



PRESIDENTS AND MATRONS OF THE LOS ANGELES TEMPLE



1. Benjamin L. and Leone Bowring, 1955–1970

Born in Brigham City, Utah, on September 1, 1903, Benjamin L. Bowring was an accountant and had an extensive and varied background in Church service. As a young man, he served a mission to the Southern States. He married Leone Rampton on December 14, 1926, in the Salt Lake Temple, and they became the parents of a son and a daughter. He served as ward and stake Sunday School superintendent and as a member of the high council and presidency of the Salt Lake Stake.

He became an ordinance worker in 1932 at the Salt Lake Temple, where he served as supervisor of the baptismal department for four years and as recorder. At the Genealogical Society, he headed the research department and was a member of the convention board. He acted as a guide on Temple Square for sixteen years and presided over the Texas-Louisiana Mission from 1949 to 1953. At the time of his appointment to Los Angeles, Bowring had been presiding over the Hawaii Temple and served as patriarch in Laie for two years. “We are happy to be engaged in the Lord’s work wherever it may be,”¹ he affirmed. He presided over the Los Angeles Temple for fourteen years, a period characterized by continual expansion. Following his release, he returned to Salt Lake City, where he died June 25, 1985. Sister Bowring died on February 14, 2003.



2. Myrthus W. and Mae Evans, 1970–1975

Myrthus W. Evans was born in Malad, Idaho, August 1, 1904. After serving a mission to Britain, he married Mae Kohler of Byron, Wyoming, in 1933 at the St. George Utah Temple. They became the parents of five children.

He earned a BS degree at the University of Idaho before pursuing graduate studies at Brigham Young University. Professionally, he was an educator of Native Americans. He was employed by the US government from 1936 to 1969, including serving as superintendent of the Sherman Institute, an Indian school near Riverside, California, for twenty-two years. He was also involved in civic affairs as a Rotarian and with the Chamber of Commerce.

Brother Evans served as president of the Corona Branch and bishop of the Arlington Ward before being called as first counselor in the Mt. Rubidoux Stake presidency. He had been patriarch in that stake for twelve years at the time of his call as temple president.

Sister Evans attended the University of Utah. In the Church, she served as ward president of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association in Oregon, as ward Relief Society president in California, and as a member of the Mt. Rubidoux Stake Relief Society board.

After presiding in the Los Angeles 1970–1975, the Evans moved to Salt Lake City, where he served as a sealer in the Temple. He died September 6, 2001, and she died on February 12, 2002.²



3. Richard C. and Vera Stratford, 1975–1980

Born in Logan, Utah, June 1, 1907, Richard C. Stratford became a general partner and manager of an international firm of certified public accountants. In 1933, he married Vera Calder. Both were graduates of Utah State University, and they became the parents of five children. He served as a bishop and member of a stake presidency in Portland, Oregon, and presided over the Northern States Mission 1957–1960.

Brother Stratford died on April 23, 1995.

Vera Stratford was born in Vernal, Utah. She was active in Church callings and community service. She was at the side of her husband while he served as a mission president. She received the Heritage award from the California-Utah Women in 1969 and was honored as California Mother of the Year the following year.³ Sister Stratford died on December 11, 1999.



4. Robert L. and Jelaire Simpson, 1980–1982

Elder Simpson was the only General Authority to serve as president of the Los Angeles Temple. He was born on August 8, 1915, in Ogden, Utah, but grew up in Southern California. Following his mission to New Zealand, he married Jelaire Chandler in the Arizona Temple; they became the parents of two sons and one daughter. After graduating from Santa Monica City College and serving in the US Air Force, he spent nearly twenty years with the Pacific Telephone Company. He presided over the New Zealand Mission 1958–1961.

Robert L. Simpson served as first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church from 1961 until 1972. Following his release, he became an Assistant to the Twelve. In this capacity, he became the managing director of the Church's Social Services Department. In 1976, the Assistants to the Twelve became part of the new First Quorum of the Seventy. In this calling, he was assigned to preside over South Pacific and other areas of the Church as well as to be the president of the Los Angeles Temple 1980–1982. He received emeritus General Authority status in 1989 and died April 15, 2003.⁴ She died on June 20, 2009.



5. Allen C. and Dawna Rozsa, 1982–1986

Allen Rozsa was born August 4, 1924, in Los Angeles. After returning from a mission to South Africa, he married Dawna Ruth Phillips at the St. George Utah Temple in 1949. They became the parents of four daughters and triplet sons.

He earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at the University of New Mexico and a Master of Business Administration at George Washington University. During his twenty-five years in the US Air Force, he was a pilot and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and retired with the rank of colonel. During his military service, Church callings included being zone president over five thousand LDS service personnel in Vietnam and stake president in Virginia. The Rozsas presided over the mission in Boston 1974–1977. He also served as a regional representative and patriarch. Dawna Rozsa presided over Young Women and Relief Society organizations. Allen Rozsa served as a counselor to Robert L. Simpson in the temple presidency for two years before being temple president 1982–1986.⁵

In 1991 he became the director of the Visitor's Center at Independence Missouri.⁶ He died February 17, 2001, at Lucas, Texas.



6. Jack B. and Betty McEwan, 1986–1989

President McEwan was born in 1920 in Salt Lake City, but his family moved to Los Angeles when he was seven years old. His parents were not active in the Church, but a youth leader reached out and became a role model. Jack had planned to serve a mission, but World War II broke out, and he became a bomber pilot in the Pacific. In 1948 he married Betty Clark, who was born in Long Beach, California; they were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple by Elder Harold B. Lee. They were the parents of three sons. Betty was a teacher and leader in Church organizations, gave community service, and was president of the California-Utah Women organization. She had an interest in history and record keeping.

Jack McEwan earned his DDS degree at the University of Southern California. Being a dentist allowed him to practice medicine but also gave him the flexibility to serve in a variety of Church callings. He was a bishop, member of a stake presidency, and regional representative before becoming a patriarch in 1971. He also served as a temple worker until 1982 when a new assignment came. Concerning this call, he reflected: “I had a successful dental practice which took years to build. Then the Lord called me to be a counselor in the temple presidency, and I retired and sold the business. What a blessing this has been, to be of service to the Lord and to the Saints who come to the temple.” He served as a counselor to Allen Rozsa in the Los Angeles Temple presidency before presiding over the temple 1986–1989. Following their service in the temple, the McEwans continued to make their home in Arcadia, California.⁷



7. Wayne A. and Madge Reeves, 1989–1992

President Reeves was born June 19, 1918, in Pomona, California. He earned a bachelor’s degree in music with a minor in business at the University of Southern California. He then earned a master’s degree in financial services from America College in preparation for his forty-seven years with Beneficial Life Insurance. He was also the cofounder of his own company.

He married Madge Kemp, and they became the parents of eight children. He served as a bishop, stake president, and director of the visitors’ center at the Washington D.C. Temple. He was a counselor to Jack B. McEwan before presiding over the Los Angeles Temple 1989–1992.

The Reeves later moved to Utah, where Wayne became a sealer in the Provo Utah Temple. He died November 26, 2000.⁸



8. H. Von and Sheila Packard, 1992–1995

Von Packard was born at Nampa, Idaho, in 1926. He served in the Spanish-American Mission in Texas and New Mexico. He married Sheila Dunkerley, who had been born in England and joined the Church there at age sixteen. They became the parents of twelve children.

He earned his degree in dentistry at the University of Oregon and then established a dental clinic with two of his brothers in Carlsbad, California. He served as a regional representative, patriarch, and temple sealer. He and his wife presided over the Chile Santiago North Mission 1979–1982. Sheila also served as ward Primary and Relief Society president, stake Young Women president, and as a teacher in these organizations.

At the time Von Packard was called to preside over the Los Angeles Temple, his brother Floyd was called as president of the new San Diego Temple. Von presided 1992–1995. The Packards later moved to Highland, Utah, where he died May 8, 2013.



9. Glen H. and Willa Rae Walker, 1995–1998

Glen was born in 1927 in Raymond, one of the small Latter-day Saint communities in southern Alberta, Canada. He served his mission in Australia. In 1950 he married his childhood sweetheart Willa Rae Erickson in the Temple at Cardston. She had been born in the nearby town of Stirling. After graduating from McGill University Medical School in Montreal he set up a general medical practice in Salt Lake City. In 1964 he moved to Los Angeles and subsequently specialized in thoracic cardiovascular surgery.

The Walkers were serving as ordinance workers in the Los Angeles Temple when Glen became a sealer in 1984. To receive the sealing power, he met President Gordon B. Hinckley in a conference room of the Horizon Club in the Western Airlines terminal at Los Angeles International Airport; President Hinckley was on his way home from dedicating the temple in Taiwan. The Walkers then served in two temple presidencies under Jack B. McEwan and Wayne A. Reeves 1986–1992. They moved to Utah where Glen became a sealer in the Provo Utah Temple. They had been there only nine months

when the call came for them to return to California and preside over the Los Angeles Temple. He died in Provo on June 10, 2008, and she died on February 13, 2016.⁹



10. Nile A. and Charlene Sorenson, 1998–2001

Born in Heyburn, Idaho, he met Charlene Wight of Brigham City, Utah, when both were attending Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University) in Logan, where he received his bachelor's degree. He then earned a master of business administration at Michigan State University. His career was in the US Air Force, including service in Puerto Rico; he attained the rank of lieutenant colonel.

