

At the conclusion of Elder Hales' address, the Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "Let the Whole Creation Cry", without announcement.

President Marion G. Romney

We have just listened to Elder

Robert D. Hales, Assistant to the Twelve, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Let the Whole Creation Cry."

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Howard W. Hunter

of the Council of the Twelve

This is a historic day for the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square—the building in which this huge congregation is seated. Today commences the second century of its history since the occasion at which it was dedicated to the service of the Lord. It is known for its unique architecture, and people around the world listening to radio and viewing television know it as the place of origination of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Organ at the "Crossroads of the West." This general conference falls on the centennial anniversary of the general conference held in October, 1875, at which this tabernacle was dedicated one hundred years ago yesterday. The hard work and labor and the sacrifice of worldly possessions by those early pioneers participating in its construction have brought blessings to the many hundreds of thousands who have come here or who have listened to the music and spoken word.

Building the bowery

The story of the builders is fascinating. When they left their homes on the banks of the Mississippi, little was known of the unexplored West. After a long and hard-fought journey, blazing a trail across the Great American Desert, they entered the Salt Lake Valley on Saturday, July 24, 1847. The following day, being Sunday, was devoted to religious services and Monday and Tues-

day were spent exploring the valley and surrounding country. By late afternoon of the next day, the location of the city had been determined and Brigham Young thrust his cane in the ground on the spot where the temple would be built.

On Thursday, a group from the Mormon Battalion who had been released in New Mexico entered the valley and joined the Saints, increasing their number to about 400. These men from the battalion went to work immediately on the construction of a bowery on the southeast corner of the place designated as the Temple Block to serve as a place of assembly—a predecessor to this tabernacle. Poles were cut and brought from the mountains and planted in the ground to support a roof of leafy boughs. This first structure to be built in the valley was finished on Saturday, one week from the day of arrival. On the following day, Sunday, they were able to hold religious services under the shade of this bowery.

The bowery was temporary, of course, but it served those early pioneer settlers for two years before being torn down to make way for a larger one on the same site. The roof of the second bowery was of boughs and dirt, supported by one hundred upright poles and had open sides like the first structure. It could be used only in good weather; nevertheless, it served as a meeting place for the next three years.

The adobe Tabernacle

By this time, the Saints were becoming established in their new settlement. They had land under cultivation, houses built, and there was a need for a more adequate place in which to hold assemblies and religious services. In order to have a building that was more permanent and usable in all kinds of weather, they set about to construct a tabernacle. The sides of this building were of adobe bricks supporting a truss roof. This eliminated the necessity of pillars or poles that had been an inconvenience to them in the boweries.

The adobe tabernacle, which later became known as the Old Tabernacle, took one year to build, but it was ready to be used for the general conference in 1852. More Saints were arriving in the valley, and by conference time the building was not large enough to seat the throng and many could not gain admittance. At the April conference two years later, Brigham Young invited the seven thousand who attended to move out-of-doors because of the large overflow crowd. Before the October conference of that year, a third bowery was built large enough to seat the conference.

The Great Tabernacle

The need for an adequate building was evident and President Brigham Young commissioned the preparation of plans for a new structure that became known as the Great Tabernacle, the one in which we are seated today. Only fifteen years had passed since the arrival of the first pioneers in this desert valley. At the April conference of 1863, many of the speakers mentioned the proposed building and made appeals for all to join in the sacrifice of financing and construction. It was an ambitious undertaking for people in an outpost settlement with only limited building materials and without the benefit of a railroad for transportation. Any imported materials had to be hauled from the

Missouri River by oxteam. The building was to be erected by donation because tithing funds were needed for the temple that had been under construction for ten years. The Saints were invited to donate liberally of their substance—jewelry, building materials, bread, and labor, inasmuch as cash was scarce.

It was decided that the building should be 250 feet long and 150 feet wide with semicircular ends and 46 piers to support the roof structure. The plans provided for an elliptical arch roof, rising 44 feet from the top of the 20-foot piers, making the distance from the floor to the roof 64 feet. The floor was to slant from the back to the front with a 16-foot elevation so there would be less visual obstruction. At the time of its planning and construction, it was said to be the largest building in the world unsupported by columns.

Building methods

In the spring of 1863 the building was commenced. The large red sandstone blocks were quarried in Red Butte Canyon in the mountains back of Fort Douglas and most of the lumber was cut in the pine forests of the Wasatch Mountains and sawed in mills in Big Cottonwood Canyon. The center section of the tabernacle was built first, then the west-curving end section was added so the construction and installation of the organ could commence. Bolts, nails, and steel straps were not available. Where the timbers crossed, holes were bored through the beams and dowels were driven into the holes and cut so that they extended on each side. The ends were spread by a wedge to hold them securely in place. When timbers split, they were wrapped with green rawhide that contracted as it dried, holding the beam in a viselike grip.

