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SAINTS IN THE SECULAR CITY: A HISTORY OF THE LOS ANGELES STAKE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements For the Degree

Master of Arts

by Chad M. Orton

August 1989

This thesis, by Chad M. Orton, is accepted in its present form by the Department of History of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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14 July '89

Date

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE iv

1. One of the Great Fields in Which the Church Would Thrive 1

2. A Sunday School, a Branch, and a Mission Conference 32

3. Exodus and Promised Land 53

4. The Los Angeles Stake of Zion 74

5. Forward Hollywood 99

6. Hollywood Stake, Part II 128

7. The War Years and Beyond 160

8. A Spiritual Renaissance 185

9. An Era of Transition 206

10. A Stake for All People 242

11. Unity in Diversity 277

12. A Vision That We Must Cause to Be Fulfilled 310

13. Microcosm of a Worldwide Church 343

Bibliographic Essay 376

PREFACE

This thesis is a revision of a longer history of the Los Angeles California Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I was contracted to write and which was published in 1987 as part of that stake's sixtieth year celebrations.[1] While most graduate students hope that some day their thesis will become a book, my hope was that this book, which interrupted my graduate studies, would one day become a thesis.

Although it is a Brigham Young University policy to encourage the use of publications for theses, as a result of a misunderstanding, I have reworked my earlier history. In many ways, this misunderstanding has been a blessing in disguise, as it has allowed me to bring my thesis closer to the history of the Los Angeles Stake I would have written if I had not been a contract historian. It has allowed me to delete many of the items which I had included for the benefit of stake members, but which I felt were not vital to understanding the growth of the stake; more importantly, it

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[1]Chad M. Orton, More Faith Than Fear: The Los Angeles Stake Story (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1987).

has allowed me to include many items which I felt were vital to the story and which the publisher deleted. It also allowed me to expand the number of footnotes. Undertaking these changes has produced a thesis geared more towards the scholarly audience, although the outline remains the same as does much of the language which is directed towards the faithful Mormon audience for whom the work was originally written.

While making these revisions, I felt that a more scholarly title was also in order. In using the phrase "the Secular City," however, I am not undertaking an analysis of Mormonism in light of Harvey Cox's book of the same title.[2] Rather, I am using "secular" in the sense in which the term was used several centuries after the time of Christ when it came to mean the present age as compared with an earlier age.[3] In this sense the title connotes the expansion of Mormonism into a twentieth-century urban environment from which most nineteenth-century Mormons tried to escape, largely by gathering to Utah. This work looks at how a religion nurtured predominently in nineteen-century isola-

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[2]Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965.) Cox's thesis is that scientific and technological advances have made urbanization inevitable, and that urbanization has led to secularization, which in turn has destroyed traditional Christianity, and that the whole process calls for celebration.

[3]For a look at the issue of secularism as it relates to Mormonism see James L. Clayton, "The Challenge of Secularism," Dialogue 3 (Autumn 1968): 64-76.

tion has progresed in one twentieth-century cosmopolitan setting.

Such a study is needed since most indepth studies of Mormonism in the twentieth century tend to focus on Utah, in spite of the fact that most Mormons now live outside of Utah and a majority face the challenges associated with living in major urban enviornments. Many of the problems and issues important to the large urban centers of the United States, such as changing demographics, have barely touched the Church in Utah, while Church members living outside of Utah have had to face the challenges head on. In a small way, this thesis answers the twenty year old call of Mary L. Bradford and Garth L. Mangum for research into the influence of urbanization on Mormonism.[4]

It is logical to begin the study of urban Mormonism with the Los Angeles Stake since it was the first stake established in a major urban setting. Because of their location, members of the stake have had to develop an approach to their religion applicable to their environment and challenges while maintaining devotion to the fundamental doctrines of their religion. In so doing, they were able to make their religion relevant to a major urban setting. Consequently, the stake has been very important to the

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[4]Mary L. Bradford and Garth L. Mangum, "Mormons in the Secular City--An Introduction," Dialogue 3 (Autumn 1968): 41. This article is an introduction to a series of essays on Mormons in an urban enviornment. See Dialogue 3 (Autumn 1968): 39-108.

Church, not just in Los Angeles but also far beyond stake boundaries. Several of the programs introduced to meet stake needs have been later implemented on a Church-wide basis. The stake has also been a training center for many local leaders in southern California and throughout the world of operation. At this writing, five of the present General Authorities received part of their training there.

