is drawn is to be laid off for barns stables etc for the use of the city so that no barns or stables will be in the City among the houses the ground to be occupied for these must be laid off according to wisdom. On the North and South are to be laid off the farms for the agriculturists a sufficient quantity of land to supply the whole plot and if it cannot be laid off without going too great a distance from the city there must also be laid off on the east and west when this square is thus laid off and supplied lay off another in the same way and so fill up the world in these last days and let every man live in the City for this is the City of Zion.

All the streets are of one width being eight perches wide also the space round the outer edge of the painted squares is to be eight perches (rods) between the Temple and the street on every side.

The scale of the plot is 40 perches to the inch.

No one lot in this City is to contain more than one house & that is to be built 25 feet back from the street leaving a small yard in front to be planted in a grove according to the taste of the builder the rest of the lot for gardens & all the houses to be of brick & stone.\(^7\)

\(^6\)The two squares with numbers in them are labeled one and two.

\(^6\)These temples were apparently meant to be multipurpose buildings used for worship, education, and other public functions.

Figure 1 - The City of Zion Plat
The important features of the proposed city are its uniform grid system, location of houses on alternate sides of the blocks, uniform setback and construction material for houses, separate district for public buildings from which residences were barred, and location of farmlands and animals outside the residential section. This plan was utopian in nature, apparently not completely thought out, and never fully implemented. The city's proposed population, for instance, suggests a lack of careful planning. According to the marginal notes, the city would contain 15,000 or 20,000 people. Simple calculation reveals that there are 42 blocks, each containing 20 lots set aside for residential use, and 4 larger blocks each containing 32 lots. This means that 16 people would have to reside on each lot if the population were 15,000 and 21 people would have to live on each lot if there were 20,000. Moreover, this density was to be achieved with "but one house on a lot."\(^7\)

It is interesting to compare the proposed City of Zion with other cities of the United States at that time. It differed in all respects from the New England village, with its irregular blocks and narrow streets, but is remarkably similar to Philadelphia and other cities of the Ohio Valley established in the early 1800s. Philadelphia, like the City of Zion, consists of a regular gridiron street pattern, with open land for public buildings, uniform spacing and setback for all buildings, a central square of ten acres, and major streets of 100-foot width.\(^8\)

Wide streets have been emphasized as being a unique aspect of the City of Zion plat, but many other communities established in the 1810-1830 period have street widths as wide or even wider. For example, Waverly, Ohio (1831) had a main street 215 feet wide; Sandusky, Ohio, (1830) had streets 125 feet wide; Fremont, Ohio (1816) had main streets 132 feet wide; and Bellevue, Clyde, and Woodville, Ohio, all had streets 120 feet wide.\(^9\) Numerous other examples could be given, but the significant point is that communities in the area where Joseph Smith lived and visited had street widths comparable to those of the City of Zion plat. Street widths do become an important distinguisher of

and phrases. The original plat, from which my transcription was made, is located in the Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\(^7\)HC, 1:358-59. The only other explanation for the apparent miscalculation in population is that the Prophet was thinking of polygamous families at this early date. Average family size of the time never approached this figure.

\(^8\)Goodman, Urban Planning, p. 9.

\(^9\)Information obtained through personal correspondence with records offices of the respective communities.
the Mormon village in the Great Basin settlements, however, as will be discussed later.

The requirement for locating barns outside of town in the City of Zion plat reflects life in other communities of the time in which the problem of livestock odor and waste disposal was one of the central concerns of all communities. The concept of small farms outside the town was found in most communities in New England and in the trans-Appalachian settlements. When Cincinnati was established in 1789, lands around the town were divided into four-acre farms, while at Lexington, Kentucky (1781) they were divided into five- and ten-acre plots. The only factor which was unique to the City of Zion plat of Joseph Smith was the uniform width of the streets. Other communities established during the era had wide main streets, but the side streets rarely exceeded 99 feet in width. The significant point which emerges when the City of Zion plat is compared with contemporary American towns is the similarity of the City of Zion to the other towns.

None of the later Mormon settlements founded under the Prophet’s direction followed the City of Zion plan exactly, although Kirtland, Ohio, surveyed shortly after the plat for the City of Zion was developed, followed it most closely. The blocks of Kirtland were square, with 20 lots per block, alternate blocks having their lots oriented differently (see figure 2). Kirtland does not have a center tier of larger blocks as did the proposed City of Zion, but resembles it otherwise.

