

# The New York LDS Historian

## *Mormon New York City in the 20th Century*

### Manhattan and the Mormons: 1900-1933

By Scott D. Tiffany

At the start of the 20th century, Mormons in New York City were viewed by many as a small fanatical sect that stopped at nothing to gain converts. Throughout the first quarter of the century, Church members endured local news articles that exaggerated their beliefs, dodged national campaigns that smeared their name, and combated stiff opposition to their dreams of building a local chapel.

The Mormon Church, officially called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), had a presence in the city since 1837 when the first missionaries arrived. Although some members met sporadically in Brooklyn, the Church was almost non-existent in New York after the Civil War. Then, beginning in 1900, the Church began meeting in Manhattan for the first time in more than 25 years. The services were held at 170 West 125th street.<sup>1</sup>

The following year, in the spring of 1901, the conversion of two women to the "Mormon faith" made headlines throughout New York City. Elizabeth Dickenson and Mrs. Thomas Blair of the Port Morris, New Jersey Congregational Church scandalized the religious community by renouncing their religion as they were "two of the most prominent women in the church" and were leaders in the youth program.<sup>2</sup>

According to *The New York Times*, "Mrs. Blair shocked her friends in the church by announcing that she had become a believer in Mormonism, and resigned her position as President of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. Following close upon this came Miss Dickenson's declaration and resignation, which acted like a bombshell."<sup>3</sup>

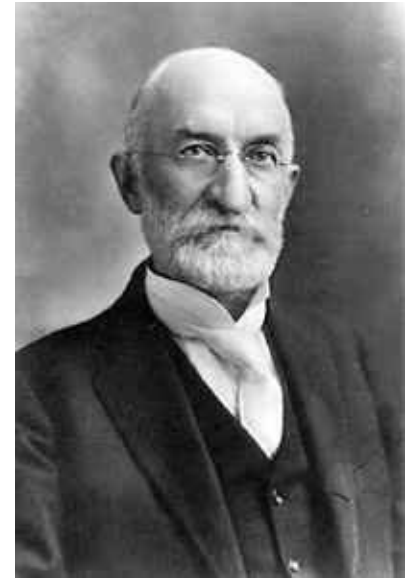
The women were stricken from the rolls of the youth group they once led.<sup>4</sup>

About the time of this religious scandal, members of the local LDS Church moved their meetings to 172 West 81st Street where they gathered from 1901 to 1905. That year, a separate Brooklyn Branch was created, and the Manhattan Branch moved to 33 West 126th Street.

On September 13, 1913, Eastern States Mission President Ben E. Rich passed away.<sup>5</sup> Walter P. Monson replaced him at the mission home located at 33 West 126th street in Manhattan.<sup>6</sup> Under Monson's direction, missionary activity in the city dramatically increased. And the increase did not escape the scrutiny of other churches or the press. *The New York Sun* printed a story on November 21, 1916, with the headline, "Mormons Working Here, Says Pastor." The article quoted the Rev. W. P. Neff of the Hoboken Methodist Church:

"Mormon missionaries masquerading as Bible class teachers, singers and other church workers are deceiving Protestant ministers and working to convert men and women to Mormonism in their very churches." Pastor Neff claimed that "Mormon missionaries walked up and down the aisles appealing for converts before and after the service until he himself ejected four of them."

The same *New York Sun* article reported that a female Bible teacher at a New York Methodist church had turned out to be a Mormon missionary. Consequently, local



President Heber J. Grant, who organized New York Stake in 1934

#### The New York LDS Historian

is the quarterly newsletter of the New York New York Stake LDS History Committee. This newsletter contains articles about and notices of the research of the Committee.

More detailed research results will be published in our monograph series. Monographs will be announced in future issues of this newsletter.

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Frank J. Cannon

## Manhattan and the Mormons (continued from previous page)

ministers were warned by the Methodist Church to “carefully examine all men and women volunteering for church work to make sure that they were not Mormons, who are numerous in the city.”<sup>7</sup>

In fact, New York area Church membership was only about 400 in 1913. As the First World War ravaged Europe, there were many anti-Mormon activists attacking the Church throughout America. The most notorious Mormon critic was Frank J. Cannon, a disenchanted member of the Church and the son of George Q. Cannon, once a member of the Church’s presidency.

In April 1914, Frank Cannon chose New York City to launch a national crusade against the Mormons. In a ticket-only rally held at Carnegie Hall, roughly 1,000 people met to hear his strategy to curb growth of the Mormon

Church. Nationally, Cannon demanded that the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, not appoint any Mormons to political office. He also asked Congress to amend the Constitution to prohibit polygamy, denounced the president of the Mormon Church, Joseph F.

Smith, as a polygamist and accused the Church of befriending twenty-two senators in order to gain political clout. Locally, Cannon demanded a New York City law banning Mormon missionaries from holding street meetings, and barring the Church from ever owning a chapel on city grounds.<sup>8</sup>

After two hours, Cannon put his measures up for a theatrical vote that was met overwhelmingly in his favor. However, a small group of men rushed the stage, including Walter P. Monson, President of the Eastern States Mission. His group verbally attacked Cannon, calling him a “liar” and an “ingrate.” *The New York Times* reported, “For a time it appeared likely that blows would be struck, and that Frank J. Cannon of Utah, formerly US 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.”<sup>9</sup>

Undaunted, Cannon returned to New York eight months later with news that upset Christian leaders of several denominations. “We have from the utterances of the head of the Mormon movement in this city definite assurance that the Mormon Church is prepared to build a tabernacle in this city,” he announced. “The Mormons are all ready to make a determined effort here, and Mormonism will be exerting its political influence in New York before you know it.”<sup>10</sup>

The Church was, in fact, hoping to build a chapel of its own. However, funding was still a massive challenge, as local church units were required to pay half of the building costs. Commenting on the construction, *The New York Times* reprinted a

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letter to the editor from mission president Monson:

“Our little congregation here has had to hire a hall for many years for its meetings, and –will those who believe fairy tales about our billions please take note?—we have saved our pennies all these years, hoping our congregation could some day achieve the status of most other congregations in the city. . . . When we finally get ready to put up our modest little meeting house we would not like to startle the town in which most of us have lived all of our lives with the notion that we have rushed in by underground or airship to invade it. . . .”<sup>11</sup>

The Church finally purchased property for a new chapel and a mission home in Brooklyn on July 5, 1916. The home was built at 233 Gates Avenue in 1918 and a

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# A Revolving Door: Mormons in New York 1934-1965

By Kent S. Larsen II

On December 9, 1934, LDS Church president Heber J. Grant stood at the podium of a rented hall at 5 West 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and took what seemed like a big risk for the Church: he turned the New York mission district into the New York Stake. It was the first stake east of the Mississippi River since the Church abandoned Nauvoo in 1846.<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the New York Stake was something of a watershed; for the first time in modern Church history, a stake was established more than 2,000 miles from its center.

