



A House for the Presidency: The History of the Church Administration Building

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The completion of the Church Administration building in 1917, located at 47 East South Temple in Salt Lake City, was the culmination of plans and hopes dating almost from the foundation of the Church. As early as 1833, the Church was commanded by revelation to erect such a building. However, a variety of circumstances, including persecution, movement of Church headquarters, and financial difficulties, precluded the fulfilling of the commandments. Now, however, the building stands as monument not only to those who finally accomplished its erection but also to much of what the Church itself stands for.

In August 1833, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that a “house for the presidency” should be built on the first lot south of the temple in Kirtland, Ohio.¹ This house was intended to be a place for the First Presidency of the Church to do their work, which included

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“obtaining revelations” and ministering to “all things pertaining to the church and kingdom” (D&C 94:3). It was revealed that the building would include an upper and lower court, measuring fifty-five feet in width by sixty-five feet in length. This would have been a structure of considerable size, matching the measurements proposed for the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 95:15).² The Lord also instructed that this house for the presidency would be “dedicated unto the Lord for the work of the presidency” (D&C 94:7). Like any other dedicated building, care should be taken to keep the building clean both temporally and spiritually so it could accommodate the Lord’s presence (see D&C 94:8–9).

Unfortunately, the Kirtland Temple consumed the funds of the Saints, making it difficult to begin construction on a house for the presidency. On October 10, 1833, however, Church leaders decided to build a single building that would accommodate a printing press and a space for the School of the Prophets.³ That building was completed in November 1834 and the presidency held meetings there.⁴ This model of having a building for multiple uses set the standard for the next several decades. The First Presidency used locations such as the Kirtland Temple, schoolhouses, Joseph’s home, and the Red Brick Store in Nauvoo for their administration meetings. Even after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, the affairs of President Brigham Young and his presidency were transacted mostly in his residence, known as the Beehive House. John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff used the Gardo House, located on South Temple just opposite the Beehive House, as their administrative offices and as a place for entertaining guests and dignitaries.⁵ When Lorenzo Snow became President of the Church, he returned to the Beehive House for his administrative office, as did Joseph F. Smith. Other General Authorities and officers were housed in a variety of cramped, unsuitable quarters during this time.⁶

During John Taylor’s administration, the Church considered building proposals that included new administrative office space. In 1884,

the newly called Presiding Bishop, William B. Preston, formally commissioned Joseph Don Carlos Young, a local architect, to create a plan for Block 57 in Salt Lake City.⁷ Joseph Don Carlos Young (born May 6, 1855, in Salt Lake City) was the son of Brigham Young and Emily Dow Partridge (daughter of Edward Partridge). Best known as Carl or identified by his initials J. D. C., he graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, in 1879 with degrees in architectural engineering.

The area known as Block 57, located just east of the Salt Lake Temple near the Lion House and Beehive House, was also referred to as the administration block. Young's ambitious plans incorporated a series of buildings that included administrative offices, meeting rooms, business space, and places for public gatherings that would stretch along Main Street and South Temple Street.⁸ Paul Bradford Westwood, in his master's thesis on J. D. C. Young, described these early designs as "a proto-modern American corporate campus located on what was then considered the fringes of American civilization."⁹ The scope of his plans was so large that it would have required razing both the Beehive and Lion Houses to make room for the new structures. The buildings resembled French chateaus with a flare of Romanesque Revival, a popular architectural design during the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁰ Young estimated that it would cost fifty thousand dollars to build his administrative complex, a projection that was not only too low but also impractical because the Church was facing severe financial difficulties.¹¹ Even a bargain bid could not tempt Church leaders to go ahead with the proposal.¹² As a result, the plan to create a new administrative hub was forgotten.

Ideas for structural changes resurfaced during President Joseph F. Smith's administration and it appeared that the timing to build a house for the presidency was more favorable than in times past. It was during this time that the Church began to enjoy enough prosperity to support and even encourage large-scale building projects in Salt Lake City. For example, the Dr. W. Groves Latter-day Saints Hospital,

a state-of-the-art facility, was completed in January 1905. Two years later, a new office building for the Presiding Bishopric and General Auxiliary Presidencies was announced, and other building projects on the administration block such as the Deseret Gymnasium and the Hotel Utah were also under way.¹³ But even though financial means were more readily available at the beginning of President Smith's presidency, a structure for the First Presidency did not seem to be part of the expansion plans. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith explained that "it was not . . . until all other needs, seemingly, had been provided for, before President [Joseph F.] Smith determined that better quarters for the Presiding Authorities and the Historical Department of the Church should be prepared."¹⁴ As the existing building projects neared completion, the First Presidency considered the possibility of building a new administrative headquarters.

Although the improved financial affairs of the Church were a motivating factor for a new administrative building, the pressing need for adequate administrative space to conduct the affairs of the growing Church could no longer be ignored. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith described the administrative situation of the time. "In the early days in the Salt Lake Valley, the headquarters, perhaps, were serviceable," he observed, "but as the Church grew and the need of greater and better quarters became necessary, no such accommodations were available. The offices of all departments were cramped and unserviceable."¹⁵ The time had come when the First Presidency could seriously reconsider building the structure that Joseph Fielding Smith would later refer to as "one of the most important of all the structures" built during his father's administration.¹⁶

The site selected for the Church Office Building was at 47 East South Temple nestled between the newly constructed Hotel Utah and the Lion House. It was designed for the distinct purpose of administering the affairs of the Church as outlined in the Prophet Joseph Smith's revelation received over eighty years earlier.

