



## CHAPTER NINE

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# PRESIDENT HINCKLEY'S REVELATION AND RECENT TEMPLE BUILDING

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Chapter 1 briefly reviewed the course of Latter-day Saint temple building leading up to President Gordon B. Hinckley's momentous revelation received at the time he participated in the Juárez Academy's 1997 centennial celebration. Temples built earlier during that decade had ranged in size from about thirty-four thousand to seventy thousand square feet and had taken long to build. Since that time many small temples resembling the first in the Mormon colonies of northern Mexico have spread throughout the world from the prophet's simple experience.

### **SMALL TEMPLES DOT THE EARTH**

A pebble dropped into a pond causes ripples which grow in size until they fill the entire surface of the water. President Hinckley's inspiration while visiting the colonies in 1997 has had that same effect. Since that momentous occasion, over sixty of these small temples have been built, and they can now be found on every inhabited continent.

At the general conference of October 1997, when President Hinckley announced plans to build smaller temples, he suggested that initially they would be located in remote areas where "the membership is small and not likely to grow very much in the



*Spokane Washington Temple represented a slightly enlarged plan. Courtesy of Tyler Nebeker.*

near future. Are those who live in these places to be denied forever the blessings of the temple ordinances?” The President answered this question by announcing, “We will construct small temples in some of these areas, buildings with all of the facilities to administer all of the ordinances” for the living as well as the dead. “We are determined, brethren, to take the temple to the people and afford them every opportunity for the very precious blessings that come of temple worship.”<sup>1</sup>

Ground was broken for the first of the small temples at Monticello, Utah, in November 1997. After being pushed rapidly to completion, it was dedicated only eight months later on July 26, 1998. The second of these temples, at Anchorage, Alaska, came about six months after; and the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua México Temple was dedicated about a year later in 1999.

These original three small temples had a floor area of about seven thousand square feet and included just one room for presenting the endowment. This meant that a new session could begin only every two hours. These buildings also included a celestial room, one sealing room, and a font for baptisms.

Beginning with the Columbus Ohio Temple, which commenced construction in April 1998, the plan was enlarged to about eleven thousand square feet. It added an additional sealing room, a second endowment instruction room, and some other facilities which enabled the temple to function more efficiently. Now sessions could begin about every hour and a quarter. With the announcement of the Columbus temple as well as temples in such locations as St. Paul, Spokane, Detroit, and Edmonton, it was apparent that these smaller structures would not only serve Saints in small, isolated areas but they would be built in some larger centers of Church population as well.

A third group of these smaller temples, beginning in 2001 with the Columbia River Temple in Washington State, enlarged the plan to about sixteen thousand square feet. This further enhanced their efficiency.

The Saints regarded some of these smaller temples as specific fulfillments of prophecy. Speaking at a conference in Grants Pass, Oregon, in 1924, Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve declared that a temple would be built one day in the Rogue River Valley.<sup>2</sup> A temple was dedicated at nearby Medford in 2000. When a chapel was dedi-

icated in a Columbus, Ohio, suburb in 1991, the stake president emphasized the importance of temple attendance (at that time, requiring an overnight drive to Washington DC) and prayed, "Help us to realize that as we attend more regularly, the temple could move closer, even to our doorsteps."<sup>3</sup> The Columbus Ohio Temple, also dedicated in 2000, was built next door to this very chapel.

There were several instances where the property that would eventually be needed had been obtained or retained even though the reason why was not known at the time. For example, when a chapel in Bismarck, North Dakota, was built at one end of an L-shaped piece of property, selling the other leg was discussed. "Each time they considered selling the land, the district presidency received strong impressions that the land should not be sold, but they did not know why."<sup>4</sup> This became the site for a temple.

As had been the case in the colonies, the Saints were blessed as they participated in, or even just witnessed, the construction of their temple. In the southeastern United States, the Young Women set goals to be sealed in the temple as they helped assemble crystals in temple chandeliers. In Detroit, Michigan, as Primary children looked out the window to the temple being built next door, they often sang "I Love to See the Temple," and eventually saved enough pennies to contribute two hundred dollars to the temple fund.<sup>5</sup>



*The Columbia River Washington Temple began the third group of the small temples.*

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Developments in temple building worldwide were reflected by specific developments in Mexico.