However, the Church's leadership evidently felt that the concept was sound because just over six months later, they formed a stake even farther away – in Hawaii. Stakes in Chicago (1936) and Washington, DC (1940) soon followed.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, the New York Stake included New York City, all of Long Island, the northern half of New Jersey, all of Westchester county, and the Connecticut panhandle.<sup>3</sup> This huge area included a population approaching ten million, but the stake population was just about 2,000 members.<sup>4</sup> Manhattan with its many inactive members accounted for nearly one-third of the stake membership.<sup>5</sup>

Before and after World War II, many members came and went including several whom later occupied important positions in the general Church leadership.<sup>6</sup>

## The Depression

When the New York Stake was formed in 1934, the United States was already in the midst of the Great Depression. Church members in New York suffered like everyone else as the prevailing minimum wage fell to \$15 a week—for those who could find work. According to one-time Manhattan Ward bishop William L. Woolf, that wage often wasn't enough to pay the rent. Instead, renters paid what they could, when they could, and land-

lords didn't evict them or ask anyone to leave, knowing that they couldn't get a new tenant. Woolf went an entire year without paying rent during the worst of the Depression.<sup>7</sup> Other landlords did evict renters who were unable to pay the rent.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile the growth of the Church in the city essentially stopped. Organized with 2,000 members, the stake by 1937 had declined to 1,885,<sup>9</sup> perhaps because of the formation of the Metuchen branch outside the stake in 1936.<sup>10</sup> Hard times kept Utah-based Church members from moving to New York City to pursue schooling or careers.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Church members with specialized training, including scientists Harvey Fletcher, Carl Christensen, Melvin Cook and Preston Robinson, stayed near New York City because of better job opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

In response to the economic crisis, the Church started the welfare program, and the New York Stake was asked to participate. For their part, stake members pooled their resources and purchased an entire railroad carload of wheat, which was divided among the members. The wheat was stored in their homes and apartments.

However, Woolf reported that the wheat wasn't used quite as the Church expected. After World War II ended, the Church asked its members for donations that could be sent to alleviate starvation in Europe. In New York, Church members donated the same railroad carload of wheat.<sup>13</sup>

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## A Revolving Door (continued from previous page)



Harvey Fletcher

Locally, one way the New York Stake addressed the Depression was through a stake employment office run by Roscoe Turner, Sr., a convert from the South. Turner used a variety of methods to find employment for Church members – telephone, letters, stickers, telling companies in the city that the Church had available high-quality employees who were “sober on Monday mornings, who weren’t quarrelsome, and who were conscientious,” according to Woolf, who was also a member of the stake presidency during the Depression. The employment office placed 300 people a year, on average.<sup>14</sup>

In 1936, the stake’s first president, Fred. G. Taylor, was released and renowned scientist Harvey Fletcher was called in his place. While Fletcher led the stake, a branch in northern New Jersey was created, a portion of the stake was split off into the Metuchen branch (part of the Eastern States Mission),<sup>15</sup> and the Oceanside branch, previously a dependent branch of the Queens Ward, was made an independent branch.<sup>16</sup>

But growth did not come quickly. William Woolf describes a pattern in which ward membership often changed because a respected member moved to another ward or branch, and other members followed.<sup>17</sup>

About the same time that the New York Stake was created, G. Stanley McAllister

New York City Church members also were involved in starting the regular Hill Cumorah Pageant. Wayne Driggs, Roscoe Grover and William Woolf formed a committee to put on the pageant at the suggestion of Eastern States Mission president Don Colton. The Pageant had been held irregularly before the mid-thirties. However, for the 1935 dedication of the statue of the Angel Moroni on top of the hill, Colton suggested that the Church landscape the hill to include a stage for a regular pageant.<sup>19</sup>

With only a few month’s notice, Driggs wrote the script for the pageant, while Grover worked on its staging, and Woolf oversaw the lighting and sound system. Colton brought in every missionary in the Eastern States Mission to canvas the area, ensuring that the pageant was well publicized. That year, crowds were estimated at 70,000 people.<sup>20</sup>

## World War II

With the advent of the war, the activities of the Church in New York City changed. The Hill Cumorah Pageant shut down,<sup>21</sup> and the scientific and military expertise of many stake leaders was absorbed into the war effort. The war also increased the number of visitors to the city, bringing in some new faces, but taking just as many away.

In support of the war effort, the New York Relief Society helped members add black window shades to conform to blackout regulations.<sup>22</sup> Members lived through gas rationing and meat shortages.<sup>23</sup> Some worked in war-related businesses. Joseph Strobel converted his factory to producing airplane parts and employed several Church members there,<sup>24</sup> while scientists Henry Eyring, Harvey Fletcher, Carl J. Christensen and others were drawn into war-related scientific projects. The war also brought some scientists and engineers to New York City, including Corbett Aamodt, who worked on the Manhattan project.<sup>25</sup> Their efforts had a direct effect on the war since research by Carl Christensen led to the discovery of a German submarine in New York harbor.<sup>26</sup>

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started working for radio broadcaster CBS. While not personally involved with programming, McAllister learned of the network’s plans to broadcast a “Church of the Air” each Sunday. He then worked with both CBS and the Church to ensure the Church’s participation. As the program started, CBS asked McAllister what Sundays the Church would prefer, and McAllister suggested the semi-annual Conference dates.<sup>18</sup>

*See page 10*

# Latter-day Saints in New York City, 1966 - 2000

By James W. Lucas

The Church did not keep statistics on the number of missionary referrals or baptisms attributable to the Mormon Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. However, the Pavilion's local effects were clear. Every unit in New York City saw numbers of new converts.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Pavilion had two specific impacts which may have seemed small at the time, but which proved to be especially significant.

The first of these was to launch a branch in the heart of Queens, the home of the Fair. Elder L. Tom Perry, who served on the New York Stake high council at the time, estimated that this branch, located in Rego Park, owed 75% of its membership to the Mormon Pavilion.<sup>2</sup> While there was a ward housed in a traditional colonial style chapel in the Little Neck area of north-eastern Queens before the World's Fair, it had served an automobile-based suburban membership primarily of transplanted westerners. The new Rego Park Branch was the first significant establishment of the Church in urban Queens. Today, the area originally covered by this one branch

ish-speaking converts from the Mormon Pavilion were the main impetus for the creation of the Spanish-American Branch which met at the West 81<sup>st</sup> Street building in Manhattan. As of the year 2000, there were over thirty Spanish language units in New York City and adjoining areas. The original Spanish branch created in 1965 (now the Manhattan 4<sup>th</sup> Ward) may be seen as the mother ward of half of all the present Latter-day Saints in the metropolitan area.

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The second, and even more significant, development was the establishment of the first Spanish language unit in the City in May 1965. Although there were some Hispanic members before then, Span-

## A Stake Center on Lincoln Square

This growth led to impossible strain on the existing Church facilities. Small chapels were built in Rego Park and on Staten Island. However, the Church's most important solution was to build a major new facility in Manhattan.

The West 81<sup>st</sup> Street building had become inadequate to accommodate the units meeting there. Furthermore, its location on the West Side was regarded as undesirable by many members living on the East Side of Manhattan, who often held their meetings at the mission home then located at 973 Fifth Avenue. Church officials initially looked to sites located near Fifth Avenue for a new chapel. (Until only very recently, the office building at 9 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street featured unused exterior escalators leading down to a very visible but closed lower level which was originally designed

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to house Church meeting facilities.)

