



The Salt Lake Theatre: Brigham's Playhouse

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As we imagine a world without the Internet, videos, televisions, recorded music, or radios, we can better understand the important role that theatres¹ once played in our society. Throughout history, an enduring commitment to music, art, and other forms of culture has been at the very heart of great societies. This pattern seems to transcend any particular political, religious, or societal context. Humanity yearns for refinement. For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the roots of cultural identity—including music, drama, and dance—date back to the beginning years of the Restoration.

A Rich Dramatic Tradition

Drama and the arts were well established among Latter-day Saints before their arrival in the western desert. In Nauvoo during the 1840s,

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the Saints embraced the notion that a reprieve from the daily struggle of living was indispensable to their mental and spiritual health. The Prophet Joseph Smith led the effort to encourage such interests by organizing a dramatic company in Nauvoo.² The multistory Cultural Hall (also known as the Masonic Hall) was built on Main Street in the early 1840s, and numerous plays were performed there. In April 1844, just two months before the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young appeared in two scenes of the play *Pizarro, or the Death of Rolla* as “the High Priest, costumed in robes of scarlet and gold, with white muslin . . . in a nonspeaking part.”³ In that same Nauvoo production of *Pizarro*, a young man named Hiram Clawson accepted a small part as a stage hand;⁴ he later played a major role in creating and establishing the Salt Lake Theatre.⁵

After their forced exodus from the City Beautiful, the Saints sought rest from their travels and travails through song and dance. Lifting the spirits of weary travelers helped them tremendously and served as a kind of healing balm. The Lord himself encouraged such activity when he instructed the Saints at Winter Quarters, “If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (D&C 136:28). During the journey west, performances were sometimes conducted on the open ground or on makeshift stages that were as mobile as wagons. As one historian noted, “even in these, the darkest days of ‘Mormon’ history, the innate love of the people for clean and wholesome social enjoyment lightened their cares and eased their burdens.”⁶

Salt Lake before the Theatre

The first pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847, and plays were being produced under the boughs of the original bowery on Temple Square as early as 1850.⁷ Hiram Clawson had a prominent role in many of those performances.⁸

Shortly after the first plays were presented in the bowery, "the dramatic instinct existed and soon found voice in the organization of the Deseret Dramatic Association," according to Phil Margetts, one of Utah's nineteenth-century theatrical stars.⁹ President Young was invited to be an honorary member of the board. Soon after, President Young called on the Saints to construct an edifice where they might enjoy social interactions on a regular basis and be sheltered from the elements. The historic Social Hall was dedicated on New Year's Day, 1853.¹⁰ Hiram Clawson was again among the stalwart performers.¹¹

The Social Hall, a very modest forty feet by sixty feet, could seat only about three hundred patrons, though up to four hundred people were sometimes squeezed into the building.¹² Appropriately, a bust of Shakespeare was placed on stage, confirming that this was, first and foremost, a playhouse. Participant changing rooms were located underneath the performance floor. The Social Hall served as a center of pioneer social activity from 1852 until 1857, when the threatened invasion of the United States Army interrupted its use during the so-called Utah War.¹³

By the following summer, the threat of military action had faded, and calls for a new and larger building soon emerged. The need for a theatre in Salt Lake City was briefly filled by the organization of the Mechanics' Dramatic Association in 1859 and the generosity of Harry Bowring, who was building a new home on First South between Third and Fourth East.¹⁴ The exterior walls of his home were built, but the interior walls had not yet been added. Mr. Bowring offered the entire ground floor of his home for use as a small theatre. "A stage was built in one end, and rising tiers of lumber seats were built in the auditorium. . . . The first scenery consisted of rugs and sheets hung up, but a little later calico curtains were used. The increasing popularity of the Mechanics' Dramatic Association, and consequent increasing box office receipts made it possible for them to replace the calico curtains with painted scenery."¹⁵ Utah historian Edward W. Tullidge wrote: "It is worthy of note that this was the first place in Utah that bore the

name of theatre. . . . It was a theatre now, no longer a bowery; no longer a Social Hall; secular, not sacred. . . . It was the beginning of our proper dramatic era.”¹⁶ It was apparently in Bowring’s Theatre that President Young decided that Salt Lake needed a large and proper theatre. One account records:

Phil Margetts had organized the Mechanics’ Dramatic Association without the sanction of the Church president, though there is no record of any opposition to it. At any rate Phil was anxious to get the favor of the “Mormon” leader for his company. So he called on him one day and extended an invitation to him and his family to witness a performance, fixing a time for the visit. President Young asked:

“Why can’t Heber [meaning Heber C. Kimball, his counselor] and I come tonight? What are you playing?”