### Smaller Temples Announced by President Hinckley after Colonia Juárez

| Temple   | Announced          | Dedicated          |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>First Group—Approximately 7,000 square feet</i>   |                    |                    |
| 53. Monticello Utah*                                 | October 4, 1997    | July 26, 1998      |
| 54. Anchorage Alaska *                               | October 4, 1997    | January 9, 1999    |
| 55. Colonia Juárez Chihuahua México                  | October 4, 1997    | March 6, 1999      |
| <i>Second Group—Approximately 11,000 square feet</i> |                    |                    |
| 59. Spokane Washington                               | August 13, 1998    | August 21, 1999    |
| 60. Columbus Ohio                                    | April 25, 1998     | September 4, 1999  |
| 61. Bismark North Dakota                             | July 29, 1998      | September 19, 1999 |
| 62. Columbia South Carolina                          | September 11, 1998 | October 16, 1999   |
| 63. Detroit Michigan                                 | August 10, 1998    | October 23, 1999   |
| 64. Halifax Nova Scotia                              | May 7, 1998        | November 14, 1999  |
| 65. Regina Saskatchewan                              | August 3, 1998     | November 14, 1999  |
| 67. Edmonton Alberta                                 | August 11, 1998    | December 11, 1999  |
| 68. Raleigh North Carolina                           | September 3, 1998  | December 18, 1999  |
| 69. St. Paul Minnesota                               | July 29, 1998      | January 9, 2000    |
| 70. Kona Hawaii                                      | May 7, 1998        | January 23, 2000   |
| 71. Ciudad Juárez México                             | May 7, 1998        | February 26, 2000  |
| 72. Hermosillo Sonora México                         | July 20, 1998      | February 27, 2000  |
| 74. Oaxaca México                                    | February 23, 1999  | March 11, 2000     |
| 75. Tuxtla Gutiérrez México                          | February 25, 1999  | March 12, 2000     |
| 76. Louisville Kentucky                              | March 17, 1999     | March 19, 2000     |
| 77. Palmyra New York                                 | February 14, 1999  | April 6, 2000      |
| 78. Fresno California                                | January 8, 1999    | April 9, 2000      |
| 79. Medford Oregon                                   | March 17, 1999     | April 16, 2000     |
| 80. Memphis Tennessee                                | October 24, 1998   | April 23, 2000     |
| 81. Reno Nevada                                      | April 12, 1999     | April 23, 2000     |