I am endebted to many people without whose help this thesis would never have been possible. President William W. Tanner of the Los Angeles California Stake not only introduced me to twentieth-century urban Mormonism and provided freely of his insights and time, but also has encouraged me to see my study to this end. Arthur Wallace and the stake's history committee gathered invaluable information and identified areas which needed to be studied. I have been aided also by many former and present stake members who willingly furnished information, reviewed the manuscript, and provided financial assistance. Dr. James B. Allen of the BYU History Department and G. Wesley Johnson of the Center for Family and Community History Studies at BYU recognized the value of this project and generously provided assistantships as well as their knowledge. Dr. Allen also sacrificed countless hours refining the manuscript. Gordon Irving of the LDS Church Historical Department has continuously offered encouragement and support as did also the other members of the Historical Department staff. Finally,

a special thanks belongs to my wife, Elizabeth, for her support and sense of humor throughout this twice told story, and for Amy, Laura, Spencer, and Taylor for their patience.

CHAPTER 1

ONE OF THE GREAT FIELDS IN WHICH THE CHURCH WOULD THRIVE

Outside Utah, the greatest concentration of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is located in California. At the beginning of 1987, Church membership in the state exceeded 650,000 and the number of stakes exceeded 140.[1] Such a presence is remarkable when viewed in light of the fact that during the era of its beginnings in California, some Church members despaired that a significant number of Latter-day Saints would ever be located within the state's boundaries.

The prominent role the Latter-day Saints played in the settlement of Utah and the Great Basin has been well publicized. However, the important role Latter-day Saints played in the history of California is not as well known.[2] They were among the first anglos in Los Angeles, San

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[1]Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1986), pp. 207, 255.

[2]The best account of Mormon involvement in the settlement of California is Eugene E. Campbell, "A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1952).

Francisco, San Diego, and San Bernardino, and were present when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. Through their experiences in California from 1846-1857, Latter-day Saints left not only an important heritage for the people of the state, but also an interesting history of individual and group struggles, successes, and failures. As a result of the several early failures associated with efforts to establish the Church in California, the Church conducted very little activity in the state for over thirty years, and when formal activity resumed in the 1890s, the heritage of the past played an important role in a renewed determination to build up the kingdom in California.

The history of the Church in California begins on 31 July 1846, one year before Brigham Young called Salt Lake Valley "the right place." On this date a group of 231 Latter-day Saint emigrants under the direction of Samuel Brannan arrived at the small Mexican settlement of Yerba Buena, now San Francisco, on the ship Brooklyn. By co-incidence, this group of Saints had left New York on the same day the first company of Saints had left Nauvoo, Illinois, 4 February 1846, and was to rendezvous with the main body of Saints in the West following an ocean voyage around Cape Horn.[3]

Upon arrival in California, which at that time was under the control of Mexico, part of the Brooklyn colony

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[3]Ibid., p. 42.

stayed in Yerba Buena, while Brannan sent the remainder east to the San Joaquin valley to establish an agricultural colony which they called "New Hope." At these colonies, the Brooklyn Saints spent the winter of 1846-1847, during which time they established schools, a newspaper, a saw and grist mill, a store, and successful agricultural concerns, but no formal Church organization. Because the number of Saints on the Brooklyn was greater than the number of inhabitants of Yerba Buena, the Mormons were also instrumental in changing the name of the settlement to San Francisco, after a mission in the vicinity.[4]

After a winter of prosperity in the relatively mild California climate, Sam Brannan hoped that California would be "the right place" for the Saints in the West and left San Francisco to meet with Brigham Young concerning that possibility. Brannan, a young man of twenty-seven and a relatively new member of the Church, met Brigham Young on the banks of the Green River, but failed to persuade the Prophet to move his followers to California. Brannan remained with President Young's party and was with the first company that entered the Salt Lake Valley in July 1847; after remaining there for a few discouraging days he

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[4]Andrew Jenson as cited in Leo J. Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity in California 1847-1947., 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1951), 1:34-35.

returned to San Francisco and his successful business ventures.[5]

In June 1847 while Brannan was meeting with Brigham Young, Addison Pratt landed at San Francisco on his way home from a mission to the Society Islands to which the Prophet Joseph Smith had called him in 1843. Upon arrival in San Francisco, Pratt noticed evidence of spiritual degeneracy among the colony and noted that "mammon was making decisive inroads."[6] Although he had been away from his family for nearly five years, Pratt determined to stay with the colony for a time to try to provide its members with spiritual guidance and to rejuvenate faith among them. His task was made easier because Brannan's influence in the colony was beginning to decline as dissensions began to arise.

Pratt, with the permission of Brannan, organized a branch among the Saints in December 1847. Brannan, whose business ventures were occupying most of his time, wished only to retain the title of First Elder and was only too happy to let Pratt run the affairs of the branch. Brannan was not only neglecting the spiritual welfare of the Saints, but he was also setting a questionable example and teaching doctrines contrary to Church teachings. He opposed the call for the colony to gather to Zion, advised his followers

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[5]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," pp. 57-58.

[6]Ibid., p. 138.

against preaching religion to non-Mormons, and encouraged marriage outside the Church.[7] In the Spring of 1848, following the discovery of gold, Addison Pratt closed down the branch and he, along with many of the colony, moved to Utah.

