

St. George Utah Temple Fact Sheet



Location: 250 East 400 South, St. George, Utah 84770

Original Announcement: January 31, 1871

Original Groundbreaking: November 9, 1871

Original Dedication: January 1, 1877;
April 6–8, 1877

Previous Renovation Rededication:
November 11–12, 1975

Renovation Construction Start:
November 4, 2019

Renovation Completion: March 20, 2023

Public Open House: Friday, September 15, until Saturday, November 11, excluding Sundays and Saturday, September 30, which is general conference.

Rededication: December 10, 2023

Property Size: 6.5 acres

Building Size: 143,969 square feet

Architect: CRSA: Kelly Gillman; Desert Edge: Ben Rogers, Scott Gilberg

Temple Design: Custom — historic pioneer temple

Interior Design: Gloria Hayley Interior Design

Contractor: Westland Construction: Ryan Thomas

Temple Structure: Historic: sandstone and timber; New: precast concrete and steel.

The St. George Utah Temple, the first house of the Lord completed in Utah, was originally dedicated in 1877. After an extensive renovation, it was rededicated in 1975 by Church President Spencer W. Kimball. The temple has been closed since November 2019, following an announcement by Church President Russell M. Nelson in October 2018 to renovate pioneer-era temples. Both the Manti Utah Temple and the Salt Lake Temple are currently under renovation.

The St. George Utah Temple is one of 28 houses of the Lord in Utah, home of the global headquarters for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition to the two under renovation, temples are currently in operation in American Fork (Mount Timpanogos), Bountiful, Brigham City, Cedar City, Draper, Logan, Monticello, Ogden, Payson, Provo (Provo and Provo City Center), South Jordan (Jordan River and Oquirrh Mountain) and Vernal. Temples under construction in Utah are in Ephraim, Heber Valley, Layton, Lindon, Orem, Smithfield, Syracuse, Taylorsville, Tooele (Deseret Peak) and Washington County (Red Cliffs), the latter of which will be the second temple in the St. George area. Church membership in Utah is at nearly 2.2 million members.

EXTERIOR FEATURES

BUILDING: Due to the large amount of ground water on the site, the historic building (1877) required special effort to ensure a proper foundation. After packing the site with lava rock using a cannon as a pile driver, the first layer of foundation stones was laid using large blocks of locally quarried basalt. The exterior walls were built from another local stone, red sandstone, stacked and grouted together.

During the 1940s a two-inch layer of gunite (a mixture of cement, sand, and water) and steel reinforcing was applied to the temple's exterior to hide cracks and eliminate future cracking. All of this was covered with a layer of white epoxy paint. The new north addition has exterior walls created of precast concrete, which are covered with a light sand and white epoxy paint to match the color and texture of the historic building.

SPIRE: The tower has three tiers, with a base about 32 feet square, an octagonal second level, and a smaller octagonal third stage topped by a small dome. The tower is a wood structure rather than the red sandstone of the exterior walls below. Because of aging and corrosion, the original wood dome exterior was replaced entirely with white fiberglass in the 1990s.

EXTERIOR ART GLASS: The windows of the St. George Utah Temple have always had clear glass, similar to other temples such as Nauvoo, Kirtland, and Salt Lake. The original 1877 wood windows were determined to be insufficient for needed thermal performance and were replaced by new wood windows made by Re-View Windows Inc. in Kansas City, Missouri. The new windows match the historic profiles and details of the original windows but have been upgraded to incorporate thermally insulated triple panes of glass. A new skylight has also been provided in the bride's room area, using the quatrefoil motif as the basis of design. This skylight will also employ decorative art glass at the room's ceiling level.

FOUNTAIN: The existing fountain from the 1970s renovation and addition (north entry) is replaced with a new quatrefoil-shaped fountain. There is also a new fountain in the east plaza, similar to the fountain on the north side. These fountains are built from concrete stem walls, painted on the exterior and tiled on the interior with a decorative design motif. The inner portion of the fountain has a bronzed multi-tiered water feature. The design was a coordinated effort between CRSA, MGB+A and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

LANDSCAPING: Roughly 250 trees have been added to the temple site. Much of the existing planting and shrubbery was replaced or added to make the grounds lush and greener and provide better views and photo opportunities of the temple itself.