President Hinckley's Revelation and Recent Temple Building

| <b>Temple</b>  | <b>Announced</b>   | <b>Dedicated</b>  |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| 83. Tampico México                                     | August 8, 1998     | May 20, 2000      |
| 84. Nashville Tennessee***                             | November 2, 1994   | May 21, 2000      |
| 85. Villahermosa México                                | November 7, 1998   | May 21, 2000      |
| 86. Montreal Québec                                    | August 6, 1998     | May 21, 2000      |
| 87. San José Costa Rica                                | March 17, 1999     | June 4, 2000      |
| 88. Fukuoka Japan                                      | May 23, 1998       | June 11, 2000     |
| 89. Adelaide Australia                                 | March 17, 1999     | June 15, 2000     |
| 90. Melbourne Australia                                | November 7, 1998   | June 16, 2000     |
| 91. Suva Fiji  | May 23, 1998       | June 18, 2000     |
| 92. Mérida México                                      | October 24, 1998   | July 8, 2000      |
| 93. Veracruz México                                    | April 14, 1999     | July 9, 2000      |
| 94. Baton Rouge Louisiana                              | October 24, 1998   | July 16, 2000     |
| 95. Oklahoma City Oklahoma                             | March 17, 1999     | July 30, 2000     |
| 96. Caracas Venezuela**                                | September 30, 1995 | August 20, 2000   |
| 98. Birmingham Alabama                                 | October 24, 1998   | September 3, 2000 |
| 103. Montevideo Uruguay                                | November 24, 1998  | March 18, 2001    |
| 105. Guadalajara México                                | April 14, 1999     | April 29, 2001    |
| 106. Perth Australia                                   | June 11, 1999      | May 20, 2001      |
| 102. Pôrto Alegre Brazil                               | October 4, 1997    | December 17, 2000 |
| 104. Winter Quarters Nebraska**                        | June 14, 1999      | April 22, 2001    |
| 108. Snowflake Arizona**                               | April 2, 2000      | March 3, 2002     |
| 112. Asunción Paraguay                                 | April 2, 2000      | May 19, 2002      |
| 115. Brisbane Australia                                | July 20, 1998      | June 15, 2003     |
| 121. Aba Nigeria                                       | April 2, 2000      | August 7, 2005    |
| <i>Third Group—Approximately 17–19,000 square feet</i> |                    |                   |
| 107. Columbia River Washington                         | April 2, 2000      | November 18, 2001 |
| 110. Monterrey México****                              | December 27, 1995  | April 28, 2002    |
| 120. San Antonio Texas                                 | June 24, 2001      | May 22, 2005      |
| 122. Newport Beach California                          | April 21, 2001     | August 28, 2005   |
| 22. Apia Samoa (rebuilt)                               | July 16, 2003      | September 4, 2005 |
| 123. Sacramento California                             | April 21, 2001     | September 3, 2006 |

| <b>Temple</b>                        | <b>Announced</b>  | <b>Dedicated</b>     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 124. Helsinki Finland                | April 2, 2000     | October 22, 2006     |
| 109. Lubbock Texas                   | April 2, 2000     | April 21, 2002       |
| 114. The Hague Netherlands           | August 28, 1999   | September 8, 2002    |
| 117. Accra Ghana                     | February 16, 1998 | January 11, 2004     |
| 116. Redlands California             | April 21, 2001    | September 14, 2003   |
| 126. Curitiba Brazil                 | August 23, 2002   | June 6, 2008         |
| 133. Vancouver British Columbia***** | May 25, 2006      | August 4, 2007       |
| <b>Temple</b>                        | <b>Announced</b>  | <b>Ground Broken</b> |
| 127. Panamá City Panamá              | August 23, 2002   | August 10, 2008      |
| 131. Kyiv Ukraine                    | July 20, 1998     | June 23, 2007        |
| 132. Cebu Philippines                | April 18, 2006    | November 14, 2007    |
| 134. Tegucigalpa Honduras            | June 9, 2006      | June 9, 2007         |
| 135. Quetzaltenango Guatemala        | December 16, 2006 |                      |
| 136. Manaus Brazil                   | May 23, 2007      | June 20, 2008        |
| 137. San Salvador El Salvador        | November 18, 2007 | September 20, 2008   |

\* Later remodeled and enlarged.

\*\* Slightly larger 2-story versions of this group.

\*\*\* Announced before, but plans changed since Colonia Juarez.

\*\*\*\* Announced earlier but the design had been changed since 1997.

\*\*\*\*\* These are groundbreaking dates, not dedications.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball's 1947 vision of a temple in Mexico (see Chapter 1) would not be realized immediately, but over a third of a century later. The temple at Colonia Juárez was not the first in Mexico; but this milestone had actually been achieved at Mexico City sixteen years earlier, when, appropriately, Spencer W. Kimball was President of the Church.

Ever since endowments were given in Spanish at the Arizona Temple beginning in 1945, faithful Saints in Mexico had wondered if it would ever be possible to have a temple in their own land. Under the Mexican Constitution of 1917 churches were

able to function but they were not legally recognized and did not have the right to own property. The law required that their property be held by the Mexican government and that all government buildings be open to the public. Latter-day Saints supposed that it would be impossible for a sacred temple to function under those circumstances. Approval to build a temple came only following three and a half years of sensitive negotiations between Church and government leaders. On one occasion, President Kimball personally met with Mexico's President José Lopez Portillo.<sup>6</sup> These negotiations were made easier because Mexican officials had come to recognize the Latter-day Saints as a people committed to complying with the laws of the land.