The later communities developed under Joseph Smith’s leadership departed radically from his proposed City of Zion but have characteristics which do fall within the range found in communities in the trans-Appalachian west. The Mormons laid out a city at Far West, Missouri, in 1836 which was dissimilar in many respects to the City of Zion. Four large streets, each 132 feet wide, bordered a central square and extended through the city. The other streets in Far West were 82½ feet wide, and the blocks were 396 feet square and were divided into 4 equal size lots, each lot being approximately 100 feet square. The plan of Far West is identical to other cities of the Midwest (see figure 3). The layout of Nauvoo (1840) also differed from the City of Zion plat; the streets were narrow, all being 50 feet wide, and the blocks were the same size and

22Wade, The Urban Frontier, p. 21, for example, notes the efforts of the citizens of Lexington, Kentucky, to keep sheep and hogs off the streets.
23Ibid., pp. 20, 24.

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division as those at Far West (see figure 4). Indeed, the only resemblance to the original City of Zion plat was the adherence to the grid pattern common to most settlements at that time.

The first city established under Brigham Young’s direction was at Winter Quarters, at what is now a suburb of Omaha. This community was laid out with blocks 20 by 40 rods (330 by 660 feet) divided into lots 4 rods by 10 (66 by 165 feet). We have no record of street width in Winter Quarters.

ADVANTAGE OF NUCLEATED SETTLEMENTS

Though later Mormon settlements were unlike the City of Zion in physical details, their morphology often grew out of the same theological and philosophical concepts as inspired the City of Zion plan. In a letter accompanying his plan, Joseph Smith listed the benefits of nucleated settlements:

The farmer and his family, therefore, will enjoy all the advantages of schools, public lectures and other meetings. His home will no longer be isolated, and his family denied the benefits of society, which has been, and always will be, the great educator of the human race; but they will enjoy the same privileges of society, and can surround their homes with the same intellectual life, the same social refinement as will be found in the home of the merchant or banker or professional man.38

The advantages of village life described by the Prophet are an extension of the milieu of the New England village of the 1700s, and reflect an attitude common among occupants of the Ohio Valley settlements in the early 1800s. More than a decade prior to Smith’s statement quoted above, for example, an observer noted that among the residents of individual farms “neither schools, nor churches, can without difficulty be either built by the planters or supported” since “persons who live on scattered plantations are in a great measure cut off from that daily intercourse, which softens and polishes man.” The opposite of this was found in the villages where “all the people are neighbors: social beings; converse; feel; sympathize; mingle minds; cherish sentiments and are subjects of at least some degree of refinements.”14

One of the themes of the New England milieu which was particularly emphasized in the settlements west of the Appalachians was education for all people. This ideal was common to all of the

38In Roberts, Comprehensive History, 1:312.

230
SECTION OF PLAN OF NAUVOO
AFTER ORIGINAL IN CHURCH HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

SCALE in feet 0 198 396

Figure 4

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Eastern seaboard where prior to the American revolution "an abiding faith in the value of widespread education possessed all townsmen."\textsuperscript{15} The lack of educational opportunities for rural dwellers on the Eastern seaboard in the 1700s led farmers to send their children to boarding schools. Boston, for example, attracted boarding students from all over New England, even to elementary schools. Evening classes provided educational opportunities for adults or apprentices who had to work in the day.\textsuperscript{16}

The New England emphasis on education is similar to Mormon Church leaders' explanations of why it was necessary to bring the Saints together into communities. Since "the glory of God is intelligence," Saints were continually urged to gather together into cities so that they could be educated about religious and secular matters, as may be seen in the following 1838 message to the Saints from the First Presidency:

In order that the object for which the saints are gathered together in the last days, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began may be obtained, it is essentially necessary, that they should all be gathered into the Cities appointed for that purpose; as it will be much better for them all, in order that they may be in a situation to have the necessary instruction. . . .

The advantages of so doing are numerous while the disadvantages are few, if any. As intelligence is the great object of our holy religion, it is of all things important, that we should place ourselves in the best situation possible to obtain it. And we wish it to be deeply impressed on the minds of all, that to obtain all the knowledge which the circumstances of man will admit of, is one of the principle objects the saints have in gathering together. Intelligence is the result of education, and education can only be obtained by living in compact society; so compact, that schools of all kinds can be supported, and that while we are supporting schools, we without any exception, can be benefited thereby.

It matters not how advanced many who embrace the gospel, be in life, the true object of their calling, is to increase their intelligence; to give them knowledge and understanding in all things which pertain to their happiness and peace, both here and hereafter.—And it is therefore required, that they place themselves in a situation accordingly. . . .

