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MANHATTAN AND THE MORMONS MOVE UPTOWN:

TOURING 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY MORMON MANHATTAN

James W. Lucas

The history of the Church in New York City is as long as the history of the Church itself. In the early days, that history occurred where the City was, at the southern end of Manhattan Island. However, as the City grew north up that island, the Church in the City grew in the same direction. An amazing number of significant events in the history of the Church in New York City in the 20th and early 21st centuries have seemed to concentrate from 57th Street, the heart of midtown Manhattan, to the new spiritual center for the entire region, the Manhattan New York Temple at West 65th Street. This issue of our Newsletter summarizes some of that fascinating history, and introduces a new walking tour down 57th Street and up to Lincoln Square, a tour of the modern history of the Church in New York City.

For most of the early 20th century the block where the temple and stake center now stand was dominated by the 66th Street station of the 9th Avenue El.

**“The Lord had many people in that city”
– the Beginnings**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been present in New York City since before the Church’s formal organization in 1830. The first recorded contact between the Church and the city of New York occurred in February 1828 when Martin Harris brought copies of characters from the gold plates to be examined by professors Charles Anthon of Columbia and Samuel Latham Mitchill of Rutgers. The second recorded contact of Church members with our area involved Joseph Smith and the Church’s first bishop, Newel Whitney. Traveling in response to the revelation now recorded as D&C 84:114, Joseph and Bishop Whitney visited New York City in October 1832.

While Bishop Whitney purchased goods for their general store in Kirtland, Joseph went sightseeing. He wrote to Emma that “the buildings are truly great and wonderful, to the continued p.2 UPTOWN...

THE MORMON ARTS
MAGNETTHE CREATIVE AND PERFORMING
ARTS ON 57TH STREET*Glen Nelson*

57th Street is one of the principal transportation corridors of Manhattan. Along with 42nd Street, Canal Street and a handful of east/west thoroughfares, it both moves people from one side of the island to the other and serves as a neighborhood marker. At the ends of 59th Street are the exits of the Westside Highway and on the east side, the entrance to the 59th Street Bridge. Below 57th Street lay the business districts of midtown and on either side the posh residences of Sutton Place and the somewhat less glamorous digs of Hell’s Kitchen. Above 57th Street are the upper West and East Sides and of course Central Park in between. But what is 57th Street itself?

Like any contemporary boulevard, the character of 57th Street changes decade by decade; at least the businesses at street level change. A surprising characteristic of 57th Street is its extraordinary connection to the arts. There is Carnegie Hall, of course, but also many hidden sites that, while all but unknown to pedestrians are magnets for generations of creative and performing artists. In the church, many artists have gravitated to New York for over a century, and for many of them 57th Street was—and remains—their mecca.

For an unusual concentration of these artists’ sites with LDS connections, begin at 5th Avenue and 57th Street. Here is a neighborhood recognized worldwide as a high-end retail axis (Tiffany, Van Clef & Arpels, Bulgari, Bergdorf Goodman), but it is also a neighborhood of the great art gallery spaces in American history, premiere classical musicians’ agents, literary agents, dance studios, film editing and recording studios, publishers’ offices, and

continued p.11 MAGNET...



photo credit: Milstein Division for United States History, Local History, & Genealogy, New York Public Library and Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

...continued UPTOWN

astounding of every beholder.” He also noted that the other residents at their boarding house were “one or two from all parts of the world” and of many races.

Official missionary activity in New York City began with the arrival of Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve to preside over the Eastern States Mission in July 1837. Initially, Elder Pratt found “the City of New York to be the most difficult as to access to the minds or attention of the people.” After months of discouraging missionary work, Elder Pratt planned to sail to New Orleans. At a last prayer meeting the “room was filled with the Holy Spirit” and manifested that “the Lord had many people in that city [New York], and He had now come by the power of His Holy Spirit to gather them into his fold.” Shortly thereafter, many joined the Church and a branch of the Church was organized in late 1837 with Wandle Mace as branch president. This first Manhattan Branch preceded the establishment of Church units in Utah by a decade.

Eventually Church members from New York City would join the other Saints in the West. Perhaps the most dramatic episode in their exodus was the voyage of the ship Brooklyn. On February 4, 1846 (the same day the Saints left Nauvoo), over 200 Latter-day Saints from the greater New York area left New York Harbor on what would be the longest religious pilgrimage in modern history. Sailing around Cape Horn, they traveled over 20,000 miles to become the first English-speaking settlers of a town now known as San Francisco.

“At any spot this side of China” – New York City Grows Up[town]

When Martin Harris and Joseph Smith visited New York City it was already the largest city in the United States, but the city proper was concentrated at the southern end of Manhattan Island. The campus of Columbia College where Martin Harris called on Professor Anthon was just north of the former site of the World Trade Center. Joseph Smith stayed at a boarding house on Pearl Street several blocks south of Wall Street. First Manhattan Branch president Wandle Mace had a shop on Wall Street but lived in what was basically the suburbs – Greenwich Village.

Even in those early times, optimistic New Yorkers perceived that the city would expand

to the north up Manhattan Island. In 1807, a special commission was authorized to plan for this growth. Their plan, issued in 1811, laid out the grid pattern of streets which distinguishes Manhattan to this day. Their report noted that some would find it “a subject of merriment that the Commissioners have provided space for a greater population than is collected at any spot on this side of China.” Even the farseeing Commissioners though thought that “it is improbable (for centuries to come) the grounds north of Harlem Flat will be covered with houses.”

It was only a matter of decades, of course, before New York City began to fill Manhattan Island. From a population of 203,000 in 1830, Manhattan’s population grew to 1,850,000 by 1900 (shortly after the 1898 consolidation with the other boroughs made

The Lord had many people in that city [New York], and He had now come by the power of His Holy Spirit to gather them into his fold.