The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts had recently been completed, but Lincoln Square was not, at the time, a prime real estate area. The neighborhood was in a general state of disrepair. In fact, Lincoln Center had been originally proposed principally as an urban renewal project. The slum-like tenements that were demolished to make way for the construction of Lincoln Center were first used as the set for the 1961 movie version of *West Side Story*. A parking lot and some dilapidated tenements occupied the block along Columbus Avenue between West 65th and 66th Streets.

One may well use the term prophetic to describe any decision to build a major facility over that particular site. In 1970, George Mortimer, a local Church leader and the Church's attorney, accompanied President Harold B. Lee in inspecting possible sites for the new Manhattan building. Brother Mortimer described their visit to the Lincoln Square site: "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. Buy it."<sup>3</sup> By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it may fairly be said that the Church probably possesses few properties of the quality and visibility of the Lincoln Square site (even if the

architecture does not adequately exploit it). The building dedicated by President Spencer W. Kimball on May 25, 1975

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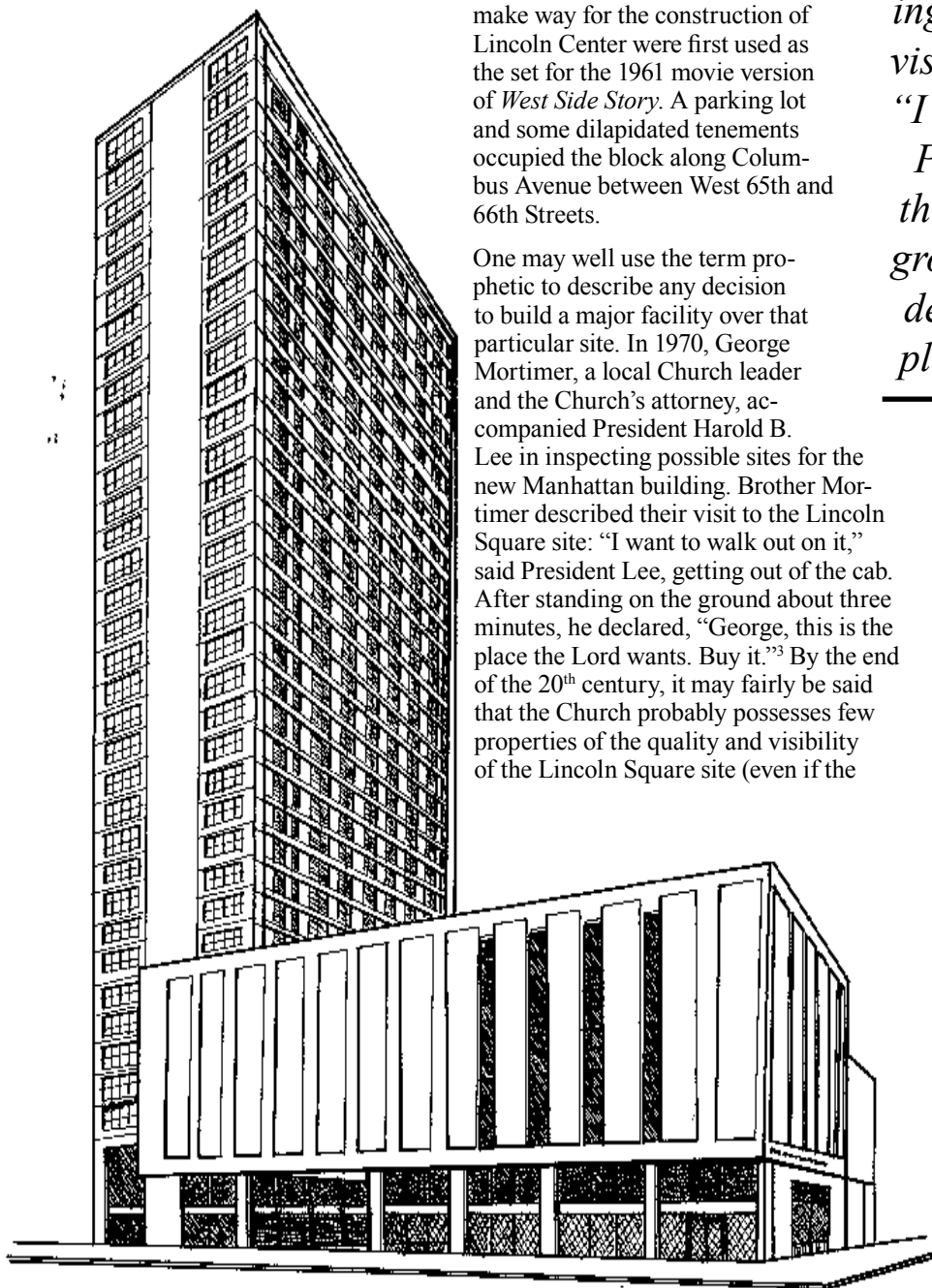
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symbolized a renewed commitment of resources by the Church to America's premier urban center.

### The "Subway" Stake

The New York Stake created in 1934 covered a vast area comprising not only New York City, but much of New Jersey and suburbs of New York City to the north in New York state and Connecticut and east to the end of Long Island. New Jersey became a separate stake in 1960 and suburban Long Island in 1967. Although the remaining stake consisting of New York City and the northern suburbs was technically headquartered at the new Lincoln Square stake center, suburban wards provided the bulk of the stake leadership. In 1978 the total representation of New York City residents in the stake leadership consisted of two regular high counselors and one alternate, one counselor in the Young Men's, Primary, and Sunday School presidencies, the Relief Society garment representative, and one member of the Stake Activities Committee.<sup>4</sup>



Thus on April 30, 1978 when Elder Robert D. Hales (incidentally a native of Queens) created the Kitchawan Stake (subsequently renamed the Yorktown New York Stake) covering the northern suburbs, the New York City stake leadership transferred almost en masse to the new stake. Elder Hales pointedly joked that church members needed to remember that the Kitchawan Stake was the new stake, not the city stake. However, it was the remaining New York City Stake that needed to be organized almost from scratch. Another challenge seemed even more daunting. The city “subway” stake was reportedly the first stake in the Church consisting only of the inner city without the “support” of wards from adjoining suburbs. Its membership was very diverse in many respects. Ethnic and linguistic minorities, particularly Hispanics, were numerous. In addition, singles and younger adults constituted an unusually large part of the stake membership in comparison with the perceived norms of the Church.

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The new stake president was Frank Miller, one of the few New York City resident members of the high council from the prior stake leadership. A Salt Lake City native who had lived in Brooklyn for many years (and still lives there), he established a policy of broad inclusiveness in the new stake organization. Hispanic members served in the stake presidency, high council, and stake auxiliary presi-

dencies regardless of English language proficiency or residency status. Single members also served throughout the stake, with many single men serving on the high council and as bishopric counselors.

The diversity of the stake received a further significant impetus a few months after the division when President Spencer W. Kimball announced the historic revelation extending the priesthood to worthy men of all races. The long-term impact of this revelation on the Church in New York City can be seen today in the numerous majority black Church units in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, and the fact that an estimated one in every five New York City Latter-day Saints is black.