*The Mexico City México Temple*

On March 21, 1976, at a meeting of stake presidents, regional representatives, and mission presidents from Mexico and Central America, the First Presidency with all three members present announced the long awaited news: the Lord had directed that a temple be built in Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Designed by Emil B. Fetzer, Church architect, the new temple would feature “a modern adaptation of original Mayan architectural styles.”<sup>8</sup> The unique A-framed base of the 140-foot tower featured arched openings, inspired by Mayan doorways, through which the sky could be seen. The exterior would be covered with white cast stone, the upper two-thirds of the surface being highly ornamented.<sup>9</sup> Government officials were pleased with this indigenous design, which distinguished the temple from the churches of any other denomination.<sup>10</sup> After its completion, the temple would be one of three buildings to receive an international award for its artistic use of pre-cast concrete.<sup>11</sup>

The Mexico City México Temple would be the largest ever built by the Church outside of the United States, and the fifth largest among all the temples. Its 128,000-square-foot interior would include four ordinance rooms, each seating 120

persons. A unique innovation was providing one foyer where people in street clothes would present their temple recommends, and a separate foyer where those dressed in white clothing would proceed up the escalators to the ordinance rooms.

A concern for the architects was the unstable land in the area. Because the site of Mexico City was once a lake, the ground did not provide a firm foundation; tests revealed that the soil at the temple site was eighty-six percent water. Many buildings in the city had actually tilted as they settled. To prevent the temple from doing so, a floating foundation system needed to be provided; 221 pilings would be capped by a “control head” connected to the foundation by steel straps which would adjust “over the years to keep the building level.”<sup>12</sup>

Ground was finally broken on November 25, 1979, under the direction of Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve, who also offered the prayer dedicating the site in Spanish. More than nine thousand attended the one-hour service, many having camped out overnight at the site in order to secure a favorable vantage point. Saints in the Mexico City area formed a six hundred voice choir to provide music for the occasion.<sup>13</sup>

Despite widespread poverty, the 242,000 Saints in the Mexico City temple district raised the remarkable total of \$1.5 million needed for the temple's construction. Some sold family heirlooms while others sacrificed their livelihood by dedicating crops to the temple. Because of the scarcity of heavy equipment, most of the construction was accomplished by hand labor.

Following its completion, the new temple was open to the public November 9–19, 1983. The fact that some 120,000 visited the temple during this period was remarkable because media coverage was limited, and most of the invitations came by word of mouth. Many commented on the spirit they felt in the temple. One visitor asked if he might bring some friends. The next day he came with a group of twenty-nine. He then asked if he could return the following day with a hundred. Another group of forty-seven young men training to become priests spent an hour and a half at the visitors' center after the regular tour. Other visitors included some five thousand



business, civic and government leaders. Typically these professional people “entered with a nonchalant attitude but left deeply impressed by the sanctity of the temple.”<sup>14</sup>

The cornerstone was placed and the temple dedicated on December 2, 1983 by Gordon B. Hinckley, second counselor in the First Presidency. Some forty thousand Saints attended the nine dedicatory sessions extending over a period of three days. Several speakers referred to the temple's dedication as a fulfillment of Book of Mormon promises of great latter-day blessings to the descendants of Lehi. “Bless thy Saints in this great land and those from other lands who will use the temple,” petitioned the dedicatory prayer. “Most have in their veins the blood of Father Lehi. Thou hast kept thine ancient promise. Many thousands ‘that walked in darkness have seen a great light’ (Isaiah 9:2).”<sup>15</sup> Some speakers referred to Elder Spencer W. Kimball's 1947 dream of a temple in Mexico.<sup>16</sup> It was at the dedication that Elder Ezra Taft Benson was prompted to stress a theme that would become one of the hallmarks of his presidency: “As I participated in the Mexico City Temple dedication,” he later recalled, “I received the distinct impression that God is not pleased with our neglect of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>17</sup>