One of the principal objects then, of our coming together, is to obtain the advantages of education; and in order to do this, compact society is absolutely necessary.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 176.

\textsuperscript{17}Elders Journal (Far West, Missouri), August 1838, p. 53.
The emphasis on advantages of city life given by the Mormon leaders mirror the statements of political leaders, philanthropists, and developers of the period.\(^{28}\)

There can be little doubt that the desire to educate and refine the members was the underlying motivation which led the leaders to emphasize the need to live in a compact group. This desire, coupled with the need for cooperative effort in establishing viable settlements in the Great Basin, led to the use of the village as the settlement form in Utah. Observers have long maintained that the plan for all of these villages was an outgrowth of the City of Zion plan presented by Joseph Smith, and that they were all alike, but careful analysis suggests otherwise.\(^{29}\) Although most settlements in Utah were nucleated, gridiron settlements (for reasons of education and socialization), they deviated widely from the particulars of the City of Zion plat and differed a great deal from each other as well.

\section*{Settlements in the Great Basin}

Shortly after the Mormons' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, plans for a city were proposed by Brigham Young. The plan for

\(^{28}\)Wade, The Urban Frontier, provides a useful overview of prevailing ideas as to the advantages of city life as viewed in the early 1800s. Specific statements mirroring Mormon comments can be found in most books relating to urban development in America, and in newspapers and other accounts of the period.

\(^{29}\)The widespread acceptance that the Mormon settlements were all the same is found in most works. Representative examples include: Lowry Nelson, The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952), p. 38 states that all the villages of Utah were based on the plan presented by Joseph Smith; Jan O. M. Broek and John W. Webb, A Geography of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 354 states that all Mormon villages are alike, having square blocks with four lots per block; Leland H. Cree, The Founding of an Empire (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947), p. 362 states that they were all laid out following the pattern of Salt Lake City; Milton R. Hunter, Utah in Her Western Setting (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1959), p. 346, states that all of the cities were built on the same plan with ten acre blocks in all; Reps, Making of Urban America, p. 48, says that while the villages may have varied slightly from one another, they are essentially uniform; P. A. M. Taylor, Expectations Westward (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), p. 111 maintains that all of the Mormon communities were planned on the basis of the plan of Joseph Smith.

Nearly any book which mentions the Mormon villages in Utah states that they were based on the City of Zion plat. As an example, Nelson, The Mormon Village, p. 38, states that the plan for the City of Zion was the guide for all the villages of Utah, and Reps, The Making of Urban America, p. 472, states that "While not all of them [Mormon villages] adhered to the strict prescriptions of Joseph Smith, they were all planned in the spirit of his original conception." Others inform the reader that all Mormon communities were laid out exactly like Salt Lake City. "Located in Millard County, Utah, the town of Fillmore was laid out in 1851 according to the plat universally followed in building Mormon communities. The land was first divided into blocks of ten acres each, which in turn were sub-divided into eight equal lots." R. Baily, ed. "Lt. Sylvester Mowry's Report on his March in 1855 from Salt Lake City to Fort Tejon," Arizona and the West, 7 (Winter 1965):333. Italics added.
Salt Lake City resembled that of the City of Zion in some respects. The blocks were each 10 acres in size as proposed by Joseph Smith, but instead of 20 1/2-acre lots, there were 8 1 1/4-acre lots on each block. The streets were all 8 rods wide, just as in the plot for the City of Zion. In lieu of a center tier of large blocks, as proposed by the Prophet, Brigham Young had one superblock of 40 acres to be used for one, not twelve, temples. President Young also added forty feet to the street width so that a sidewalk 20 feet wide could be located on each side. Each house was to be set back 20 feet from the line and in the center of the lot. (According to Church leaders, centering the houses would minimize the danger to the city should fire break out at any one point.) The houses on alternate blocks were built on only two sides of the block.

Upon every alternate block four houses were to be built on the east, and four on the west sides of the square, but none on the north and south sides. But the blocks intervening were to have four houses on the north and four on the south, but none on the east and west sides. In this plan there will be no houses fronting each other on the opposite sides of the streets, while those on the same side will be about eight rods apart having gardens running back twenty rods to the center of the block.

This plan was apparently conceived as a way to provide an illusion of the privacy found in isolated farmsteads by providing each residence with physical and visual territory unimpeded by other residences. The plan was abandoned within a few decades, however, as the influx of people led to subdivision of the larger lots, the erection of more than one house per lot, and the construction of homes on all sides of the blocks. Another variation from the City of Zion plat, of course, was the location of barns and stables, which were located on the same lots as the houses rather than outside the city.