Designing the Building

Once again, the Church turned to J. D. C. Young for help. Since his initial 1884 sketches of the administrative block, Young had gained valuable experience that greatly influenced his work. He worked on the Salt Lake Temple as an assistant to the Church architect, Truman O. Angell, and when Angell died in October 1887, Young was called to be the new Church architect. Consequently, Young redesigned some exterior parts of the temple—changing the spires from wood covered in metal to matching granite masonry—and then redesigned the entire interior of the temple.¹⁷ While Young was working on the Salt Lake Temple, Karl G. Maeser asked him to design the Brigham Young Academy Building in Provo, which was completed in 1892. When the Salt Lake Temple was completed in 1893, Young was released as Church architect and started an architectural firm, called Young & Son, with his son, Don Carlos Young.

When Church leaders approached Young & Son, there were at least three important expectations for the design of the new building. They included (1) a functional building to serve as the administrative headquarters of the Church, (2) a building that provided the best possible security and protection from natural disaster, and (3) a building that served as a visible marker portraying a growing, vibrant, modern, and legitimate organization.

A useable administrative headquarters. Since 1833, it had long been a desire of both the Lord and officers of the Church to have a house dedicated for the presidency to administer “all things pertaining to the church and kingdom” (D&C 94:3). In 1917, President Joseph F. Smith said, “A couple of years ago . . . we concluded that we would build a house that would furnish suitable accommodations for the Presidency and others.”¹⁸ At another time, President Smith provided more details, saying that the new structure would “provide offices for the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, the Presiding Patriarch, the Historian’s office, the Genealogical Society, and other Church organizations.”¹⁹

Importantly, the vision of the building had expanded from an administrative office solely for the First Presidency to a building for the leading officers of the Church. This provided a central location and headquarters of the presiding administrative body. It also meant that the new structure needed to be large enough to accommodate office space and other facilities needed to meet the needs of the administrative affairs for the entire church. After Young & Son accepted the commission to design the building, Young began sketching his ideas in a notebook. On February 24, 1913, he sketched preliminary drawings in his personal sketchbook that he labeled as the “L.D.S. Church Administration Building.”²⁰ Young completed three different sketches of a multilevel building that ranged in size from 150 to 200 feet long and from 80 to 124 feet wide. When compared with the 1833 Kirtland house for the presidency, Young’s varied designs for an administrative house or headquarters were eight to sixteen times larger.

A secure and protective building. One critical aspect in the design of the building was the need that it be secure and impervious to natural elements, especially fire and flooding. Since it was intended that the building contain the valuable historical documents of the Church, there was great concern that it should adequately protect its contents from any foreseeable disaster. Upon completion of the new Church Office Building, Anthon H. Lund, first counselor in the First Presidency, told of his earlier worries about the Church’s historical documents. “I have often been anxious about the precious documents, letters and books that we have in the Historian’s office,” he said. “If we should have been unfortunate enough to have had a fire and to lose them we could never have restored the loss, and I am therefore happy now that we have these splendid collections of historical matters pertaining to the Church placed in a safe building.”²¹

President Lund’s worries about protection and safety were shared by other officers of the Church, so Young & Son made security and protection an important aspect of their design. As a result, they designed what they referred to as a “Class ‘A’ construction.”²² They

later explained that this class of construction called for a steel frame skeleton that is fireproofed with reinforced concrete. In addition, the building was designed to resist all lateral wind pressure, and the windowless basement was designed to be constructed of steel, granite, and reinforced concrete, making it both fireproof and waterproof. The architects designed the building to be built on a grade that was considerably higher than the normal street grade to provide additional protection from the periodic floodwaters of City Creek.²³

A monument to a growing, vibrant, and modern church. President Joseph F. Smith yearned for an administrative building that would be “a monument of the real character of the work” of the Church and its leaders.²⁴ Rather than simply requiring a functional and secure administration building, President Smith wanted an edifice that would also inspire and make a lasting impression fitting of the mission of the Church. As a result, the façades in Young’s 1913 sketches were quite different from his 1884 French and Romanesque revival designs. This time his drawings reflected the American Renaissance period (1878–1917). Many of the government and civic buildings designed and built during this period neatly fit into neoclassical designs that evoke a sense of power and stability commonly associated with Greek and Roman architecture.

On April 2, 1913, Young showed the First Presidency two draft sketches of the new building. President Lund recorded in his diary that the Presidency “liked it very much.”²⁵ Just nineteen days later, the First Presidency publicly announced their intention of building a Church office building. On April 26, 1913, an announcement of the “Design of General Church Office Building” appeared in the *Deseret Evening News* with an architect’s drawing of the building.²⁶ The announcement described the proposed building as “an imposing structure, designed to be a monument not only to the Church, but to Salt Lake City and Utah.”²⁷ The printed perspective of the building was very similar to one of Young’s 1913 preliminary sketches made in his notebook earlier in February. Although the detailed perspective was printed in the newspaper announcement, the appearance and details of the building

were yet to be finalized. For example, the announcement stated that the finished building would “be a modification of the one shown in the above cut” and that “the new building [would] not be as large as that specified in this drawing.”²⁸ Clearly, though, the proposed building was going to be built and would be an imposing and a fitting monument to the Church.