A great pipe organ

The story of the building of the great pipe organ is fascinating. When it

was first played, a team of five men pumped its bellows; later a waterwheel was installed in the basement to replace their labor. Eventually the introduction of electricity furnished the power to fill the bellows. The need for additional seating was evident when the building was completed and the gallery around the sides and back was constructed to seat another 3,000 persons.

Although there had been meetings and conferences held in the building, it was not ready for dedication until the general conference of October 1875—one hundred years ago. By this time the railroad had been constructed and on Sunday of that week President Ulysses S. Grant, the first president of the United States to visit the Territory of Utah, arrived on a special train decorated with flags and bunting. The streets were lined from the depot to the Walker House with Sabbath School children, backed by hundreds of spectators to see the president and the long line of carriages that escorted him. The newspaper referred to Salt Lake City as having a population of about 25,000, and “more houses devoted to public religious uses in proportion to its population than any other city or town in the United States, and probably churches and meeting houses of aggregate seating capacity sufficient to accommodate every man, woman and child in the community.” (*Salt Lake Herald*, Oct. 3, 1875, 6:102.) The next morning President Grant, accompanied by Governor Emery, drove to the Temple Block and visited the new tabernacle.

Dedicating the Tabernacle

At the beginning of the morning session of the general conference on Saturday, President Brigham Young announced that Elder John Taylor would offer the dedicatory prayer. I wish we could read all of it, but time will not permit more than a few of the words. President Taylor prayed: “Be merciful unto thine ancient covenant people, O Lord, that in Thine own due time the

spirit of grace and supplication may rest upon them, that they may be gathered from all nations whither thou has scattered them, that they may possess the inheritance of their fathers, know their Redeemer, and that Jerusalem may become the throne of the Lord.” Then follows this interesting petition: “Remember, O Lord, in mercy the Lamanites who have wandered from thy ways, and to whose fathers thou promised that thou wouldst renew thy covenants to their seed. We thank thee that thou hast commenced to give unto them dreams and visions and they have begun to feel after thee.” (*Deseret News* 24:594.)

At the afternoon session, Elder George Q. Cannon read the names of persons called to leave their homes and families and go into the world as missionaries. There were 105 of them. In those days missionaries were called by reading their names from the podium of this tabernacle in the general conferences. Later the practice was changed as the number of missionaries increased and calls were ultimately made by a communication from the President of the Church. If the practice were still followed of calling missionaries by reading their names at a general conference, it would have been necessary to read the names of 7,923 persons at this present conference, which alone would take about one-half of the total time of this three-day assembly. That is the number of missionaries called since we were last assembled in a general conference six months ago, and incidentally, about the number that are presently seated here today.

A memorial and missionary

Elder George Q. Cannon stood at this pulpit after the building was completed but not yet dedicated and talked about missionary work. His words seem to echo from the past what our president is saying to us today. He said: “Our Elders have gone to the Eastern States by hundreds to lift up their warn-

ing voices to the people concerning the things which God is doing and is about to do in the midst of the inhabitants of the earth. For this purpose they go to Europe, to the West, to the Islands of the Pacific, to Asia and Africa, and they will yet traverse every country on the face of the whole earth. The millions of Asia will yet hear the glad tidings of salvation from the Elders of Israel . . . and the time is near at hand when the sound of this Gospel, proclaimed by the Elders of Israel, will re-echo from one end of the earth to the other, for it must be preached as a witness unto all nations." (*Journal of Discourses* 13:53.)

Times may have changed and conditions under which we now live may be different, but the purposes and objectives of the restored gospel do not vary and truth remains constant. The sacrifices and efforts made by those who are now gone have brought blessings to us of today and are reminders of our obligation to those who will come after us. This building stands as a memorial to that reminder. It has stood as a great missionary, introducing the gospel of Jesus Christ to people around the world—those who have entered its portals and those who have heard the message that has gone forth from here in music and the spoken word. Down through the years our missionaries have carried a message that has blessed hundreds of thousands of people in the earth, and they are carrying that same message today to bless, for all eternity, those who will hear and believe. This message is true, and I bear witness of it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Following Elder Hunter's address, the Tabernacle Choir sang the hymn,

"Come We That Love the Lord,"
without announcement.

President Marion G. Romney

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Come We That Love the Lord."

We appreciate the courtesies shown by the owners and operators of over 350 radio and television stations for offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to a large audience throughout North America, South America, and many other areas of the world.

By means of satellite transmission, these services are being carried over radio stations in Australia, the Philippines, and countries of Latin America.

The proceedings of this session also have been carried over direct oceanic cables to hundreds of members and friends assembled in chapels throughout Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, and Austria.

We shall conclude this sixth session of the conference, with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Serve the Lord with Gladness," after which the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy.

This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "Serve the Lord with Gladness."

The benediction was pronounced by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy.

The conference was then adjourned until 2 o'clock in the afternoon.