David Treviño, a young man living in Mexico City at the time, had a special experience as he sang with one of the dedication choirs. He had wondered why the “Hosanna Anthem” was in the Spanish hymnal because there had never been a temple dedicated in that language. “I learned to love that Anthem,” he reflected. His forty member choir stood in two rows behind the General Authorities on the stand. “As we began to sing the Hosanna Anthem,” he recalled, “we started to choke up because of the strong emotions, yet we did our best to keep singing. The words of the anthem had a very strong meaning at the time. As we continued to sing, I could hear a rather large group singing behind us. I even looked back a couple of times just to find myself staring at the wall. I offered a silent prayer of gratitude for the help sent to our little choir. I just accepted the fact that angels were indeed helping us, since they were also rejoicing with us in this historic day. As we continued to sing, I heard the choir behind us getting larger and larger.” Later as a member of the Mormon Youth Chorus, he had

the opportunity to sing with the Tabernacle Choir which he likened in volume and quality to the unseen singers at the Mexico City Temple dedication.<sup>18</sup>

While the temple was under construction, there was a renewed emphasis on genealogical research. Many Saints wanted to do temple work for their own family members rather than for persons randomly identified through name extraction.

The temple had even a broader impact on the Saints' spirituality and faithfulness. During the period of construction, tithing increased three-fold and four times as many people held temple recommends as before.<sup>19</sup>

The temple ordinances had a profound effect on those who were worthy to receive them. "It is always a sweet experience when a family of converts comes to the temple to be sealed for time and all eternity," reflected Agricol Lozano, the Church's long-time attorney who became the temple's president in the 1990s. "However, the sealing of a husband and wife from the group of people often classified as 'field workers' is a particularly sweet, tender and beautiful experience." Such individuals may "have never been the center of attention. . . . The wife perhaps in the past felt a tinge of envy as she saw a bride adorned for a formal wedding because life never gave her the opportunity to do more than dream of wearing such clothing." Upon entering the temple, however, they are "respected and are the subject of great tenderness." Dressed in exquisite white, she and her husband kneel at the altar in the beautiful sealing room. During the sacred ordinance, they are promised supernal and unimaginably wonderful blessings. "In most cases," President Lozano continued, these potential kings and queens in the kingdom of Heaven then "stand and embrace, leaning their heads on each other's shoulders, weeping."<sup>20</sup>

In 1995 President Lozano stated that "more members are coming to the temple, and they are better prepared than ever before." Many stakes, even those at some distance from the temple brought groups that were "self-sufficient"—including individuals who could serve as temple officiators. On one Saturday morning he saw as many as 35 buses in the parking lot. The youth were also faithful in performing baptisms for the dead, often early in the morning before school; on one occasion there were seventy in the temple at 5 a.m. By this time the temple "block" included a complex of other church

buildings: a mission office, distribution center, missionary training center, apartments, meetinghouse, visitor's center, family history center, and microfilm vaults.<sup>21</sup>

## **MORE TEMPLES IN MEXICO**

A significant change took place in Mexican law as a new constitution removed many of the restrictions formerly placed on churches. On June 29, 1993, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially registered by the Mexican government, and like other churches was given such privileges as the right to own property.<sup>22</sup> This opened the way for a significant expansion of temple building. The Colonia Juarez Chihuahua Temple, dedicated in 1999, became the second in Mexico and one of the original three "small" temples. In subsequent years, the other two were remodeled and enlarged, so the temple in the Colonies is the only remaining one having the original plan.

The year 2000 represented a milestone in temple construction both in Mexico and throughout the world. The intense pace of dedicating these temples prompted the Prophet to delegate some of this responsibility to his counselors. Often, two dedications in a given area were scheduled on the same weekend to cut down travel. These patterns were reflected in Mexico where the number of temples in operation soared from two to ten during this momentous year. The first two, Ciudad Juárez and Hermosillo, were dedicated by President Gordon B. Hinckley during a single weekend in February. The next two, Oaxaca and Tuxtla Gutiérrez, were dedicated by President James E. Faust on a weekend in March. The remaining four, Tampíco, Villahermosa, Mérida, and Veracruz, were dedicated by President Thomas S. Monson on weekends in May and July. They all belonged to the slightly larger second group of "small temples." They could be constructed in just about one



*The Tuxtla Gutiérrez México Temple*

year. In fact, two of them, Oaxaca and Tuxtla Gutiérrez, were actually completed in less than a year's time, as had been Colonia Juárez.