“Luke the Laborer,” answered Phil.

“I’ll come tonight,” President Young promised, and in witnessing the performance he was so well pleased that he accepted an invitation for himself and Heber C. Kimball and their families for the following evening.

The next night the two families, including Hiram B. Clawson arrived,—*ninety* in all; and although they crowded the little theatre beyond its capacity they managed to squeeze in. . . .

At the close of the play Phil made a curtain speech to which Brigham Young responded in a complimentary way. That very night President Young was impressed that the time was ripe for the building of a big theatre and immediately thereafter instructed Hiram B. Clawson to negotiate at once for a suitable site upon which to construct a great playhouse.¹⁷

As President Young famously said, “The people must have amusement as well as religion.”¹⁸ He recognized, as one Salt Lake Theatre actress noted, that the Saints “demanded amusement. We were far

away from everywhere, cut off from the world, with nothing but the faults and foibles of our neighbors to amuse us.”¹⁹

Not everyone was enamored, though, with the idea of a theatre in the city. There was even disagreement among Church leaders. The idea of erecting a playhouse when the temple of the Lord was incomplete seemed to be of questionable merit. Some authorities argued that if they built a theatre before a temple, it would invite condemnation both locally and nationally.²⁰ Brigham Young was resolute, however, and the theatre became a priority. He is reported to have said at this time that “there is nothing lovely in this world but the Lord created it for the good of his children. It is the abuse and not the use of anything that constitutes evil.”²¹

Almost half the funds used to build the Salt Lake Theatre were obtained “in a very unusual manner, thanks to Uncle Sam. Johnson’s [*sic*] army, doing detail duty in Utah, had very large supplies when they were suddenly ordered East”²² to fight in the Civil War. Before the army’s redeployment, the government auctioned off large quantities of supplies, building materials, and foodstuffs. Brigham Young sent Clawson to the auction as his agent with four thousand dollars in gold to “buy the things we most needed.”²³ As Clawson recounted in a 1907 address to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers:

I found building material, glass, nails, tents, sugar and other groceries, and many necessities. I was cordially received and favored by the officers. . . . I made my purchases as instructed. Tents with cook stoves that sold in New York City for \$12 or \$15, I bought for \$1, nails worth \$40 a box for \$6, and other things in proportion. From the sale of a part of the things that I purchased, which realized \$40,000.00, and with nails, glass and other building material, so conveniently provided, the building of the Salt Lake Theatre was made possible.²⁴

Few were surprised when President Young selected Clawson as the first manager of the Salt Lake Theatre.²⁵ Clawson quickly secured a site for the new theatre on the northeast corner of First South and State Street.²⁶ In addition to the funds obtained through the sale of military surplus, it is reported that President Young also used funds that had previously been set aside to build a Seventies Hall in Salt Lake City. "We have a large fund on hand," President Young is reported to have said, "for the erection of a Seventy's hall, but not enough to build such a hall as I want for the Seventies; so we will use that fund to help build the theatre, and when we get the theatre running we can pay back the Seventy's hall fund with good interest, and in that way the Seventy's will get their hall sooner than if they started to build it now."²⁷

Building the Salt Lake Theatre

The theatre's foundation was laid in July 1861, and the walls had been raised by October. The building was enclosed by Christmas and completed in March 1862. The theatre was built entirely of timber, stone, and adobe,²⁸ and the finished cost was over one hundred thousand dollars.²⁹ George W. James, a travelogue author, called it "one of the noted buildings in America."³⁰ The Salt Lake Theatre was described in an 1888 illustrated guide to Salt Lake City:

This imposing and massive edifice . . . was erected at the instance and under the personal direction of the late President Brigham Young. It has undergone many improvements since his demise, and no pains are spared by its present proprietors to make it one of the best appointed in the West. It is a capacious building, 175 feet in length and 80 feet in width, and 60 feet from floor to ceiling inside, having a stage 65 feet deep and 32 feet at the proscenium,³¹ and it is fully supplied with traps, properties and scenery. It has a parquette, dress and three upper circles, and two private boxes each side of the proscenium. It will seat

comfortably 1,500 persons. The outside presents an imposing appearance, granite finish on adobe walls, fluted columns, massive cornices in the simple Doric style of architecture. The interior is decorated with taste, and when lighted up is very fine. The scenery is the production of the best artists, and looks so real that it commands the admiration of all spectators. In all its appointments the theatre is first class.³²

M. B. Leavitt, a famous theatrical promoter, declared in 1912, "At the time of its erection, it was not surpassed in magnitude, completeness and equipment by any other existing house. Its stage, 130 feet deep, remains the most capacious of any in this country."³³ One non-LDS author, in 1914, went so far as to declare that the Salt Lake Theatre was "one of the Seven Wonders of the theatrical world."³⁴

The theatre was dedicated on Thursday, March 6. President Young sent invitations which announced the upcoming event:

Mr. _____ and family are respectfully invited to be present at the dedication of the New Theatre, on Thursday evening, March 6, 1862, at 6 o'clock.

Brigham Young

P.S. Children under four years not admitted. As the house is not finished, care should be taken to come warmly clothed.

This ticket must be presented at the door of the Theatre.

Great Salt Lake City,
Feb. 28, 1862³⁵

Over 1,200 people attended the dedication—reportedly nearly all of them were Church officials and their families. In the dedicatory prayer, Daniel H. Wells, a member of the First Presidency, invoked the blessings of the Lord that the building would be a place "for pastime,

amusement, and recreation; for plays, theatrical performances, for lectures or celebrations.”³⁶ One account of the dedicatory prayer reflected some disappointment at the proceedings:

“Squire” Wells as he was popularly called . . . no doubt made a good city mayor and an efficient general of the Nauvoo Legion, but the worthy “Squire” was not an orator, moreover, he had his piece written for this occasion and read it; his peculiar mode of delivery was tiresome even when at his best, when he had his choice of subject and all the latitude he could desire; but it was especially so on this occasion, when he was circumscribed to a most monotonous enumeration of everything that entered into the construction of the huge building. Beginning with the ground on which it stood and going in systematic order up through it foundation, walls, floors, doors, windows, to the roof, particularizing even the timbers, nails and bolts, the laths and plaster, the glass and putty, no detail he could think of was omitted. Each and all were especially dedicated to their particular purpose and use, and the blessing of the Almighty invoked to be and continue with each of these materials, and with the structure as a whole. Even to those who believed in dedications, who were the great majority of those present, the dedicatory prayer was just a little wearisome and the audience experienced a feeling of relief when it was over.³⁷

The dedicatory service also included a speech by President Young entitled “The Capacity of the Human Body and Mind for Development.” During his talk, he stated, “If I had my way, I would never have a tragedy played on these boards. There is enough of tragedy in everyday life, and we ought to have amusement when we come here.”³⁸ The theatre, Young continued, is “one of the privileges and blessings which an All-Wise Creator had placed within the reach of creatures to enjoy.”³⁹ Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor also spoke. A choir and

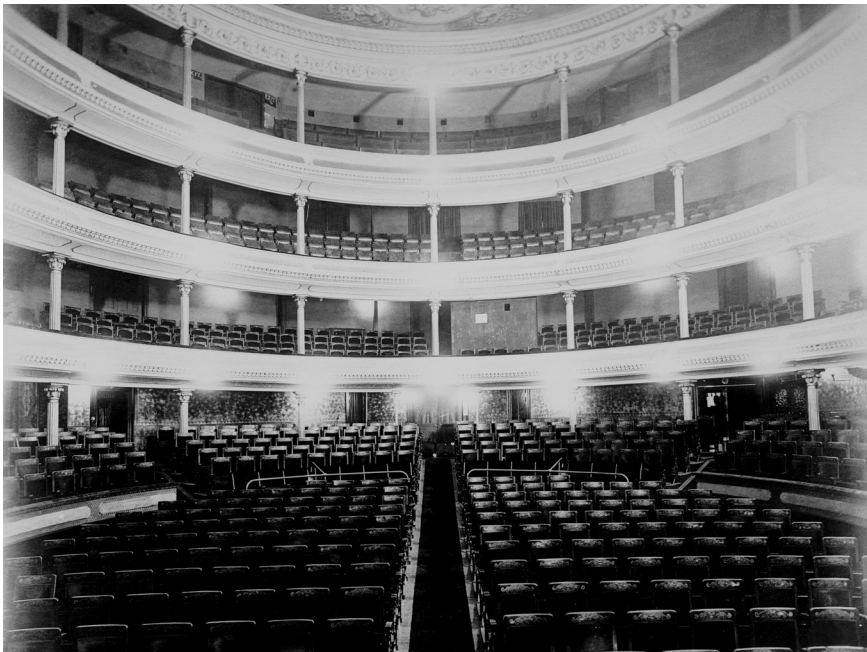
orchestra performed "The Star Spangled Banner," "La Marseillaise," a special anthem written for the dedication by Eliza R. Snow, and other hymns. There was dancing after the formal program ended.⁴⁰