New York City larger than any in China). As the city grew to consume Greenwich Village and other suburban districts, its wealthier residents fled north. The main road up the center of the island (originally and appropriately named Middle Road) had been incorporated into the Commissioners’ Plan and renamed Fifth Avenue as part of the east to west numbering scheme for the Plan’s broad north-south “Avenues.” With the creation of Central Park (a project begun in the 1850s and not part of the original Commissioners’ Plan) Fifth Avenue began to attract many New Yorkers newly wealthy from America’s post-Civil War mercantile, financial and industrial growth.

The area they moved into was hardly empty land. What is now midtown Manhattan was full of farms serving the booming city just to the south as well as many shanty-towns. Stories are told of *nouveau riche* society ladies holding elegant teas in their new Fifth Avenue mansions to the sound of their farmer neighbors slaughtering chickens for the market downtown. However, with the establishment of Fifth Avenue as the new prestige address other urban growth was not far behind. The first task was leveling the ground. The ancient glacial rocks now seen only in Central Park covered the area, and untold tons of dynamite were used to clear

them. The streets of the grid were then laid out and the land made available for purchase. By 1900 all of the lots in the midtown area and even farther north had been acquired and built on. Unlike lower Manhattan, many of the buildings now standing in midtown Manhattan are the first built on their sites. This growth was further accelerated by the construction of elevated trains up many of the main avenues followed by the construction of subway lines in the first decade of the 1900s. Inexpensive public transportation made it feasible for middle and working class people to move into the newly built areas surrounding Central Park. In particular the West Side of midtown became a predominantly working class area despite the presence of elegant residences along Central Park West such as the Dakota at West 72nd Street (so named because when it was built in 1872 it

was so far beyond the City that living there was compared to living in the Dakotas).

The two principal north-south roads for midtown became Fifth Avenue on the east and Broadway on the west. Broadway followed the route of the old Bloomingdale Road, the main road up Manhattan Island. It was so well established that the Commissioners’ Plan incorporated it into its design despite the fact that it did not follow the straight lines of the grid. The Commissioners’ Plan had also designated 15 of the original 155 small east-west streets to be wider to serve as east-west arteries. Not anticipating that the midtown area would become a second business district or that growth would be bifurcated by the future Central Park, the Commissioners’ Plan had only designated two of these broad cross-town streets in this area – 42nd and 57th Streets. With 42nd Street dominated by the popular entertainments of Longacre (later Times) Square, this left only 57th Street as a suitable location for the more refined requirements of Fifth Avenue’s residents. In the 1890s Fifth Avenue resident Andrew Carnegie financed the construction of a proper concert hall at the corner of West 57th Street and Seventh Avenue. Elegant shops opened in the new steel frame high rise buildings on both East and West 57th Street. And the symbolic and functional center of

it all was 57th Street and Fifth Avenue with the mansion of society doyenne Mrs. Mary Mason Jones on the northeast corner (whose niece Edith Wharton was to describe this society in her novels) and several Vanderbilts on the northwest.

Other bastions of the arts followed Mr. Carnegie’s concert hall to West 57th Street. Among the elegant shops was one for the Steinway Piano Company. In 1892 an important art school, the Arts Students League, moved into a new building on West 57th Street a block west of Carnegie Hall. Well-to-do people who could not afford a free-standing mansion moved into elegant apartment houses. Gradually these would replace even the Fifth Avenue mansions. Today only two of these old mansions survive as museums (the Frick and Cooper-Hewitt). With convenient access to upper scale housing both on the upper East Side and the northern suburbs through Grand Central Station, arts facilities, convenient public transportation and the wildly successful Central Park, the midtown area became a second uptown “downtown” for New York City.

“This is the place the Lord wants for us” – the Saints Return to Manhattan

After the gathering of the Saints in the western United States, New York City continued to play a significant role in Church history. It remained the Eastern States Mission headquarters. In addition, the vast majority of more than 70,000 European converts on their way to the western United States passed through New York Harbor. They were usually processed through the immigration center at Castle Clinton in what is now Battery Park in lower Manhattan.

However, in the late 1800s, a new movement began. Latter-day Saints began to return to New York City. Usually they came to pursue education and training. Brigham Young’s son Richard graduated from West Point and attended law school at Columbia. Dr. Romania Bunnell, one of the first LDS woman physicians, did her residency in New York in the 1880s, and in 1876 Orson Pratt’s son Lorius was among the first of many LDS artists to study here. The Eastern States Mission began to grow again in the 1890s, in part from converts and in part from an influx of immigrating German Latter-day Saints who found better economic possibilities and a much larger German-American community



in New York than in Utah. By the time of the First World War, the Church had grown so significantly in the area that the first LDS chapel built east of the Mississippi was dedicated in Brooklyn in 1919. A stately home next door served as the Eastern States Mission headquarters for mission president B. H. Roberts of the presidency of the Seventy.

As Latter-day Saints returned to New York City, they often came to the new dynamic midtown heart of Manhattan. Aspiring international lawyer and Columbia law school graduate J. Reuben Clark lived on West 73rd Street just off of Central Park West and across the street from the Dakota. Brigham Young’s businessman son (who was also an ordained apostle), John A. Young, lived in fine apartments in an elegant building on West 57th Street across from Carnegie Hall. Mormon artists flocked to the Art Students League located on the same block. During this time the Manhattan Branch met in a variety of rented locations, including Steinway Hall, Carnegie Hall, and the former YMCA building, all on West 57th Street. Carnegie Hall served as the site of a number of other major LDS-related events, including a mass anti-Mormon rally and riot in 1914 and more recently appearances by major LDS artists and groups such as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

The former YMCA building at 316 West 57th Street can be easily seen in this photo looking west down 57th Street from the corner of 57th Street and 8th Avenue. The New York Stake was created here in December 1934.