While the Colonia Juárez temple was still under construction, the two other temples in northern Mexico were announced, at Ciudad Juárez (in Chihuahua about 180 miles northeast of Colonia Juárez), and Hermosillo (in Sonora, the state just west of Chihuahua). David Wills, who had been project manager at Colonia Juárez, was assigned to supervise the construction of both of these new temples.

The temple in Ciudad Juárez truly is international, serving Saints in two countries. It was located there rather than in the neighboring city of El Paso, Texas, because United States citizens could enter Mexico much more easily than could people from Mexico cross the border into the U.S. At the groundbreaking, Elder Eran A. Call, President of the Mexico North Area observed, "In this temple district, we have members on both sides of the border. This will bring a uniting and joining of members of both communities."<sup>23</sup> A year later, the temple was completed and ready for its public open house. Over 25,000 attended. Many commented on how the temple was an oasis of peace in striking contrast to the bustle of this large border city. One professional man commented, "I don't need to die to see heaven. This is heaven." Another added, "If all the people in this city could come here and feel what I feel, Ciudad Juarez would be a much better city."<sup>24</sup>

John Hart, editor of the *Church News*, noted that Saints from both sides of the border gathered for the cornerstone ceremony and dedication. "Stake members from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas, who worked together on last-minute details, sang together in the choirs."<sup>25</sup> As the temple went into service, El Paso sisters crossed the border to help Mexican Relief Society members make their own temple slippers. Richard and Bon Adelle Skidmore, the temple



*The Ciudad Juárez México Temple*

construction missionaries who had been reassigned to Ciudad Juarez following the completion of their assignment in the Colonies, summed up their feelings: “We feel like there has been more than a temple built here. We have witnessed a mingling of cultures and a sharing of ideas.”<sup>26</sup>

When President Gordon B. Hinckley was visiting with Elders Eran A. Call and Jerald L. Taylor just prior to his landmark announcement of small temples, he hinted to them that a temple would also be built in Hermosillo, the capital of the northwestern Mexican state of Sonora. Then in March 1998, immediately following the Colonia Juárez groundbreaking, Elder Call met President Hinckley for a week-long tour of the Mexico North Area. Their first stop was in Hermosillo. The prophet looked over Church property adjacent to the Pitic stake center and then at a meeting with the Saints he promised them that “they would have a temple in their city.”<sup>27</sup> The official announcement that a temple would be built on this site came about four months later.

Members immediately set to work to beautify the generally unattractive street that passed in front of the temple site. Workmen sometimes asked supervisors from the Church why the standards for the temple construction were so high. They came to appreciate that they were involved in a very special project; some took the missionary discussions and were baptized. As the building was completed, local members, like the Saints in the Colonies, contributed many hours to create beautiful gardens around the temple which were appreciated by the neighbors. During the temple's open house, the hours needed to be extended, sometimes until midnight, because of the great interest; many visitors left with tears in their eyes because of the special spirit they had felt in the temple.<sup>28</sup>

A temple in Tampíco was built at about this same time. The Church had acquired property in Tampíco, Mexico, where a stake center and school were built. In 1982 the school closed and



*The Tampíco México Temple*



*The Guadalajara México Temple*

some wanted to sell that portion of the land. Stake President Roberto de Leon Perales resisted, declaring: “One day, a temple will be built here.”<sup>29</sup> The Tampico Temple now stands on that plot of land.