Following the disbandment of the branch, Brannan went throughout the gold region, trying to make gain from the Mormons who had joined in the gold rush.[8] Clearly in a state of apostasy from gospel teachings, Brannan was later disfellowshipped by Elder Parley P. Pratt. One of the activities leading to disfellowshipment was Brannan's organizing of the first vigilante committee in San Francisco. Having been a Mormon in name only these many years, Brannan's only tie with the Church was now severed. He would eventually go on to help establish Sacramento and Yuba City, own large tracts of land in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento, establish a lucrative trade with China, build the first great wharves in San Francisco and the state's first two railroads, and become California's first millionaire. He would also die one of its many paupers.

In March 1849 Elder Amasa M. Lyman of the Council of the Twelve Apostles was called to San Francisco to save those Saints who remained in the city from the intoxication

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[7]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," pp. 131-135.

[8]Ibid., p. 133.

of the gold rush and to direct missionary efforts in the state. He was replaced by Elder Charles C. Rich of the Council of the Twelve, who arrived in February 1850 and stayed in San Francisco until October. However, their efforts were not successful and the two apostles became convinced that there was no place for a Church colony in northern California, although they held some hope for the Church in southern California.[8]

In July 1851 Elder Parley P. Pratt arrived in San Francisco and in addition to disfellowshipping Brannan, he re-established the branch when eight converts were made in the city. In July 1852 Elder Pratt was replaced by George Q. Cannon, who later became a member of the First Presidency. Cannon stayed in San Francisco until 1857, not only providing spiritual guidance to the colony but also directing the Church's missionary efforts in California partially through publishing a newspaper, The Western Standard. When Brigham Young recalled all the Saints to Utah in September 1857 as a result of the Utah War, the faithful in San Francisco left.

For thirty years after that, no official attempt was made to re-establish Church activity in the city. Most of those who stayed in San Francisco eventually fell into inactivity, and many joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus

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[8]Ibid., p. 165.

Christ of Latter Day Saints when it began formal organization in the city.

On 26 June 1846, one month before the Brooklyn landed in California, Captain James Allen of the U.S. Army arrived at the Mormon settlement of Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, with orders to raise a battalion of five hundred men to assist in the United States' war with Mexico. Captain Allen's request for volunteers was the national government's response to Brigham Young's efforts to find means of helping the Saints finance their migration west. In 1844 President James K. Polk had run on a platform which called for the annexation of the Republic of Texas to the United States and the resolution of the dispute with Great Britain regarding ownership of the Pacific Northwest.

President Young, knowing of Polk's desire to populate the Oregon Territory, thereby reinforcing America's claim to the area by sheer numbers, felt he might be able to secure a government contract to build stockades and blockhouses along the Oregon Trail. Building these stockades would help the government by providing protection to settlers heading for Oregon and at the same time give the Saints badly needed money. To build these forts would slow down the progress of the pioneers, but not force them to deviate greatly from their intended route which ran parallel to the Oregon Trail. With this idea in mind, President Young wrote Jesse Little, then on a mission in New Hamp-

shire, asking him to go to Washington to let government officials know of the Saints' financial difficulties and to "embrace any facilities for emigration to the western coast which our government shall offer."[10]

However, by the time Little presented Young's plan to Polk, the crisis with Great Britain concerning the Oregon Territory was nearly resolved. Since populating Oregon was no longer a vital aspect of resolving the conflict with Great Britain, President Polk rejected the Saints' offer to build forts, but accepted their offer of assistance. Polk suggested to Little that the Saints could be of assistance in America's more pressing concern--a war with Mexico which had begun the previous year over the annexation of Texas.

At first many Mormons viewed the call for volunteers as unfair and unreasonable in light both of past difficulties with the government and of the desperate need for all able-bodied men to assist in the westward migration. However, when Church leaders made the request throughout the Mormon settlements in Iowa and at Nauvoo, the response was favorable.[11] While calling the battalion was not the type of government assistance they had hoped for, Church leaders realized that the pay the battalion members would receive would greatly assist in financing the westward migration.

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[10]Brigham Young to Jesse C. Little, 6 July 1846, as cited in Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:150.

[11]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 77.

On 16 July 1846 the Mormon Battalion was mustered into the U.S. Army for a period of twelve months. Four days later it began the longest infantry march in U.S. history, a march that would take the recruits to San Diego and Los Angeles before they were discharged from the service. Accompanying the Battalion were thirty-five women and several children. From the government, members of the Battalion had received assurance that they would remain together for their period of service; from Brigham Young they received assurance that "not one of those who might enlist would fall by the hands of the nation's foes, that their only fighting would be with wild beasts and that there would not be as many bullets whistle around their ears as did around Dr. Willard Richards' in Carthage jail."[12]

After a two hundred-mile march to Fort Leavenworth, the Battalion was outfitted for the remainder of its journey to California. At Fort Leavenworth, each Battalion member was given $40 as clothing money for the year. Instead of purchasing clothing, however, most of them sent the money back to help support their families, and to assist the migrating poor and seriously ill.