Another major impetus toward diversity came a year later in April 1979, when President Kimball issued a special appeal to accelerate missionary work among linguistic minorities in urban areas where the Church was established. Missionaries trained in Chinese, Korean, Polish, Greek, and Russian were added to the Spanish-speaking missionaries who had served in New York City since the creation of the first Spanish-speaking branch in the mid-1960s. Shortly thereafter, a Chinese-speaking branch was formed in Brooklyn and a Korean-speaking branch was formed in Queens.

### **Growth and Challenges**

Despite its challenges, the New York City Stake saw remarkable growth from a number of sources. Improvements in the city’s economy in the 1980s helped bring an influx of Church members from other parts of the United States to pursue careers and education. Columbia University’s law school, for example, went from having less than a handful of LDS students in the 1970s to almost thirty at one point in the late 1980s. Another significant influx of Church members came from Latin America, where the Church had begun to realize major growth in the

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## Latter-day Saints in New York City (continued from previous page)

1960s. These Latin American immigrants provided a leadership core for the increasing number of Spanish language units and may now constitute a quarter or more of the Hispanic Latter-day Saints in New York City.

However, the largest source of Church growth in New York City came from new converts. With the liberalization of U.S. immigration laws in the 1960s and the City's improved economy in the 1980s, a new wave of immigration to New York City began. Whereas previous immigrants had come from various parts of Europe, major migrations now came to New York City "from all parts of the world," as Joseph Smith had put it in his 1832 letter to his wife Emma.<sup>5</sup> It was among these new immigrant communities that the LDS missionaries found their principal reception. In addition to the Latin American groups, significant numbers of converts were found among immigrants from the French and English-speaking Caribbean and Africa. A fewer number came from Asia and eastern Europe. By November 17, 1985, only seven years after the previous stake division, the New York New York East Stake was formed covering Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island.

Such rapid growth brought many challenges. Experienced leadership was thin, and convert retention difficult. In addition, supplying suitable meeting places was a problem. Constructing traditional Church buildings in New York City was very expensive, and the Manhattan-centered subway system made commuting to meeting houses in the other boroughs

difficult. In the early 1990s, Church leaders implemented an unexpected reorganization on the Church in New York City. The New York New York East Stake was dissolved on May 19, 1991 and mission districts formed in its place. A mission district was also formed in the Bronx, which was thus removed from the New York Stake. Wards from southern Westchester County were added to the New York Stake, creating an odd bi-polar entity. Initially, it appeared that there would be a reversion to the old pattern of having the suburban wards dominate the stake leadership.

Another change at this time was the creation of the first singles ward in Manhattan. A vibrant stake singles program brought them together in many activities, including annual evening cruises in the New York harbor. The proposal to create a singles ward met with considerable opposition. In an event rare in the contemporary Church, at the multi-ward sacrament meeting where the singles ward was formed on June 16, 1991 many members abstained or voted against the separation of the singles into a special ward. The continuing presence of large numbers of unmarried Church members in Manhattan is evidenced by the existence of three substantial Manhattan singles wards as of the year 2001.

## The Evolving Church at the End of a Century

Church growth continued at an increasingly rapid pace in New York City in the 1990s. From about 3,200 members in 1980, Church membership in New York City increased to 6,500 in 1990 and to 17,000 at the end of 1998.<sup>6</sup> There were nearly 20,000 Latter-day Saints in New York City at the end of 2000. From 1980 to 2000, the number of wards and branches in New York City increased from 13 to 50. The five Church meeting houses in 1980 grew into 19 in 2000, with several more under construction. These new meetinghouses included the construction of large new multi-unit chapels on Kingsbridge Road in the Bronx and in Inwood in northern Manhattan. Because of real estate and construction costs, local

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*Primary Sacrament Meeting Program in the Manhattan 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, October 1999*



members claim the chapels are the most expensive meetinghouses ever built by the Church in the United States.

Most of the new meeting spaces have been clever renovations or “co-habitations” in existing buildings, including churches of other faiths, office buildings, a union hall, a funeral parlor, and a restaurant. The most significant of these is the renovation of a complex of former Bulova Watch Company offices and schools in Woodside, Queens. Already partially finished and housing the Woodside Branch, when the full renovation is completed this facility will serve as a future stake center and will be the largest Church facility in New York City after the expanded two-chapel Lincoln Square building.<sup>7</sup>

The Church organization in New York City reflected these advances. On November 9, 1997, the suburban Westchester units of the New York City Stake were combined with the Bronx District to form a new Westchester New York Stake, leaving Manhattan alone to form the New York New York Stake. Contrary to the earlier experience, a majority of the City stake’s leadership came from Manhattan, leaving the Westchester Stake with the greater staffing challenge. The Brooklyn New York Stake was created on November 22, 1998, comprising Staten Island and most of Brooklyn. As of this writing, Queens remains divided into two mission districts, Queens and Richmond Hill (the latter also including some parts of Brooklyn) with five units in eastern Queens assigned to the suburban Plainview New York Stake and Lynbrook New York District. Both of the Queens-based districts are ambitious of becoming stakes.

In the last part of the 20th century, the Church in New York City underwent significant changes from its character throughout most of the century. As recently as 1980, the Church in all five boroughs was centered on a Manhattan base of transplanted westerners, with 38% of the New York Latter-day Saints living in Manhattan. By 2000, that percentage had declined to 20% — far behind Queens and Brooklyn, homes of 32% and 30% of LDS New Yorkers respectively. Perhaps more significantly, the ethnic makeup of LDS New Yorkers has

changed to the point where an estimated 50% are Hispanic and 20% are black. Of the fifty units in New York City in 2000, twenty-one were Spanish-speaking, two used American Sign Language, and one each operated in Chinese and Korean.

In addition to the diversity among the units, New York City wards and branches exhibit considerable internal diversity. English language units outside of Manhattan often consist of a dizzying mix of American whites and blacks, West Indians, Africans, English-speaking Latino and Asian members, and other immigrant groups from places as varied as the Philippines, Russia, Brazil, and Utah. Most of the City’s Spanish language units include members from throughout Latin America.

As it enters the 21st century, the Church faces many challenges in New York City. Some are to be found wherever the Church is experiencing continued rapid growth, including training leadership, convert retention, and housing Church functions. Others are more particular to New York City.<sup>8</sup> These include building a stable foundation on a growing but constantly transient membership base and integrating English-speaking second-generation Hispanic members into residential, rather than ethnic-based, Church units.

On a larger scale, the development of the Church in New York City presages the character of the entire Church in ten or fifteen years. Statisticians at Brigham Young University predict that 70% of Church will reside in Latin America by 2020.<sup>9</sup> The ability of New York City Latter-day Saints to surmount these challenges could point the way to the establishment of a truly worldwide Zion in the 21st century.

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## Notes

Except as otherwise noted, information in this article comes from the personal knowledge of the author and from a series of approximately 20 interviews conducted in 1999 and 2000 with Church members and leaders throughout New York City.

<sup>1</sup> Brent L. Top. “Legacy of the Mormon Pavilion.” Ensign 19 (October 1989):22-28, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Recounted to the author by George Mortimer.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Miller oral history interview, March 21, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Dean C. Jessee, editor, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1984, at 252-254.