On August 12, 1913, Presidents Anthon H. Lund and Charles W. Penrose of the First Presidency reviewed the current plans for the new administration building.²⁹ The final plans were completed in October 1913, and Young took out a patent on the blueprints.³⁰ As anticipated, the final design was altered from the original drawings in both appearance and size. While the building design clearly fits the neoclassical style of architecture, J. D. C. Young characterized the building’s design as Grecian Ionic.³¹ Young felt this design style was “one of the most graceful and pleasing of all architectural styles.”³² The building would extend five stories above a basement and would measure 101 feet and 11 inches wide by 165 feet and 3 inches long.

President Smith’s desire for the building to be designed as a monument was also embraced by others involved with the building. Elder Junius F. Wells, for example, proposed that the building should explicitly honor the legacy of Church leaders by inscribing their names into the exterior granite walls. Wells worked with Pope and Guptull, architects from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, to complete blueprints showing the name of the Church, important historical dates and locations, and all the names of Latter-day prophets, Apostles, the Three Witnesses, and all other General Authorities along with the dates of their service inscribed in the building’s granite exterior.³³ Obviously, this particular plan did not come to fruition.

Building Construction

With Young & Son leading the design and engineering on the building, J. W. Mellen, a prominent local contractor, was selected as

the lead contractor.³⁴ Excavation began on September 3, 1913, and it was anticipated that the construction of the building would take only two years barring any significant complications or delays.³⁵ During the first year of construction, Young reported that the recently poured concrete for the foundation froze in the severe winter conditions. Upon initial inspection and testing, the concrete crumbled to dust and could not support the weight of the five-story building. Due to poor weather conditions, it was determined to wait until warmer weather to remove the foundation. It was not until spring 1914 that the weather warmed sufficiently to rectify the faulty concrete. Prior to removing the foundation, the concrete was retested. Much to the shock of the architects, engineers, contractors, and builders, the foundation was deemed to be structurally sound and could be left intact. Young and others felt the change in the condition of the foundation was nothing short of miraculous providence, for it saved time and precious funds.³⁶

In October 1914, President Smith described work on the building as “progressing slowly but satisfactorily.”³⁷ He attributed the lack of progress not to construction delays but to financial difficulties. “I might add possibly without inconsistency,” he said, “that the progress of this building might have been a little more rapid if we had seen clearly our way to supply the means necessary to force it along a little faster.”³⁸ The Church had used \$128,663 of tithing funds to support the construction of the administration building but this amount was obviously insufficient to keep the project on schedule.³⁹ To help subsidize the cost of construction, it was determined that the proceeds from the sale of Church Historian Andrew Jenson’s 1914 edition of *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events Pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* would be used to help meet the financial needs of the new building.⁴⁰ Even with financial assistance from other sources, President Smith felt that the real solution to meeting the obligations of the growing Church would be for members of the Church to pay their tithing.⁴¹

The basement, which would support the entire superstructure of the building, was far enough along to construct the steel skeleton by November 1914.⁴² The basement extended twelve feet below grade and was constructed of reinforced concrete and a “projecting plinth” of solid granite.⁴³ With the basement and main floor complete, most of the six hundred tons of steel used in the building was used to erect a fireproof framework designed to carry the load for the entire building.⁴⁴ With this in place, the exterior stonework could begin.

All of the exterior walls were composed of Utah granite taken from the same quarry in Little Cottonwood Canyon that supplied the granite used to build the Salt Lake Temple.⁴⁵ By early spring 1915, two rows of granite were laid, and a cornerstone-laying ceremony was scheduled for May 19, 1915, at 10:00 a.m. The ceremony was delayed to 3:00 p.m. because the inscription for the copper plate on the memento box was not completed.⁴⁶ President Smith was in Hawaii at the time and unable to attend the ceremony so his counselors presided in his place. Francis Lyman, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, opened the ceremony with prayer after which the stone was hoisted up and set in place. The cornerstone is the largest stone in the exterior walls, weighing about eight tons, and is located at the southwest corner of the building.⁴⁷ As soon as the cornerstone was set in place, President Lund, first counselor, declared the stone as being laid according to “rule & plummet” and stated that he hoped “the building would all be as well and solidly laid as this stone.”⁴⁸ Following President Lund’s declaration, President Penrose, second counselor, dedicated the cornerstone.⁴⁹

The Exterior

The exterior was constructed of 4,517 granite block stones diagrammed by individual weight, cubical contents, and cost—totaling 73,000 cubical feet of granite weighing 6,025 tons.⁵⁰ The distinctive feature of Young’s Grecian Ionic design was twenty-four columns and

capitals forming a colonnade on each side of the building between the granite masses at each corner. Each column was forty-eight feet tall and measured five feet in diameter at the base. True to the classic Ionic order, each capital is a carved volute, creating a spiral scroll.⁵¹ Above the columns rests a massive granite entablature described by J. D. C. Young as “consisting of a beautifully carved architrave, heavy dentils, the water leaf course and the egg and dart moldings.”⁵² The only other exterior decorative symbols carved of stone are the two stone wreaths above every window portal and the granite lion heads appearing over each column on the corona. At the crown of the building is a solid granite parapet.⁵³

