

## First Conference in the New Tabernacle

THE news that the Tabernacle was to be available for conference was an incentive for a larger crowd than usual to attend. In order to inform the people who would attend the first meeting in the Tabernacle of the history and magnitude of the building, T. B. H. Stenhouse, the editor of the *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, published an article on October 6, 1867, the day before conference was to convene. It is the most complete report on the Tabernacle written at that time and is therefore sufficiently valuable to be reproduced in full:

*The New Tabernacle.* It seems proper, at the opening of the New Tabernacle, on the Temple Block, in this city, to furnish our readers with some particulars concerning its construction and to give such items of its dimensions, etc., as we have been able to glean from a few of the brethren who have had the oversight of various departments of the work. Brother Henry Grow, the designer and builder of

the Tabernacle, furnishes us with large proportion of the following particulars.

The form of the building was the design of President Brigham Young, who was desirous that the lattice work principle should be introduced into the construction of this large edifice. Brother Grow commenced the work, with a small force of men, September 1, 1865. In consequence of accidental delays in procuring lumber and other material, and from other causes, progress in construction was not so rapid as would otherwise have been the case. The work on the building, however, progressed steadily, and latterly with greatly accelerated rapidity, through the hearty response of the masons, carpenters and plasterers of the city and Territory to the call made by President Young some weeks since.

The maximum number of men employed at any one time in the construction of the building was 205, and the average for the last three weeks has been 137. These figures do not include laborers nor plasterers. We have not the exact figures, but we understand that about 70 men were engaged in plastering the inside of the building.

Mr. Grow thinks that any person who has not seen the building can have a very good idea of the roof by imagining the back or shell of a common eastern ground turtle, of huge proportions, but it is more frequently likened to the hull of an old fashioned ship, without any keel, and turned topsy turvy. This immense roof, which is in fact, the principal portion of the building, rests upon 44 piers of cut sand-stone masonry, each nine feet from outside to inside of building by three feet the other way, and the whole averaging twenty feet high to the spring of the roof. On each side of the building are nine piers in a straight line. From these, an arch of 48 feet is sprung. Thirteen arches spring at each end from thirteen piers, which stand

on a circle. The height from the floor to the ceiling is 68 feet in the centre of the building. There is a space of nine feet from the ceiling to the roof.

The building itself is 250 feet from east to west, and 150 from north to south. The room is 100 feet straight from east to west in the centre, with a semi-circle of 75 feet at each end. There are no columns in the building.

The roof is framed of lattice arched bents, twelve feet from centre to centre, each arched bent converging and meeting at the highest given point of the two main outside bents, where they are securely fastened.

On the northern and southern sides of the building are 30 spaces between the piers, which are filled with windows, containing altogether 2,500 lights of glass. On the north and south sides are also twelve spaces between the piers, filled by double doors. On the east side are two doors, but it is intended to have four more some time. There are two small doors on the south-west, two on the north-west, and one private door on the west, opening to the stand.

The scaffolding was taken down on Wednesday without injury to any of the workmen. The single accident which occurred during the erection of the building resulted from carelessness, and was not fatal.

Above the piers there is over one million feet of lumber; in the floor 80,000 feet; in the joists 100,000; in the sleepers 30,000; in the doors, stands, benches and other parts not enumerated, 290,000 feet; in the aggregate one million five hundred thousand feet. The roof is covered with 350,000 shingles, besides a space at the top, averaging 60 x 130 feet, which is covered with "patent roofing." A spiral stairway from the ceiling affords access to the outside of the roof.

The floor of the building was completed on the 4th inst. There is supposed to be ample room in the building to seat comfortably 8,000 to 9,000 persons. . . .

The stand for the speakers is at the west end of the building, and covers 7500 feet of surface.

The front of the stand is a segment of a circle. Before it are a seat and desk for the bishops and others who administer the sacrament. The first seat in the centre of the stand or platform is for the Presidency of the Stake, the next for the Quorum of the Twelve, the third for the First Presidency. Back of these are seats for a choir of 150 singers, with the great organ, yet unfinished, behind them. On the right and left are seats for from 800 to 1000 persons.

The speaker's desk is 60 feet in front of the western piers. In front of the stand, for 70 feet, the floor is horizontal, thence to the east end the floor rises with a grade of one foot in ten. The horizontal portion of the floor is seated with very comfortable permanent benches. The remainder temporarily with the old benches from the Bowery.

During the past six months, and for some time before that, Elder Truman O. Angel has been engaged in designing the cornice of the building, the stand, floor, seats, &c.

