

Religion 342

Field Trip Report

The Beehive House

by

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Brother Manscill
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Introduction

In Ether 2:3, the Jaredites were making their journey to the promised land. One of the items they took with them was "...deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee."

The early Utah pioneers, led by Brigham Young, had made their way to the promised land as well -- the Great Basin. To them, the honeybee and the beehive were symbols of industry and hard work. They certainly had an enormous amount of hard work ahead of them to tame the vast desert in which they lived.

The Beehive house was completed by the Church Public Works department in 1855. The house received its name from the wooden beehive on top of the house. Since the Beehive house was the residence of the president of the church and the governor of the territory, the beehive on top of the house was a symbol of industry to the entire territory.¹

How does the Beehive house relate to church history?

The Beehive house is rich with church history. From the time the Beehive house was finished until the death of Brigham Young in the Lion house on 29 August, 1877, the Beehive house served as the official residence of Brigham Young. In 1888, Lucy Ann Decker Young sold the Beehive house to John W. Young, one of Brigham Young's sons. After John Young purchased the Beehive house in 1888, he demolished part of the house. John Young then rebuilt the house in a "three-story mid-Victorian style."²

Then in 1893, the Beehive house was repossessed and purchased by John Beck. In 1898, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bought the Beehive house, renovated it, and used it as a home for two church presidents -- Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith. Lorenzo Snow died in the Beehive house on 10 October, 1901. Joseph F. Smith died at the Beehive house on 19 Nov, 1918. From 1920 to 1959, the Beehive house was used as a boarding house for girls. And in 1959, the house was restored to its original condition under the direction of a restoration committee. Many members of this restoration committee were descendants of Brigham Young.

The Beehive house was originally constructed out of pinewood from nearby canyons and sun-dried adobe from pioneer adobe yards. Plaster covered the interior and exterior walls. The plaster was fortified with horse hair and hog bristle. On the inside of the home, an artist has painted the flat walls to resemble a marble finish.³

What was interesting about the Beehive House to me?

The Beehive house has many rooms. Among the many rooms are the sitting room, Brigham Young's room, the sewing room, the north bedroom, the girl's room, the long hall, the kitchen, the dining room, the play room, the boy's room, and the family store. The sitting room was used for playing instruments, teaching the children about the gospel, and family prayer.

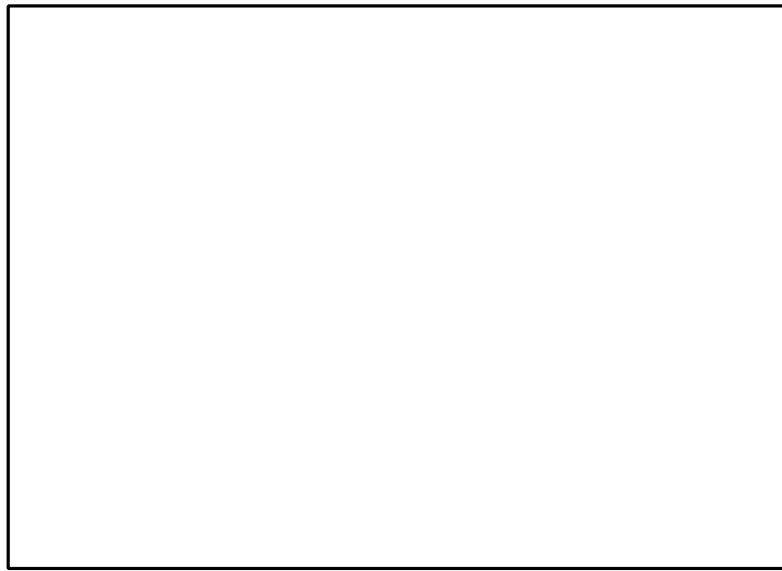
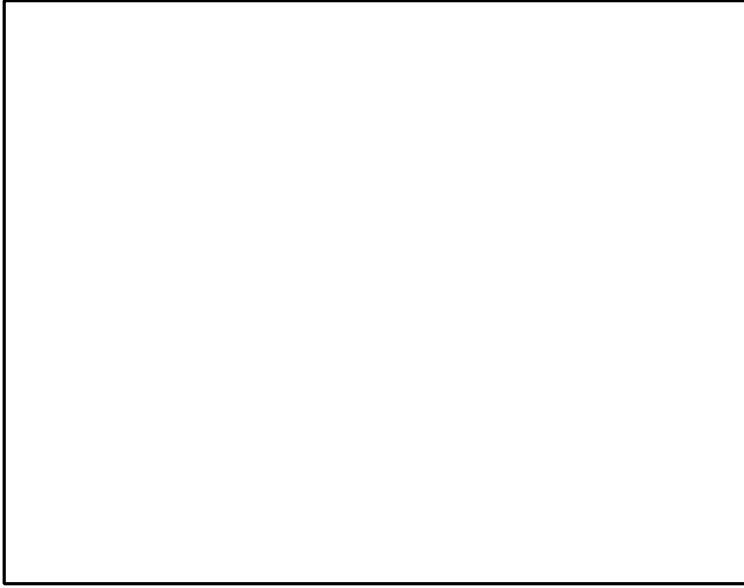
Brigham Young's room is large with thick walls, measuring sixteen by sixteen foot. His room had simple furnishings and a Lady Franklin stove to keep the room warm during the winter. The room was located close to the entrance to the house. The mother of the family stayed in the north bedroom.

The family store was one of the most interesting parts in my tour of the Beehive house. Each of Brigham Young's families came here to the store to get food, clothing, and shoes when they were needed. With Brigham Young's 57 children, the family store was necessary to make sure each of his children was treated fairly.⁴

Another interesting fact about the Beehive house was the variety of people who visited Brigham Young there. Among the people who visited the Beehive house were President Ulysses S. Grant, Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil, General William T. Sherman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), Jay Gould, and Horace Greenley.⁵

One of the most impressive things about Brigham Young is that even though he was the first governor of Utah territory and the president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he still made time for his family and the simple things in life. To Brigham Young, his family was important. His family was also very well organized. As I walked into the house, I could feel a feeling not only of organization, but of the love which would have existed in Brigham's home while he was still alive.

There is just too much to tell about the Beehive house, so I cannot relate everything here. But in figures 1, 2, and 3 on the next page, I have attached pictures of the Beehive house, the Lion house next door to the Beehive house, and the Eagle gate. The Eagle gate is an eagle and beehive hand-carved by Ralph Ramsey in 1859 and placed on top of an archway. The gate formed the entrance to the Beehive house when the house was surrounded by a 9-foot cobblestone fence in Brigham Young's day.



Brief directions of how to get to the beehive house from BYU...

To get to the Beehive house from BYU, follow the map in figure 4. Take University Parkway to I-15, go north on I-15 to 6th south. Exit at 6th south, go to West Temple, and take South Temple to the Beehive house. Parking lots are available on North Temple. The Beehive house is just a short walk from these parking lots.

ENDNOTES