Perhaps the greatest departure from the City of Zion plan was in the size of the city. It had been the Prophet's plan to limit the size of each city to one square mile in area and to a population of 15,000 to 20,000. It is unclear whether Brigham Young originally planned to limit the city's size, but the number of immigrants forced rapid expansion of the surveyed city. When originally surveyed in 1847, the city contained 135 blocks. The following year an ad-

20 The 40-acre temple block was reduced to 10 acres when the city was surveyed in the first weeks of August 1847.
ditional 63 blocks were surveyed, and in 1849 another 85 blocks were added. Thus Salt Lake City was not an embodiment of the proposed City of Zion, which would have been limited in size and surrounded by agricultural lands. A brief look at data concerning Mormon villages indicates that there was no consistency in the plan of other communities (see table 1). The wide variety of city plans indicates that the Mormon settlers did not rely on the City of Zion plan in laying out their communities, and indeed seemed to have little concern for the morphology of their communities at the time they were established.

A typical experience is related by the settlers of Cache Valley. They report that in 1860 an emissary from President Young arrived and informed them it would be advisable to lay out a city plot. "President Maughn and Jesse Fox and Several other Bretherren came and layed before us the necessity of having a City plot laid off and Jesse W. Fox had been instructed by President Young to come up and lay of Cities." The settlers accepted this decision and the city was surveyed. The results of this survey created additional labor for the settlers since they had to move their homes to comply with the surveyed lots. "The Servayors commenced to lay off the City plot, the most of the houses and yards had to be moved." As this passage points out, the first settlers were not concerned about formally laying out a community and only did so at a later date at Brigham Young’s insistence.

It is doubtful that the City of Zion plat served as a specific blueprint to lay out any Mormon settlements. It is apparent that in the majority of cases the group settling a site laid out a city whose features were determined in public meeting by the settlers themselves. In order to ensure fairness in the distribution of city lots, a public lottery was used. This required dividing the city into equal-sized lots, and a grid pattern provided the simplest method of doing so. The need for uniform lot size, coupled with the settlers’ previous experience as residents of gridiron communities seems to be the basis for the regular, rectangular Mormon survey.

Although there is great variation from village to village, there is sufficient similarity to have caused casual observers to presume they were all laid out according to some master plan. And although

23Journal of Henry Ballard, 11 March 1860, manuscript, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.
24Ibid., 12 March.
25Journal of John D. Lee, 2 February 1851, manuscript, Utah State Historical Society. Lee gives an interesting account of how the lots were divided and distributed.
TABLE 1  CITY OF ZION PLAN COMPARED TO REPRESENTATIVE COMMUNITIES ESTABLISHED BY MORMONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City of Zion Plan</th>
<th>Date Established</th>
<th>City Size</th>
<th>Block Size</th>
<th>Lot Size in Acres</th>
<th>Street Width</th>
<th>Setback of Houses</th>
<th>Building Materials</th>
<th>Agricultural Land</th>
<th>Location of Barns and Livestock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proposed 1833</td>
<td>maximum of 20,000</td>
<td>10 acres and 15 acres</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>132 feet</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
<td>brick and stone</td>
<td>all outside city limits</td>
<td>all outside city limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far West, Missouri</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>4 acres</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>132 feet and 82.5 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>data not available</td>
<td>data not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nauvoo, Illinois</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>4 acres</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>172 feet</td>
<td>20 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provo, Utah</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>4 acres</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>132 feet and 82.5 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogden, Utah</td>
<td>1849</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>132 feet and 66 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holladay, Utah</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>82.5 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millcreek, Utah</td>
<td>1852</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>8 acres</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>99 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. George, Utah</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>6 acres</td>
<td>.8</td>
<td>92 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpine, Utah</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>5 acres</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>66 feet</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>gardens on city plot</td>
<td>barns and livestock on city lots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there seems not to have been a master plan, still there are some similarities which do set the Mormon village apart as a unique settlement form in the West. Observers have long characterized the Mormon village as having wide streets, for example, but until now no serious study has been undertaken to confirm this observation.

**COMPARISON OF MORMON AND NON-MORMON SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST**

To compare the morphology of Mormon and non-Mormon towns, information was obtained on street widths (main and side), and lot and block size (see tables 2, 3, and 4) for 313 non-Mormon towns in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada, and compared with that for 94 Mormon settlements in Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming.

