

Salt Lake Tabernacle

Matthew 18:20; Moroni 6:9; Doctrine and Covenants 25:11–12

*Where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20*

President Brigham Young knew that the Saints would be spiritually strengthened by having a building they could all gather in to receive instructions from their leaders. By July 31, 1847, just a week after the pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, the first “tabernacle” was built on Temple Square. It was an improvised bowery made of adobe blocks and poles supporting a roof of leaves and branches. In 1852 the pioneers completed a one-story adobe building, the “Old Tabernacle,” which could accommodate 2,500 people.

By 1854 it was clear that the Old Tabernacle was too small, and plans were started for a new, much larger building. Brigham Young envisioned a building with a dome-shaped roof and no supporting pillars. Construction of the Salt Lake Tabernacle began in 1863.

Recognizing the importance of music in worship services (see Moroni 6:9; D&C 25:11–12), plans

were also made to include a pipe organ in the Tabernacle. Joseph Ridges built and installed the first organ in 1867. The central portion of the organ case remains, and the famous golden pipes, made of wood staves from Utah timber, still play. The case has been enlarged several times over the years, but the design has always followed the original style.

The Salt Lake Tabernacle was first used for general conference in October 1867. An additional seating gallery, begun in 1870, extends around three sides of the Tabernacle and is supported by 72 columns. The completed Tabernacle, which can seat about 6,000 people, was dedicated at the October 1875 general conference by President John Taylor. It was then the main building used for general conferences until April 2000, when the Conference Center began to be used. Today various meetings and programs are held in the Tabernacle.

Summary

Soon after the Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young chose an area on Temple Square where the members of the Church could gather to be taught by their leaders. For many years the Saints met outdoors or in a one-story adobe building, but in 1863 construction began on the Salt Lake Tabernacle, a building

that would be large enough to seat about 6,000 people. The Tabernacle was first used for general conference in October 1867, was dedicated in October 1875, and for many years continued to be used for general conferences. It is used today for various meetings and programs.

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