Over the years, the Mexican Saints had sacrificed to make the long trips needed to reach a temple. Even in Hermosillo, which was relatively close to the Mesa Arizona Temple, crossing the international border and the expense of

the trip posed challenges. For example, Purificación Segovia, a blind lady, went from house to house doing washing in order to raise money for the trip to the temple. Saints from central and southern Mexico had made even greater sacrifices as it sometimes required days rather than just hours to reach the nearest temple. The Emilio García family from Guadalajara used all their funds simply for the cost of going to Mesa with nothing left over for food; they were very grateful therefore when some thoughtful saints in the border-city of Nogales gave them some sandwiches. Years later, Brother García would become the first president of the Guadalajara México Temple.<sup>30</sup>

Those living in southeastern Mexico needed to travel yet longer distances. Saints from Mérida in the Yucatan needed to travel four days to reach Arizona; they then spent four days in the temple and an additional four days to return home making these excursions nearly two weeks in length. Even after the Mexico City temple opened, they traveled hundreds of miles to get there. The Guatemala City temple was actually closer to Mérida, but the Saints there would need to cross mountains, jungles, and an international border, so they preferred to make the 1,000-mile trip to Mexico City. Celia Carillo remembered seeing mice scurrying across the floor of the train from Mérida bound for the Mexican capital. She recalled another trip when their chartered bus lost control in a remote area and crashed into a ravine. Though many were “bloodied and bruised,” there were no serious injuries. As they crawled out of the bus, they

encountered three bandits who had been following the bus apparently with the intent of ambushing it and robbing the passengers. When they saw the injured men, women, and children, they left without harming them. The Saints discussed the advisability of returning to Mérida but determined to continue on to the temple.<sup>31</sup>



*The Mérida México Temple*

During the eighteen hour trip from Tuxtla Gutiérrez, five-year-old Ingrid Fabiola Martínez Barredo and other primary children sang their favorite hymns such as “Count Your Blessings” and “I Am a Child of God.” Adults in the group thanked the children for helping them pass the hours so enjoyably. While Ingrid was waiting to be sealed to her parents, she helped the temple workers in the nursery care for the smaller children and babies. Two years later, when their own temple was dedicated in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Ingrid enthusiastically pointed it out to all of her acquaintances as the place “where dads and moms can be married for eternity,” and “where families can be sealed together forever.”<sup>32</sup>

As workmen realized that they were building a sacred house for the Lord, they often took particular pride in their work. Jay Erekson, project manager for the temple in Oaxaca, declared: “We set an entirely new standard in quality for buildings in Mexico by building these temples the way we have built them. In recent history, there has never been anything like them in terms of the quality of workmanship achieved.”<sup>33</sup>

Temple builders on various occasions were convinced that they had been protected from the forces of nature. Because the Oaxaca temple was in an earthquake-prone area, its foundation was built on a system of pilings as had been done at Mexico City. When the temple was nearing completion, a 7.6-magnitude earthquake struck and lasted for three minutes. “I saw the building shake,” reported Jay Erekson, “the tower was whipping back and forth about a yard and I watched the windows going



*The Oaxaca México Temple*

in and out of plumb.” He described how the ground in front of temple “seemed to rise in waves 8 inches high.” Although over one hundred other buildings in the area were destroyed, the temple remained “perfectly square and undamaged.”<sup>34</sup>

A fast-moving thunderstorm approached as men were working on the roof of the Hermosillo temple. They were concerned for their safety. A bolt of lightning struck a nearby wooden power

pole, but the temple was not hit even though its metal tower was much taller, so all the men got off the roof safely. “It was a miracle,” gratefully acknowledged a local priesthood leader.<sup>35</sup> Lightning was also a concern at Veracruz when the figure of Moroni was placed atop the temple’s tower. “It had been raining steadily . . . but as we prepared to raise the angel, it immediately stopped raining. Once the statue was in position, the rain began to fall again.”<sup>36</sup>

Although these temples were built on the same basic plan, some architectural details and interior finishing gave each of them a unique character. In some of them, the first of the two ordinance rooms featured murals depicting local landscapes. As the temples neared completion, “the whole mood in the temple changed,” noticed Brother Erekson. “Prior to that time, guys would yell down the hall to each other and run back and forth. But once the furnishings were in, and the workers noticed the paintings of the Savior on the wall, the mood of all the workers changed. Without any instigation, they began to walk, not run, and they would talk only in a whisper. It was something that came from inside of them.”<sup>37</sup>