FENCE AND WALKWAYS: The fence surrounding the temple site was installed in the 1977 renovation. It is comprised of concrete panels and decorative steel fencing. In the new renovation this steel fence has been sand-blasted and painted a dark bronze to match the new site elements.

INTERIOR FINISHES

FLOORING: Flooring in both the north addition and the historic structure is a mixture of new wood, carpet and tile. The new wood flooring is similar to the historic flooring used in some areas of the north addition. The baptistry has red metaquartzite flooring in the font, lobby and entry vestibule. This stone is quarried south of Las Vegas and supplied by Las Vegas Rock.

DECORATIVE PAINTING: The original temple had very little decorative painting. A few areas of the temple, such as the celestial and sealing rooms, have gold leaf accenting. Decorative paint work was done by Finessed Finishes Inc.

LIGHTING: Remains Lighting in New York City manufactured the metal decorative lighting fixtures, which are made of cast bronze with a two-tone finish to match the building's hardware finishes. Wheel-cut glass shades have grapevine or gothic window motifs. The crystal chandeliers were manufactured by Schonbek Lighting. Other decorative fixtures are period antiques that have been refurbished and rewired for use in the temple. All lighting fixtures are historically consistent with those found in the late 1800s.

MILLWORK: The millwork found in the renovation matches the millwork from the pioneer era. The altars, recommend desks, cabinets and other new millwork are a carefully detailed reflection of what would have been built in 1877. The profiles of the baseboards and casing are close matches of the historic profiles. Fetzer Architectural Woodwork and Millwork provided the new millwork.

FONT RAILINGS: The font railings are made from cast bronze with a two-tone finish similar to the hardware and lighting fixtures. Historical Arts & Casting Inc. manufactured all the bronze work associated with the font and completed all the restoration and installation of the historic font bowl and oxen. The font bowl and oxen are the originals from 1877.

DOORS AND HARDWARE: Where possible, historic wood doors were abated of their lead paint by a certified abatement company, Eagle Environmental Inc., then repainted and reinstalled in their original location. All the new doors are white painted wood to

match the paneling and other details of the historic doors. The original hardware did not meet the current building code and was redesigned using historic hardware precedents. New cast bronze and porcelain hardware was manufactured by Rocky Mountain Hardware in Hailey, Idaho.

WALLS: In areas where the existing plaster was failing or needed to be removed to accommodate new electrical, HVAC or plumbing, it was replaced with new plaster or drywall. Walls in the north addition are painted drywall. Most of the temple is painted in its original white to match the historic interiors, but a few rooms have a light-colored paint, such as the celestial room and the large sealing rooms located in the annex.

CEILINGS: The ceilings of the historic building were mostly replaced with new plaster and drywall because of the sagging wood floor structure above that required reinforcing. The ceilings of the north addition are painted drywall, with suspended ceiling tiles used in some areas, such as the dressing rooms. The profiles of crown moldings match historic moldings found in the temple. The moldings in the historic temple and the north addition are wood or glass-fiber-reinforced gypsum.

FURNITURE: The simple elegance of the furniture is intended to complement the restrained beauty of the interior architecture. The furniture design is inspired by the late neoclassical style popular during the mid-19th century — a style the pioneers of southern Utah produced in simpler vernacular versions of grained pine throughout the 19th century. It is characterized by flat surfaces with dramatic curves that are veneered in mahogany and flamed mahogany, with tables featuring Carrara marble tops.

STAR AND QUATREFOIL MOTIF: The entablatures of the original interiors featured a motif of alternating quatrefoils and gold five-pointed stars. These decorative motifs have been preserved on the fourth floor and reconstructed in the instruction rooms of the second floor. The motifs were also used in other subtle ways in the temple, including door hardware and altars.

MURALS: The veil and celestial rooms historically featured murals that represented the room in the progressive sequence of creation, garden and world

rooms. These murals were removed in the 1970s and partially restored in the 1990s. New murals were commissioned that capture the rugged natural beauty of the southwest Utah landscape. These murals were painted by Linda Curley Christensen, Keith Bond and David Miekle, each of whom was responsible for one of the instruction rooms.