After a brief initial opening run of a few weeks, the theatre was closed after the April 1862 general conference so that work on the interior could be completed. The theatre reopened on Christmas Eve 1862.⁴¹

For the first decade of its existence, the theatre was lit by 385 oil lamps dispersed throughout the building. Later, in 1872, gas lighting, which was much preferred, was installed.⁴² Shortly thereafter, other enhancements were added. These included the replacement of the old benches with chairs and new stage boxes and the modification of the floor to provide a better slant toward the stage. Despite these improvements, there were still many challenges. In 1873, George Reynolds wrote President Young that the theatre was struggling. He cited poor attendance due to inclement weather and illness among the Saints as well as their animals. Another concern was a new music hall that had recently opened in Salt Lake City that featured women dancing in provocative ways. Reynolds reported that the new hall seemed to attract both those who were curious and those who were more inclined toward amusements other than those that President Young and others had worked so hard to establish.⁴³

The Salt Lake Theatre in Operation

The first play performed in the new theatre was entitled *The Pride of the Market*.⁴⁴ Unlike other theatres, no performances were ever given on Sunday,⁴⁵ and every performance opened with prayer regardless of what type of event was being held. Smoking and drinking were prohibited. Customers were required to check their firearms at the box office, and, instead of popcorn, attendees often ate parched corn and dried fruit during a performance.⁴⁶ When the theatre first opened, its ticket prices ranged from fifty cents for the upper galleries to seventy-five cents for the better seats.⁴⁷ The theatre reflected the community in



The interior of the Salt Lake Theatre was designed by E. L. T. Harrison, a London-trained architect who patterned the house after the famous Drury Lane and Boston theaters. (Used by permission, Utah State Historical Society. All rights reserved.)

which it flourished; “almost anything was taken in exchange for admittance—eggs, butter, cheese, flour, vegetables and other merchantable produce. Large melons bought a ticket and a small melon in change; a peck of potatoes might buy a ticket with a bit of flour as change.”⁴⁸

In the early years of the theatre, actors usually worked without pay and were expected to learn “three, four, sometimes five, new plays a week; frequently two plays the same night.” Sometimes actors were expected to memorize their parts “on a day’s notice.”⁴⁹

President Young took an active role in the operation of the Salt Lake Theatre. After it opened, he attended as many rehearsals and performances as possible. He reportedly even used his private carriage to take actresses to and from the theatre to help them avoid opportunities for embarrassment and annoyance.⁵⁰ Ever the matter-of-fact and practical

leader, "he was a splendid fireman about the theatre, and took every possible precaution against fire. Once, when George Francis Train was delivering a lecture in the theatre, two or three of the coal-oil footlights began to smoke and flare. [President Young] stepped quietly out of the stage box, strolled over to the lamp, and, with his broad-brimmed hat, wafted out the light and returned to his box without any remark."⁵¹

Several stories about Brigham Young and the theatre were passed around Salt Lake City. In one story, a young actor fell in love with Sara Alexander, a ward of President Young's. When the actor asked for permission to court the young woman, Brigham Young reportedly told him, "Young man, I've seen you attempt Richard III and Julius Caesar with fair success, but I advise you not to aspire to Alexander."⁵² In a second story, a leading lady needed a dark-haired wig to complete her costume but could not find one in the wardrobe department. When President Young heard of the problem, he approached John McDonald, an actor with long black hair, and asked him to cut his hair so that a wig could be made. McDonald reportedly said, "If the success of the play depends upon my hair, Brother Brigham, you shall have it!" and he cut his hair as requested.⁵³ A third story involved the subject of censorship:

The first time Brigham Young imposed any censorship on the theatre was during the first professional ballet to appear in it. Young instructed the manager that all ballet skirts must be ankle length. The manager protested that it would be impossible for the troupe to dance, but Young was insistent.