<sup>6</sup> Figures for 1998 come from the Church. Figures for 1980 and 1990 come from *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1980: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported by 111 Church Bodies*. Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1982 and *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990: An Enumeration by Region, State and County Based on Data Reported by 133 Church Groupings*. Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> David Scott. “Watching over a New Flock: In a building where clock makers used to train, Mormons now Pray.” New York Newsday, December 4, 2000, p D1.

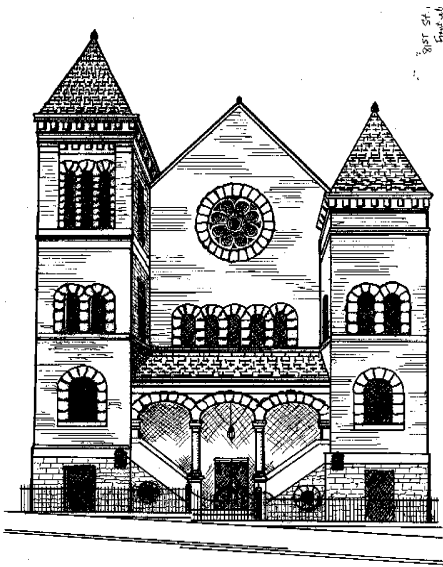
<sup>8</sup> For further discussion about challenges and details about the Church in New York City at the end of the 20th century, see James W. Lucas’ chapter, “Mormons in New York City” (Ch. 13), in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis, New York: New York University Press, 2001, at 196-211.

<sup>9</sup> Tim B. Heaton. “Vital Statistics.” In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1520-1521, general editor Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan, 1992.

## A Revolving Door (continued from page 4)

The war also affected the local Church. In 1943, the U.S. Navy WAVES took over the hotel on Broadway at 76th street where the Manhattan ward met, forcing it to move back to Steinway Hall on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. The ward stayed there until the end of the war, when the Church was able to purchase a building on West 81<sup>st</sup> Street.<sup>27</sup>

During the war, the wards served as a social center for the LDS servicemen who passed through on their way to Europe. For example, a group of fourteen LDS servicemen from California attended the Manhattan ward while in New York studying an electronics course. They brought along with them a non-member named Earl Tound who, when forced to remain in New York because of a medical condition, kept attending the Manhattan Ward and he was eventually baptized.<sup>28</sup>



81<sup>st</sup> Street Chapel

## After the War

Following the end of World War II, the stake put on a centennial celebration commemorating the sailing of the ship Brooklyn from New York City in 1846. That celebration included a Sunday evening pageant written by New York University professor and Church member Howard Driggs.<sup>29</sup> The following year the stake celebrated the centennial of Pioneer Day with an event in Queens' Flushing Meadows park.

The end of the war also allowed the Church to improve its facilities in the city. Seeking a more substantial presence, the Church purchased a new mission home at 973 Fifth Avenue in 1948. The building was designed in 1903 by noted architect Stanford White and was built as a wedding present to the Count and Countess de Heredia of France by the Countess' father, General McCook. It featured imported furnishings from France and Italy, including old masters paintings. The home remained the headquarters of the Eastern States Mission until its sale in 1973.<sup>30</sup>

The stake suffered the loss of some prestigious and long-time members when, in 1946, University of Utah President L. Ray Olpin persuaded three member families to move to Salt Lake City and join the faculty at his school. Henry Eyring, Carl J. Christensen and Preston Robinson all left that year.

Following World War II, the Church's leadership began to pressure the stake to purchase a welfare farm, as part of its welfare program. However, the stake had difficulty finding a suitable property. Finally, a working, but somewhat rundown, farm was purchased in 1953. Located some 50 miles west of New York City off of Route 31, the farm was used throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the stake spent a considerable amount of effort improving the farm. Eventually, stake leaders became frustrated with the difficulties that the farm faced, and it was sold in 1970 at a huge profit, leading some members to conclude that New York Mormons were better at investing than at farming.<sup>31</sup>

## Stake Begins to Grow

From the beginning of the stake in 1934 until the early 1950s, the stake remained basically the same size with four wards

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*The farm was used throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the stake spent a considerable amount of effort improving the farm. Eventually, . . . the farm was sold in 1970 at a huge profit, leading some members to conclude that New York Mormons were better at investing than at farming.*

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and three branches, although some boundaries and names had changed. Then, in the mid 1950s, the stake finally began to grow, although principally in the city's suburbs.

As the Oceanside branch became the Uniondale Ward in 1952, the Westchester branch began constructing its own chapel. The building was complete by 1954 and the branch became a ward in 1956.<sup>32</sup> In 1955, the Short Hills Ward (formerly East Orange Ward) finished constructing a new building after its previous building was condemned to make way for the Garden State Parkway.<sup>33</sup>

A new branch on Long Island, the Suffolk branch, was formed in 1957 as a dependent branch of the new Uniondale Ward.<sup>34</sup> That growth was followed by the Montclair, New Jersey branch (now Caldwell Ward) in 1958, and the expansion of the North Jersey branch into a ward the same year.<sup>35</sup>

The Church also began to see New York as a place to demonstrate the accomplishments of its members. In 1958, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir came to New York to perform in Carnegie Hall. About this time, Sister Ellen N. Barnes of the General Board of the Relief Society, then residing in Washington DC, established the Relief Society Singing Mothers, which came to New York to sing in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel as part of the National American Mothers Annual Awards Banquet.<sup>36</sup> Later the Utah Symphony also came to New

Stanley McAllister, was called as President of the New York Stake.

The suburban growth continued in the early 1960s and the Westchester Ward was divided and the Mt Kisko branch was formed.<sup>37</sup> About this time, the Church assigned missionaries to Brooklyn for the first time since the Eastern States Mission home had moved to Fifth Avenue in Manhattan in the late 1940s. Then, in 1962, the Church lost a bit of its local history when the old Brooklyn chapel and mission home, originally constructed by the Church in 1918, were sold. Two years later, the Brooklyn branch was housed in a new building on Glenwood Road in Midwood.<sup>38</sup>

### The World's Fair

In the 1960s, the stake's growth exploded due to the Mormon Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. However, unlike the growth of the previous decade, the baptisms from the World's Fair came in all areas of the stake. In the first year the Mormon Pavilion saw 3.1 million visitors, with as many as 34,000 a day. That generated 250,000 missionary referrals, many of which were local.<sup>39</sup>

Those referrals had an almost immediate effect on baptisms throughout the stake. Mission President Wilburn West reported that where the New York Stake had 165 baptisms in 1963, it nearly tripled to 483 in 1964. The New Jersey Stake saw its baptisms