ST. GEORGE UTAH TEMPLE RENOVATION — ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE

ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION: The St. George Utah Temple was the first temple to be completed in Utah after the pioneers arrived and is the longest-operating temple in the Church. Dedicated in 1877 by Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff and others, the St. George Utah Temple was the first temple in which endowments for the dead were performed.

Overcoming swampy ground conditions by packing the site with volcanic rock using a cannon as a pile driver, the early Saints in St. George completed the temple in haste and at great sacrifice, making it the only temple finished during Brigham Young's 30-year tenure as President of the Church. Originally patterned after the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples, with two large assembly halls featuring a set of pulpits at both the east and west ends, the temple was reconfigured extensively in the 1930s, as the lower assembly hall was divided into four progressive-style endowment rooms with murals. These murals were subsequently removed in the 1970s renovation, when the endowment sequence was changed to concurrent rooms with an audio-visual presentation. The current renovation maintains the 1970s arrangement of rooms but restores the architectural details of the original 1877 design, including new murals as approved by the First Presidency in January 2019.

CURRENT RENOVATION: In 2016 the Presiding Bishopric identified the need for major renovations to several historic and pioneer-era temples, including the St. George Utah Temple. The St. George Utah Temple was last renovated in the 1970s, being rededicated by Spencer W. Kimball Nov. 11-12, 1975. After more than 40 years since this previous work, the St. George Utah Temple needed a major renovation for several reasons, including replacement of all mechanical, plumbing and

electrical systems, which had reached the end of their useful life. Structural upgrades were also needed to ensure a strong and stable foundation.

A comprehensive Historic Structure Report was commissioned in order to understand the history and design of the original building and ensure that new rooms and building elements would be compatible with the historic temple. Previous renovations had created inconsistencies in architectural style throughout the temple. The current renovation not only completes the necessary upgrades to mechanical, plumbing and other systems but also aims to eliminate these design aberrations. The temple site is also updated, with new plazas that improve accessibility to temple entrances and create gathering areas for families and friends. The street on the north side of the temple, 400 South, was converted into a pedestrian plaza with gardens, seating, and a water feature. From the east side of the temple, visitors can sit in an additional landscaped plaza and admire the temple's historic front facade.



St. George Utah Temple Renovation



SUMMARY

The St. George Utah Temple, originally dedicated in 1877, is a monument to the significance and persistence of sacred temple ordinances in Latter-day Saint doctrine and worship. Ordinances that bind God's children to Jesus Christ and bind them together as families were revealed to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois, but the Saints were forced to abandon their temple in Nauvoo due to violent persecution. The later construction of the St. George temple manifested the endurance of these sacred practices and provided a place for their standardization and expansion. The temple has since been renovated more than 10 times, always with the aim of continuing to offer these ordinances to a growing community.

KEY MESSAGES

- Temples are sacred buildings where we make covenants that bind us to Jesus Christ and our families.
- The St. George Utah Temple is evidence of the Savior's love, the ongoing Restoration of His gospel, and the continuity of priesthood authority.
- Sacred ordinances have been performed in the St. George temple since its initial dedication in 1877. This renovation will allow sacred ordinances to continue in the temple for many years to come.

SIGNIFICANCE

The St. George Utah Temple was a significant step in extending temple blessings to all people.

- **Temple ordinances written**
Envisioning many temples, Church President Brigham Young directed that the temple ordinances be recorded in writing to ensure their consistency and long-term availability. In St. George, working under Young's direction, Wilford Woodruff, the first president of the St. George temple, and others made the first written record of ordinances that had been passed on by word of mouth since they were revealed to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. That effort continues to bless us today.
- **More ordinances for deceased individuals**
St. George was the first temple where the endowment ordinance was performed by proxy for deceased individuals. It was also the first temple where proxy sealings were performed in which both spouses were deceased. (Baptisms for the dead had been performed in Nauvoo, and some sealings of living individuals to their deceased spouses had also been done there.)
- **Precursor to revelation**
Wilford Woodruff's experiences as president of the St. George temple helped shape his views on

genealogy and prepared him to receive revelation that continues to influence temple worship today.