During the first performance, many of the dancers tripped and fell on the long skirts. Before the second performance, the manager cut one inch off the skirts.

When this went unnoticed by Young, the manager cut off another inch at the next performance and continued doing this until, by the final night of the ballet, the skirts had been

shortened to their original length. Brigham Young had attended every performance and either hadn't noticed or pretended he hadn't!⁵⁴

To ensure that the Salt Lake Theatre presented proper entertainment, rules and regulations were introduced sometime in the 1864–65 performance season and hung on the theatre wall.⁵⁵ The following were some of the house rules:

1. Gentlemen are not to wear their hats in the Green Room, except in costume, or talk vociferously. . . . For any breach of this article, Fifty Cents will be forfeited. . . .

2. All rehearsals must be punctually attended, according to the call. For absence from each scene, a fine of Fifty Cents; whole rehearsal, Five Dollars. . . .

5. Any person appearing intoxicated on the stage shall forfeit a week's salary, and be liable to be discharged. . . .

8. A performer introducing his own language or improper jests, not in the author, or swearing in his part, shall forfeit One Dollar.

9. A performer restoring what is cut out by the managers or omitting advertised songs, will forfeit One Dollar. . . .

12. No person permitted, on any account to address the audience, but with the consent of the managers. Any violation of this article will subject the party to forfeiture of a week's salary, or discharge, at the option of the managers. . . .

16. Every gentleman engaged in the Theatre is to provide himself with such silk or cotton tights, stockings, wigs, hats, feathers, swords, shoes and boots, as may be appropriate and necessary to the costume he is wearing. If the costume be of present period, the whole of it must be provided by the performer. . . .

19. The use of profane or ungentlemanly language is strictly prohibited in the Theatre.

20. Smoking is strictly prohibited on the stage of the Theatre, in the entrances, Green Room,⁵⁶ auditorium, or in the ante-rooms.⁵⁷

During the first eight years of operation, the theatre reportedly produced “more than 500 plays, farces, and operas, . . . a record unequaled by any American theatre of that time.”⁵⁸ Many of those performances included the talents of national and international dramatic stars, including “P.T. Barnum; Drew, Ethel, John, and Lionel Barrymore; Sarah Bernhardt; Edwin Booth; Billie Burke; ‘Buffalo Bill’ Cody; Fanny Davenport; John Drew; Eddie Foy; Charles and Daniel Froham; Al Jolson; Lillian Russell; Dewitt Talmage; and scores besides.”⁵⁹

One famous American actress, Julia Dean Hayne, enjoyed and appreciated the Salt Lake Theatre so much that she extended a planned brief stop in Salt Lake into a performance run over one year long. At her last performance in July 1866, she stepped out of character and was called in front of the curtain. In her farewell speech, she said, “To President Young, for the many courtesies to a stranger, alone and unprotected, I return these thanks which are hallowed by their earnestness; and I trust he will permit me, in the name of my art, to speak my high appreciation of the order and beauty that reigns throughout this house. I would the same purity prevailed in every temple for the drama’s teaching. Then, indeed, the grand object would be achieved, and it would become a school.”⁶⁰

President Young owned the theatre until his death. For a brief time following President Young’s passing in 1877, the property was maintained in the name of the Salt Lake Theatre Corporation, but the keys were held by the U.S. marshal when the theatre became involved in estate litigation. In 1879, the theatre keys were conveyed to President John Taylor, who assumed responsibilities and reorganized it into the Salt Lake Dramatic Association.⁶¹ During the theatre’s existence, three

Presidents of the Church (Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Joseph F. Smith) as well as one future Church President (Heber J. Grant) held a majority ownership and control of the theatre.⁶²