From Leavenworth, the Battalion headed south along the Santa Fe Trail. By the time they reached the Arkansas River, several men had taken sick and were ordered to

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[12]Daniel Tyler, Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War (n.p., 1881), p. 118.

Pueblo, Colorado, while the rest of the Battalion continued the march towards Santa Fe. At Santa Fe eighty-six of the more infirm and almost all of the women and children were also dispatched towards Pueblo under the leadership of Captain James Brown. As the Battalion left Santa Fe, its numbers had been diminished to around four hundred.

At that point the Battalion had only a sixty days' supply of food. To ensure that there would be enough rations to last until they reached California, the men were placed on three-quarters rations, or worse, for the remainder of the trip. The roads along this stretch of the journey were almost impassable; the sand was so deep in places that the men, already burdened down with heavy packs, had to help pull the wagons. Because of these conditions, another group of fifty-five sick and worn out men were sent to Pueblo.

On 9 December 1846 the battalion fought the first and only battle of its journey. This battle was, in accord with Brigham Young's prophecy, with wild bulls and lasted under an hour. As the column passed a herd of wild cattle, around one hundred of the bolder bulls attacked, goring to death several pack mules and draft animals and throwing several wagons about. The men fired at the bulls, killing several before driving off the rest.[13] Finally, after six months and nearly two thousand miles of marching through hot

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[13]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:150.

deserts, the Mormon Battalion reached San Diego on 27 January 1847.

On 1 February 1847 the Battalion was ordered to the mission San Luis Rey where they began twenty days of intensive military drills. The war with Mexico had ended on 16 January 1847, eleven days before their arrival in San Diego, and this training was carried out in case the terms of surrender should be disregarded by the local residents.

On 19 March 1847, the main body left San Luis Rey for Los Angeles, the former Spanish California capital. Arriving at their destination on 23 March, the Mormon soldiers camped on the eastern edge of Los Angeles.

In the latter part of April, as rumors of possible Mexican uprising and attacks by Indians became prevalent, the order was given for the Battalion to build a fort on a hill overlooking the city, the first public structure in Los Angeles. Work continued on Fort Moore, named after a U.S. Army captain who had recently died, until it was completed by 1 July. On the Fourth of July, at the fort's formal dedication, the Battalion raised the American Flag for the first time over Los Angeles on a "liberty pole" made from the tallest tree that could be found in the mountains near San Bernardino. The men then gave nine cheers for the Stars and Stripes.[14]

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[14]Ibid., 1:74.

At the same time that the main company had left San Luis Rey for Los Angeles, Company "B" had left the mission for San Diego. These men made such a favorable impression upon the city's citizens through their hard work, moral living, and community service, that a group of San Diego residents wrote the commander of the military district requesting that another company of Mormons be raised to take the place of Company "B" and stating "that they did not wish any other soldiers quartered there."[15]

On 9 July 1847, Company "B" was reunited with the main force in Los Angeles and on 16 July 1847 the Mormon Battalion was mustered out of the United States Army after a year of service. Following their release most Battalion members prepared to rejoin their families whom they had left on the plains and at Nauvoo. After organizing themselves as the Israelites of old into hundreds, fifties and tens, they bade farewell to Los Angeles on 21 July. Few, if any, had any reluctance to leave the city which they "had found to be a `sink of iniquity,' a cesspool of profligacy, drunkenness, debauchery, thievery, gambling, cruel bull-fights and other forms of degeneracy."[16]

Once they left Los Angeles, the former Battalion members headed north through the San Joaquin Valley, with

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[15]Tyler, Concise History of the Mormon Battalion, p. 290.

[16]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:61.

the idea of heading across the Sierras to Salt Lake. At Sutter's Fort, the Mormon volunteers camped overnight with a disappointed and disgruntled Sam Brannan, who was returning from his meeting with Brigham Young. Brannan presented a gloomy picture of the Salt Lake Valley and recommended that the volunteers stay in California, for, he predicted, the Mormons in Salt Lake would soon be forced out by the harshness of the valley.