- **Distinction developed between general and temple worship**
The St. George temple and the temples that followed it were reserved exclusively for temple ordinances and related meetings, unlike the Nauvoo and Kirtland temples, which were used for multiple types of worship and even civic meetings.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ST. GEORGE UTAH TEMPLE HISTORY

Temple Construction

In the years before his death, Brigham Young was focused on extending temple blessings to as many Latter-day Saints as possible. Constructing a temple in St. George enabled Brigham Young to share critical information about temple worship with the next generation of Church leaders. Its relatively short construction schedule is especially remarkable for a community with few resources in a harsh environment.

- **January 1871: Announced**
Brigham Young proposes building a temple in St. George, the first since the exodus from Nauvoo.¹
- **November 1871: Site dedicated**
The temple site is dedicated by Brigham Young, and excavation begins.²
 - Brigham Young's plan for the St. George temple closely follows Joseph Smith's designs for the Nauvoo Temple, ensuring continuity of the temple experience across generations.
 - Construction of the temple becomes a motivator for pioneering Latter-day Saints in southern Utah to contribute to their community despite the harshness of life in the region. Church members throughout Utah contribute labor and materials to enable construction. Most construction workers are paid from goods donated as tithing and other Church offerings.
- **March 1873: Cornerstone laid**
- **June 1875: Font fabricated**
Casting work on the font commences in Salt Lake City.³

- **June 1875: Exterior walls and parapet completed**
Principal exterior masonry work is completed, and plastering begins.
- **August 1875: Font delivered**
The font is transported from Salt Lake City and installed in the temple. It is transported in pieces by rail to Nephi and then by ox team to St. George in sweltering summer heat.
- **October 1875: Roof installed**
- **November 1875 – December 1876: Interior finish woodwork installed**

Temple Dedication and Ordinance Work

The dedication of the St. George Utah Temple marked a key milestone in the Church's growth. Since then, many Latter-day Saints have attended the temple at great personal expense and sacrifice. In early years, travel to the temple could take weeks on rough roads by wagon. A portion of the road between communities in Arizona and St. George was nicknamed "the Honeymoon Trail" because so many Church members traveled that road to be sealed as husband and wife and participate in other temple ordinances.

- **January 1, 1877: Sections of the temple dedicated**
 - The baptistry is dedicated by Wilford Woodruff. An assembly room on the second level is dedicated by Erastus Snow. A sealing room on the upper level is dedicated by Brigham Young Jr.
- **January – April 1877: Temple ordinances documented**
Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and other Church leaders transcribe the endowment ceremony.
- **January 9, 1877: Baptisms for the dead begin in the temple**
- **January 11, 1877: Endowment work begins in the temple**
 - Wilford Woodruff records that almost 25,000 baptisms for the dead; 12,000 endowments; and 3,800 sealings were completed in the temple during the first year.⁴

