

Religion 342

Field Trip Report

Manti, Utah

by

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Introduction

In the October 1949 general conference, Isaac Morely, Seth Taft, and Charles Shumway were called to lead a settlement in Sanpete valley, Utah. On Monday, 19 November, 1849, fifty families made their camp near Manti. Shortly after they arrived, the new settlers encountered bad weather. In fact, the snow fell and fell until three feet of snow had fallen. Many of the families established dugouts in the hill on which the Manti Temple now stands. During their first winter there, they lived on this hill.

On Friday, July 8, I visited Manti, Utah with my ward to attend the Mormon Miracle Pageant. I also walked through the Manti Cemetery. Finally, I inspected the grounds and workmanship of the Manti temple, which was closed for the evening. This report is about my visit to Manti, its temple, and how Manti relates to church history.

How does Manti, Utah relate to church history?

The most excellent historical event to happen in Manti was the construction of the temple. Many years before the Manti Temple was constructed, President Heber C. Kimball prophesied that the community of Manti would be a success. He also prophesied that a temple would be built on the hill where the first settlers had built their dugouts during the first winter there.

President Kimball's prophecy was later fulfilled when Brigham Young declared:

...I will make a proposition, and you may have five years to do the work I am about to assign you. ...Go to work and build a temple in Sanpete. ...The ground is already selected. We do not ask whether you are able to do this; but ask yourselves if you have faith sufficient to do it, for we know that you are perfectly able to do it if you are willing, and do it inside of three years from next April.¹

Brigham Young dedicated The Manti Temple site on April 25, 1877. William H. Folsom was appointed as the architect for the Manti temple and Edward L. Parry became the master mason. The cornerstones for the Manti temple were laid on Monday, April 14, 1879.

The foundation for the temple was made of a white-colored limestone brought from springs south of Manti. The temple itself was made of oolitic limestone quarried from the mountains west of Manti. The

finished product was 117 1/2 feet long and 169 feet wide. The tallest point of the building rose to 179 feet at the east tower.²

C.C.A. Christensen, a famous church artist living at the time the Manti Temple was being built, painted the murals in the creation room of the Manti temple. To raise funds for the building of the temple, families donated the eggs their chickens laid on Sundays. Men living in Manti gave their labor for the building of the temple. One of the most interesting works in the Manti Temple were the two 90-foot self-supporting staircases in the west tower of the temple. In all, it took eleven years to complete the Manti temple.³

The Manti temple was dedicated in May of 1888. First, on May 17, a private dedication was held where Wilford Woodruff, who was in hiding at the time, offered a dedicatory prayer. Many of the Twelve were present at the first dedication, as well as others who were invited.

The formal dedication lasted for three days -- May 21 - 23, 1888. The dedicatory prayer was offered on the first and third days of the temple's dedication by Lorenzo Snow. On the second day of the temple's dedication, the prayer was offered by Franklin D. Richards. At the first two dedicatory services, the congregation all joined in the "Hosannah Shout". Daniel Hanmer Wells became the first president of the Manti temple. He held that position until his death in 1891.

What was interesting about Manti to me?

As we approached Manti, the most impressive sight was the beige-colored temple rising above the small town. Also, even though it was in the middle of a hot and dry summer, the fields around Manti were flowing with thick, green grass. The awesome temple and green grass were monuments to the hard work of the early pioneers who settled the Sanpete valley.

Of course, the most interesting part of my visit to Manti was the Mormon Miracle Pageant. Beginning at dusk, the pageant began on the south side of the temple. The pageant talked about the first vision, the translation of the Book of Mormon, the events in the Book of Mormon, the Martyrdom of Joseph Smith, and finally the saints' trek to Utah. The pageant began on 23 July, 1967. It was such a success that it continued in 1968 and from then on. Later, Elder Mark E. Peterson established a formal pageant organization. Today,

about 1200 people are needed for the cast, support, and stage workers in the pageant. About 130,000 people from all 50 states attend the pageant every year.⁴

Brief directions of how to get to Manti from BYU...

There are two ways to get to Manti from BYU. The first is to go south on I-15 until you encounter Nephi, UT. From Nephi, you turn east on highway 132, travel through the mountains and into the Sanpete valley. Turn south on highway 89. Manti is easily spotted because of the Manti Temple to the side of the highway.

The alternate route is to travel south on I-15 to Spanish Fork. In Spanish Fork, take highway 6 into Spanish Fork canyon. Turn south on highway 89. Highway 89 will take you directly to Manti.