After Brannan had left for San Francisco, battalion members also met Captain James Brown, who had led the Pueblo sick detachment to the Salt Lake Valley and was on his way to Monterey to collect the back pay of that detachment. Brown brought an official announcement from Church leaders advising that only those with means of subsistence in Utah should continue the journey and that the remainder should stay in California until spring. About half the company wintered at Sutter's Fort, while the other half moved on to Utah. While at Sutter's Fort, some of these former Battalion members were involved in the discovery of gold on 24 January 1848, thus helping to set off the famous California Gold Rush.[17]

Those who left for Salt Lake arrived there on 16 October 1847 and spent the first winter with the Saints in the valley. For thirty-two, however, their joy at reaching Salt Lake was short-lived as they found their families were

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[17]Ibid., 1:62-63.

still on the plains. Tired from their long journey and ill equipped for another, these men nevertheless headed across the plains to be with their families. On 18 December 1847, the March of the Mormon Battalion finally ended for this little band of frozen and hungry men as they were reunited with their families at Winter Quarters, Nebraska.[18]

Once the Saints were headquartered in the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young began laying plans for the creation of the State of Deseret, whose territory would encompass all of present-day Utah and Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, New Mexico, Arizona, and the southern portion of California. Small groups of Saints were called to settle areas outside the Salt Lake Valley as Brigham Young began colonizing his imposing State of Deseret.

An important aspect of the State of Deseret was the so-called Mormon Corridor to the Pacific through southern Utah and Nevada to the ports of San Diego and San Pedro. By establishing a series of Mormon settlements between the Salt Lake valley and the coast, Church leaders hoped to provide a more convenient way for immigrants to migrate to Salt Lake City than across the Overland Trail and also to develop a useful trade route.

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[18]For a detailed history of the Mormon Battalion see John F. Yurtinus, "A Ram in the Thicket: A History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1975).

Although national concerns over slavery doomed the State of Deseret from the start, Mormon leaders still tried to make their plan work by establishing communities, such as Las Vegas, as resting points along the route and by planting a Mormon Colony near the shores of the Pacific at San Bernardino.

In 1851, Brigham Young called Apostles Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich to lead a company of Saints to California and settle the San Bernardino Valley. One of those who volunteered for the duty was Jefferson Hunt, formerly a captain in the Mormon Battalion who had scouted the valley east of Los Angeles during his stay in that city. While a member of the Battalion, he wrote Brigham Young that the Saints had an opportunity to purchase land in the San Bernardino valley if they wanted it.[19] He also promoted the idea that it would be to the benefit of the Church to establish a Latter-day Saint colony in southern California, an idea with which Church leaders agreed.

President Young desired a party of approximately twenty to fifty men to establish the settlement. To his great alarm 437 men, women, and children volunteered to go to California. After the company had left Payson, Utah, for California, President Young wrote, "I was sick at the sight

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[19]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 183.

of so many saints going to California."[20] The reason for this feeling was clear: he saw these men as going "after the God of this world."[21]

Church leaders had encouraged the Saints to stay in Utah and avoid the gold fields of California. In spite of these pleas, many Saints went searching for gold, and many, as a result, were lost to the Church. The great number of volunteers for San Bernardino convinced President Young that the same spirit existed among many in that group.

Among the members of the San Bernardino company were Parley P. Pratt, recently called as President of the Pacific Mission, and eight missionaries on the first mission to the non-Mormons of the state. The missionaries journeyed with the group to San Bernardino and then headed to Los Angeles, arriving in the city on 16 June 1851. There they spent two weeks preaching the gospel with their efforts rewarded on 26 June when Pratt baptized and confirmed James Warren as a member of the Church.[22] From Los Angeles these missionaries went by boat to San Francisco where, as noted earlier, Elder Pratt reorganized the San Francisco Branch. Most of the missionaries went on from San Francisco to labor in the South Pacific Islands.

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[20]Manuscript History of Brigham Young, as cited in Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 191.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Parley P. Pratt, "Mission to California, 1851," California Historical Society Quarterly 13 (March 1935): 74.

After the missionaries had left the main body at San Bernardino valley, the Saints there were able to obtain title to the Rancho del San Bernardino's 35,000 acres for $77,500. They immediately set out to improve the land. They planted 1300 acres in wheat, dug canals, built roads, erected a bowery which served as both school and chapel, and built grist and saw mills. They also laid out a city in accordance with Joseph Smith's plat of the city of Zion, with the center site set aside for a temple, and they established the San Bernardino Ward and the San Bernardino Stake of Zion, the first in California. Additionally, they were instrumental in the creation of San Bernardino County from the eastern half of Los Angeles County.

By 1853, the colony had grown to almost nine hundred, but factions were arising among the Saints and problems were developing with the non-Mormons in the area. In April 1857, the days of the colony seemed numbered as Elders Lyman and Rich were called on missions to Europe.