Numerous prominent Salt Lake families were closely associated with the Salt Lake Theatre. The children or grandchildren of Hyrum Smith, Edward Partridge, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Lorenzo Snow, Newel K. Whitney, Parley P. Pratt, Jedediah M. Grant, Joseph Fielding, Willard Richards, John Taylor, William E. McLellin, George A. Smith, Newel Knight, Amasa M. Lyman, Reynolds Cahoon, and many others were involved in productions.⁶³ Elder Orson F. Whitney, who was called in 1906 to serve as an Apostle, also took part in theatrical performances at the Salt Lake Theatre.⁶⁴

Annie and Maude Adams, a mother-and-daughter team, were famous local actresses who performed regularly at the theatre. Annie started acting there as a child, and her daughter, Maude, first appeared on stage as a baby in the early 1870s. A farce entitled *Lost Child* was to be performed with Phil Margetts as the lead comedian. The play called for a baby to be displayed on stage, but a problem arose:

Instead of providing a real baby, as the property man had been instructed to do, he had a grotesque-looking rag baby, not at all to the comedian's taste in the matter. Millard, the property man, declared he had been unable to procure a live baby, nobody was willing to lend a baby for the part—older children he could get, but he could not get a baby,



Actress Maude Adams.

and the rag baby was the best that he could do under the circumstances, and on such short notice. Margetts was in distress. "What, in Utah!" he exclaimed. "The idea!" Where babies are our best crop, to be unable to procure one for his favorite farce. It was simply preposterous, absurd, incredible; he objected to play with nothing but a miserable makeshift of a rag baby. . . . Sudden as a bolt from a clouded sky, while the altercation was still at its height, Mrs. Kiskadden [Annie Adams] appeared in the centre of the stage with her baby in her arms, and in a good-natured tone that ended all the trouble, exclaimed, "Here's Maude, use her!" Maude was indeed a good substitute for the inartistic-looking "prop" the property man had provided. Phil was happy and played the distracted parent with a realism and a pathos he never could have summoned for the rag baby.⁶⁵

In later years, Maude Adams would become one of America's most famous and beloved actresses.

In addition to providing a suitable place for plays and musical performances, the Salt Lake Theatre hosted numerous other events such as magicians, musclemen, lectures on numerous topics (including phrenology), dances, charity events, and even political caucuses and conventions.⁶⁶

Conclusion

President Young was sometimes criticized for the active role he had taken in the creation and development of the Salt Lake Theatre. Addressing that criticism, he said:

I built the theatre to attract the young of the community and provide amusement for the boys and girls rather than have them run all over creation for recreation.

Upon the stage of a theatre can be represented evil and its consequences, good and its happy returns and rewards, the

weakness and the follies of man, the magnanimity of virtue and the greatness of truth.

The stage can be made to aid the pulpit in impressing upon the minds of the community an enlightened sense of a virtuous life, also a proper horror of the enormity of sin and dread of its consequences.⁶⁷

A history of the Salt Lake Theatre written in 1915 suggested: "Every thoughtful visitor to the place confesses to feeling an influence, an undefinable impression unlike that imparted by any other building of its kind. Who shall say? Perhaps something of the spirit of good, invoked upon the edifice in the prayers of the old pioneers may still linger within its walls to hallow them, and keep alive the aims and hopes of its founders."⁶⁸

The Salt Lake Theatre was in business for sixty-six years and was "a castle, indeed, which . . . stood as an historic monument to Drama, Music, and Art in Utah and the Rockies, and which . . . sent forth geniuses and influences affecting even their development throughout America."⁶⁹ By the 1920s, the building was in need of costly repairs, and audiences diminished with each passing year. In 1928, President Grant, who had owned a controlling interest in the Salt Lake Theatre in earlier times, made the difficult decision to sell the building for two hundred thousand dollars.⁷⁰ The last performance in the Salt Lake Theatre on October 20, 1928, was a mixed program that included several plays and speeches, intended primarily as a stroll down memory lane for the audience. And, of course, the final evening ended with prayer.⁷¹

The actual destruction of the building was more difficult than the engineers assigned to the task had envisioned. "Its large, red-pine structural timbers were sound and the building remained unusually tightly fitted. Such pioneer workmanship, combined with the structure's bastion-like walls, meant that several more months of demolition than planned was required."⁷² Mountain States Telegraph and Telephone,

who had purchased the theatre, built a telephone exchange on the site.⁷³ Several furnishings from the Salt Lake Theatre, including the original stage curtains and Brigham Young's box seats, have been preserved and are on display at the Pioneer Memorial Museum in Salt Lake City.

