

# *Celebrating*

## the Newly Renovated Salt Lake Temple



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# “However Long and Hard the Road”

*President Jeffrey R. Holland<sup>12</sup>*

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On 28 July 1847, four days after his arrival in that valley, Brigham Young stood upon the spot where now rises the magnificent Salt Lake Temple and exclaimed to his companions: “Here [we will build] the Temple of our God!”<sup>13</sup>

Its grounds would cover an eighth of a square mile, and it would be built to stand through eternity. Who cares about the money or stone or timber or glass or gold they don’t have? So what that seeds are not even planted and the Saints are yet without homes? Why worry that crickets will soon be coming—and so will the United States Army? They just marched forth and broke ground for the most massive, permanent, inspiring edifice they could conceive. And they would spend forty years of their lives trying to complete it.

The work seemed ill-fated from the start. The excavation for the basement required trenches twenty feet wide and sixteen feet deep, much of it through solid gravel. Just digging for the foundation alone required nine thousand days of labor. Surely someone must have said, “A temple would be fine, but do we really need one this big?” But they kept on digging. Maybe they believed they were “laying the foundation of a great work.” In any case they worked on, “not weary in well-doing.”

And through it all Brigham Young had dreamed the dream and seen the vision. With the excavation complete and the cornerstone ceremony concluded, he said to the Saints assembled:

I do not like to prophesy much, . . . But I will venture to guess that this day, and the work we have performed on it, will long be remembered by this people, and be sounded as with a trumpet’s voice throughout the world. . . . Five years ago last July I was here, and saw in the spirit the Temple. [I stood] not ten feet from where we have laid the chief corner stone. I have not inquired what kind of a temple we should build. Why? Because it was [fully] represented before me.<sup>14</sup>

But as Brigham Young also said, “We never began to build [any] temple without the bells of hell beginning to ring.”<sup>15</sup> No sooner was the foundation work finished than Albert Sidney Johnston and his United States troops set out for the Salt Lake Valley intent on war with “the Mormons.” In response President Young made elaborate plans to evacuate and, if necessary, destroy the entire city behind them. But what to do about the temple whose massive excavation was already completed and its 8’ x 16’ foundational walls firmly in place? They did the only thing they could do—they filled it all back in

again. Every shovelful. All that soil and gravel that had been so painstakingly removed with those nine thousand days of labor was filled back in. When they finished, those acres looked like nothing more interesting than a field that had been plowed up and left unplanted.

When the Utah War threat had been removed, the Saints returned to their homes and painfully worked again at uncovering the foundation and removing the material from the excavated basement structure.

But then the apparent masochism of all this seemed most evident when not adobes or sandstone but massive granite boulders were selected for the basic construction material. And they were twenty miles away in Little Cottonwood Canyon. Furthermore, the precise design and dimensions of every one of the thousands of stones to be used in that massive structure had to be marked out individually in the architect's office and shaped accordingly. This was a suffocatingly slow process. Just to put *one* layer of the six hundred hand-sketched, individually squared, and precisely cut stones around the building took nearly three years. That progress was so slow that virtually no one walking by the temple block could ever see any progress at all.

And, of course, getting the stone from the mountain to the city center was a nightmare. A canal on which to convey the stone was begun and a great deal of labor and money expended on it, but it was finally aborted. Other means were tried, but oxen proved to be the only viable means of transportation. In the 1860s and '70s always four and often six oxen in a team could be seen almost any working day of the year, toiling and tugging and struggling to pull from the quarry one monstrous block of granite, or at most two of medium size.

During that time, as if the United States Army hadn't been enough, the Saints had plenty of other interruptions. The arrival of the railroad pulled almost all of the working force off the temple for nearly three years, and twice grasshopper invasions sent the workers into full-time summer combat with the pests. By mid-1871, fully two decades and untold misery after it had begun, the walls of the temple were barely visible above ground. Far more visible was the teamster's route from Cottonwood, strewn with the wreckage of wagons—and dreams—unable to bear the load placed on them. The journals and histories of these teamsters are filled with accounts of broken axles, mud-mired animals, shattered sprockets, and shattered hopes. I do not have any evidence that these men swore, but surely they might have been seen turning a rather steely eye toward heaven. But they believed and kept pulling. And through all of this, President Young seemed in no hurry. “The Temple will be built as soon as we are prepared to use it,” he said.<sup>16</sup> Indeed his vision was so lofty and his hope so broad that right in the middle of this staggering effort requiring virtually all that the Saints could seem to bear, he announced the construction of the St. George, Manti, and Logan Temples.