The building had two entrances, the main entrance and a private entrance located in the northeast corner of the building. The main entrance is found on the south and is reached by climbing sixteen solid granite steps flanked by granite pedestals on either side. A decorative bronze tripod bearing an inverted glass bowl was perched on the threshold of each pedestal with a high powered lamp placed inside each bowl that was “so arranged as to throw a flash of light upon the Ionic columns flanking it.”⁵⁴ The main doors are made of solid bronze with glass panels. In front of these doors is a pair of bronze grills that slide out from inside the exterior walls to enclose the entrance at night. Like the front entrance, the rear door is also made of bronze and glass. True to the neoclassical styling, a pediment was placed over the main entrance and the tympanum contained the blocked letters “LDS.”⁵⁵ Directly under the pediment in block letters was inscribed “CHURCH OFFICES,” which designated the official name for the building as the “LDS Church Offices” at the time.

The Interior

By 1916, the building’s exterior was nearing completion, and the interior construction was under way. The primary purpose of the basement was to provide the best possible security against any foreseeable

natural disasters. Consequently, the concrete walls were reinforced and waterproofed. A vault to store the most prized historical documents of the Church was installed in the basement. The remainder of the basement was unfinished and used for storing files, records, and maintenance equipment.

Main floor. The first, or main, floor was designed to accommodate public receptions, large meetings, and the administrative work of the First Presidency, the Patriarch of the Church, and the administrative staff. Every effort was made to make the interior of the building as stately and grand as its exterior, especially on the first floor. The entry was floored in white marble, and the walls were veneered with large blocks of golden travertine marble—both extracted from Utah quarries. A white marble staircase with treads of white Tennessee marble, balusters and handrails made of Utah marble and travertine of varying tints curve upward connecting the upper floors. Two elevators with bronze doors are opposite the staircase and service all floors of the building including the basement.

North of the entry, through two large glass doors, lay a thirty-foot by forty-foot reception hall of white marble floors and marble-veneered walls. Four marble standards set into the walls extended seven feet to an entablature and had an inverted glass dome fixture attached. While the building was still under construction, the First Presidency met with members of the Presiding Bishopric to discuss details concerning the design of the reception hall. Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley felt that sixteen fluted Doric columns should be purchased for forty thousand dollars and placed in the room.⁵⁶ Nibley's second counselor, David A. Smith, however, favored having marble pedestals with the busts of the Presidents of the Church over the columns. Anthon H. Lund expressed his preference of not using either option, feeling that the costly marble veneering on the walls and the existing columns in the building would be sufficient.⁵⁷ In the end, the reception room was ultimately flanked with sixteen fluted marble monoliths taken from the Bird's Eye Quarry in Thistle Canyon.⁵⁸



Interior of the Church Administration Building in Salt Lake City. (© Intellectual Reserve, Inc.)

These columns were arranged to support an entablature that created a floating ceiling made of art glass, creating a light court in the reception area. Light wells, or large open areas in each upper floor, allowed natural light to cascade vertically through the building from the open roof behind the parapet.

Two large conference rooms are accessible from the reception area. To the west is a twenty-eight-foot by ninety-eight-foot room running north to south with deep mahogany-paneled walls and a marble fireplace carved with sego lilies on its eastern wall. This conference room was designated for use by General Authorities, general officers, and members of the various general boards of the Church.

The other conference room is located just north of the reception hall through a small waiting room often referred to as the Onyx Room, named because of the light-colored Utah onyx walls and white marbled floor.⁵⁹ Through the doors of the Onyx Room is a twenty-seven-foot by forty-seven-foot conference room running east to west that is used

by the First Presidency for receiving dignitaries and holding business meetings. The walls are warmed by rich panels of Circassian walnut where the panels are mounted in an intricate pattern known as the butterfly effect.⁶⁰ The ceiling is blocked with walnut, and a white travertine marble fireplace lines the east wall of the room.

Another large area (twenty-nine feet by ninety-eight feet) on the east side of the main floor running north and south was provided as general office space for the administrative staff. This room was divided by “screens and counters” (cubicles) to create private working spaces for staff assignments. A “fire- and burglar-proof vault” for the use of the First Presidency was also located in this area.⁶¹

Private offices for the members of the First Presidency were located on the main floor in the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the building. Each office was furnished with personal facilities and had an adjoining secretary’s office. The First Presidency’s administrative secretary and the office for the Patriarch of the Church were located in the southeastern corner of the main floor.

The upper floors. The second floor originally housed the offices for the Council of the Twelve, Council of the Seventy, and staff. All private offices aligned with the exterior walls, providing each office with at least one window. A storage room, restrooms, closets, stairwells, elevators, and a light well used the rest of the inner floor space.