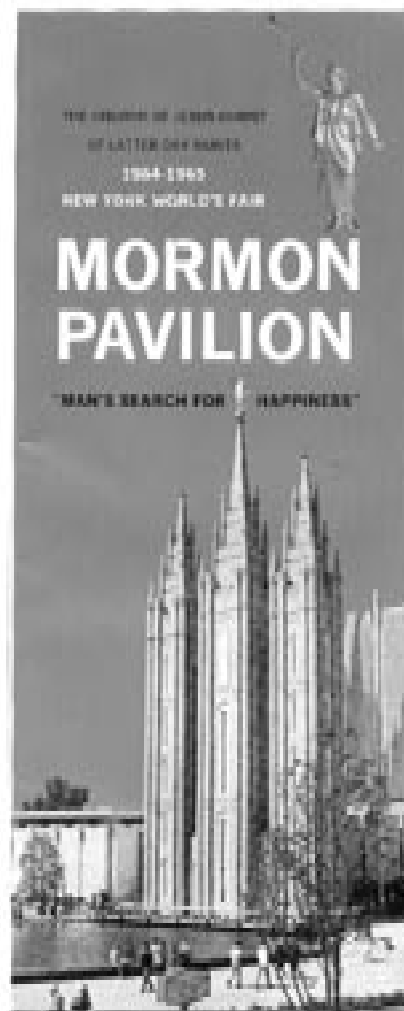
double from 154 to 291.<sup>40</sup> And the interest wasn't just in the suburbs. Manhattan Bishop Earl Tingey said his ward saw almost 100 baptisms in 1964, and 197 the following year.<sup>41</sup> The Church had to provide 12 Spanish-speaking missionaries in New York City during the second year of the Fair because Spanish speakers' interest in the Church was so high.

This growth led to some immediate changes in the New York Stake. The Rego Park branch was split from the Brooklyn

*From the beginning of the stake in 1934 until the early 1950s, the stake remained basically the same size with four wards and three branches . . . Then, in the mid 1950s, the stake finally began to grow.*

York, performing in Carnegie Hall.

In 1960, the Church's growth in the city reached another milestone when the stake was divided for the first time. The Short Hills and North Jersey wards and the Montclair branch were combined with the Metuchen, Monmouth and Trenton branches from the New Jersey District of the Eastern States Mission to form the New Jersey Stake. Stake President George Mortimer continued as President of the New Jersey Stake, while his counselor, G.



1964 World's Fair Mormon Pavilion Brochure

## A Revolving Door (continued from previous page)

branch to serve as the host unit to the World's Fair.<sup>42</sup> The Church purchased a brownstone adjacent to the Manhattan chapel during the Fair to accommodate the swelling size of the Manhattan Ward, which reached 1100 members of record by the time it was split in 1965. The new congregation, a Spanish-speaking branch, was housed mainly in the brownstone for a time.<sup>43</sup> On Long Island, the Plainview Ward was organized a year after the Fair, leading to the formation of the Plainview Stake the following year—the second time the New York Stake had been split in just seven years.<sup>44</sup>

The Mormon Pavilion was also used to help strengthen the youth of the Church along the

East Coast. Winnifred Bowers reported that the stake held a 3 or 4 day Youth Conference during the Fair, attracting youth from as far away as Florida. The youth visited the Mormon Pavilion, saw the rest of the Fair, and heard from many speakers, including a representative of the Church's First Presidency.<sup>45</sup>

The World's Fair left the New York Stake a very different stake from what it had been 30 years earlier. In place of one small, fledgling unit far from Church headquarters that struggled for 20 years before it saw growth, there were three rapidly-growing stakes. The New York Stake itself was smaller, and included a new demographic – Spanish-speaking, urban residents. In the process of local growth, the stake also made an important impact on the Church worldwide.

*The World's Fair had an almost immediate effect on baptisms throughout the stake . . . where the New York Stake had 165 baptisms in 1963, it nearly tripled to 483 in 1964. . . . Manhattan Bishop Earl Tingey said his ward saw almost 100 baptisms in 1964, and 197 the following year.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Deseret News 2001-2002 Church Almanac (Deseret News: Salt Lake City, 2000) p 448-449.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Queens Ward was considered the strongest ward, with its members primarily in two-parent families with children. Most stake officers lived in that ward. The Brooklyn Ward was similar, but included a large German-speaking population. Manhattan also had a German-speaking population of 25-30 families and 100 to 150 students. The East Orange Ward was similar to Queens, but smaller. The Westchester Branch was new, small and had only a few families. The Bay Ridge Branch was similar to Brooklyn, and Oceanside was an old, small branch that consisted mainly of the family of William Soper, members on Long Island since the 1860s. See William L. Woolf Oral History, interviews by William G. Hartley, 1973-74, typescript, pp. 93-95, Oral History Program, Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>4</sup> William L. Woolf. The Church in New York City. Improvement Era Dec 1938 p 728-730, 754-756.

<sup>5</sup> Woolf Oral History, pp.16-21.

<sup>6</sup> Examples include Elder L. Tom Perry, Elder Robert D. Hales and Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

<sup>7</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Caro. The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (Vintage Books: New York, 1974) p. 323.

<sup>9</sup> Elisabeth S. Card, New York – Birthplace of Utah. Mss. contents outline for proposed book.

<sup>10</sup> Louise S. Smith, A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Jersey. Unpublished school paper, 1984. p 17.

<sup>11</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Louise S. Smith, A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Jersey. Unpublished school paper, 1984. p 17.

<sup>16</sup> Easter, George M. Mormonism's 116 Years on Long Island, New York. Unknown source.

<sup>17</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> Robert G. Vernon. G. Stanley McAllister Biography. Mss. October 21, 1999. Notes pg 3, Note 3.

<sup>19</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 6-9.

<sup>20</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 6-9.

<sup>21</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 6-9.

<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth S. Card, New York – Birthplace of Utah. Mss. contents outline for proposed book.

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth S. Card, New York – Birthplace of Utah. Mss. contents outline for proposed book.

<sup>24</sup> Elisabeth S. Card, New York – Birthplace of Utah. Mss. contents outline for proposed book.

<sup>25</sup> Corbett Aamodt, Interview with Kent Larsen. 1998. In preparation.

<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth S. Card, New York – Birthplace of Utah. Mss. contents outline for proposed book.

<sup>27</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Woolf Oral History, p. 31-33.

<sup>29</sup> New York Stake Prepares Pageant on Centennial Of "Good Ship Brooklyn." The Church News 19 January 1946 p1.

<sup>30</sup> Eastern States Mission Home, 973 Fifth Avenue. Undated manuscript describing the building.

<sup>31</sup> George Mortimer, Comments for New York, New York Stake 50th Anniversary Program. 1984.

<sup>32</sup> Jean D. Griffith. Westchester Ward History, 1977?

<sup>33</sup> Louise S. Smith, A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Jersey.

Unpublished school paper, 1984. p 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> Beginnings and New Beginnings: A short history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Long Island. 1981 p3.

<sup>35</sup> Louise S. Smith, A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Jersey. Unpublished school paper, 1984. p 18.

<sup>36</sup> Adelaide N. McAllister, Comments for New York, New York Stake 50th Anniversary Program. 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Jean D. Griffith. Westchester Ward History, 1977?

<sup>38</sup> Brooklyn District History Committee. Zion in the Brooklyn District: One Heart, Many Voices. (Brooklyn New York District: New York, 1997) p. 5-6.

<sup>39</sup> Nelson Wadsworth. Influence of Mormon Pavilion Felt Around Globe. Church News 26 December 1964

<sup>40</sup> Nelson Wadsworth. Influence of Mormon Pavilion Felt Around Globe. Church News 26 December 1964

<sup>41</sup> Earl Tingey, Comments for New York, New York Stake 50th Anniversary Program. 1984.