“Can you accomplish the work, you Latter-day Saints of these several counties?” he asked. And then in his own inimitable way he answered:

Yes; that is a question I can answer readily. You are perfectly able to do it. The question is, have you the necessary faith? Have you sufficient of the Spirit of God in your hearts to say, yes, by the help of God our Father we will erect these buildings to his name? . . . Go to now, with your might and with your means and finish this Temple.<sup>17</sup>

So they squared their shoulders, stiffened their backs, and went forward with their might. But when President Brigham Young died in 1877, the temple was still scarcely

twenty feet above the ground. Ten years later, his successor, President John Taylor, and the temple's original architect, Truman O. Angell, were dead as well. The side walls were just up to the square. And now the infamous Edmunds-Tucker Act had already been passed by Congress disincorporating The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One of the effects of this law was to put the Church into receivership, whereby the U.S. marshal under a November court order seized this temple the Saints had now spent just under forty years of their lives dreaming of, working for, and praying fervently to enjoy. To all appearances, the still unfinished but increasingly magnificent structure was to be wrested at this last hour from its rightful owners and put into the hands of aliens and enemies, the very group who had often boasted that the Latter-day Saints would never be permitted to finish the building. It seemed those boasts were certain to be fulfilled. Schemes were immediately put forward to divert the intended use of the temple in ways that would desecrate its holy purpose and mock the staggering sacrifice of the Saints who had so faithfully tried to build it.

But God was with these modern children of Israel, as he always has been and always will be. They did all they could do and left the rest in his hands. And the Red Sea parted before them, and they walked through on firm, dry ground. On 6 April 1892, the Saints as a body were nearly delirious. Now, finally, here in their own valley with their own hands they had cut out of the mountains a granite monument that was to mark, after all they had gone through, the safety of the Saints and the permanence of Christ's true church on earth for this one last dispensation. The central symbol of all that was the completed House of their God. The streets were literally jammed with people. Forty thousand of them fought their way onto the temple grounds. Ten thousand more, unable to gain entrance, scrambled to the tops of nearby buildings in hopes that some glimpse of the activities might be had. Inside the Tabernacle, President Wilford Woodruff, visibly moved by the significance of the moment, said:

If there is any scene on the face of this earth that will attract the attention of the God of heaven and the heavenly host, it is the one before us today—the assembling of this people, the shout of “Hosanna!” the laying of the topstone of this Temple in honor to our God.<sup>18</sup>

Then, moving outside, he laid the capstone in place exactly at high noon.

In the writing of one who was there, “The scene that followed is beyond the power of language to describe.” Lorenzo Snow, beloved President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, came forward leading 40,000 Latter-day Saints in the Hosanna Shout. Every hand held a handkerchief every eye was filled with tears. One said the very “ground seemed to tremble with the volume of the sound” which echoed off the tops of the mountains. “A grander or more imposing spectacle than this ceremony of laying the Temple capstone is not recorded in history.”<sup>19</sup> It was finally and forever finished.

Later that year the prestigious *Scientific American* (1892), referred to this majestic new edifice as a “monument to Mormon perseverance.” And so it was. Blood, toil, tears, and sweat. The best things are always worth finishing.

## NOTES

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<sup>12.</sup> Reprint: Previously published in Jeffrey R. Holland, “However Long and Hard the Road” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 18, 1983).

13. James H. Anderson, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Contributor* (The Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations of Zion), no. 6 (Apr. 1893): 243.
14. Anderson, *Contributor*, 257–58.
15. J. A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Deseret Book, 1973), 410.
16. Anderson, *Contributor*, 266.
17. Anderson, *Contributor*, 267.
18. Anderson, *Contributor*, 270.
19. Anderson, *Contributor*, 273.

# James Campbell Livingston: Laying the Foundation of a Great Work

*Jeanne W. Anderson*<sup>20</sup>

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James Campbell Livingston was born on December 2, 1833, to Archibald Livingston and Helen Conner Livingston. He lived with his family at Shotts Iron Works in Lanarkshire, Scotland. Shotts was an industrial town with a large supply of coal, ironstone, and lime in the area. When his parents died of the dreaded cholera, James and his brother Charles worked extensive hours in the coal mine to support the family of six children.

In Scotland, James and his family were blessed to learn the gospel from missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. James was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church on May 7, 1849, by Elder Paul Gourley.

In the spring of 1853, when James was nineteen years old, his family decided that he should go on ahead to help pave the way for the others by emigrating to Zion in the Salt Lake Valley. On March 15, 1853, James bid farewell to his family and sailed from Glasgow, Scotland, to Liverpool, England. He then left England on March 28 on the good ship *Falcon*. The company arrived in New Orleans and then transferred to a steamboat to travel up the Mississippi River to Keokuk, Illinois, the staging area for many pioneer companies.

