A widely recognized Mormon landmark, the Tabernacle Organ is one of the largest and finest in the world. It was originally built by Mormon pioneer Joseph Ridges for the newly completed Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1867. It was rebuilt 5 times over the next 124 years (shown here after the 1916 expansion). The current organ consists of 11,623 speaking pipes, ranging in length from 3/4 inch to 32 feet.

Donald Harrison, who brought this concept to maturity after World War II. Alexander Schreiner was impressed with this forward-looking approach and felt that an all-American instrument drawing on European and English traditions would be appropriate for the Tabernacle.

The organ presently contains 11,623 individual pipes organized into 147 voices (tone colors) and 206 ranks (rows of pipes). Grouped into 8 divisions, they are controlled from a console with five 61-note manuals (keyboards) and a 32-note pedalboard. All divisions of the organ are located behind the massive casework on the west end of the Tabernacle except the antiphonal division, which is in the lower attic at the east end and speaks through openings behind the center balcony seats. The longest pipe is 32 feet in speaking length; the shortest is three-quarters of an inch. Pipes are made of wood, zinc, and various alloys of tin and lead.

Between 1985 and 1989, Schoenstein and Co. of San Francisco directed a major renovation of the organ, regulating all pipework, rebuilding the console, and installing seventeen ranks of new pipes.

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TAYLOR, ELMINA SHEPARD

Elmina (Mina) Shepard Taylor (1830–1904), the first general president of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association (see young women), was born September 12, 1830, in Middlefield, New York. She was the eldest of three daughters of Methodist parents, David S. and Rozella (Rosella, Rozita) Bailey Shepard. Following her graduation from public school and Hardwick Academy, she left home in 1854 to teach school in Haverstraw, New York, where she met John Druce, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Elmina Shephard Taylor (1830–1904), first general president of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association, served from 1880 to 1904.

She was converted and baptized into the LDS Church on July 5, 1856. In a later account of her conversion, she wrote, “I fought against my convictions, for I well knew how it would grieve my dear parents . . . and I also thought I should lose my situation. . . . However, I could not silence my convictions, and . . . I went forth and was baptized” (Crocheron, p. 49).

On August 31, 1856, she married George Hamilton Taylor. They left New York for Utah on April 15, 1859, and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 16. They located in the Salt Lake Fourteenth Ward, where Elmina lived until her death. She was the mother of seven children, three of whom died in infancy.

Elmina Taylor was appointed secretary of the Fourteenth Ward Relief Society on December 12, 1867, and served in that capacity for twenty-six years. On September 23, 1874, she was called as president of the Young Ladies’ Association of the ward. On December 22, 1879, she was chosen as a counselor to Salt Lake Stake Relief Society president Mary Isabella Horne, a position she held for sixteen years.

At a conference of women’s organizations held June 19, 1880, in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square, Elmina Taylor, although shy and reserved, was appointed the first general president of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association. Originally organized to help teenage girls focus more on spiritual and less on worldly pursuits (see Retrenchment Association), the association encouraged their study of gospel principles, development of individual talents, and service to those in need. Under her direction, the organization flourished. General, ward, and stake boards were appointed, lesson manuals produced, the Young Woman’s Journal inaugurated (1889), and joint activities established with the Young Men’s Association (see Young Men). President Taylor traveled thousands of miles yearly, giving instruction to ward and stake leaders. She became a member of the National Council of Women and, in 1891, three years after its organization, became an ex officio vice-president.

Elmina Taylor retained her office as president of the Young Ladies’ Association through her last illness, reading reports in bed until the day of her death, December 6, 1904. Her funeral was held in the white-draped Assembly Hall. The choir and ushers were members of the Young Ladies’ Association. President Joseph F. Smith, one of the speakers, summarized her life’s work: “She was one of the few in the world who had the light within her, and . . . power among her associates. . . . She was legitimately the head of the organization over which she was called to preside. . . . She was a strong character, . . . tempered and softened by the . . . spirit of kindness, of love, of mercy, and of charity” ("Death of Elmina S. Taylor," p. 221).

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FLORENCE SMITH JACOBSEN