<sup>42</sup> Brooklyn District History Committee. Zion in the Brooklyn District: One Heart, Many Voices. (Brooklyn New York District: New York, 1997) p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Liliana Henriquez Sillito, Comments for New York, New York Stake 50th Anniversary Program. 1984.

<sup>44</sup> Beginnings and New Beginnings: A short history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Long Island. 1981 p3.

<sup>45</sup> Winnifred Bowers. Interview with Joanne Rowland 22 November 1996.

# B.H. Roberts: Father of Modern Missionary Work

By Scott D. Tiffany

As a member of the presidency of the Quorum of the Seventy and as assistant Church historian, Elder B.H. Roberts was given free reign to work as president of any American mission of his choice.<sup>1</sup> Roberts chose the Eastern States Mission because it had more than “thirty-three millions of people—truly a noble field” and it contained Palmyra, the “cradle of the Church.” At the age of 65, he arrived at the Brooklyn mission home on May 29, 1922.<sup>2</sup>

“My mission here is to convert the Jews,” he said. “More Jews live in Brooklyn and New York than anywhere else in the world. I do not want to leave until we have a branch of Jewish converts meeting here.”<sup>3</sup> Roberts’ dream was not achieved. However, he fulfilled a life-long desire to defend Jesus “as the Christ” to thousands of Jews by writing a detailed series of articles later published as a book called *Rasha the Jew*. More than one million copies of the first two articles were published and distributed throughout New York City.<sup>4</sup>

During his tenure as president, Roberts radically altered the face of missionary work throughout the city, the Eastern States and, ultimately, the entire Church. President Roberts demanded that the missionaries work in pairs of two and he created the first formalized series of “investigator” missionary lessons. He honed proselytizing skills to a near science, developing some of the earliest materials to train missionaries in a “systematic method.”<sup>5</sup> Much of what he wrote was incorporated into the first official *Missionary’s Handbook* published by the Church in 1937.

Additionally, after one performance review of the missionaries, President Roberts “hit upon the idea of establishing a mission school for imparting such instructions and creating a background of general knowledge and specific instructions which would lead to a general improvement in efficiency and morale of the missionaries.”<sup>6</sup> He developed a series of four-week

concentrated training sessions in which groups of missionaries from throughout the twelve states he supervised came to “Missionary School” in Brooklyn:

“I wish to impress upon all those who come to the school that they are coming here for a period of INTENSE WORK ... they must not think of coming to New York as coming upon a pleasure trip.” Indeed, the missionaries were trained, lectured, scolded and tested from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently, President Roberts was not much easier on the missionaries when they were working in their fields of labor. He was known to stall letters from home, delay monthly checks to “test their faith,” and lecture parents who sent more support money than the allotted \$40 per month. As biographer Truman Madsen says, B.H. Roberts was “firm in rebuke and sparing in praise.”<sup>8</sup>

At least one missionary who worked closely with him called Roberts “tender and sympathetic to his missionaries,” but members of the Brooklyn Branch were put off by Robert’s lack of warmth and personal interaction.<sup>9</sup> In a meeting held to confront him with their concerns, President Roberts said:

“I am not cold but I know I appear at times indifferent. In all my life I have



B. H. Roberts

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*By the end of Roberts’ five-year tenure, he had written thirteen exhaustive tracts and reprinted three of his own books with revisions.*

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## A Revolving Door

(continued from previous page)

had little time for play or for pleasant times to cultivate friendships...I am writing every free minute I have. I have much to do before I die.”<sup>10</sup>

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*During his tenure as president, Roberts radically altered the face of missionary work throughout the entire Church. He demanded that missionaries work in pairs and created the first “investigator” missionary lessons. He honed proselytizing skills to a near science, developing some of the earliest materials to train missionaries in a “systematic method.” Much of what he wrote was incorporated into the first official Missionary’s Handbook in 1937.*

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And so Roberts wrote. He spent many isolated hours writing at home and researching at the New York Public Library. “I am a hermit” he once confided in a letter.<sup>11</sup> His mission secretary, Elder G. Stanley McAllister, recalls, “The light showed under his door until 4 or 5 in

the morning.”<sup>12</sup> By the end of Roberts’ five-year tenure, he had written thirteen exhaustive tracts and reprinted three of his own books with revisions.<sup>13</sup>

President Roberts also wrote a number of proselytizing tracts which he “tested” in sermons at the Brooklyn chapel—inviting ministers of other faiths, newspaper editors, Church members and people off the streets. McAllister says “crowds gathered in the Chapel and it was impossible to get seats unless you were there an hour before the service.”<sup>14</sup>

After his release as mission president, President Grant gave Elder Roberts a six-month commission to finish his most monumental book, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*. While living at 308 Riverside Drive, he finished the 747-page masterpiece, which Roberts said reflected “all of my thought, research and studies.”<sup>15</sup> Despite his labor, the Church deemed the book too controversial and declined to publish it.

In October, 1927, B.H. Roberts returned to Salt Lake City to resume his duties in the presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He left New York on what he called a “rising market” of missionary work.<sup>16</sup> The successful creation of the first New York Stake seven years later was due, in part, to his efforts.

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## Notes

1 General Conference Report, April 1923.

2 B.H. Roberts, *Autobiography of B.H. Roberts*, Edited by Gary James Bergera, Signature Books, 1990, p. 230.

3 Statement from Dr. Harvey Fletcher, a branch president in New York City at the time, as quoted by Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, Deseret Book, 1980, p. 318.

4 Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith*, p. 329.

5 B.H. Roberts, *On Tracting*, 1924, p. 10.

6 B.H. Roberts, *Autobiography of B.H. Roberts*, Edited by Gary James Bergera, Signature Books, 1990, p. 232.

7 Ibid, pp. 234-35.

8 Madsen, p. 324.

9 Letter from G. Stanley McAllister to Truman Madsen, December 22, 1969. A copy is in the New York New York Stake History Archives.

10 Correspondence from Elizabeth Hinckley to

Truman G. Madsen, September 15, 1969, as quoted in Madsen, p. 334.

11 Madsen, p. 334.

12 Letter from G. Stanley McAllister to Truman Madsen, December 22, 1969. A copy is in the New York New York Stake History Archives.

13 B.H. Roberts, General Conference Report, April 1927.

14 Letter from G. Stanley McAllister to Truman Madsen, December 22, 1969.

15 Truman G. Madsen, *The Meaning of Christ—The Truth, the Way and the Life: An Analysis of B.H. Roberts’ Unpublished Masterwork*, BYU Studies, Spring 1975.

16 B.H. Roberts, Conference Report, April 1927.

## Manhattan and the Mormons (continued from page 2)

chapel next door at 272 Gates Avenue was completed the following year. On February 16, 1919, Apostle and Senator Reed Smoot dedicated the first LDS chapel built east of the Mississippi River since the Mormons fled to Utah almost 75 years earlier.