The third and fourth floors had nearly identical floor plans. Each was designed with nine offices, an open twenty-foot by forty-eight-foot work room, and an open stack room that was used for storage, shelving, reading, and reference work. The third floor was allocated to the Church historian. The Genealogical Society of Utah was housed on the fourth floor; instead of having a work room, a classroom was built on the east side for class instruction in genealogy and temple recording.

The fifth floor was primarily designed to serve as a “stack room” for the records and files of the Church Historian and the Genealogical Society. This floor was almost entirely open space filled with shelving.⁶²

Completion of the New Church Office Building

Church leaders expected the building to be ready for dedication by April 1917. Occupancy of the building took place in stages as construction was completed during 1917. The Genealogical Society and business offices for the First Presidency's staff, for example, began moving into the building on February 28, and the First Presidency began moving into their private offices on April 4. The building was officially deemed complete on October 2, 1917, when an eight-foot mantelpiece of white travertine marble was installed on the fireplace in the First Presidency's conference room.⁶³ The cost of the building was announced as approximately nine hundred thousand, although some estimates had the building costing more than one million dollars.⁶⁴

During the October general conference of 1917, President Joseph F. Smith stated that a dedication date for the building had not yet been set but would "take place in the near future."⁶⁵ During the same conference, President Lund expressed his gratitude for the completion of the "new office quarters" and invited the public to "come and see them."⁶⁶ Visitors toured the building for decades after President Lund's invitation. Tours were organized, and in the 1920s a handsome brochure of the building was created to be distributed to guests touring the building.⁶⁷ These tours continued well into the late 1960s, when it was reported that "at general conference time, the building literally overflows with members of the Church who find occasion to enter it. At other times, groups of seminary students and others may be found touring the building and seeing for themselves some of the historic records stored there."⁶⁸ Due to heightened security needs, public tours were discontinued during the 1970s.

Continued Improvement to the Building

In October 1947, it was announced that the building would be remodeled to create more usable space as well as to improve the building's efficiency. Before remodeling, the basement was used as a

makeshift storage area and vault. The new changes split the basement into thirds with a receiving and supply area, a suitable storage area for documents and files (stack room), and a mechanical section to meet the needs for the publicity and radio functions of the Church.

The most dramatic change of this remodeling, however, was covering the natural light wells on the second, third, and fourth floors to create usable space for additional offices and storage. As a result, a missionary assembly room, once located on the fourth floor, was moved to the newly created space on the third floor which, in turn, made ample room for the Presiding Bishopric and their staff to occupy the fourth and fifth floors on November 27, 1949.⁶⁹

Renovation and remodeling, 1975–77. In addition to regular maintenance, several changes were made to the building over the next twenty years to facilitate administrative changes of the Church. For example, a private branch exchange (PBX)—a switching station for telephones—was installed to handle growing communication needs. By 1969, the light well on the fifth floor was covered, creating additional space.

With the announcement of the new multistoried Church Office Building to be built on the administrative block at 50 East North Temple in the early 1960s, confusion over the appropriate nomenclature for the new headquarter complex surfaced. A simple but important change to the façade of the building on 47 East South Temple clearly resolved any question on this matter. The letters “LDS” on the building’s tympanum were removed, and the words “Church Offices” above the main entrance were replaced with “Administration Building.” In addition, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints” was added in large bronze block letters to the architrave over the main entrance.⁷⁰

In the early 1970s, Church architect Emil B. Fetzer was working on plans to add a fire escape to the Administration Building when he determined that while the foundation and exterior walls of the building were in excellent condition, the interior needed a drastic renewal.⁷¹ After approaching the First Presidency with the idea, Fetzer was given

permission to proceed but was counseled that the building “should be brought to the character and quality of the original building, with the present-day standards.”⁷²

Around this same time, Relief Society general president Belle S. Spafford began looking for an appropriate rug for the reception room on the main floor.⁷³ She contacted William Pera, who secured a large rug, thirty-nine by eighteen feet, that was woven in the 1920s. The rug was reportedly made in Bulgaria and originally placed in a Bulgarian palace, but it was removed when the Communists took over the government at the end of World War II. President Spencer W. Kimball said three families worked together for seven years to create the rug.⁷⁴ The colors of the rug beautifully matched the hues of the marble in the reception room, and the rug’s cypress tree motif fittingly matches the tree of life symbolism from the Book of Mormon.⁷⁵ The rug was purchased and presented to the Church as a gift from the Relief Society.⁷⁶ It still adorns the main floor reception room.