The Church continued to grow in the New York area culminating in the creation of the New York Stake on December 9, 1934. This was a signal event in Church history. The New York Stake was the first stake created east of Colorado since the exodus to the western United States and only the third (after Los Angeles and San Francisco) to be formed outside the areas of LDS pioneer settlement. Church president Heber J. Grant, First Presidency counselor J. Reuben Clark (a former New York City resident) and Presiding Bishop Sylvester Q. Cannon came for the organization. The event occurred at the Church’s regular meeting place at a rented facility in the former YMCA building at 316 West 57th Street, only a few blocks from the present site of the Manhattan New York Temple and stake center at West 65th Street and Broadway. (The building also housed a gymnasium and dance school, and Church members recalled attending Church meetings to the clang of barbells as dancers in leotards tiptoed through their meeting room.)

The original wards were Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and East Orange (New Jersey)

with branches in Oceanside (Long Island), Bay Ridge (Brooklyn) and Westchester. The new stake covered approximately the same geographical area as the current Manhattan New York Temple District. The stake organization was covered by the major newspapers.

The New York Stake was the first stake created east of Colorado since the exodus to the western United States

The *Herald Tribune* reported that “New York City Mormons present a complete, though small, cross-section of metropolitan life,” although “students probably represent a third of the membership.” In 1945 the Church acquired its first owned chapel in Manhattan when it purchased a former Jewish synagogue on West 81st Street. After the Brooklyn chapel and Eastern States Mission home in Brooklyn were sold in 1962 the Eastern States Mission moved into an elegant row mansion at 973 Fifth Avenue near the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These moves made midtown Manhattan the center of the Church in New York City.

Another signal event in New York City Church history was the Mormon Pavilion at the 1964-1965 New York World’s Fair. Featuring a front fashioned after the towers of the Salt Lake Temple and located next to the main entrance to the Fair from the subway, the pavilion drew millions of visitors. It featured many innovative ways of presenting the Restored Gospel, including

the Church movie *Man’s Search for Happiness* which was originally produced for the Mormon Pavilion. The growth resulting from the Mormon Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair also led in 1965 to the first division of the Manhattan Ward and the creation of the first Spanish-speaking branch, which also met in the West 81st Street chapel. The Church soon outgrew the West 81st Street facility. Initially the Church tried to negotiate for space in a major new office tower at 9 West 57th Street which would have provided both a chapel and a media broadcast center for the Church on the building’s lower levels. This also would have moved the Church center away from the deteriorating West Side. Indeed some Church members, disgusted with maneuvering around drunks and drug addicts on West 81st Street, had already started holding meetings at the elegant mission home on Fifth Avenue.

Instead of concluding the 9 West 57th Street arrangement, in 1971 the Church acquired a lot at Lincoln Square between West 65th and West 66th Streets across from the newly completed Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. The site was occupied at the time by a parking lot and dilapidated five story tenement and office buildings. Nonetheless, it was personally selected by Harold B. Lee, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, who was reported as saying when stepping on to the site “this is the place the Lord wants for us.” The New York Stake center was dedicated on May 25, 1975 by President Spencer W. Kimball. On August 7, 2002, it was announced that parts of the stake center would be renovated to become a temple of the Lord. The Manhattan Temple was dedicated by President Gordon B. Hinckley on June 13, 2004.

The New York Stake History Committee will be offering an opportunity to explore the modern history of the Church in New York City with a walk down historic West 57th Street culminating at the new spiritual center of the Restored Church for the mid-Atlantic area, the Manhattan New York Temple. For information about the tours, please watch your ward bulletins or contact Marci Stringham at marci@stringham.name.

SOURCES: Scott Tiffany, *The Voyage of the Ship Brooklyn*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 1998); Scott Tiffany, *Mormonites in Manhattan 1828-1858*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Winter 1999); Dean Jesse, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984; Kent Larsen, *A Rising or a Setting Sun? The LDS Church in New York City 1858-1893*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Winter 1999); Minutes of the formation of the New York Stake from the LDS Church Archives; Ned Thomas, *Various Times and Sundry Places: Buildings Used by the LDS Church in Manhattan*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2000); Mark Butler, *The Brooklyn Building: First Chapel East of the Mississippi*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2000); Ned Thomas, *Evolution of the First Manhattan Stake Center*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2000); Taylor Petrey, *New York 1964 World’s Fair: Mormonism’s Global Introduction*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Fall 2000); Glen Nelson, *A Portrait of Latter-day Saint Art*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2003); Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown*, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1976; Remarks of the Commissioners for Laying Out Streets and Roads in the City of New York under the Act of April 3, 1807, <http://www.library.cornell.edu/Reps/DOCS/nyc1811.htm> (accessed 9/30/06); John Walker Herrington, *Mormonism Retraces Its Steps to Evangelize New York State*, *New York Herald Tribune*, December 7, 1934, pp. 2, 10; Neil Kittredge (Beyer Blinder Belle, Architects & Planners) *History of Lincoln Square 1700-2000* (unpublished 6 pp.).

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MORMON MIDTOWN

A SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE IMPORTANT LDS HISTORY SITES ON 57TH STREET AND ITS VICINITY



9 West 57th Street

The Church has explored many options in its quest for an adequate facility to represent it in New York City. One of the more interesting efforts was here at the heart of midtown Manhattan on a prestigious site originally occupied by mansions of the Vanderbilts. In a joint venture with commercial real estate developers in the 1960s, the lower level of this prominent new office tower was to house not only facilities for Church meetings, but also a media center where the Church could expand on its successful outreach efforts in the manner of the Tabernacle Choir’s long-running “Music and the Spoken Word” program. Eventually the Church instead built the stake center at Lincoln Square. However, 9 West 57th Street still features the unusual external escalators which would have accessed the Church’s facilities in the building’s lower level.