The end for San Bernardino as a Church colony came in the fall of 1857 when Brigham Young recalled the settlers after President James Buchanan sent an army to Utah to put down a rumored Mormon rebellion and replace Brigham Young as governor. On 24 July 1857, the Saints were celebrating their tenth anniversary in the Salt Lake Valley when they received word that an army was enroute to "invade Utah territory." Brigham Young, having received no official word

on why troops had been sent and remembering the Missouri and Illinois persecutions, had the Saints prepare for war. Martial law was declared, the Territorial militia--the Nauvoo Legion--was mobilized, supplies were stockpiled, and missionaries were recalled from the eastern states and Europe. In addition, the call went forth for all the Saints to abandon outlying colonies and return to Salt Lake. However, only 55 percent of the Saints in San Bernardino answered the call, showing that almost half the colony would rather abandon their Church than their homes.[23] The preparations for war proved unnecessary as the Utah War was brought to a peaceful end in the early months of 1858.

Following the end of the Utah War, Church leaders made no effort to re-establish the California Mission, nor did they make an official effort to re-establish the San Bernardindo colony, for the losses, especially of Church members, far outweighed the gains of keeping the colony.

Instead, Church efforts were concentrated on establishing the Church in the intermountain area as Church leaders encouraged members to gather to Utah. Missionary efforts continued to be centered in Europe and the Eastern United States where the Church's ventures had not cost more members than it gained, as was the case in California.

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[23]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 282.

Nevertheless, there continued to be a sizeable Mormon presence in the state.

Beginning in the summer of 1858 and continuing for a number of years, many families returned to join those who remained at San Bernardino, often bringing new arrivals with them. Those who arrived at San Bernardino did not always make that valley their home. The Los Angeles Star in January 1860 reported that "San Bernardino has received a considerable accession to its population with a few weeks past. A large number of families from Utah have arrived and are locating in different parts of California."[24] However, a majority of these were members in name only as most faithful members had caught the spirit of the gathering and returned to Utah. In San Bernardino there is no evidence that religious services were held after Brigham Young gave the call to gather to Utah in 1857.[25] Most of those who stayed behind in California had developed a negative attitude towards the Church and its teachings, especially polygamy, and viewed Brigham Young as a high-handed authoritarian.

Even if those who stayed in the state had maintained their faith, the lack of Church-sponsored religious activities for over thirty years further contributed to a

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[24]Los Angeles Star, January 1860, as cited in Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:93.

[25]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 282; Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:100.

generation of California Mormons being lost to the Church. The one notable exception to the lack of religious organization was in Sacramento, where a small branch was organized in 1871 by a group of Utah Mormons who had joined with the Reorganized Church and later became dissatisfied.[26] However, the branch was not begun with official Church approval.

Another reason why the Church failed to establish itself in California during these years--in addition to its emphasis on establishing the Saints in the Great Basin and the mostly negative experience of attempting to establish the Church in the state--was the practice of plural marriage. During this time opposition mounted not only in public outcries, but also in Congressional legislation which threatened not only the Church's practice of plural marriage, but also the Church itself.

As early as 1831 Joseph Smith had received a revelation commanding his followers to practice plural marriage.[27] In 1843 this commandment was announced to a few leading Church members who practiced it secretly until 1852 when it was announced to the world that the Saints were obeying this commandment of God. Almost immediately an

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[26]Brief histories of this branch are given in Campbell, "History of the Church in California," pp. 292-296 and Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1: 95-96.

[27]James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), pp. 69-70.

outcry was heard throughout the nation for action to be taken against the Mormon practice.

In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Antibigamy Act which prohibited the practice of polygamy in the territories, but made no provisions for its enforcement, largely because of the Civil War then occupying the nation. Following the war the nation's efforts at reconstructing the South continued to allow the Saints to live with minimal outside interference. In the 1870's, however, the cry was again raised for a crusade against plural marriage in Utah. As a result, Church leaders, believing that the Antibigamy law would be stricken down because it violated the Constitution's provision guaranteeing religious freedom, wished it to be tested in the courts. In 1874, George Reynolds, Brigham Young's personal secretary, volunteered to go on trial for practicing plural marriage. After the Morrill Act was upheld in the lower courts, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court which unanimously sustained the law's constitutionality in January 1879.

In 1882 Congress passed the Edmunds Bill which declared polygamy a crime, and polygamous living a misdemeanor, and power was given to enforce the law. In October 1884 the first of many convictions for plural marriage was handed down. Rather than obeying what they felt was an unjust man-made law, however, many Mormons followed the

passive resistance example of President John Taylor and went "underground" to practice this commandment.

Because the Saints continued to practice plural marriage, Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887. This bill increased the government's power to enforce the law by disincorporating the Church and allowing the government to escheat Church property in excess of $50,000. By June 1888 most of the Church's property, including the nearly finished Salt Lake Temple, was in receivership. Inasmuch as Church members' continued practice of plural marriage threatened the very existence of the Church, President Wilford Woodruff, after much consideration and prayer, issued his famous "Manifesto" in September 1890 declaring his intention to obey the law of the land and advising all members to do the same, stating that he did so "under the necessity of acting for the temporal salvation of the Church."[28] With this announcement, many of the problems with the federal government ended, and the Church began a renewed emphasis on missionary work.

