

SALT LAKE THEATRE

The Salt Lake Theatre was built in downtown Salt Lake City in 1861–1862 at a cost of over \$100,000. President Brigham YOUNG donated more than half of the funds because he believed the Saints needed a theater to bring recreation, relaxation, and additional unity to the pioneer community. Visitors from other areas were shocked and even a little scandalized by his support because the theatrical stage did not have a good reputation in the 1860s. However, a glance at his talk given at the dedication shows that President Young made very clear his expectations for good, moral theater (*JD* 9:242–45).

The Salt Lake Theatre, with a seating capacity of 1,500, was one of the finest buildings in pioneer Salt Lake City, comparing well to theaters worldwide. It was praised by many of the professional actors who performed in it, including such theatrical greats as Sarah Alexander, Julie Dean Hayne, E. L. Davenport, and John McCullough. “There was scarcely a ‘star’ of the American stage who did not make a Salt Lake Theatre appearance” (Walker and Starr, p. 73).



Salt Lake Theatre (1862–1929). Feeling that people needed amusement as well as religion, Brigham Young instructed a son-in-law, Hiram Clawson, to build this theatre. Completed in 1862, it seated 3,000. All performances were opened and closed with prayer, and the actors and actresses were expected to set a good example in the community. Photographer: C. R. Savage, c. 1913.

After more than half a century of significant productions, however, the financially troubled and aging playhouse was sold in 1928 to be razed for a commercial office building. But the elements of theater—music, dance, and drama—established by the Salt Lake Theatre by the Mormon pioneers through six decades of continuous operation could not be torn down or destroyed. In 1962 the Pioneer Memorial Theatre, commemorating the old Salt Lake Theatre, was dedicated on the University of Utah campus and has since played a full season each year (*see* DRAMA).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asahina, Roberta Reese. “Brigham Young and the Salt Lake Theater, 1862–1877.” Ph.D. diss., Tufts University, 1980.
- Maughan, Ila Fisher. *Pioneer Theatre in the Desert*. Salt Lake City, 1961.
- Walker, Ronald W., and Alexander M. Starr. “Shattering the Vase: The Razing of the Old Salt Lake Theatre.” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 57 (Winter 1989):64–88.

CHARLES L. METTEN

SALT LAKE VALLEY

In 1847 Brigham YOUNG, like a modern Moses, led the first pioneer Saints across a 1,300-mile stretch of “wilderness” into a large valley, surrounded by high mountain peaks and bordered on the northwest by a large lake of salty water, which gave the valley its name. Religious persecution of the 1830s and 1840s in the more populated eastern states necessitated the movement of the Latter-day Saints to the West, where they could be more isolated. The Prophet Joseph SMITH had designated Jackson County, Missouri, on the fringes of civilization, as the ZION of the latter days. However, continued persecution in Ohio, in Missouri, and later in Illinois caused the Latter-day Saints to seek a refuge in the Rocky Mountains, farther to the west, where they could worship God and practice their religious beliefs in the absence of religious bigotry, in land claimed by Mexico. To approximately 80,000 LDS pioneers who gathered from many nations and traveled across the great American desert by wagons before the advent in 1869 of the railroad, and to the thousands who followed afterward, the LDS presence in the Salt Lake Valley was compared to a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the latter days, the City of God, established

in the top of the mountains where people from all nations could gather to the House of the Lord to learn his ways (Isa. 2:1–3). To the Latter-day pioneers, President Brigham Young’s words expressed their feelings: “This is the place.”

The seventeen-mile-wide by twenty-five-mile-long Salt Lake Valley is some 4,500 feet above sea level and is surrounded by towering mountain peaks of the Wasatch Range that rise to over 11,000 feet. The valley is part of the Great Basin, where river waters are kept from flowing into the Pacific Ocean by high mountains. Lake Bonneville once lay within the Great Basin, and geologists say that it measured 1,000 feet deep where SALT LAKE CITY is now located. The current Great Salt Lake is the evaporation remnant of that inland sea.

Though the valley floor was very dry and covered with sagebrush when the LDS pioneers arrived in July 1847, it did not take long for them to divert the clear, snow-fed mountain streams onto the parched soil and make a productive farming community. Fur trappers and traders, explorers, and Roman Catholic priests had “passed through,” but the Latter-day Saints were in the valley to stay.

Salt Lake City, in the north end of the valley, became the “big city,” the headquarters of the Church. But as immigrants gathered from far-flung countries to their Zion, numerous smaller towns were established in the valley along the mountain streams.

With the coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, Gentiles (non-Mormons) began to move into the valley, diluting the LDS population; but Latter-day Saints continued to be a majority. The railroad helped foster more manufacturing, mining, and commerce, and the valley took on a decided change. By 1870 modern houses were replacing the log and adobe brick cabins, and green trees lined the streets and roads. Farms were fenced and well groomed.

The 1880s saw the introduction of the telephone and electricity to Salt Lake City, and in 1893 the Salt Lake Temple was finished. In the early 1900s money from Utah’s mining industry was being invested in the valley’s first skyscrapers, and a modern capital city emerged with hospitals, colleges, business buildings, libraries, and thousands of homes. Salt Lake City had changed from the all-Mormon village of 1847 to a cosmopolitan city.

By 1990 the population within the formal city boundaries was 165,000, but the greater Salt Lake

Valley population totaled over 715,000. With shopping malls, freeways, and employment opportunities scattered throughout the valley, the population shift away from the city became valleywide on both sides of the Jordan River, which flows north from Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake. Mountains surrounding the valley have been extremely valuable. Mining in the west side Oquirrh Mountains has brought many jobs to the people of the valley and the world’s largest open-pit copper mine is a major employer. The mountains to the east provide precious drinking water and are used chiefly for recreational purposes, especially for skiing in the winter.

As travelers drive down out of the mountains today, they view a beautiful tree-filled Salt Lake Valley below. The scene stirs feelings of gratitude for the labor of the pioneers, who, in many cases, were their forefathers. The faithful Saints may feel that Isaiah’s words have literally been fulfilled, that “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isa. 35:1–2).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Thomas G., and James B. Allen. *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City*. Boulder, Colo., 1984.
- McCormick, John S. “The Valley of the Great Salt Lake.” Reprint of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* 27 (July 1959); rev. ed., 1963.
- . *Salt Lake City, the Gathering Place*. Woodland Hills, Calif., 1980.

LAMAR C. BERRETT

SALVATION

Salvation is the greatest gift of God (D&C 6:13). The root of the word means to be saved, or placed beyond the power of one’s enemies (*TPJS*, pp. 297, 301, 305). It is redemption from the bondage of sin and death, through the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST. Some degree of salvation will come to all of God’s children except the SONS OF PERDITION. Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Paul said, “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:40–