More than three-fourths of the timbers were supplied by Elder Jos. A. Young up to within a few months; since which several hundred thousand feet of finishing lumber was furnished by President Wells, and a large quantity also obtained from Elders Feramor Little, Samuel A. Woolley, and from a few others.

The work from beginning to end has been closely supervised by President Young, who in this, as in everything else of a public character, "has been in all and through all," and encouraged by his confidence all engaged in it.

After the departure of President Young for the north, and since, President Wells has been most assiduous in his labors, superintending and furnishing everything, and latterly, when the work had to be done within a given time, and that also very short, his constant presence and encour-



The Tabernacle was finished in time for the October 1867 general conference. With its completion, the Saints turned their attention to finishing the Salt Lake Temple. Here, the completed Tabernacle is surrounded by granite blocks used in constructing the temple.

*Courtesy of Church Archives*

agement to the workmen and those in charge added greatly to the early completion of the work. Bishop John Sharp, as Asst.-Superintendent of Public Works, has rendered a very efficient share of labor, and Elder John D. T. McAllister was constant in his superintendence of the laborers, and had under his direction over a hundred men and thirty teams working.

So far as we have been able to judge, from the frequent conversations we have listened to, President Young seems fully satisfied with the accomplishment thus far of his design. It will take a great many men some months yet to make the seats and finish other portions of the edifice. By the 6th of April next, the whole will be finished and ready for dedication. It is a grand building, of which the Saints have reason to be proud, and we but echo the feelings of every faithful Saint in wishing a lengthened life to President Young, that he therein may long continue

to instruct and lead Israel to the accomplishment of the designs and purposes of the Most High.<sup>1</sup>

The report of the building of the Tabernacle, contained in the above item, made very little mention of the work of Truman O. Angell. This disturbed Mr. Angell, and he went to talk to Henry Grow about it and then to Mr. Stenhouse.<sup>2</sup> As a result of Mr. Angell's visit, the following item was published in the October 13 issue of the *Telegraph*:

When writing the description of the New Tabernacle, we gathered our information from those whom we credited in that report, and from others possessing any information that we could reach. Brother Truman O. Angel, the Church Architect, was not at the Tabernacle on the Saturday preceding Conference, at the time we were gathering the information, so that we could say but little of his labors. We had opportunity yesterday of conversing with him, and he tells us that he draughted the whole of the interior portions of the building, and detailed the same on the trussel board for practical execution, and likewise superintended the workmanship thereof, as chief foreman, until the opening of the building at Conference. We may have omitted in our report other persons deserving of notice.<sup>3</sup>

This report was satisfactory to Mr. Angell as indicated by his diary entry: "Sunday, 13th. This morning it came out in the Daily Telegraph as I wished and requested the Editor to do, and I am satisfied so far as that goes."<sup>4</sup>

The interest in the conference can be caught from several items published in the papers:



1. "The New Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 6, 1867.
2. See Angell Journal, October 7, 12, 1867.
3. "The New Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 13, 1867.
4. Angell Journal, October 13, 1867.

In the City.—Elder Orson Hyde returned to the city on Monday evening from his northern trip. . . . The Elder is in excellent health, and looking forward, with the rest of the people, to a great Conference.<sup>5</sup>

Coming In to Conference.—Many of the brethren and sisters from the distant settlements of the south are daily arriving in the city. From all reports that reach us, there is every prospect that this will be the largest gathering of the people of Utah.

No doubt our citizens are making arrangements to receive and accommodate the visitors. The Saints in the country give a whole-souled welcome to those who visit them.<sup>6</sup>

Coming In.—By telegraph to President Young, we learn that the emigration passed the Weber Station at 10 o'clock yesterday, all well. They should arrive in the City on Saturday. Their anxiety, like everybody else, to get in to Conference, will doubtless induce good travelling to be in time. Their number is not great; but that will lessen in nothing the courtesies and kindness usually extended to immigrants.<sup>7</sup>

The crowd anticipated for the meeting was so great that a large number of special doorkeepers was appointed, and seating instructions were published for the information of those attending conference:

The following gentlemen have been selected door-keepers for during Conference—

1st Ward— S. A. Chase, Adam Duncan.  
2nd " Peter Johnson, John Lyon.



5. "In the City," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 2, 1867.
6. "Coming In to Conference," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 2, 1867.
7. "Coming In," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 4, 1867.