It was the government's attempts to end plural marriage that helped bring about the expansion and growth of the Church in California. During the "raid" on polygamists in the 1880's, several Saints went to California to hide

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[28]Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 25 September 1890, as cited in B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), 6:220.

from the U.S. marshals. Because of the anti-polygamy prosecutions and the ill feelings which existed towards the Mormons during this time, most Saints in California found it advantageous to keep their religious affiliation quiet. Joining with a few faithful members already there, they would form the nucleus for Church activity and missionary work when it was re-established in the state.

One man who left Utah for California to escape the law was Mark Lindsey. In July 1890, two months before the "Manifesto," Lindsey, described as an "elderly man" moved with a wife and two children to Oakland "for his health" and because he was "in hiding."[29] A native of England, Lindsey was responsible for the first baptisms in northern and southern California as the Church was re-established in the state.

While walking the streets of Oakland looking for a place to stay, he saw a man and the Spirit said, "He is a saint, follow him." The man, a Bishop Cutler from Lehi, Utah, had also come to California to escape prosecution for plural marriage. He informed Lindsey that "there were several . . . in California on the 'Underground' and [that they] did not want to be known too extensively."[30]

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[29]California Mission Manuscript History, introduction to vol. 2, Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereafter cited as the LDS Church Archives.)

[30]Ibid., 20 July 1890.

Among these Saints was J.W. Pickett, who had made acquaintance with Alfred and Charlotte Nethercott, their son Charles, and daughter-in-law Rebecca. The Nethercotts were members of the Church who had left Utah for the California gold fields. Because there was no Church organization in the mining districts, they joined with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, although never fully accepting its tenets. As a result of Alfred's outspoken opposition to aspects of the RLDS Church and his attempts to make converts to the LDS Church from among the congregation, he was excommunicated. The family then began associating with the small Latter-day Saint colony in Oakland which had started holding meetings following the "Manifesto." Alfred also wrote an old friend, Seymor B. Young of the First Council of Seventy, asking what his family must do to be rebaptized.[31]

In addition, Lindsey also wrote the First Presidency concerning the Nethercotts. To this letter, President Woodruff replied that Lindsey and Pickett were authorized "to act as missionaries in the midst of the people who you have sojourned among, and to baptize and confirm any who by sincere repentance show they are worthy of these blessings."[32] On 6 December 1890, Lindsey rebaptized the

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[31]Ibid.

[32]Wilford Woodruff to J. W. Pickett and Mark Lindsey, (n.d.), copied into Ibid., 11 December 1890.

Nethercotts into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the font in the RLDS chapel in Oakland.

From the Nethercotts, Lindsey learned of Norman B. Phillips, a recent RLDS convert, whom Alfred Nethercott had tried to convert to the beliefs of the Utah church, which missionary effort resulted in excommunication. By this time, however, Norman Phillips had moved to Los Angeles for the winter and then decided to make Redondo Beach his home.

In June 1891 Lindsey took his family on a vacation to Redondo Beach where he hoped to contact Phillips. Of his first Sunday in Los Angeles County, Elder Lindsey wrote in his journal: "There being no Saints in this place where we can meet together and worship God we spent the day on the beach."[33] Unknown to Elder Lindsey there was indeed a small group of Saints in Los Angeles County who had been living there for several years and were anxious for the kind of contact with the Church that he could have provided.

On 2 July 1891 Norman B. Phillips was baptized into the Church in the ocean at Redondo Beach, the first convert in the new era of the Church in southern California. Because of his baptism, Phillips' wife left him, and shortly thereafter he returned to Oakland to be with the branch of Saints in that city, not knowing of the small Mormon colony in Los Angeles. Elder Lindsey returned to Utah also without making contact with the Saints in the county.

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[33]As cited in Ibid., 14 June 1891.

A year later, in August 1892, the California Mission of the Church was officially reestablished as John L. Dalton, of Ogden, Utah, was called to work with the Saints at Oakland. Before the year was over three other missionaries were called to California, and John Dalton was appointed President of the mission. Most missionary efforts, however, were centered in the Oakland and Sacramento areas, where most of the Saints in California were known to reside. By 1893 the presence in Los Angeles of three families containing twelve baptized members, including two priesthood holders, and three children under eight, were known to mission leaders.[34] But the lack of numbers prohibited President Dalton from sending missionaries to assist them.

President Dalton continued to preside over the California Mission until he was replaced in January 1893 by Dr. Karl G. Maeser, a former president of Brigham Young Academy. Dr. Maeser was sent to California primarily to arrange and direct a Latter-day Saint educational exhibit for the Church at the San Francisco Mid-Winter Fair. Through the exhibit at the fair, Church leaders hoped to overcome some of the prejudices against the Mormons. During the fair the numbers attending the Oakland Branch were increased by visitors from Utah, but, as the mission historian recorded, "the seeming impetus given the work here

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[34]Ibid., 31 December 1893.