109 West 57th Street - Steinway Hall

In the 1920s Church members held their Sunday services in Steinway Hall at 109 West 57th Street. The space was one of many congregational sites in the early part of the twentieth century. Moving from place to place was nothing new to New York Saints. Beginning in 1837, members began a procession of worship spaces that led the Saints, literally, from one end of the island to the other.

Initially, the congregations met downtown in the upper rooms of homes and businesses. At the turn of the century, the church moved to 125th Street where it stayed, with a brief detour to West 81st Street for nearly twenty years, until it moved to Steinway Hall. Although the Church moved out of Steinway Hall in the 1920s, the Church returned in 1943 and remained there until the end of the war, at which time, the Church purchased its first permanent New York City space, a former Jewish synagogue at 142 West 81st Street. The Manhattan Ward remained on West 81st Street until the Lincoln Square building was constructed thirty years later.

The idea for Steinway Hall was developed by Henry Engelhard Steinway. Henry was a German cabinet maker who started building pianos and eventually developed the modern piano. Henry moved his family and company to America and under his company’s name he and his sons acquired 114 patents for pianos; one patent, from 1875, is for the modern grand piano.

Steinway Hall originally opened in 1866 on 14th Street and housed the New York Philharmonic until it moved to Carnegie Hall in 1891. Later Steinway Hall was moved to its current location. This structure not only has auditoriums where many of the greatest pianists have performed, but there is also a piano bank downstairs where artists can pick out the piano they would like to play on.



57th Street and 7th Avenue - Carnegie Hall

During the 1920s, the Church also held meetings in rooms above Carnegie Hall on the corner of 57th Street and 7th Avenue. The rooms are visible today and are still used as rehearsal spaces and music studios. It was an elegant space that member recalled fondly, a marked improvement from other makeshift locations. In each of these meeting spaces, the Saints were interlopers and, however well appointed, the space was not their own. They used the buildings on Sundays only and had to exercise care to treat the surroundings well.

Still, the Carnegie Hall experience of the 1920s was a marked improvement from the reception the Church had in 1914 on this site, when an anti-Mormon rally led to a newsworthy fracas. Although the Church in New York was small—there were only 400 members in 1913—the missionary presence of street meetings was a lightning rod. Other churches voiced antagonism toward Mormons generally and also those resided in the city.

The 1914 episode began with a crusade against the Church that was organized by a former Senator from Utah named Frank J. Cannon, a disenchanted member of the Church and son of Church First Presidency member George Q. Cannon. In the spring of 1914, Cannon launched a nationwide crusade against the Mormons. At the ticket-only event in Carnegie Hall, Cannon outlined his strategy to curb the growth of the Church in America to roughly 1,000 listeners.

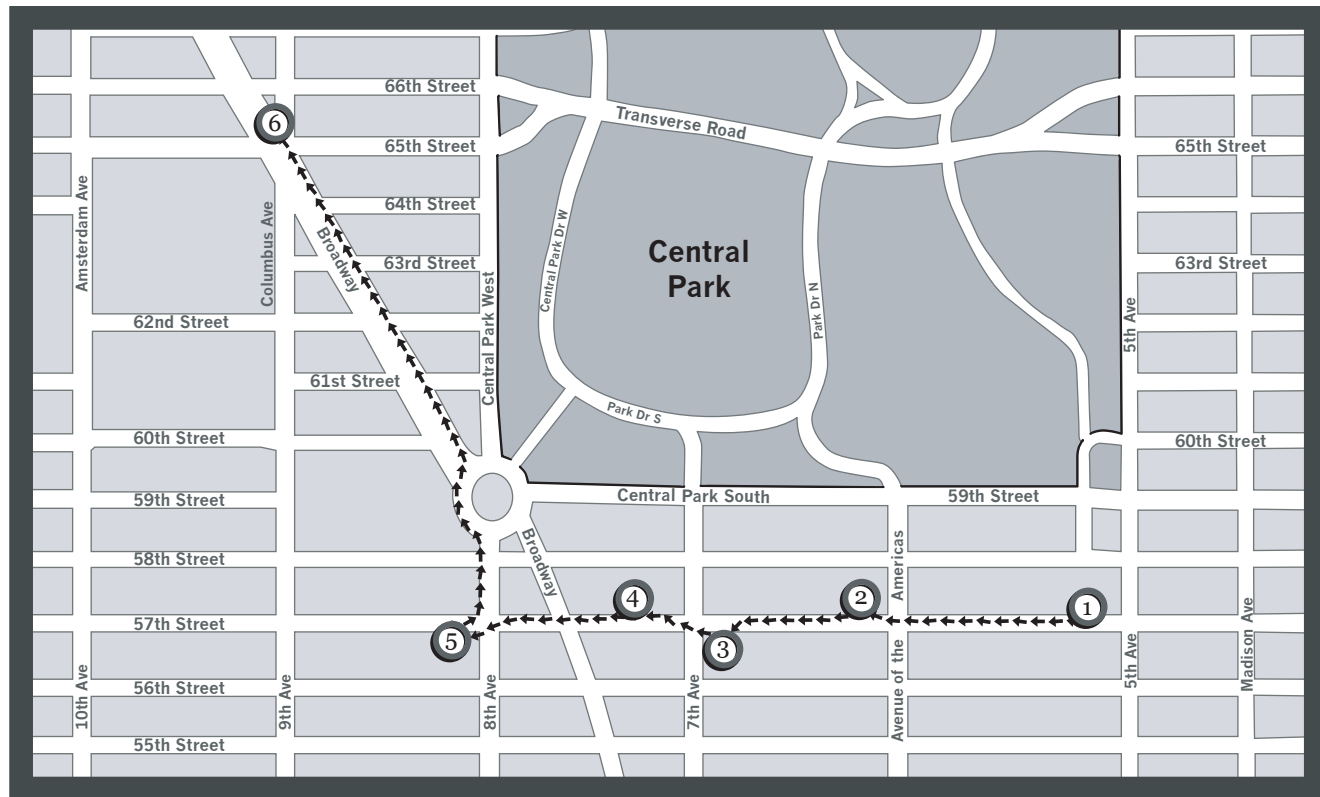
For two hours, Cannon presented his ideas. He demanded legislation to ban missionary street meetings and to bar the Church from owning property in New York. He condemned what he saw as the growing influence of the Church in American government, and he denounced Church leaders as polygamists. Those in attendance echoed their approval when a vote was taken regarding these anti-Mormon acts.

