Welfare Square became functionally and symbolically important to the Church in the 1930s and 1940s. It was the flagship of the Church welfare program initiated in the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City in 1932. Over the years, the pattern established at Welfare Square has been replicated in more than a hundred Bishop’s Storehouse facilities. Welfare Square continues to be the central supplier and coordinator for many of these other locations.

Welfare Square stands for all the principles of welfare advocated and practiced by the Church—industry, work, and caring for the poor and needy. A VISITORS CENTER is located on Welfare Square to distribute information about the Church welfare program and to teach the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning social and religious obligations toward those in need.

[See also Poverty, Attitudes Toward.]

T. GLENN HAWS

WELLS, EMMELINE B.

Emmeline Blanche Woodward Wells (1828–1921) was a strong advocate for women’s rights and advancement as editor of the woman’s EXPONENT for nearly four decades, as general president of the RELIEF SOCIETY for over a decade, as a national suffrage leader, and as a Utah political activist.

Born to David and Deidama Hare Woodward on February 29, 1828, at Petersham, Massachusetts, Emmeline experienced early the extremes of private tragedy and public triumph that would recur throughout her life. The death of her father when she was four years old and the controversy in her community occasioned by her conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ten years later were harrowing to the young girl. Yet Emmeline had opportunities for education not widely available to girls of her time. While still in her early teens she started teaching, but her teaching career was cut short by her marriage on July 29, 1843, at age fifteen, to James H. Harris, only two months her senior, and their subsequent move the following spring with his parents and other Latter-day Saints to Nauvoo, Illinois. However, within sixteen months of their marriage, James’s parents abandoned both the Church and Nauvoo after Joseph Smith’s assassination; the young couple’s son, Eugene Henri Harris, died shortly after birth; and James left Nauvoo to look for work, never to return. Many years later, Emmeline discovered he had died in a sailing accident in the Indian Ocean.

She found refuge by returning to teaching, and among her pupils were the children of Bishop Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney. In February 1845, Emmeline became a plural wife to Whitney, who was thirty-three years older than she. He died in 1850, two years after they had arrived in the Salt Lake valley, leaving her with two young daughters.

Emmeline’s third marriage in 1852 proved more enduring, but not always satisfying. Seeking protection and stability, she petitioned Whitney’s friend and prominent Church leader Daniel H. Wells to marry her. He already had six other wives, and, because of numerous business and ecclesiastical obligations, he and Emmeline rarely saw each other. Although three daughters were born to the union (two of them died in young adulthood), only in the later years of their marriage did Emmeline find the love and companionship that she had so long desired, but had found so elusive.
Emmeline Wells turned to civic affairs for fulfillment and found her cause in the fight for suffrage and women's rights. “I desire,” she proclaimed, “to do all in my power to help elevate the condition of my own people especially women” (Journals, January 4, 1878). Her writing talent blossomed as she submitted articles to the Woman’s Exponent, a feminist Mormon publication established in 1872. In 1877 she became its editor, a position she held for thirty-seven years.

In 1879 Emmeline was appointed one of two representatives from Utah to the suffrage convention in Washington, D.C., the first of many such meetings she would attend and address. She soon became friends with national suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who were impressed with her abilities. Election to several offices in the National Woman Suffrage Association, the National Council of Women, the International Council of Women, and as president of the Utah Woman Suffrage Association followed. In 1899 she was invited by the International Council of Women to speak at its London meeting as a representative from the United States.

Emmeline Wells was nearly eighty-three years old when she was called as general president of the Relief Society in 1910, an organization she had previously served for twenty years as general secretary and as head of its grain storage program in the 1870s. Her tenure proved, like her life, to be bittersweet. In 1912 she was awarded an honorary doctorate of literature from Brigham Young University, yet two years later she suspended publication of Woman’s Exponent, upon which she had labored for almost half her life, when the Relief Society declined her proposal to make it the official organ of the Relief Society. In 1919 she was honored by a visit to her home by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and his wife; the occasion commemorated the sale of over 205,000 bushels of Relief Society wheat to the U.S. government during World War I, and, ironically, the loss of the Relief Society’s autonomy over its grain-storage program.

Finally, in 1921 at age ninety-three and suffering from serious illness, Emmeline was released as President of the Relief Society, the first since Emma Smith not to die in office. Upon hearing of her release, she suffered a stroke and then died three weeks later on April 25, 1921. In death, she continued to receive honors: a funeral in the Tabernacle (the second woman to be so commemorated) and the installation of a marble bust in the Utah State Capitol from the women of Utah engraved, “A Fine Soul Who Served Us.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY
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CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN
MARY STOVALL RICHARDS

WELLS, JUNIUS F.

Junius Free Wells (1854–1930) was the organizer of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA, in 1977 YOUNG MEN). Born June 1, 1854, in Salt Lake City, a son of Daniel H. and Hannah C. Free Wells, Junius attended school at the Union Academy and graduated from the UNIVERSITY OF DESERET at the age of seventeen. He was known as an exceptionally intelligent young man. As a youth, he managed his father’s lumberyard and was a sales clerk for Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution (ZCMI).

He was called to serve a mission to Great Britain (1872–1874), and in 1874 he accompanied Elders George A. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow, and others to Palestine, where, on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, they dedicated the land for the restoration of the gospel. Immediately upon his return, Wells was asked by President Brigham Young to organize the first YMMIA in the Thirteenth Ward in Salt Lake City, which he did on June 10, 1875. Wells married Helena Middleton Fobes on June 17, 1879. They were the parents of two children.

The YMMIA, counterpart to the previously organized association for young women, was charged to help boys develop intellectually and spiritually and to enjoy recreation under proper supervision. A central committee was formed on December 6, 1876, with Wells as president, to coordinate all associations organized throughout the Church. He served as president of the board for four years. In October 1879 he founded the Contributor, a monthly magazine that served both