In the Church, Nile Sorenson served as a bishop; stake president in Anaheim, California; mission president in Denver, Colorado; regional representative; and director of the Los Angeles Temple Visitors' Center. Charlene served as a ward and stake Relief Society president and Primary president, and she accompanied her husband when he served as mission president.

The Sorensens served in the presidency of the Los Angeles Temple with H. Von Packard before being called to be president and matron 1998–2001. Their home was in Chino Hills, California.¹⁰



11. Paul R. and Dorothy Hatch, 2001–2004

President Hatch was born in Salt Lake City, but spent most of his youth in Southern California. After serving a mission to Spain, he married Dorothy Jo Lanier who was born in Alhambra, California. They became the parents of seven children. He worked as a property manager and received his bachelor's degree from California State University, Los Angeles, at age forty-five.

He served as a bishop, stake president in Glendora, mission president in Iowa, and as a regional representative. Sister Hatch served as a Young Women and Relief Society president.¹¹



12. Richard M. and Darlene Andrus, 2004–2008

In 1936 he was born in Bell, California, a southeast suburb of Los Angeles. As a young man he served a mission in Western Canada and then spent six years in the US Army Reserves. He earned his BA degree at California State University, Los Angeles, and his master's at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. He was an educator by profession, being employed as a history teacher, school principal, and personnel director for over thirty-five years.

He married Darlene Anne Hill of Salt Lake City, and they became the parents of five children. In the Church, he has served as a bishop, stake president in San Luis Obispo, and then mission president in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Sister Andrus has been a teacher in seminary and several of the Church auxiliary organizations. She has served as Young Women president. He was serving as a sealer when he was called to preside over the Los Angeles Temple 2004–2008. Following a battle with cancer, he died in San Luis Obispo on December 18, 2012.¹²



13. Grant R. and Avis Brimhall, 2008–2011

President Brimhall was born in Taylor, Arizona, and was the youngest of thirteen children. Later the family moved to Gridley, California. He served a mission in the Southern States. At Brigham Young University he met Avis Marie Ardian, who was born in Burbank, California. They were married in 1952 and became the parents of six children.

Grant earned a doctorate in public administration at the University of Southern California and made his career as a consultant. He was city manager in Glendora and Thousand Oaks, California. He also became managing director of the MBIA MuniServices Company.

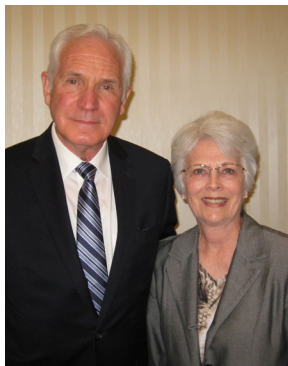
He served as a bishop, stake president, regional representative, and patriarch. Avis served as a ward Primary president and as ward and stake Young Women president. She was a seminary teacher and temple ordinance worker. The Brimhalls presided over a mission in the Philippines 2002–2005. He was a sealer at the time of his call as temple president. He presided over the Los Angeles Temple 2008–2011. Their home was in Thousand Oaks, California.¹³



14. R. Randall and Kay Huff, 2011–2014

President Huff was born in Pocatello, Idaho, in 1940. As a young man, he served a mission to Uruguay and adjoining countries in South America. At Brigham Young University, he met Kay Whiteley Taylor, who was born in Portland, Oregon. They married and became the parents of eight children. After earning his law degree at Duke University in North Carolina, he embarked on his career as an attorney.

He served as a bishop, president of the Pasadena Stake, and Area Seventy. Kay served as a ward and stake Young Women president and in Primary and Relief Society presidencies. Brother and Sister Huff presided over the Sacramento California Mission. He was a member of Los Angeles Public Affairs Council executive committee. He also was chairman of the Howard W. Hunter Foundation and the Mormon Studies Council at the Claremont Graduate University. After presiding over the temple from 2011 to 2014, they returned to their home in Altadena, California.¹⁴



15. William F. and Lani Reynolds, 2014–2017

President Reynolds was born in Elkhart, Indiana, but spent most of his growing-up years in Escondido, California. He served a mission in New England and graduated from Brigham Young University. He married Lani Petersen in the Los Angeles Temple; she was born in La Jolla, California, and they became the parents of six sons. He is a urologist, having received his medical training at the University of California Irvine and at the University of Southern California.