- 3rd " Jos. Moffat, Wm. Wagstaff.
- 4th " H Clawson, Wm. Moore.
- 5th " Jesse West, Junius S. Fullmer.
- 6th " Wm. H. Solomon, Saml. Brown.
- 7th " George C. Lambert, Jas. Hague, jun.
- 8th " Edward Frost, Robt. N. Russell.
- 9th " Jos. Edwards, Samuel H. Woolley.
- 10th " Wm. Ostler, Eric Peterson.
- 11th " John B. McMaster, Fred. Myer.
- 12th " Henry E. Bowring, P. A. Schetler.
- 13th " George Naylor, Seymour B. Young.
- 14th " F. S. Richards, R. S. Horne, C. R. Jones,  
Chas. Smith.
- 15th " Jas. Ure, J. K. Hall.
- 16th " John P. Isaacs, Samuel Harner, Wm. J.  
Newman.
- 17th " Wm. Bromhead, Miles P. Romney.
- 18th " Joshua K. Whitney, D. P. Kimball, Saml.  
Kimball.
- 19th " Adam Seegmiller, George Hamlin.
- 20th " Geo. Harrison, Harry Luff.

The spaces between the piers are all numbered from 1 to 44, and the gentlemen will see to the best order and silence being preserved around the Tabernacle. The entrances for the public are on the east side, numbered 3 and 42; on the south side, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13; on the north, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37. On the south-west and north-west are the entrances for the Bishops and Priesthood occupying the stand. The choir enters by the door numbered 24, and the President's private entrance is by the door numbered 22, on the west end.<sup>8</sup>



8. "The New Tabernacle," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 6, 1867.



As we understand it, the ladies will occupy the two rows of seats in the centre, fronting the platform. The gentlemen will occupy the side seats and the back seats in the east end of the building. The side seats of the platform will be occupied by the Priesthood—The Bishops, High Priests, Seventies, etc. As the seats do not admit of persons passing those who are seated, the first entering will have their places in the centre, and so on till the seats are filled.<sup>9</sup>

The day for the first conference dawned bright and fair. Long before the hour named for the opening of the gates to the Temple Block, the people began to assemble. By nine o'clock there was such a dense crowd around the south and west entrances that the sidewalks were blocked. The streets were filled with carriages, wagons, and horses, indicating that a large number had come early from the nearby country, in addition to those who had come from greater distances on previous days. The gates to the Temple Block were opened at nine, and the people flooded in. Long before ten o'clock, the time for the commencement of the conference, the seats in the Great Tabernacle were filled, the aisles and doorways were crowded, and many were left outside. The stand was filled with Church officials and the various choirs who were present to take part in the service.<sup>10</sup>

The report of the first conference in the Tabernacle is worthy of inclusion in this thesis:

On the stand, at the opening, were the full quorum of the First Presidency, Presidents Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Daniel H. Wells: beside them, Brigham Young, junr.



9. "The Opening of Conference," *Salt Lake Telegraph*, October 4, 1867.

10. "The Thirty-seventh Semi-annual Conference," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 8, 1867.



The foundation of the Salt Lake Temple with the Old and New Tabernacles in the background. The Salt Lake Temple was finished twenty-six years after the Great Tabernacle, in 1893.

*Courtesy of Richard Neitzel Holzapfel BYU Collection,  
purchased with funds provided by the Stewart L. Grow family*

Of the Twelve Apostles, in their order and place were—

Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Geo. A. Smith, Ezra T. Benson, Chas. C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow and George Q. Cannon—all of the Apostles now in the Territory.

On the first seat, fronting the audience, were Elders Daniel Spencer, George B. Wallace and Jos. W. Young, the Presidency of this Stake of Zion, and beside them were Elder John Young, President of the High Priests' Quorum, his counsellor, Bishop E. D. Wooley; Bishop Phineas Young; Elders W. W. Phelps, Wm. H. Hooper, Levi Hancock, John Van Cott and Horace S. Eldredge.

On the Bishops' seat in front of the stand, were Edward Hunter, the Presiding Bishop, with his counsellors, Leonard W. Hardy and Jesse C. Little; beside them Bishop Hoagland, the clerk of the Quorum of Bishops—Elder George Goddard, and Elder John D. T. McAllister.

On the stand, in addition to the presiding authorities named, were the Salt Lake Choir, under the leadership of Elder Robert Sands, numbering about one hundred and fifty, with organist Joseph John Daynes; to the left of the speakers' benches was a large choir, uniting the choirs of Springville, Payson and Spanish Fork, under their respective leaders. Elders Frederick Waight, Wm. Claycen and Wm. R. Jones. Reporters, Elders Geo. D. Watt, E. L. Sloan, David W. Evans, and a representative of this paper.

There were present on the stand, and throughout the building, a very large number of the Bishops and authorities from all the settlements, north and south; but the vastness of the assembly prevented us from noting them by name. . . .