James was assigned to herd and guard the oxen as the wagon trains were organized for the great journey to the Rocky Mountains. He drove an ox team, walking and fording streams the entire distance across the plains from the Mississippi River to the Great Salt Lake, arriving in Salt Lake City on October 16, 1853. James recorded in his journal, “Despite the hardships of the journey, the Lord blessed me by sea and by land, for which I was very thankful, especially for the good health I enjoyed.”<sup>21</sup>

## WORK AT THE RED BUTTE CANYON QUARRY

Upon his arrival, James was assigned by President Brigham Young to work in the Red Butte Canyon quarry extracting sandstone rock for a wall around the temple block. He worked at the quarry all winter and the following spring and summer.

Prior to James’s arrival in Salt Lake City on February 14, 1853, ground had been broken for the Salt Lake Temple, and the cornerstones were laid in a twenty-foot-wide and sixteen-foot-deep perimeter.

James married Agnes Widdison on June 7, 1854. James and Agnes had grown up together as friends in Scotland. They established their first little one-room home in Salt Lake City. After his marriage, James continued to work at the Red Butte quarry extracting the sandstone rock that was used for the fifteen-foot-high wall around the temple block until its completion in May 1857.

### JOHNSTON'S ARMY

In June 1857 the first stones were laid on the foundation of the temple; however, the Saints received a message that Johnston's Army was coming to the Utah Territory. This news put a stop to all work on the temple. With the army approaching, Brigham Young instructed the workers to bury the foundation of the temple so that enemies would not desecrate it. Along with thirty thousand other people, the Livingston family left Salt Lake City to temporarily hide out in central Utah.

In anticipation of the army's arrival, Church leaders called up the Mormon Militia, also known as the Nauvoo Legion. James and others were released from working at the quarry and called upon to serve in the militia to hamper Colonel Johnston's approach into the Salt Lake Valley. After further negotiations between the Church and the US Army, Camp Floyd, southwest of Salt Lake City, was established so the army could continue to "monitor" the Utah Territory.

### LITTLE COTTONWOOD CANYON QUARRY WORK BEGINS

With the imminent threat eliminated, James was called in 1860 to take a group of forty men and start extracting granite from the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon for the Salt Lake Temple. They worked ten-hour days, spring through fall, under the direction of Bishop John Sharp, with James serving as the quarry superintendent. Quarry work paid as follows:

- Master stonemasons and apprentices: \$2.00 to \$3.00 per day.
- Teamsters: \$4.00 to \$6.00 per day (they supplied their own wagons and supplies).
- Blacksmiths to sharpen tools and repair wagons: \$2.50 to \$3.00 per day.

With the start of the Civil War in 1861, Johnston's Army was ordered back to the eastern United States. Shortly thereafter, President Young recommenced temple construction by uncovering the temple foundation. It was discovered that the original sandstone block foundation had cracked, rendering it insufficient to support the granite walls of the new temple. Consequently, the defective blocks were removed and new blocks were placed. The more precisely sized blocks required less mortar, creating a more solid foundation. The new foundation consisted of a sixteen-foot-deep sandstone sub-foundation with a fourteen-foot-deep granite foundation laid over the top.<sup>22</sup>

## COMING OF THE RAILROAD

The biggest challenge at the Cottonwood Canyon Quarry was transporting the 2,500- to 5,600-pound granite blocks to the temple site.<sup>23</sup> It took four days to transport one large block from the quarry, pulled by wagons with oxen, mules, or horses, to the temple site. Because the wagons often broke down, the Cottonwood Canal was dug to float the granite blocks on barges. This method failed as the soil was too porous to maintain enough water in the canal to support the heavy barges.

During this same period, the Transcontinental Railroad was under construction to connect the country from east to west. President Brigham Young called a stop to the work at the quarry in 1868 and asked the crew to go to work for the railroad. Responding to the quarry workers' confusion, President Young explained that little progress would be made on the temple until the railroad was built. Once the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, other lines could be built, including a line that would extend to the Cottonwood Canyon Quarry.

The 100-worker crew started grading the railbed at Devil's Gate in Weber Canyon. Including completing two tunnels, they finished the work in Weber Canyon in February 1869. James then took a 300-worker crew to Promontory Point in northwest Utah on a heavy rock contract. There the nearby bedrock was broken up with explosives to create gravel ballast under the new rail line.

## AN ACCIDENT

The work was dangerous, and there were tragic accidents of all kinds, mainly because of the volatile and unpredictable explosives. Sometimes heavy explosions started avalanches that buried alive entire camps of workers. It was at Promontory that James was using nitroglycerin when it prematurely exploded, shattering his right arm and hand so badly that his hand had to be amputated one year later.

After James recovered from his accident, he went back to work at the Cottonwood Canyon Quarry. He was fitted with a hook, making the work much more difficult, but he felt blessed to be alive. While the crew continued to transport rock to the temple site by wagons, a railroad extension to the canyon was under construction.