He served as a bishop, stake president, and Area Seventy. Lani served as a ward organist, a Primary president, a member of Relief Society presidencies, and a ward music chairman. At the time of their call to preside over the temple, the Reynolds' home was in La Cañada.¹⁵



16. Larry J. and Kristie Larsen, 2017–

President Larsen was born at Lyman, Wyoming, in 1946. After serving a mission in Japan, he completed his bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University in Asian studies and Japanese. He later spent an additional two and a half years in Japan as a first lieutenant assigned to army headquarters. While at BYU, he and his brothers all were in Men's Chorus and formed a quartet. He met Kristie Elmina Burton when she accompanied

them on the piano. She was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, but moved to Downey in Southern California when she was entering the sixth grade. They were sealed in the Los Angeles Temple in 1969 and became the parents of two children. Computer support became his career. For seventeen years he managed up to 1,500 computer accounts for Unified Grocers, Inc., in Los Angeles. Kristie taught piano at home while the children were young and then taught Spanish at Downey High School, her alma mater, for twenty-three years.

Larry Larsen has served as a bishop and stake president. Sister Larsen has served as president of the Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society in her stake. At the time of their call to preside in the temple, the Larsens were serving as young single adult leaders. She was also a temple ordinance worker, and he was a sealer.¹⁶ Their home was in Downey.

In Summary

Of the sixteen men who have served as presidents of the Los Angeles Temple, three were born in Los Angeles County; while eleven were born in the intermountain area (Utah and adjoining states). Two were educators, two had a career in the military, two were medical doctors, two were dentists, and one was an attorney. Nine had served as stake presidents, and ten as mission presidents; of these, six had presided over both a stake and a mission. One was a General Authority of the Church, two served as Area Seventies, and six had been regional representatives (an earlier calling similar to Area Seventy). Six were patriarchs. One had experience as president of another temple, and five had served as counselors to previous Los Angeles Temple presidents. Four more had been sealers.

Notes

1. "Benjamin L. Bowring Named President, Elder Steed Chosen," *Church News*, December 3, 1955, 2; "President Bowring Begins Work at L.A. Temple," *Church News*, December 31, 1955, 5.
2. J. M. Heslop, "New Presidency for L.A. Temple," *Church News*, March 14, 1970, 3, 15; "The LDS Scene," *Improvement Era*, April 1970, 666; "L.A. Temple Presidency," *California Intermountain News*, March 11, 1971, 9; Obituary, *Deseret News*, September 9, 2001.
3. Jack E. Jarrard, "New L.A. Temple Presidency," *Church News*, February 15, 1975, 3.
4. "Two Church Leaders Receive Calls as Temple Presidents," *Church News*, December 8, 1979, 4; Lawrence R. Flake, *Mighty Men of Zion* (Salt Lake City: Karl B. Butler, 1974), 361–62; Robert L. Simpson, "The Lord Is Mindful of His Own," *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1962).
5. Carrl Fox-Heidelberg, "Saluting the Rozsas," *Latter-day Sentinel*, September 13, 1986, 8.
6. "New Directors Called to Head 15 Visitor Centers," *Church News*, February 2, 1991.
7. Carrl Fox-Heidelberg, "I Have Seen Great Impact: New Temple President Jack McEwan Talks about the Temple," and "Betty Clark McEwan: Meet the New Matron," *Latter-day Sentinel*, August 16, 1986, 10–11; Jason Swensen, "Patriarch Still Fulfilling His Calling at Age 95," *Church News*, February 19, 2015, 11.

8. Obituary, November 30, 2000.
9. "New Temple Presidents," *Church News*, April 29, 1995, 12; Glen Harris Walker Obituary, Walker Sanderson Mortuary.
10. *Church News*, September 28, 1998.
11. "New Temple Presidents," *Church News*, September 8, 2001, 14.
12. Obituary, *Deseret News*, December 22, 2012.
13. "New Temple Presidents" *Church News*, July 26, 2008, 12; interview by Marilyn Mills, March 28, 2017.
14. "New Temple Presidents," *Church News*, June 18, 2011, 12.
15. "New Temple Presidents," *Church News*, April 20, 2014, 10.
16. "New Temple Presidents," *Church News*, May 14, 2017, 13.