Even though the Monterrey temple was the second announced for Mexico (in 1995), it was the twelfth to be dedicated (in 2002). Stiff opposition and legal battles followed the announcement of plans to build a temple. Finally, a new site was selected “in an area of Monterrey surrounded by greenery and the city’s dramatic mountain



peaks.” Located in one of Mexico’s largest cities, this temple was built according to the larger of the “small temples” plans and had a floor area of 16,500 square feet. The temple’s open house attracted much favorable attention for the Church. “We’ve waited seven years for this temple,” reflected Leticia Villagrana de Becerra when the temple was dedicated on April 28, 2002.<sup>38</sup> Elder Eran A. Call, who by this time had been released as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, became the temple’s first president.

As had been the case in Colonia Juárez, these other small temples also had a motivating impact on the Saints. In Tampico, for example, many less-active members were prompted to become more faithful as they observed their fellow Saints sacrificing to attend the temple.<sup>39</sup> Church leaders in these other areas echoed the desire of Meredith Romney that the Saints develop the habit of attending the temple more regularly. Following the dedication of the Villahermosa temple, Elder Richard E. Turley Sr. first counselor of the Mexico South Area Presidency, instructed the Saints that they “must now develop within their homes a culture of temple attendance and participation. It is our hope that every member home in the temple district will eventually have a picture of the temple to remind them and their children of the opportunities that can be theirs. If you are faithful, the spirituality of the members will increase. There will be a measurable impact on the whole community through the faithfulness of the people and the beauty of the temple and its surroundings.”<sup>40</sup>

## **SOME LARGER TEMPLES STILL BEING BUILT**

In 1997 when President Hinckley announced plans to build smaller temples, he added: “In areas of greater Church membership we will build more of the traditional temples,



*Rexburg Idaho Temple (2008),  
one of the larger temples still  
being built by the Church.  
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*Temples in Nauvoo (2002), Copenhagen and Manhattan (both 2004)  
represent unique types of temples. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.*

but we are developing plans that will reduce the costs without any reduction in terms of the work to be performed therein.”

Two temples announced for regions of large Church membership in the southern part of the Salt Lake Valley and another in Rexburg, Idaho, would have areas of about 57,000 square feet. Three others would be of unique types: Nauvoo, a historic temple rebuilt; Copenhagen, an existing chapel remodeled into a temple; and Manhattan, temple facilities occupying only part of an existing structure. Although they would serve significant numbers of Church members, these temples were relatively few. The vast majority of temples built during the decade following President Hinckley’s 1997 announcement were constructed after the pattern revealed to the Prophet following his visit to the Colonies. Thus the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Temple stands as a monument to the revelation which has blessed millions of Latter-day Saints around the earth.

## LARGER TEMPLES DEDICATED SINCE COLONIA JUÁREZ

| Temples                        | Announced          | Dedicated         |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 66. Billings Montana           | August 31, 1996    | November 20, 1999 |
| 97. Houston Texas              | October 4, 1997    | August 26, 2000   |
| 100. Boston Massachusetts      | September 30, 1995 | October 1, 2000   |
| 113. Nauvoo Illinois (rebuilt) | April 4, 1999      | June 27, 2002     |
| 118. Copenhagen Denmark        | March 17, 1999     | May 23, 2004      |
| 119. Manhattan New York        | August 7, 2002     | June 13, 2004     |
| 125. Rexburg Idaho             | December 12, 2003  | February 3, 2008  |
| 128. Twin Falls Idaho          | October 2, 2004    | August 24, 2008   |
| 129. Draper Utah               | October 2, 2004    | March 20, 2009    |
| 130. Oquirrh Mountain Utah*    | October 1, 2005    | December 16, 2006 |

\* Groundbreaking dates for temples not yet dedicated.

### NOTES

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32. Marvin Gardner, "Ingrid Fabiola Martínez Barredo of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, México," *Friend*, May 2002.
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