- **April 1877: First dedication of the entire temple pronounced**
 - Daniel H. Wells, second counselor to Brigham Young, offers the dedicatory prayer in the opening session of general conference, held in the St. George temple. Brigham Young, despite his failing health, offers a few remarks.
- **Fall 1877: Ordinances performed for prominent world leaders**
 - In response to visions and dreams of prominent US leaders, Wilford Woodruff and others perform temple ordinances for prominent deceased people in US and world history, including Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Robert Burns, Christopher Columbus, John Wesley and George Washington. Lucy Bigelow Young is baptized for Martha Washington and “seventy (70) of the Eminent women of the world.”⁵ This effort signals an expansion of temple ordinances to all people. (Years later, a subsequent revelation to then Church President Wilford Woodruff directs members to research their genealogy and perform ordinances following kinship lines.)
- **August 1878: Tower struck by lightning**
 - The original steeple is damaged by lightning. In 1882, it is replaced by a new tower designed by architect William H. Folsom. In 1994, the wood tower is replaced with one made of fiberglass and metal.
- **1938: Significant modification made to floor plan**
 - Endowment rooms are moved from the basement to the main level. A large assembly room on the main level is replaced by smaller rooms incorporating murals.
 - These changes align the St. George temple with other operating temples in the early 20th century.
 - Architects Young and Hansen design the modifications.
- **1975: Annex enlarged and staircase added to west side**
 - This work significantly increases the capacity of the temple and adds new sealing rooms.
 - Part of the renovation enables the temple to use the film version of the endowment instruction rather than using live actors.
 - Much of the 1870s design aesthetic in the temple’s interior is obscured by 1970s design choices. Church architect Emil Fetzer designs the renovation.
 - Spencer W. Kimball, President of the Church in 1975, presides at the rededication in November of that year.
- **2019 – 2023: Efforts made to stabilize entire structure**
 - New annexes are added on the north and west.
 - A bride’s exit is added for wedding ceremonies.
 - The baptistry suite is enlarged and an independent baptistry entrance is created.
 - New interior finishes are implemented that follow 19th-century design patterns.
 - Traffic flow and wayfinding are improved.
 - Major mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are replaced.
 - New trees are planted, and landscaping and site features are improved.

Renovating the Temple

Since its dedication, the St. George Utah Temple has been renovated more than 10 times. Four significant renovations improved functionality, increased capacity, and incorporated technologies to further its sacred purposes.

- **1917: Temple annex enlarged**
 - Partition walls are added in the basement and main level to allow concurrent ceremonies and additional comfort.
 - Architects Don Carlos Young and Ramm Hansen, who later design the Mesa Arizona Temple, design the modifications.

Interesting Facts and Figures

- The St. George area is the historic home of the Paiute tribes. Some tribal members participated in temple construction and early ordinance work in the temple.
 - Parowan, the oldest Latter-day Saint settlement in Southern Utah, was founded in 1851. St. George was founded in 1861.
 - Truman O. Angell was appointed temple architect by Brigham Young, and he remained heavily involved in design and construction.
 - On Jan. 31, 1871, when Brigham Young announced the plan to build the temple in a meeting with the St. George Stake high council and other local leaders, Erastus Snow shouted, "Glory, hallelujah!"
 - St. George had roughly 1,100 residents in 1871.
 - The temple was constructed by skilled local craftsmen using local materials. Stone and lime for plaster came from local quarries. Wood came from Mt. Trumbull, Arizona, which required construction of a new road. Glass for windows and metal for nails and the roof came from Salt Lake City.
 - Brigham Young personally paid for the temple baptismal font. The font and oxen were cast by Davis and Howe Foundry in Salt Lake City and freighted to St. George by wagon. The font was in six pieces. Christian Christensen, one of the freighters, recalled: "Apostle Orson Hyde went in and saw the font in place and came out weeping with joy. He thanked God that he had lived to see another font in place in a temple of the Lord."⁶
 - A few construction workers left signatures and time capsules in the walls of the temple. One contained original inspirational poetry they had written.
- 1 See Kirk M. Curtis, "History of the St. George Temple" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1964), 23, citing Juanita Brooks, "To the Glory of God," *Arizona Highways* (Arizona State Highway Department, 1947), 1.
 - 2 See Curtis, "History of the St. George Temple," 30.
 - 3 See "Castings for the Temple," *Deseret Evening News*, June 17, 1875, 3.
 - 4 See Wilford Woodruff, Journal (January 1, 1873 – February 7, 1880), Wilford Woodruff Papers, 1877 year-end summary, 296, <https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/a7e13e76-da8b-4991-a0f5-a7fa1f3c223e/page/b3dce41f-dfe4-4094-a629-32391a0100f2>.
 - 5 See Wilford Woodruff, Journal (January 1, 1873 – February 7, 1880), Wilford Woodruff Papers, Aug. 21, 1877, 274, <https://wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/a7e13e76-da8b-4991-a0f5-a7fa1f3c223e/page/b8aa5b0b-698d-4842-9748-a56143920457>.
 - 6 C. L. Christensen, "How the Temple Font Was Taken to St. George," *Deseret News*, Aug. 29, 1931, 8.