Suddenly thereafter, a group of Mormon men rushed down the aisles, led by Eastern States Mission President Walter P. Monson, calling Cannon a liar and an ingrate. The skirmish was reported in The New York Times, "for a time it appeared likely that blows would be struck, and that Frank J. Cannon of Utah, formerly U.S. Senator and once a Mormon, would get the brunt of the attack. Women and clergymen crowded about the Senator and shielded him while he shouted stinging rebukes to his attackers."

It was not the last time Cannon attacked the Church, but since that time, Carnegie Hall has been a considerably friendlier venue for Latter-day Saints. In addition to the use of its rooms as a worship space, the recital halls themselves have been venues for the Church. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed at Carnegie Hall as early as 1958, and on April 8, 1999 the New York Stake organized a celebration and performance in the hall with a large choir conducted by David Fletcher and with local vocal and instrumental soloists.

In the early 1940s, LDS pianist Grant Johannesen gave vivid performances in the hall when the Bell Telephone Hour used Carnegie Hall as its home for live radio broadcasts. In recent years, numerous local performers have taken their turns on the stages of Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall and Zankel Hall as soloists, recitalists, instrumentalists and choral artists. Additionally, the hall is often rented by touring groups from outside of New York, and not infrequently, those high school and college groups include members of the Church.

The idea for Carnegie Hall began with the conductor Walter Damrosch. When he was 25 he went to Europe to study with Hans von Bulow. For years Walter had been trying to get a concert hall in New York City. The New York Philharmonic Society was able to find space to perform, but the group Walter conducted, the Symphony Society, was not considered as important as the Philharmonic and had a hard time finding space to play.



On his ship ride to London in 1887 to meet von Bulow, Walter had the good fortune to meet Andrew Carnegie's new bride, Louise Whitfield. Louise had sung as a soprano in the Oratorio Society for a few seasons and was interested in Walter's idea for a grand hall. She and Andrew Carnegie soon became friends with Walter and by the end of the summer they had agreed to fund the first grand concert hall in New York. Construction began on the hall May 13, 1890 and was finished seven years later—resulting in the famed Carnegie Hall.




215 West 57th Street – The Art Students League of New York

Beginning in 1917, Mormon visual artists flocked to this site to study drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture. Formerly, LDS artists trained in Paris, but World War I stopped this. At the turn of the nineteenth century, art academies did not exist in the west, and the Church sent its painters abroad to learn the skills necessary to decorate its temples and meetinghouses. A list of Mormon artists who studied at the League is formidable: Mahonri Young, Minerva Teichert, LeConte Stewart, Cyrus E. Dallin, Waldo Midgley, Lynn Fausett, Louise Farnsworth, and many others.


The Art Students League became the most important art academy of 20th Century America, with a list of students that is the Who's Who of American art. The Mormons who studied here had access both to advanced techniques of instructors and also to peers like John Sloan, Winslow Homer, Georgia O'Keefe, Norman Rockwell, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Roy Lichtenstein, all of whom dramatically altered how we think of art today.


One LDS artist, Mahonri Young, who was the last grandchild of Brigham Young, studied at the Art Students League in 1916 and eventually became an instructor and president of the institution. He taught at the League for thirty years. Initially, he planned to stay at the League briefly. He worked at a newspaper in Salt Lake City for four years, saving all of his money in order to be able to stay in New York for one year. Instead, the artist who later created the monuments on Temple Square and the This Is the Place Monument remained his entire life in the New York City area.




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9W 57th Street: In the 1960s the Church nearly built a chapel and broadcast center in the lower levels of this sloped building. Although the Church ended up not using the space, architect Gordon Bunshaft's controversially shaped tower still preserves the distinctive separate outside escalators to what was to have been the Church's space.





Gordon Bunshaft
- 


109W 57th Street – Steinway Hall: Throughout the early 20th century, New York Saints met in buildings across Manhattan. In the 1920s, they met in this building where some of the best pianos in the world were played and sold.



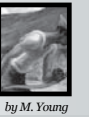

Henry Steinway
- 


57th Street & 7th Ave – Carnegie Hall: 1914: Frank J. Cannon—a Senator emeritus and former Church member—led an anti-Mormon rally here; a group of Mormons stormed in and stopped the show. A few years later, the Church held Sunday meetings above the Hall. Many LDS musicians have since performed here.

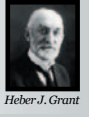
Dale Carnegie *Frank J. Cannon*
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215W 57th Street – The Art Students League of New York: When the First World War prevented Mormon artists from studying abroad, young artists such as Minerva Teichert and Mahonri Young studied instead at this prestigious institution. Mahonri later was president of the League, teaching there for 30 years.


by M. Young *by M. Teichert*
- 

316W 57th Street – Stillman's Gym: President Grant created the New York Stake here on December 9, 1934. The meetinghouse was shared with the YMCA, an art school, and a gym, and it was not unusual to see dancing girls in leotards wander into Church meetings.