By 1972, Emil B. Fetzter completed his early designs for the renovation and remodeling of the Administration Building.⁷⁷ Although the project only involved the interior of the building, the size and scope was so extensive that Bishop H. David Burton later described the building as being “torn apart and restructured.”⁷⁸ The building was vacated during the remodeling. The First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, other General Authorities, their staffs, and those affiliated with other departments housed within the building moved their offices in July 1975 into the new church office building at 50 East North Temple.⁷⁹

Architect Fetzter’s plans called for both a renovation and a remodeling of the building’s interior. The renovation included completely modernizing the electrical, mechanical, fire sprinkler, plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning systems throughout the building. Most carpets, draperies, and other furnishings were also replaced and updated.⁸⁰

The remodeling was bold and drastic. The entire basement was redesigned to include a cafeteria for General Authorities, an exercise

room, dressing rooms, an efficient mechanical room, and an office for the building manager. New private elevators for General Authority use were installed in the northern end of the building as was an additional stairwell.⁸¹ Another entrance to the Administration Building was created in the basement by making an opening in the north wall of the basement and connecting it with the underground parking level created for the Church Office Building in 1965.⁸²

The private offices of the First Presidency on the main floor were updated, and the northwest corner office was enlarged for the President of the Church.⁸³ Offices and work rooms were created from the open general office space in the east portion of the building. Members of the Council of the Twelve occupied all four corner offices of the second, third, and fourth floors. Other General Authorities occupied offices on the upper floors. The administrative offices are paneled in either cherry or walnut.⁸⁴ In all, the newly remodeled Administration Building offered ninety-three offices on the upper four floors for General Authorities and their staff. Other additions to the building included a library on the fourth floor and a large meeting room for the Council of the Twelve, Presiding Bishopric, and other General Authorities on the fifth floor.⁸⁵ The General Authorities began moving back into the newly completed Church Administration Building during September 1977.⁸⁶

When the project was completed, plans for rededicating the building were discussed. Soon, though, a question arose as to whether or not the building was ever dedicated in the first place. After careful examination, the Historian's Office determined that the building had never been dedicated, making a rededication impossible. When considering why the building was not dedicated when first completed, President Kimball felt it was most likely due to a series of events rather than single event. He explained that President Joseph F. Smith fell ill during the fall of 1917 and on January 23, 1918, his forty-five-year-old son, Hyrum Mack Smith, died. This event greatly affected him for quite some time. In April, President Smith suffered a stroke that hampered

him until his death on November 19. Finally, the Spanish flu epidemic limited public gatherings and even caused the postponement of the general conference in 1919 from April until June. President Kimball concluded that the “dedication of this Administration Building was postponed and left to be taken care of at another date.”⁸⁷

It is rather ironic that this particular building had never been dedicated. After all, its inception was by divine revelation in 1833 and the Savior specifically stated that the house for the presidency would be “dedicated unto the Lord” (D&C 94:7). On February 8, 1978, President Kimball gathered the Church leaders and staff in the west conference room of the newly refurbished building to “properly dedicate this magnificent building.” He said, “It now becomes our pleasure and satisfaction to offer this building, even at this late date, and dedicate it to the Lord for the carrying on of all his work, particularly for the growth and development of the kingdom here on the earth.”⁸⁸

Post-1980 changes. Only two other significant changes have taken place since the dedication of the building in 1978. The first was a remodeling of the basement entrance that was added in 1977. A new entrance extended into the underground parking facility, creating a gracious room that complimented the interior styling found throughout the building. The new entrance also afforded General Authorities privacy and the convenience to enter the building from the parking entrances while creating an efficient security room for screening visitors and assessing possible threats.

In July 2006, the Administration Building underwent a life-safety or seismic renovation. The crews worked double shifts six days a week for one month so that the renovation would disrupt the busy schedules of the General Authorities as little as possible.⁸⁹

Conclusion

True to its prophetic conception, the Church Administration Building has been a place dedicated to the Lord for the presidency to

do their work in ministering to “all things pertaining to the church and kingdom” (D&C 94:4). More than just an administrative facility, this building has been a place of tribute to those who have, as President Kimball prayed, “served . . . and who loved this building . . . and brought credit to it.”⁹⁰ The bodies of Presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Howard W. Hunter have all lain in repose in the reception hall.⁹¹ The Administration Building has welcomed prominent individuals, governmental and religious leaders, and dignitaries visiting Salt Lake City. It is a stately building that will continue to serve the Church in the decades ahead.

The Administration Building continues to fulfill President Joseph F. Smith’s desire that it would be “a monument of the real character of the work.”⁹² Upon its completion in 1917, it was reported that “the first impression one receives of the building is its massiveness, coupled with its striking beauty, richness and harmony in every detail.” Another visitor called the structure “a poem in stone.”⁹³ Oscar Wenderoth, supervising architect of the US Treasury Department, said that the Administration Building was “equal to anything he has seen in the East or in Europe, and that it will be a lasting monument to the Church that is erecting it.”⁹⁴

The lasting monument of the Administration Building, however, is not found in its strength, security, functionality, or even in its impressive beauty. This building is a monument to something far more significant, as was expressed in an *Improvement Era* article commemorating its fiftieth anniversary: “Third and even fourth generations of Church members are receiving direction and guidance that come from within this beautiful granite building.”⁹⁵ This statement affirms the Lord’s original intention that such a building truly would be “for the work of the presidency, in obtaining revelations; and for the work of the ministry of the presidency, in all things pertaining to the church and kingdom” (D&C 94:4).