After the theatre was demolished, there remained individual memories and the realization that culture was an indispensable part of the Latter-day Saint heritage. One tribute and lament summarized community feelings regarding the destruction of the grand old theatre:

And now, this art heritage of a passing pioneer people, with its four glittering horseshoes, and many gilded pillars, is to be swept away for the progress of business and a paltry sum of \$200,000. The building which stood as a giant in the sixties seems small in the shadow of the twentieth century skyscraper. . . . the last performances have been given. A wrecking crew will lay low the "homey" theatre. . . .

As if to link the glory of the past with the power of the present, Ethel Barrymore stood before the curtain recently, too sad to talk, as she recalled that on this stage had played her grandmother, her mother and father, her uncle, and her two brothers.

And what a record of plays the old call board registers! From the dust of the hills the adobe building came, to dust in the hills it will soon be blown, but the memory of the Salt Lake Theatre will be as imperishable as the granite cliffs in the Wasatch crags, and as tenderly sweet as the scent of a desert rose.⁷⁴

Inspired by such traditions, Latter-day Saints continue to have a deep and abiding love for beautiful, inspiring, and enduring values. President Young once said that if he were stranded on a cannibal island and challenged to bring civilization, he would build a theatre.⁷⁵ His comment is indicative of the Mormon way. Industry, hard work, and perspiration mark the Mormon ethic. But clearly one secret to Latter-day Saint success both in pioneer times and today has been the

inclination to unstring the bow, relax, and be entertained with healthy cultural amusements. The Salt Lake Theatre filled that role well.⁷⁶

Notes

1. While the preferred US spelling today is usually “theater,” this chapter will retain the preferred nineteenth-century British-influenced spelling—“theatre.”
2. Horace G. Whitney, *The Drama in Utah: The Story of the Salt Lake Theatre* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), 3.
3. Stanley B. Kimball, “Also Starring Brigham Young,” *Ensign*, October 1975, 52.
4. George D. Pyper, *The Romance of an Old Playhouse* (Salt Lake City: Seagull, 1928), 26.
5. Hiram Bradley Clawson was born in 1826 at Utica, New York, and arrived in Utah in 1848. He was a “member 17th quorum seventies. Diplomatic missionary to Salt Lake City and elsewhere 1855–77. First treasurer Salt Lake City. Adjutant-general Nauvoo Legion. First superintendent Zion’s Co-operative Mercantile Institution. Died March 29, 1912, Salt Lake City.” See *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers, 1913), 810. He was a son-in-law to Brigham Young. See Charles L. Metten, “Salt Lake Theatre,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1255.
6. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 23.
7. George Wharton James, *Utah: The Land of Blossoming Valleys* (Boston: Page, 1922), 137.
8. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 5.
9. There appears to be some debate regarding the exact date of the creation of the Deseret Dramatic Association. Some sources claim 1850, others 1852. See Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 38, 44.
10. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 45.
11. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 5.
12. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 45.
13. For additional information regarding the relationship between Salt Lake City and the United States Army, please see the chapter entitled “Camp Douglas—Keeping a Watchful Eye on the Saints,” in this volume.

14. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 68.
15. Myrtle E. Henderson, *A History of the Theatre in Salt Lake City from 1850 to 1870* (Evanston, IL: n. p., 1934), 43–44.
16. Quoted in Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 69–70.
17. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 71–72.
18. Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 762.
19. Annie Adams Kiskadden and Verne Hardin Porter, “The Life Story of Maude,” *Green Book Magazine*, June 1914, 892.
20. John D. Fitzgerald, “Theatre in the Wilderness,” *Family Weekly*, October 12, 1958, 22.
21. Fitzgerald, “Theatre in the Wilderness,” 22.
22. T. Earl Pardoe, “The Showplace of the Pioneers,” *Drama Magazine*, January 1929, 106.
23. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 75.
24. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 75–76.
25. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 9. Clawson served as manager of the Salt Lake Theatre from its opening in 1862 until May 1889. See Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 333.
26. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 47.
27. John S. Lindsay, *The Mormons and the Theatre* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1905), 23. The Salt Lake Seventies Hall was never built.
28. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 11. Up to a quarter million adobe bricks were used during the construction.
29. Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1919), 347. For additional information see Roberta Reese Asahina, “Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Theater, 1862–1877” (PhD diss., Tufts University, 1980).
30. James, *Utah*, 135.
31. A proscenium is “the part of a modern stage in front of the curtain.” See *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., “proscenium.”
32. *The “Mormon” Metropolis: An Illustrated Guide to Salt Lake City and Its Environs* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry, 1888), 33–34.
33. M. B. Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1912), 406.

34. Kiskadden and Porter, "Life Story of Maude," 885.
35. Pardoe, "Showplace of the Pioneers," *Drama Magazine*, January 1929, 106.
36. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 7.
37. Lindsay, *Mormons and the Theatre*, 24–25.
38. James, *Utah*, 137.
39. Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management*, 406.
40. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 8. See also Lindsay, *Mormons and the Theatre*, 25.
41. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 9.
42. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 55.
43. George Reynolds to Brigham Young, February 5, 1873, correspondence, Vault MSS 95, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
44. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 8.
45. Kiskadden and Porter, "Life Story of Maude," 894.
46. Fitzgerald, "Theatre in the Wilderness," 22.
47. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 8.
48. Kiskadden and Porter, "Life Story of Maude," 894.
49. Kiskadden and Porter, "Life Story of Maude," 890.
50. James, *Utah*, 137–38.
51. Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management*, 408.
52. Fitzgerald, "Theatre in the Wilderness," 22.
53. Fitzgerald, "Theatre in the Wilderness," 22.
54. Fitzgerald, "Theatre in the Wilderness," 23.
55. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 64.
56. A "green room" in a theatre or other public building is a room that is designed to accommodate performers or speakers when they are not on stage.
57. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 64–66.
58. Fitzgerald, "Theatre in the Wilderness," 22.
59. Ronald W. Walker, "Salt Lake Theatre," in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Kent Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 484.
60. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 18.
61. Management in the Association was maintained by three individuals—John T. Caine, president; Hiram B. Clawson, secretary; and David McKenzie, treasurer. See Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 332–33.

62. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 46.
63. See Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 21–22.
64. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 37.
65. Lindsay, *Mormons and the Theatre*, 60.
66. Walker, “Salt Lake Theatre,” 484–85.
67. Fitzgerald, “Theatre in the Wilderness,” 23.
68. Whitney, *Drama in Utah*, 48.
69. Pyper, *Romance of an Old Playhouse*, 11. On pages 12 and 13, Pyper relates the following story regarding how he became manager of the Salt Lake Theatre:

One day, more than thirty years ago, Heber J. Grant, then owning a controlling interest in the Salt Lake Theater, now President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (“Mormon” Church) said to me, “George, which would you rather be—manager of the Heber J. Grant Insurance Company, or manager of the Salt Lake Theater?”

“I would rather be manager of the Salt Lake Theater than anything else on earth!” I answered.

A few days later he said:

“Go down and put your name on the boards.”

And so, for thirty years I have been managing the destinies of the very playhouse.

70. Pardoe, “Showplace of the Pioneers,” 106.
71. Henderson, *History of the Theatre*, 107.
72. Walker, “Salt Lake Theatre,” 485. See also Ronald W. Walker and Alexander M. Starr, “Shattering the Vase: The Razing of the Old Salt Lake Theatre,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (Winter 1989): 64–88
73. Ann W. Engar, “Theater in Utah,” *Utah History to Go*, http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/utah_today/theaterinutah.html.
74. Pardoe, “Showplace of the Pioneers,” 106.
75. Clarissa Young Spencer, *Brigham Young at Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 147.
76. Visitors to Salt Lake City can still see what the Salt Lake Theatre looked like. Both the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum (located at 300 North Main Street) and Kingsbury Hall on the University of Utah campus (located at 1395 Presidents Circle) in Salt Lake City are patterned after the original Salt Lake Theatre.



Beehives on the doorknobs of the Salt Lake Temple. (© Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)