Heber J. Grant
- 

65th Street & Broadway – Temple at Lincoln Square: The Church's 119th temple, it was dedicated in June 2004 and serves over 40,000 members in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The temple was built over the existing New York Stake center (1975) and has a soundproof inner shell that keeps out the loud noises of the city outside.



Atop the Temple

It is no exaggeration to state that all of the artists of the Church from the first half of the 20th century are in some way products of the Art Students League. Their paintings grace the walls of chapels and the temples throughout the Church, including in New York City. For more on the history of LDS artists in New York City and on 57th Street, see Glen Nelson's "The Mormon Arts Magnet – The Creative and Performing Arts on 57th Street" in this issue.



316 West 57th Street

On this site, the New York Stake was created on December 9, 1934 by President Heber J. Grant, with Counselor (and former New York City resident) J. Reuben Clark. It was a landmark occasion for the history of the Church because it was the first stake to be established east of the pioneer settlements of the west since the Saints' exodus to the Rocky Mountains. In addition, it was only the third stake (after San Francisco and Los Angeles) to be created anywhere outside of the pioneer settlements.

The decade leading up to the organization of the New York Stake witnessed tremendous growth, some 400%. By 1934, there were 2,000 members in the metropolitan area. The original wards of the stake were Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, East Orange (New Jersey), with branches in Oceanside (Long Island), Bay Ridge (Brooklyn), and Westchester. The geographic area of the stake covered all of New York City and Long Island, the northern half of New Jersey, and all of Westchester County, an area roughly contiguous with the modern boundaries of the Manhattan New York Temple District.

The building was originally built as a YMCA. After the YMCA moved to new quarters, the building was rented to a number of tenants which included art, drama and business schools in addition to the Church. It also housed Stillman's Gymnasium, a well-known training facility for boxers and other athletes. Members recalled that during Sunday meetings there was nothing unusual about a group of dancing girls walking through the meeting, dressed in leotards. Others recalled the clanking sounds of free weights from the gymnasium that rang throughout church services. For its inconveniences, it did offer something valuable: its size. The meeting room had a capacity for 500. Separate services were held in German at the same facility.

Two millionaires had opened Stillman's Gym in 1921 in an effort to help troubled young people reform themselves through boxing. Louis Ingber bought the gym, and because it was all ready the premiere gym for boxers, he changed his name to Lou Stillman instead of changing the gym's famous name. John Garfield said, "there've been great fighters from all over the country, and good trainers, but never in the sport's history have we seen so many greats all in one place at one time. In the golden age of boxing, Stillman's produced more world class fighters than any other place ever had."



Lincoln Square

In turning up Broadway we follow the route of Bloomingdale Road, the old main road up Manhattan Island toward an area which has been settled at least since the 1700s, when Dutch New Yorkers established the village of Bloomingdale (Dutch for "vale of flowers"). As New York City expanded northward in the 1800s, the grid street plan incorporated little squares where the old Bloomingdale Road (now renamed Broadway) crossed the grid pattern of streets. In the 19th century the area around Lincoln Square (named after a local landowner rather than the American president) filled with working class tenements, especially after the construction of the Ninth Avenue El in 1880. The El station on the block between West 65th and West 66th Streets stood directly in front of the current temple location. In 1902, the first Broadway subway established a stop at West 66th Street. The neighborhood, of mixed Irish and African-American populations, was nicknamed "San Juan Hill," in honor of the African-American Tenth Cavalry of the U.S. Army, which had fought in that battle during the Spanish-American War.

In the early 1960s, New York City's legendary Robert Moses led the demolition of many blocks in the area to create a new complex of theaters to be named Lincoln Center. In part this was seen as an urban renewal project to clean up an area considered to be poor and dangerous. Before the buildings were demolished, they served as the set for the exterior scenes of the movie version of *West Side Story*, which portrays the battle of ethnic gangs thought to dominate the area. How it was to come to be the spiritual heart of the entire region is told in the accompanying article, "Deserving of a House of the Lord: The Story of the Manhattan New York Temple at Lincoln Square."

"DESERVING OF A HOUSE OF THE LORD"

THE STORY OF THE MANHATTAN NEW YORK TEMPLE AT LINCOLN CENTER

Scott Tiffany, Richard Bushman, Allison Clark, & James Lucas

By the 1960s there was general agreement that a stake center building was needed for the New York Stake. Local leaders differed on where it should be located. Many preferred Westchester County. Advocates of a Manhattan location favored the East Side, away from the deteriorating neighborhood of West 81st Street where the Manhattan members had been meeting since 1945. Both groups were surprised when Church President Joseph Fielding Smith indicated that the building was to be in Manhattan and asked local leaders to include a West Side site among the options.

In 1970, Harold B. Lee, then president of the Council of the Twelve, inspected proposed building sites in Manhattan, accompanied by George Mortimer, a local Church leader and the Church's attorney. The Lincoln Square site was the last site they visited. "I want to walk out on it," said President Lee, getting out of the cab. After standing on the ground about three minutes, he declared, "George, this is the place the Lord wants for us. Buy it."

The church facilities on the second, third and fourth floors of the building at Lincoln Square were dedicated by President Spencer W. Kimball on May 25, 1975. In 1998 the fifth and sixth floors, which originally housed a health club, were acquired by the Church and converted into a second set of church facilities including chapel, cultural hall, offices, and classrooms, which were dedicated on November 10, 2001.