**Street widths.** Comparison of street widths reveals that there is a general tendency for main streets of Mormon towns to be wider than those of non-Mormon towns in the West (see table 2). Only 25 percent of non-Mormon towns examined had main streets 90 feet or wider, but 72 percent of Mormon towns had them. Nearly 20 percent of Mormon towns had main streets of 130 feet or greater, but no non-Mormon towns had such wide streets. Comparison of side street widths reveals that there is a much wider range of side street widths in non-Mormon towns than in Mormon towns, but a general tendency for wider side streets in Mormon towns. Sixty-four percent of Mormon towns had side streets 80

**TABLE 2**

**COMPARISON OF STREET WIDTHS IN MORMON AND NON-MORMON TOWNS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Width in Feet</th>
<th>Side Streets</th>
<th></th>
<th>Main Streets</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Mormon</td>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>Non-Mormon</td>
<td>Mormon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 40</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-109</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110-119</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF TOWNS BY BLOCK SIZE IN MORMON AND NON-MORMON TOWNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Town</th>
<th>Less Than 1 acre</th>
<th>1-1.9 acres</th>
<th>2-2.9 acres</th>
<th>3-3.9 acres</th>
<th>4-4.9 acres</th>
<th>5-5.9 acres</th>
<th>6-7.9 acres</th>
<th>8-9.9 acres</th>
<th>10 acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Mormon</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 4
PERCENT OF TOWNS WITH INDICATED LOT SIZE IN MORMON AND NON-MORMON TOWNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Town</th>
<th>Lots of Less Than 1/2 Acre Size</th>
<th>Lots of 1/2 Acre or Larger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 2500</td>
<td>2501-4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Mormon</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
feet or wider, but only 19 percent of non-Mormon towns have side streets as wide. Nearly 25 percent of non-Mormon towns, but only 2 percent of Mormon towns, have side streets narrower than 60 feet. Mormon towns generally have side streets of 66 or 99 feet and main streets of 99 feet, and usually have side and main streets of uniform width. Fewer than 20 percent of the Mormon towns had any variation in size between main and side streets, but 80 percent of non-Mormon communities had side streets narrower than main streets. There is thus a general trend for Mormon towns to have wider main and side streets than non-Mormon towns.

**Block Size.** When block sizes of Mormon and non-Mormon towns are compared, the Mormon towns are quite distinct (see table 3). Less than 6 percent of non-Mormon towns in the West have blocks 4 acres or larger in size, but all Mormon communities have such large blocks. Approximately 1 percent of non-Mormon towns have 6-acre or larger blocks, compared to 60 percent of Mormon towns. The existence of such large blocks is more definitive in recognizing a Mormon town than wide streets since large blocks are almost exclusively a characteristic of the Mormon settlements.

**Lot Size.** Large lots are also essentially unique to Mormon settlements (see table 4). Less than 4 percent of non-Mormon towns sampled reported lots ¼ acre or larger, but all of the communities founded by Mormons had lots exceeding this size. More distinctively, 80 percent of Mormon communities had lots of one acre in size or larger, but no non-Mormon settlement had lots this large. Lot sizes in Mormon towns were uniform throughout the town, with no provision for a commercial area. In the non-Mormon towns examined there was nearly always a commercial section with extremely small lots, and the balance of the town plat included somewhat larger lots. It should be noted that large city lots were not used in the City of Zion plat and represent a distinctive development after the Mormons arrived in the West. The large lots provided the basis for subsistence economy in which each household obtained its meat, milk, eggs, vegetables, and fruit from its town lot.

**CONCLUSION**

The original Mormon settlements emerge as a distinctive type in the West, but not one of uniformity based on the City of Zion master plan. There was a great deal of variation in the morphology
of Mormon communities, but in general terms, the following characteristics combined to create a readily identifiable settlement type in the Mormon culture region of the western United States.

1. Regular grid pattern oriented as close to north and south as the settlers could manage with the crude instruments in their possession.
2. Streets which are generally wider than those found in non-Mormon towns.
3. Main streets and side streets which are usually of the same width.
4. Lots which dwarf typical lots in non-Mormon towns.

The combination of these factors made the original Mormon settlements distinctive in the West. In rural areas of the Mormon cultural region these characteristics remain evident today, creating the recognizable Mormon village. The Mormon village thus emerges as unique in the West, but certainly dissimilar to the City of Zion plan of Joseph Smith.