Five years later, on May 3, 1874, the first granite blocks were shipped on railroad flatbed cars. The trip took one hour instead of four days. It was a day of great rejoicing! Sixty-thousand pounds of granite could now be hauled to the temple site in one day. President Brigham Young traveled on the train to personally experience this remarkable event.

The quarry families and the railroad men established the Wasatch settlement in Little Cottonwood Canyon. There they lived in small cabins with wooden floors, wood sides, and tent roofs. These cabins were on the south side of the stream and were reached by a footbridge.

Many leaders of the Church used the area as a summer retreat. The Apostle Wilford Woodruff described the little Wasatch community in this way: "The granite settlement is one of the most romantic spots on the face of the earth for a settlement in the summertime for rest, health, and recreation that I ever beheld. The Little Cottonwood

Creek of cold pure ice water rushes down the canyon which abounds with trout and furnishes water for every house and flower bed. It is a delightful and healthy retreat.”<sup>24</sup>

### TRIBUTE TO THE QUARRY WORKERS

While the quarry crew relaxed and enjoyed the beauty of the canyon on the Sabbath day, on the other days of the week they engaged in hard, dangerous, and exhausting work. David Cameron, one of the quarry workers, described work at the quarry as follows:

We learned what it meant to labor for the Lord. It was difficult to get supplies—the men often went hungry! Many times, they were sick with mountain fever or rabbit fever. They suffered from snake bites and bee stings and from mosquitos and horseflies! Imagine, if you can, being blinded by the glistening shafts of sunlight on those white cliffs and deafened by the roaring of all the loosened boulders. Blistering in the blasts, then freezing off fingers and toes! Shuddering during sudden thunderstorms with lightning flashes—being soaked in the rain showers or being pelted with hailstorms and later covered with snow! It seemed as though we were forever climbing, straining, stumbling, falling—fearing for our very lives! But working on to the dead of winter! Then, going home for Christmas to stay a few weeks determined to a man to find other employment. We had to please a lot of people besides John Sharp in charge of the Quarry Mission and Truman O. Angell who drafted till his fingers ached on Brother Young’s inspired temple design. Then when we were called into President Young’s office to be blessed for our labors, we knew we were not working for Brother Brigham or for anyone else but for the Lord. We labored for His House—not our own; for Him, not for ourselves! We extracted a Granite Temple from the everlasting hills with our bare hands (so to speak) for all the world to see and enjoy for centuries to come and for the benefit of millions for time and all eternity! Would you do it? Maybe not, but we did do it for the everlasting benefit of all!”<sup>25</sup>

And so the men pressed on in their labors for another fifteen years. On April 6, 1892, the final capstone was laid with 40,000 people in attendance. President Wilford Woodruff pressed an electric button and the temple capstone moved securely into position. The scene that followed is beyond the power of language to describe. The President of the Twelve, Lorenzo Snow, instructed the congregation as to the order of ceremony at the laying of the capstone of the temple. Those gathered on the temple block were to shout “Hosanna” after the stone was placed to indicate that their hearts were “full of thanksgiving to the God of heaven.”<sup>26</sup>

The last job at the quarry was to extract rock for the Brigham Young Monument at Temple Square. After the completion of the temple and monument, the rock quarry was closed.

James and his family were called to start a new settlement in Sanpete County at a place called Cedar Cliff. After forty years of hard work, they felt great sorrow in leaving the Salt Lake Temple behind. Fortunately, the Manti Temple had been built, but it was still a full-day wagon journey away. Cedar Cliff was a desolate land of sagebrush and cedar, but it was time to press forward in a new adventure. The family cleared the land and became farmers and ranchers, growing hay and raising cattle.

James was called to serve as the patriarch of the South Sanpete Stake. He died on October 17, 1909, at the age of seventy-five after a lingering illness. He is buried in the cemetery in Fountain Green, Utah.

## NOTES

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20. Note from the author: I am the great-great-granddaughter of James Campbell Livingston and Hannah Widdison Livingston. My source for this article was the *Autobiography of James Campbell Livingston*, which is in my possession.
21. *Autobiography of James Campbell Livingston*, 2.
22. Lynn Arave, "Is the Foundation of the Salt Lake Temple Composed of Granite or Sandstone?," *Deseret News*, May 13, 2018.
23. Modern geologists have determined that the "granite" in Little Cottonwood Canyon used to build the Salt Lake Temple is technically quartz monzonite. However, if the rock had a slightly larger concentration of quartz, it would be considered granite. I chose to use the common term *granite* for this article because that's the term the pioneer builders used.
24. *The Upper Quarries*, comp. Paul A. Hanks, Sept. 26, 1992, MSS in Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.
25. *The Upper Quarries*.
26. "Temple Capstone Laid 100 Years Ago," *Deseret News*, Apr. 4, 1992.

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