MEETINGHOUSE

Meetinghouses for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are often called chapels, but technically the chapel is a special part of the meetinghouse in which worship services are held. In the tradition of the New England meetinghouse, LDS meetinghouses are multipurpose facilities. They developed from a single-room, multiuse building to multiroom complexes.

The Meetinghouse, 1847–1869. Before 1847 there were few LDS meetinghouses. Soon after the Saints arrived in the Great Basin region in 1847, single-room structures were constructed of indigenous materials in all established communities. Where it was deemed prudent to build forts for the protection of the settlers, such meetinghouses were included within the overall design of the protective enclosure. They had earthen or plank floors, small paneled windows, open ceilings, and a roof that could be made from a variety of natural materials. Each served as a chapel, a general meeting facility, and often also a school, making it the focus for the activities of the community or settlement.

Later meetinghouses in this period exhibited a greater sense of style than their earlier counterparts. Classical pediments, bracket motifs, pilasters, small steeples, and inside columns became more frequent. Yet one may not classify these meetinghouses stylistically as Federal, Greek, or Gothic Revival, or as New England variations on English architect Christopher Wren. Rather, the majority remained either eclectic or of a vernacular “high style.”

The Meetinghouse, 1869–1890. More sophisticated designs were developed to accommodate the rapid growth of the Church following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Ward needs were met by the construction of halls or chapels of appropriate size with seating benches that faced a raised pulpit area. In some meetinghouses, the floor of the hall was sloped downward toward the pulpit area, and there was a back wall gallery, reached by staircases located at either corner of the hall or by an outside entrance. At times, the gallery extended from the back along the side walls of the meetinghouse. The ceilings were either flat or elliptical depending on the abilities of the artisans. Often, instructional and meeting rooms were placed behind the pulpit area to augment those in the undercroft or basement.

The Meetinghouse, 1890–1920. Important changes were made in the general design of LDS meetinghouses in the early twentieth century. At first separate halls were built adjacent to many meetinghouses for use in needed cultural and recreational activities of the Auxiliary Organizations of the Church and for the service activities of the Relief Society. Later modified designs incorporated the separate structures into the overall design of the meetinghouse. The combination of prospering LDS communities, growing numbers of qualified artisans, and a broader knowledge of architectural design led to a greater level of architectural sophistication. Wrenish entrance fronts with associated towers and spires became more frequent. The overall architectural styles of meetinghouses in this period can best be described as Classical, Romanesque/Gothic, and Victorian.

The period between 1890 and 1920 is usually regarded as the most individualistic period in Church architecture. Some of the Church’s gifted artisans were sent to study at distinguished educational institutions and brought their knowledge and skills back to Utah. For instance, Joseph Don

The chapel of an LDS meetinghouse (built in 1986). In the foreground are seats for those presiding or speaking at a meeting and for the choir. Not visible to the sides are the organ and piano. At center is the podium, with the sacrament table to the left and a desk for the clerk on the right. The partition at the back opens for additional seating. The simple design of a modern LDS chapel does not include artwork or religious symbols. Courtesy Doug Martin.
Carlos Young, a son of Brigham Young, went to Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute in New York and earned a degree in architecture. Shortly after his return, he was appointed Church architect. One of his responsibilities was to complete the Salt Lake Temple, which he did in 1893. His virtuosity in architecture soon led him and others to employ distinctive and sometimes exotic variations in style.

The most unique aspect late in this period was the introduction of the “Wrightian style.” Derived from the cubic forms of the American modernist Frank Lloyd Wright, it was adapted to LDS meetinghouse architecture by Utah architects Hyrum Pope, Harold W. Burton, and Taylor Woolley (the latter having served as the head of Wright’s Detroit office). It became known as the “Mormon style.”

The Meetinghouse and Standard Planning, 1920–1990. Standard planning has characterized LDS architecture since 1920, beginning with Joseph Don Carlos Young in the late years of his work as Church architect. The transformation came in response to Church growth and the need for a more cost effective use of limited Church funds. In the process, attempts were made to arrive at what might be considered an authentic form of LDS architecture. Young devised a plan that structurally joined the previously separate chapel and classrooms with the recreational or cultural hall through a connecting foyer/office/classroom complex. The joining of the two building types created a diversity in ground plans reminiscent of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English domestic architecture. They became known as “Young’s Twins” or the “Colonel’s Twins.” Most often they were designed in the Colonial style, and soon they became the prominent building type within the Church in the western United States.

During the Depression and war years of the 1930s and 1940s, the Colonial style of the 1920s gave way to a pragmatic or “plain style.”