Notes

1. The heading for Doctrine and Covenants 94 states that this revelation was received by Joseph Smith on May 6, 1833. The Kirtland Revelation Book, however, shows that the D&C 94 was actually the last portion of the revelation known as D&C 97. See Kirtland Revelation Book, 64, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
2. When completed, the outside walls of the Kirtland Temple measured 59 feet × 79 feet 2 inches and the inside walls measured 57 feet × 77 feet 2 inches.
3. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:418.
4. *History of the Church*, 2:379.
5. John P. Livingstone and others, *Salt Lake City: Ensign to the Nations* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 48. The Gardo House was also known as Amelia's Palace and was used until 1891, when it was taken from the Church by the Edmonds-Tucker Act; see also Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, November 13, 1891, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
6. James B. Allen and Richard O. Cowan, *Mormonism in the Twentieth Century* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), 26.
7. Paul Bradford Westwood, "The Early Life and Career of Joseph Don Carlos Young (1855–1938)" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1994), 90, Church History Library. Westwood concluded that while Bishop Preston is credited with commissioning the plan, the First Presidency would have known about the project or "jointly commissioned" Young to the work. Westwood reasons this must have been the case since George Q. Cannon, First Counselor in the First Presidency, was Joseph Don Carlos Young's brother-in-law.
8. See Joseph Don Carlos Young, "Sketches for a Church Block: Block Development in Salt Lake City One Hundred Years Ago" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1990), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
9. Westwood, "Early Life and Career," 90, 92. Westwood is currently the manager of collection development, Church History Library.
10. Westwood, "Early Life and Career," 93.

11. Westwood, "Early Life and Career," 90.
12. Westwood, "Early Life and Career," 94.
13. The Deseret Gymnasium was considered to be one of the best-equipped gymnasiums of the time and was an adjunct of the Church school system. The Hotel Utah, situated on South Temple and Main Street, was completed in June 1911. President Joseph F. Smith described it as being "one of the most magnificent hotels that existed on the continent of Americas, or in the old continent either." In Conference Report, October 1911, 129.
14. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 427.
15. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 427.
16. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 427.
17. For additional information on the construction of the Salt Lake Temple, see Richard O. Cowan's article herein.
18. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1917, 8.
19. Journal History, August 20, 1913, 2. See also Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1914, 4.
20. Joseph Don Carlos Young Family Papers, 1873–1978, February 24, 1913, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
21. Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, October 1917, 10.
22. J. D. C. Young, "The Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, April 1917, 57.
23. Paul L. Anderson, interview by George Cannon Young, Salt Lake City, 1973, 35, Church History Library.
24. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1917, 8.
25. *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund*, ed. John P. Hatch (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), April 2, 1913, 496.
26. "Design of General Church Office Building," *Deseret Evening News*, April 26, 1913, 1.
27. "Design of General Church Office Building," 1.
28. "Design of General Church Office Building," 1. Even with the disclaimer that the building would be smaller than the design provided, no actual dimensions of the building were given in the announcement.
29. *Danish Apostle*, August 12, 1913, 511.

30. The original blueprints were dated October 1913. Gary L. Phelps, "The Church Administration Building," August 1969, 3, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library.
31. There are three ancient orders of classical architecture, known as the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. All of these orders were invented by the Greeks, although the Romans (and others) recast the orders according to their own tastes.
32. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 57.
33. Junius F. Wells papers, 1867–1930, Church History Library.
34. *Deseret Evening News*, April 14, 1917, 9.
35. Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 428; *Deseret Evening News*, Saturday, April 26, 1913, 1.
36. Phelps, "Church Administration Building," 3–4.
37. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1914, 4.
38. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1914, 4.
39. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1915, 8.
40. "Church Chronology," *Improvement Era*, June 1915, 752.
41. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1914, 4.
42. Harry Shipler, "Bransford Apartments, Eagle Gate and Hotel Utah," Shipler Commercial Photographers, November 1914, photograph, Collection MSS C 275; Shipler #15691, Utah State Historical Society.
43. A plinth is a continuous course of stones (or other solid material) supporting a structural wall. A plinth negotiates the space between a structure and the ground—a footing. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 57–58.
44. "L.D.S. Church Office Building—A Poem in Stone: New Church Offices Open to Public Inspection," in *Deseret Evening News*, Saturday, April 14, 1917, 9.
45. Spencer W. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building," 1978, Church History Library; "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church Office Building," *Improvement Era*, November 1967, 64.
46. *Danish Apostle*, 578; Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 428.
47. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 58.

48. *Danish Apostle*, 578. A plummet is a plumb bob, used for measuring verticality in construction.
49. *Danish Apostle*, 578.
50. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 58.
51. A volute is a spiral or scroll-like ornament set atop a column.
52. J. D. C. Young, "The Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Juvenile Instructor*, March 1916, 147. An entablature is a part of a building resting on columns. A classical entablature consists of an architrave, a frieze, and a cornice. The architrave is the main beam resting on top of a column or row of columns. A dentil is one of a series of small, rectangular blocks arranged like a row of teeth. These blocks are used as ornaments, typically on the molding of a cornice. The design included a pattern of egg-shaped ovals, arrows (darts), and leaves.
53. A parapet is a low wall running along the edge of a roof or balcony. Young said that by using a parapet, he was "enabled to get a fine room out of a space that is usually lost." Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Juvenile Instructor*, 147. Because there were no windows in the parapet, lighting was accomplished by having windows on the interior walls or in the light well.
54. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 58.
55. In Greek architectural styling, a pediment is the triangular section above the entablature on the front of a building. The pediment is usually placed over an entrance. The tympanum is the recessed area within the pediment.
56. Doric columns are the oldest and simplest of the Greek design and usually stand flat on the ground with a smooth, flared capital.
57. *Danish Apostle*, 606.
58. The term "bird's eye" came from small, round fossil corals found in the marble that resemble the eye of a bird. The columns are made of golden travertine marble.
59. Brooks Hale, secretary of the First Presidency, Church Office Building notes, June 2010; notes in author's possession.
60. Circassian walnut is a rare wood from the area between the Black and Caspian Seas known as Circassia. When the wood was purchased for the First Presidency's room, it was the only log of Circassian walnut in the United States and was purchased for five hundred dollars. The commercial value of the log at the time was

