

Renovating the Tab

By June 2006 all of the pipes of the organ except those seen here had been removed for cleaning, and the slope of the floor in the balcony was being increased so all visitors would have a good view of the rostrum. The floor had been covered and the pillars wrapped for protection. The restoration of the ceiling had been finished.

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While the Salt Lake Tabernacle was closed to the public for two years, workers carried out an extensive renovation on the 140-year-old building.

“I love this building,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley at a press briefing on October 1, 2004. “I don’t want anything done here which will destroy the historical aspect of this rare gem of architecture. . . . I want the old original Tabernacle, its weak joints bound together and . . . strengthened and its natural and wonderful beauty preserved.”

Following are photographs of the renovation.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY A. ANGLE AND ROGER SEARS



Above: Workers install solid white oak pews, which will replace most of the original soft pine ones. The original pews, painted by pioneer artisans to look like oak, were damaged and worn. Some will be permanently displayed.

Right: The rostrum has been equipped with a large stage lift in the center. This, in combination with self-contained rostrum wagons (right), can be configured into general conference mode, fireside mode, or orchestra platform mode. The wagons have audiovisual equipment, wiring, and ventilation built into them. They also have matching carpet, new millwork, and viewing screens on which General Authorities can watch conference proceedings.



One of two new staircases added to the balcony makes six exits from the upper floor.



Audiovisual upgrades include a variety of new lighting effects. The inset shows one of two screens mounted on either side of the organ pipes. When not needed, the screens can be retracted behind the choir seats. State-of-the-art audio equipment has been installed, yet the famous acoustical properties of the Tabernacle have been preserved.



A worker stands atop scaffolding that is several stories high as he works on the restoration of the ceiling. Fourteen layers of paint were removed to reach the original plaster. After repairs were made, workers applied plaster that matched the properties of the historic plaster in both its content and acoustic properties. Care was taken to preserve the waviness of the original ceiling.



A skilled artist touches up the faux finish on the face of the balcony. Most of the faux graining on the walls and pillars of the Tabernacle needed to be repaired or replaced.



Below: As part of the seismic improvements, the exterior piers were anchored deeper into the ground and strengthened with new steel and concrete footings. This anchoring is located below sidewalk level.



The organ pipes were cleaned, retuned, and reinstalled. The largest pipes (left) are made of wood and were too large to remove. The pipes were regilded.

Significant space under the Tabernade has been remodeled. Right top: The administrative offices of the Tabernade Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square now occupy the space previously occupied by the baptistry. Center: The women's changing room provides each choir member with her own cubicle to store her permanent wardrobe. The men have a similar space. Bottom: The music library houses all of the choir's sheet music. It also provides individual lockers for each of the approximately 350 choir members. Librarians compile binders containing the right music in the right part for a given show and place them in the individual lockers.



The new aluminum roof, shown here in December 2005. Below: On each end of the Tabernade, a wide steel truss—called a “sister truss”—was attached to the existing wooden truss to strengthen it. Below left: Workers apply plywood prior to adding the new roof.