In the meantime the Church had acquired property to build a temple in Harrison, New York in suburban Westchester County. However, that project had been held up by ongoing zoning disputes. On June 19, 2001, New York Stake president Brent J. Belnap received an unexpected

telephone call from Elder Robert D. Hales, a member of the Church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Hales had some questions relating to travel logistics and costs for Church members residing within the metropolitan area. As the conversation continued, Elder Hales confirmed that a temple somewhere in Manhattan was in fact a topic of discussion among Church leaders in Salt Lake City.

In August 2001, less than two months after the phone call from Elder Hales, Elders W. Craig Zwick and Spencer J. Condie of the North America Northeast Area Presidency

with this visit, President Belnap was asked to prepare an analysis of travel to the Harrison temple versus travel to a temple in Manhattan from New Jersey, the five boroughs, Long Island, upstate New York and Connecticut. Not even President Belnap's counselors were privy to this assignment.

On March 23, 2002, President Gordon B. Hinckley, his staff, Elder Zwick, President Belnap and Richard Hedberg visited the Harrison temple site in Westchester County. The prophet was intimately familiar with precise details about the site: he rattled off information regarding square footage, drainage, utility lines, elevation, and he could identify exactly what the orange spray paint lines on the property meant. After visiting sites of other Church buildings in Manhattan the group ended the day at the Manhattan stake center.

At a special regional meeting the following day, Sunday, March 24, 2002, President Hinckley told the members that "I just feel so very strongly that you are deserving of a House of the Lord" and that "I'm going to see that we get a temple in this New York area while I'm still alive." He added that "within two years we'll have a temple ... ready for dedication." He urged the members to prepare themselves to be worthy for this blessing. Referring to the difficulties with the proposed suburban site, he quoted Brigham Young that "we never announce the construction of a temple that the bells of hell don't begin to ring" but concluded "we're going to do it. We're going to exercise our faith ... all of us ... so it will come to pass to bless our lives."

In July 2002, a little more than three months after President Hinckley's visit, stake members were surprised to learn that the new chapel and meeting space on the fifth and sixth



presented a rough schematic drawing of a "small" temple within the fifth and sixth floors of the existing stake center. On January 12, 2002, the Church's presiding bishop, H. David Burton, came to New York City to visit sites for the temple and proposed new chapels in Manhattan. In connection

floors of the stake center would be closed for “renovation.” Rumors of plans quickly spread amongst Church members in New York City, with many hoping that a temple was finally to be in their midst. The hoped-for news came on Wednesday, August 7, 2002. With no press conference and little fanfare, the First Presidency announced in a press release that a temple would be built in New York City, in the Lincoln Square stake center.

After almost two years of construction work, during most of which nine Manhattan wards and branches met in various combined meetings in a single chapel in the stake center (which was itself being renovated most of the time) the Manhattan New York Temple was completed. Before the dedication an open house and tours were planned for the general public. “The hottest ticket in town,” an article in USA Today called reservations at the Manhattan New York Temple open house. Judging by attendance, thousands of New Yorkers and people from far off places agreed.

The first tours were given on Saturday, May 1, 2004, for the temple’s construction workers and their families. Many of them knew the temple inside out already, but not all had seen it furnished and beautified. This was a chance to show their handiwork to their families. Tours for the general public began on Saturday, May 8, and ran through Saturday, June 5. As many as 3,000 people a day came to the site and a total of over 53,000 people toured the Manhattan temple during the open house.

On Saturday, June 12, 2006, the temple’s completion was celebrated with a gala at Radio City Music Hall featuring performances by thousands of youth from throughout the temple district.

On Sunday, June 13, 2004, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated it as the Church’s

119th temple. Four dedicatory sessions were held; President Hinckley officiated at each session. Two stationary video cameras inside the celestial room relayed each session to members seated in the rooms of the temple and the adjacent chapel. Meanwhile, members in fifteen other chapels throughout the temple district viewed the dedicatory sessions live via satellite. Each of these broadcast locations was considered an extension of the temple for the occasion. Only baptized and confirmed members of the Church who were worthy of temple recommends were admit-



ted to participate in the dedication, including children aged eight years or older. In the course of the day, 10,649 people participated in the four dedicatory sessions. The second session’s dedicatory prayer was broadcast in Spanish to accommodate the large Spanish-speaking population within the temple district. With the help of translators in Salt Lake City, all of the dedication was made available in the following languages at various sessions: Mandarin, Cantonese, French, Haitian French Creole, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. The third session was

closed-captioned and also translated at the Lincoln Square chapel into American Sign Language for hearing-impaired members.

New York City’s first temple ordinances began on Monday, June 14, 2004, at 11:00 a.m., with an endowment session for the temple district’s stake and mission presidents.

Decades after President Lee stood in a rundown parking lot and meditated with the Lord, the Lincoln Square site has become part of a prestigious neighborhood. We have no indication that the Church leaders who

“I want to walk out on it, [Lincoln Square site]” said President Lee, getting out of the cab. After standing on the ground about three minutes, he declared, “George, this is the place the Lord wants for us. Buy it.”

were inspired to select this site knew that a House of the Lord would someday rise on this piece of solid Manhattan schist, but we can know now that the Spirit of the Lord has long been a part of this sacred ground.

SOURCES: Personal recollections of George Mortimer, Harlan Clark, and Brent Belnap; Ned Thomas, *Evolution of the First Manhattan Stake Center*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2000). *The Coming of a Temple to Manhattan and Manhattan Temple Dedication Extra*, *The New York LDS Historian* (Spring 2004).

...continued from cover MAGNET

country’s premiere art school of the 20th century. Those sites were also the draws for LDS artists who moved to New York with a talent and a dream.