estimated to be about ten thousand dollars. Don Carlos Young Family Papers, 1873–1978, box 8, folder 4. J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah. See also Young, “Latter-day Saints Church Office Building,” *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 60.

61. Young, “Latter-day Saints Church Office Building,” 60. When Joseph Fielding Smith became the President of the Church, he placed a large safe that was used to store historic documents and sacred artifacts that had “been under his exclusive control for years” in the First Presidency’s vault on the main floor. Gibbons reported that the contents of this safe “provided grist for numerous and unfounded rumors and speculations” over the years. Francis M. Gibbons, *Joseph Fielding Smith: Gospel Scholar, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 459; see also Young, “Latter-day Saints Church Office Building,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 149.
62. Young, “Latter-day Saints Church Office Building,” 60.
63. Journal History, October 2, 1917, 3. Andrew Jenson also recorded the completion date of the Church Office Building as October 2, 1917, in the *Encyclopedic History of the Church*.
64. The *Herald Republic* reported the building cost as about nine hundred thousand. See Journal History, April 22, 1917, 10. The million-dollar figure was reported in Janie L. Rogers, “The Life and Work of Joseph Don Carlos Young: Utah’s Architectural Heritage,” December 10, 1986, 10–11, Church History Library.
65. Journal History, October 2, 1917, 3.
66. Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, October 1917, 10.
67. “Latter-day Saints Church Office Building,” Church History Library.
68. “Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church Office Building,” *Improvement Era*, November 1967, 65.
69. “The Church Moves On,” *Improvement Era*, October 1947, 632; Church Office Building fourth floor (blueprints), 1948, CR 126 99, Church History Library.
70. Photographs of the Administration Building in 1967 bear the changes. See photo in “Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church Office Building,” *Improvement Era*, November 1967, 64; Phelps, “Church Administration Building,” 4. See also building photographs PH 4397, folders 1 and 2, Church History Library.
71. “Church Leaders Move Offices,” *Church News*, September 10, 1977, 7.
72. “Church Leaders Move Offices,” 7.

73. Douglas Coy Miles, "Persian Rugs in the Church Administration Building," MS 14563, Church History Library.
74. Spencer W. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building, 1978," First Presidency, photocopy of typescript, CR 1 80, Church History Library.
75. Peter Scarlet, "LDS Church Administration Building Rug Is Swept Up in Royal History All Its Own," *Salt Lake Tribune*, Saturday, November 2, 1991, A8.
76. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building, 1978." According to a letter written by Douglas Miles Coy, he and his wife, Blanche Miles, purchased the rug and donated it the Church. Douglas Coy Miles, "Persian Rugs in the Church Administration Building," MS 14563, Church History Library.
77. "Remodeling and Addition to the Church Administration Building, 1972," CR 103 386, fd.1, Church History Library.
78. Lynn Arave and Scott Taylor, "For 35 years, Church Office Building Has Been Symbolic Mormon Headquarters, Operational Center for Church Growth," *Deseret News*, April 1, 2010.
79. "First Presidency to Move Offices," *Church News*, June 14, 1975, 3.
80. "New Insides for a Grand Old Building," *Ensign*, November 1977, 108; "Church Leaders Move Offices," *Church News*, September 10, 1977, 7.
81. "First Presidency to Move Offices," 3; Emil B. Fetzter's blueprints reveal the many changes during this remodeling, See "Remodeling and Addition to the Church Administrative Building," Church History Library.
82. "Remodeling and Addition to the Church Administrative Building, 1972."
83. Prior to this change, the Church President's office was located in the northeast corner.
84. "New Insides for a Grand Old Building," 110.
85. "Remodeling and Addition to the Church Administration Building 1972."
86. "Church Leaders Move Offices," *Church News*, September 10, 1977, 7.
87. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building, 1978."
88. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building, 1978."
89. "LDS Church Administration Building Seismic Upgrade," www.jacobsenconstruction.com/portfolio/religious/lds-church.
90. Kimball, "Dedication of the Church Administration Building, 1978."
91. President Joseph F. Smith did not lie in repose in the building because the flu epidemic limited public participation in his funeral.

92. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1917, 8.
93. "L.D.S. Church Office Building—A Poem in Stone," 8.
94. Young, "Latter-day Saints Church Office Building," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, 58.
95. "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church Office Building," *Improvement Era*, November 1967, 65.



President Harold B. Lee, considered the father of modern Church correlation.
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