The President kindly expressed to the workmen the thanks of all the Apostles and all the brethren and sisters for the steady perseverance and faithfulness that they had manifested in completing thus far the building. For one, he said, he had not ceased to pray for them . . . and he took the opportunity of expressing that he would be very much pleased did he witness so resolute a spirit in the Elders of Israel to favor the early completion of the Temple. He thought it proper to say something of the unfinished condition of the organ. Not over one-third of the pipes were up, and till the casing was built, they had thrown around it a loose garment. It was now only about fifteen feet high, but when completed it would be forty feet high. Bro. Ridges and those who had labored with him had done the best they could, and notwithstanding their diligence, by early day, noon and night, they had been unable to have it properly tuned. It was, however, in a condition to accompany the choir, and he was pleased with it. The President called the audience to order; a perfect stillness ensued, and Elder Sloan lead the opening hymn: ["Praise, Praise, O, Praise the Great I AM."] . . .

Prayer was offered by President Young, in which he expressed to the Most High the grateful feelings of the Saints for the favors which He had multiplied upon them, enabling them to have finished thus far an edifice in which they could assemble and worship Him their Creator in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit to teach them how to pray and what to ask for acceptably in His sight.

He implored the blessings of the Lord upon the congregation assembled and those who might assemble during Conference. . . . He asked that the blessing of the Almighty might continue to increase upon the people, that all their efforts to build up the kingdom of God might be prospered, that the people be preserved in these mountains, multiply, increase and gather around them from the elements what was necessary for their consumption. . . . He implored the blessing of the Most High upon our families, our wives, our children, our barns, our fields, and all we possessed; asking the Lord, for Jesus' sake, to inspire the speakers, the singers, the hearers during Conference, so that all might be done according to His holy will.

The combined choirs of Payson, Springville and Spanish Fork sang the hymn: "Soldiers of Christ Arise."

President Kimball delivered the opening address.

He had seen a great many people assembled out of doors, but he had never seen so many in one house before. . . . He felt grateful towards his brethren who had labored to erect this building, [and blessed the Saints.] . . .

Elder Fishburn's choir sang.

President Wells said—The erection of this building he regarded as a great achievement and a praise to the people here. The Lord had planted us in the valleys of the mountains [and] had prospered and blessed them. . . . He rejoiced

to see the progress the people had made. . . . A glorious future was before them. . . .

The choir sang, “An angel from on high.”

Benediction by President Wells.

Afternoon. The Spanish Fork Choir sang the anthem, “Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O Zion.” Prayer offered by Elder Brigham Young Jr.

Elder Orson Hyde said he had traveled over a great part of the world and he had never seen so large a religious congregation as that before him. . . . Elder Hyde was very hoarse and could speak only for a little time. . . .

The Fishburn choir sang, “The mountain brave.”

President Young spoke briefly. . . .

The Payson choir sang, “Hark the Song of Jubilee.”

The Meeting was dismissed by President Kimball.<sup>11</sup>

The conference continued until the following Wednesday, with the sessions on Monday being the most significant.

Monday Forenoon. . . . President Young said that they had no idea when Conference would terminate, but they would, he expected, have to continue their assemblies unusually long, and, to hear all those who had to speak, he would ask for short sermons. He furnished the following texts, on which he would expect the elders to speak:

1st. The opening of a subscription list in aid of the Perpetual Emigration Fund.

2d. To teach our children the ways of the Lord in their youth, and to introduce into our schools the Bible,



11. “The Thirty-seventh Semi-annual Conference,” *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 8, 1867. Though only ten Apostles are named, the source notes that these were “all of the Apostles now in the Territory.” Elder Franklin D. Richards was in England and Elder Joseph F. Smith was sustained as a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve at the conference.

Book of Mormon, Book of Doctrine and Covenants, also phonetics.

3d. The young ladies to study arithmetic, book-keeping, and other branches of education necessary to qualify them for business—attending in stores, operating in the telegraph offices, and so to let the men now attending to such things to go to the kanyon, build houses, make farms, and prepare themselves for sustaining wives and children.

4th. Five hundred teams were wanted immediately after Conference to haul three loads of rock each, from Little Cottonwood, for the Temple.

5th. The best method of prolonging the present life; the manner of living frugally and temperately.<sup>12</sup>

During the course of the morning and afternoon sessions, 163 missionaries were called to go to the southern part of the territory of Utah to establish settlements and build up the area. The remaining days of the conference were occupied with religious preaching and closed with a benediction upon all the people by Brigham Young.



12. "The Thirty-seventh Semi-annual Conference," *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph*, October 9, 1867.