One year later, a missionary arrived at the new mission home who greatly impacted the lives of hundreds of Church members in the metropolitan area. His name was Elder G. Stanley McAllister and he served in the Eastern States Mission from 1920 to 1923. After his mission, McAllister came back to New York to work at a realty firm, Cushman & Wakefield, while attending classes at New York University from 1926-1928. In 1929, he went to work at Columbia Broadcasting Systems (CBS) as Director of Buildings and Plant Operations and helped secure a weekly national broadcast for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir that still airs today.<sup>12</sup> McAllister eventually went on to become a prominent merchandising executive and in 1960 was called as president of the New York Stake.<sup>13</sup> He was also instrumental in securing the Mormon Pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair.

While a missionary, Elder McAllister worked as mission secretary (May 1922-

used the home to plan radical missionary strategies (see accompanying article).

In 1925, *The New York Times* reported that the Mormon missionaries were among the most effective proselytizers in the city: "Broadway has a novelty in sidewalk preachers. Many of the religious exhorters, even with the aid of a cornet, fail to draw street congregations, but many attentive listeners are attracted by a group of comely young women evangelists with up-to-date clothes and even bobbed hair. From the crowd promenading upper Broadway in the evening, sizeable audiences are drawn. When a passer-by pauses to inquire the nature of the meeting, a single word of explanation engages his attention. The word which serves to enlarge the congregation is 'Mormon.'"<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1920s, Elder Wilburn West seemed to agree that sister missionaries were the keys to effective public preaching. He describes an innocent, if not strategic, game of bait and switch:

"Our noon street meeting was exceptionally successful, with two lady missionaries to help draw a crowd. Sister Lillian Mortimer, a newly arrived missionary, has an exceptionally fine voice. When she sang, a crowd gathered. Then an elder would speak..."<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of the Great Depression, Elder West was serving in Brooklyn as secretary of the Eastern States mission. Since the mission cook had Thursdays off, Elder West and a companion were at the mission home on August 9, 1929, preparing their "usual Thursday evening supper of bread and milk" when the doorbell rang. As the mission president, James H. Moyle, and his wife were out to dinner, the young elders answered the door. They were shocked to find the prophet of the LDS church on their doorstep.

President Heber J. Grant explained that he had just failed to negotiate an impor-



*Brooklyn Chapel*

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*On February 16, 1919, Apostle and Senator Reed Smoot dedicated the first LDS chapel built east of the Mississippi River since the Mormons fled to Utah almost 75 years earlier.*

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September 1923) under a controversial figure in American history: LDS General Authority and former Congressman B.H. Roberts, who came to Brooklyn as mission president in the spring of 1922.<sup>14</sup>

For President Roberts, the mission home at 233 Gates Avenue in Brooklyn was not just a residence, but, as one biographer describes it, "an embassy and the prime nerve center of the Church membership."<sup>15</sup> Roberts referred to the Brooklyn home in which he lived for five years as "a spiritual and cultural center."<sup>16</sup> Roberts also

## Manhattan and the Mormons (continued from previous page)

tant loan for a church subsidiary and was “discouraged and lonely and could not bring himself to go to a hotel and spend the night all by himself.” When the missionaries tried to explain they had little to eat, President Grant replied, “I am especially fond of bread and milk.” Still,

the boys managed to find some peanut butter and grape jelly, “something special for the Prophet!”<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, Church members met for Sunday services at a variety of places from the refined surroundings of Carnegie Hall on 57th Street,

to a beer hall off Broadway on the Upper West Side. They also met at Stillman’s Gym, 316 West 57th Street, where there was “nothing unusual about a bunch of dancing girls over there coming in with leotards.”<sup>20</sup> Then, in 1928, the Church found a semi-permanent home on the ground floor of a hotel located at 2166 Broadway between 76th and 77th Streets.<sup>21</sup>

By the early 1930s, the New York metropolitan area had nearly 1,600 Church members. On April 26, 1931, the New York Mission District was formed including greater New York, Long Island and parts of New Jersey as an independent unit from the Eastern States Mission.<sup>22</sup> In fact, many New York members felt they were

ready to become a stake—a unique claim, as there were no stakes in the country east of Colorado. But at a mission conference on Sunday, May 15, 1932, Church President Heber J. Grant said no stake would be formed as the distance was too great from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City.

At the time, members of the Manhattan Branch met in a YMCA building at 316 West 57th Street, which had a seating capacity of 500 with an office and a social room. In addition to separate services held in German at the same facility, two other branches were meeting in Brooklyn.<sup>23</sup> Many Church members migrated to New York during the Great Depression through the early 1930s. Consequently, by 1934, New York City was ready to become a stake after all.

In early December, 1934, President Heber J. Grant of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints arrived in New York to organize the first Mormon stake east of Colorado since Nauvoo. The metropolitan area had 2,000 members at the time, a 400% increase since 1924.

*The New York Times* covered the event in a respectable three-column article with pictures of Church President Heber J. Grant and the new local authorities—a stark contrast of coverage compared to the same newspaper three decades earlier, when Mormons made headline news with just two conversions.<sup>24</sup>

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*At a mission conference on Sunday, May 15, 1932, Church President Heber J. Grant said no stake would be formed as the distance was too great from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City.*

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Zion in the Brooklyn District: One Heart, Many Voices*; Brooklyn District History Committee, New York District; Brooklyn, New York, 1997, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *The New York Times*, June 17, 1901, 2:5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times*, June 28, 1901, 5:3.

<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopedic History of the Church, Eastern States Mission.*

<sup>6</sup> *The New York Times*, August 11, 1913, 14:3.

<sup>7</sup> *New York Sun*, November 21, 1916, 2:5.

<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, April 24, 1914, 14:3; see also *The New York Tribune*, April 24, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Times*, April 24, 1914, 14:3.

<sup>10</sup> *The New York Times*, December 14, 1914, 1:5.

<sup>11</sup> *The New York Times*, December 20, 1914, III 2:5.

<sup>12</sup> The radio program is the longest-running

national broadcast in America.

<sup>13</sup> Robert G. Vernon, *G. Stanley McAllister Biography*, 1997, p. 3. Among other duties, in September 1922, B.H. Roberts sent Elder McAllister to organize the first branch in Newark, New Jersey.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Defender of the Faith*, Truman G. Madsen, 1980, p. 324.

<sup>16</sup> *The Autobiography of B.H. Roberts*, by B.H. Roberts, 1990, p. 236.

<sup>17</sup> *The New York Times*, September 20, 1925, VIII 14:4.

<sup>18</sup> *Journey Through Life, Wilburn and Zelma West*; 1994, Wilburn C. West, Sr., Publisher’s Press, p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>20</sup> *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

*Oral History Program, William L. Woolf*; Typed transcript of interview by William G. Hartley, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 25, 1973, p. 22. Copy available in the New York New York Stake History Archives. Brother Woolf moved to New York City in 1925, to study at Columbia University. Woolf served as the third Bishop of the Manhattan ward from 1942 until 1948, when he moved to Salt Lake City.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Services were held there until World War II when the Navy took over the space.

<sup>22</sup> *Zion in the Brooklyn District: One Heart, Many Voices*; Brooklyn District History Committee, New York District; Brooklyn, New York, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *The New York Times*, July 25, 1932, 13:2.

<sup>24</sup> *The New York Times*, December 10, 1934