Then in the administration of President David O. McKay (1951–1970), a new plan was introduced to replace what had become an impoverished form born of economic necessity. Devised by architect Theodore Pope, the new plan connected the cultural hall to the back of the chapel. A modification of the plan connected two chapels on the opposite ends of a single cultural hall, creating a double-ender or double-chapel design. The latter configuration was intended to reduce land and construction costs where there were larger concentrations of Church members in a small geographic area. Both arrangements allowed for the potential overflow from the chapel to expand into the cultural hall, making both areas more functional and increasing the frequency of use. Classrooms and other meeting areas were attached to or extended around the chapel and cultural hall areas. This concept remains in effect today, though there are differences in outward appearances, interior spatial flow, and room arrangements.

Another concept developed in recent years allows for structural expansion by building additions in regulated phases, to accommodate a small but growing congregation. These later changes stem from events associated with the energy crisis in the 1970s, the rapid growth of the Church, and rising construction costs.

Colonial or classical exterior styles continue to be popular both in America and internationally. Whatever historical or modern motifs are now used, they remain subordinate to the overall stan-
standard design concept based on pragmatic functionalism. However, some individualistic plans have been used to conform to special geographic or cultural requirements. Regardless of the resulting style or plan, a Latter-day Saint meetinghouse still serves the same function as the New England meetinghouse—as a multipurpose center for worship and cultural activities.

C. MARK HAMILTON

MEETINGHOUSE LIBRARIES

Meetinghouse libraries in the wards and branches of the Church are provided to assist Latter-day Saints in both learning and teaching the gospel, whether in Church meetings or at home. Instructional materials are indexed to correlate with the Churchwide curriculum and are designed to enrich lives, helping people develop spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually.

An integral part of each meetinghouse, the library ideally contains selected books, pictures, flannel board stories and flannel boards, audiocassettes and players, videocassettes and players, a photocopier, a typewriter, screens, and projectors for the available audiocassette tapes, filmstrips, and slides. Additional teaching resources include supplies such as easels, maps, charts, indexes, paper, and chalk. Ward members are allowed access to virtually all library materials for both teaching and home use.

Printed materials in the library typically consist of the standard works, doctrinal works by Church authorities, copies of the current hymnal and children's songbook, current and back issues of Church magazines, copies of current and past lesson manuals for all courses of study, general conference reports, and guide books for self-instruction in genealogical or family history work.

Learning and teaching aids are available for the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, Church history, Church leaders, FAMILY LIFE, and other resources used in the Church organizations. Many of these materials are prepared under the Church's correlation guidelines.

The librarian and one or more assistants, who are called to the work by the ward BISHOP, instruct members about available items and how to use them. The librarian is normally trained by both the previous librarian and the stake or regional librarian. The librarian orders needed supplies normally from a Church DISTRIBUTION CENTER, planning the order in coordination with ward organization leaders, and subject to an established budget.

Teachers in Church organizations use the library most heavily on worship days. During the week, ward members may draw on library resources for family activities, FAMILY HOME EVENINGS, FIRESIDES, and other occasions.

BETH M. MARLOW

MEETINGS, MAJOR CHURCH

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are a meeting-going people. When the Church was organized, the instruction was given, "It is expedient that the church meet together often" (D&C 20:75). The pattern for meeting every SUNDAY to pray, speak, and partake of the SACRAMENT or "Lord's Supper" was established immediately, following the Book of Mormon norm (Moro. 6:5–6). The pattern of holding a Church CONFERENCE every three months also began in 1830 (D&C 20:61–62). Since that time other meetings have been added to the Church agenda. The main meetings on Sunday are (1) SACRAMENT MEETING; (2) SUNDAY SCHOOL; and (3) concurrent PRIESTHOOD quorum meetings for men and RELIEF SOCIETY for women, with children under twelve years of age simultaneously attending PRIMARY. Young women meet in their own sessions, while young men of equivalent age are in priesthood meeting.

In addition, families are expected, usually on Monday evening, to meet in their own homes in a FAMILY HOME EVENING, which can include instruction from a Church-prepared manual, an activity, and refreshments. Most families also use this evening as a time to discuss family concerns and make plans for the week. Single Latter-day Saints are encouraged to participate with nearby family groups or in groups of their peers.

Besides the meetings for all members, there are special meetings related to Church CALLINGS. For example, a presidency of three plus a secretary or clerk meet regularly to oversee the many functions of a stake and its wards. Then within each ward are the bishopric, priesthood quorums, Sunday School, Relief Society, Primary, Young