The 9 West 57th Street building, originally developed by the Church, has a hidden LDS connection even today. On the 57th Street side, close to the oversized, red nine on the sidewalk, there is a descending staircase to a space currently used as a restaurant. On the same location but on the 58th Street side of the building, there is another descending stair. This was intended to be the church entrance. The plans of the building have been lost, but stake member Tom Vogelmann reports that he recalls seeing the plans. The chapel space was designed to double as a performance and recording studio. The floor was to have been steeply raked; there were sound booths and recording studio facilities alongside worship and classroom space. The impetus for such thinking was undoubtedly the prominence of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the time, which performed with some frequency in New York and had recording contracts with Columbia Broadcasting (CBS), which is located a few blocks away.

Walking between 5th and 6th Avenues, art galleries line both sides of 57th Street, although there are few at ground level. It is nearly impossible to overemphasize the importance of these spaces and the The New York Arts Students League (near Broadway) as a psychological magnet for American artists. In these small galleries, modern art first appeared before the public. Many of the art movements most closely associated with America debuted here, including Pop Art and Abstract Expressionism. In the days before art could be easily reproduced in color and disseminated, young artists who wanted to assimilate what was new had to come to these places to see it first hand. Later, LDS artists themselves showed their work in some of these spaces.

Carnegie Hall is the prominent building at 57th Street and 7th Avenue. By now, it is perhaps the most revered concert hall in America. LDS artists have surprisingly strong connections with Carnegie Hall and many have performed there including the Tabernacle Choir. Carnegie Hall is more than a single space. There are apartment residents above it on the south side of the block (where LDS scholars have lived while they conducted research in New York); there are rehearsal halls above the building on the



Among the important LDS artists who studied at the Art Students League was Minerva Teichert. Although most of her themes were scriptural or western, as in her well-known Miracle of the Gulls, she also occasionally drew on her New York City experiences as in this 1938 image of Jewish refugees arriving in New York Harbor.
Courtesy of Brigham Young University Museum of Art. All rights reserved.

north side (where the Manhattan Ward used to meet on Sundays). Weill Recital Hall is an intimate performing space where recitalists who are LDS have debuted (including Susan Boren Alexander, soprano, and most recently Winona Vogelmann Fifield, and Amneris Puscasu, violinists). Underneath Carnegie Hall is the new Zankel Hall, a renovated movie theater space that now draws mid-size ensembles, including the Metropolitan Opera Chamber Orchestra with whom the LDS soprano Jennifer Welch-Babidge performed recently.

The main hall itself—now named the Isaac Stern Auditorium, after the famous violinist who mounted a tireless campaign to landmark the building and save it from demolition in the 1970s, has hosted many LDS performers over the years. In addition to the Tabernacle Choir, LDS pianist Grant Johannesen performed there many times over a period of fifty years. During the 1940s, upon his arrival here from Salt Lake City to seek his fortune as a concert pianist, Johannesen recorded live broadcasts for the Bell Telephone Hour which used the hall for radio recording and later for the first television broadcasts of classical music. The list of LDS performers who have “made it” to Carnegie Hall includes literally hundreds. There are LDS performers in many of the

nation’s most prestigious orchestras, and the Utah Symphony has occasionally made it to Carnegie Hall. In 1999, the New York Stake rented the large hall and performed with a chorus of over a hundred voices and LDS soloists drawn from New York’s most prominent opera companies. It is not at all uncommon for high school, community, and university performers to rent the space for their concerts, and those who are LDS will frequently appear at church as part of their tour.

Across the street is CAMI Hall, a small rehearsal space, but more importantly, home of the world’s great agencies of classical musicians. It is the professional home for elite singers, instrumentalists, conductors, and solo artists, some of whom are represented there (Ron Wolford, president of Columbia Artists Management, Inc. is a product of University of Utah).

No site in America can claim the title of being a magnet for artists more impressively than the New York Art Students League at 215 West 57th Street near Broadway. For the majority of the 20th century, the Art Students League was the training ground of American painters. There is no other way to say it: anyone who mattered studied there. Beginning with World War I, LDS artists

who were preparing for a career as fine art painters made their way to New York to study at the Arts Students League, including Lynn Fausett, Minerva Teichert, Torlieff Knaphus, Avarad Fairbanks, Louise Richards Farnsworth, LeConte Stewart, and Mahonri Young, among others. When we look at This Is the Place Monument (by Mahonri Young), or the majestic Book of Mormon paintings (by Minerva Teichert), or the sculptures of Moroni atop our temples (by Avarad Fairbanks) we have to acknowledge the New York connection. It is here that these artists were trained and found their voice. Furthermore, its importance goes on. LDS artists continue to study at the Art Students League to the present.

Next door to the Art Student League, on the second through four floors of a non-descript building is the Broadway Dance Center. LDS dancers have a long history of study at that site. A parade of LDS performers on Broadway began in earnest in the 1960s, and in the last decade, particularly, there has been no time in which Broadway has not had an LDS performer on the boards. The Dance Center is one of many places where professionals and students can take classes from peers to hone their skills.

The idea that these magnet sites exists will be news to no one. What is unusual is the idea that while New York has consistently been the place where aspiring artists go -- "If I can make it there..."-- the impact of LDS artists has altered the Church itself in New York. The culture of the Church has shifted subtly by their presence, and their work has been affected by New York. The unexpected byproduct of this cross-pollination is the image of the Church itself. The painters, sculptors, composers, dancers, authors who have helped define how we see ourselves (the tradition of choral singing as a by-product of the Tabernacle Choir, for example, or the artworks that adorn our temples via Art Students League painters) came to New York because they had to come here. Some stayed, but all soaked up the vitality of spirit of the new that is to be found here, and perhaps nowhere more than on 57th Street.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

PRESENTS

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Among numerous appearances over the years by LDS artists at Carnegie Hall, in 1999 the New York Stake sponsored an Easter concert featuring many LDS professional musicians and a special choir of stake members.

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