[35]Ibid., 31 January 1895.

by this increased attendance only served to intensify the loneliness of the few Saints" in the city.[35] While newspaper accounts of the exhibits indicated that it had helped to overcome prejudices, it had failed to bring in the hoped-for converts.

On 26 July 1894, Henry S. Tanner of Ogden, Utah received a call from the First Presidency to take over the leadership of the California Mission on 15 August. President Tanner was barely past his twenty-fifth birthday when given this heavy responsibility. He was, however, not without mission experience. A week following his marriage to Laura Woodland on 5 March 1890, he left for a mission to the Southern States, on one occasion being driven out of town by a South Carolina mob. In June 1894 he was called on a six week mission to the mining camps around Park City, Utah. Prior to being called on his mission to the mining camps, Tanner had graduated from the Brigham Young Academy with a Bachelor of Pedagogy (teaching) degree.

When the call came for President Tanner to go to California, the finances of the Church, the California mission, and of the young President Tanner, who had spent most of his four-and-one-half years of marriage in school or on a mission, wouldn't allow him to take his family with him. Leaving his wife Laura and two children with her parents in Idaho until finances would allow them to follow

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[35]Ibid., 21 January 1895.

him to California, Tanner left on his mission.[36] He arrived in Oakland and was greeted by Elder Henry B. Williams, a missionary who had served under both Presidents Dalton and Maeser and agreed to extend his mission until President Tanner became acquainted with his duties.

From the time Henry Tanner set foot in California, he felt that the adversary was determined that he should not fulfill his mission.[37] Two days after his arrival he was stricken with a case of typhoid fever. At first he thought it was a return of the malaria he had contracted while in the Southern states. With the help of Elder Williams and George Hyde, a member attending medical school, Tanner treated the illness the best he knew how. He remained sick for nearly two weeks when, finally, the fever made him delirious. Elder Williams called for a doctor who diagnosed the illness as typhoid in its most advanced form and moved him to a hospital.

Three days later the doctor recommended that the next of kin be notified to prepare for the worst, as there was no hope for President Tanner's recovery. The First Presidency was notified and quickly telegraphed Laura Tanner with the news of her husband's condition. On 10 September she left the Railroad Depot in Ogden, Utah, arriving in

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[36]Laura Tanner to Leo J. Muir, 6 December 1946, photocopy, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

[37]Ibid.

Oakland 12 September. When she went to the hospital she found her husband "strapped to his bed, as in his delirious condition it was impossible for two strong men to handle him."[38]

The local brethren had arranged to give President Tanner a blessing. Following the blessing the downhearted Saints, concerned about their new president, gathered at the church, where a prayer was offered in his behalf. Norman B. Phillips recalled:

> When we rose from our knees, there was not a sad face, nor gloom in the building. The spirit testified to us each and all that all would be well with Brother Tanner, that he would get well and be amongst us again shortly, notwithstanding the unfavorable report given by the Doctors.[39]

On 14 September 1894, President Tanner regained consciousness. Three weeks later, on 8 October he was released from the hospital, sufficiently strong to continue his mission. Laura Tanner was given a Church call to take care of the mission home, and she remained with her husband except during the time of the birth of their third child the following year.

On 15 November 1896, after two years and three months of service, Henry S. Tanner was released as President of the California Mission. When he assumed the leadership

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[38]Ibid.

[39]Norman B. Phillips, "Historical Sketch of the California Mission," p. 12, as copied into the California Mission Manuscript History, vol. 2.

of the California Mission, the only functioning branches were in Oakland and Sacramento. By the end of his administration, branches had been organized in Stockton, San Diego, Fowler, Latrobe, and Los Angeles. Church membership in the state had grown from less than 120 to over 400.[40]

Following their release, the Deseret News commented on the mission experience of the Tanners:

> When Elder Tanner arrived in California, the outlook for proselyting among the people was anything but encouraging. Indeed it looked as though Mormonism, of all religions, would receive a very cold reception and but little or no consideration from the people. . . . But things changed in time.[41]

And change they did. Not only did the feelings of the people in California change concerning the Church, but also the Church's attitude towards California changed. Gone were the days when it was held as a religious tenet that the Church and California were incompatible and to move to the state meant spiritual death. Not only could the Church survive in California, but it would also thrive. Nowhere would this be more evident than in the Los Angeles area in general and the Los Angeles California Stake in particular.

Perhaps Laura Tanner best summed up the feelings of those who helped establish the Church in the state:

> None, except those who took part in the early missionary experiences of breaking down the prejudices and the indifferences of the people toward the Church

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[40]Deseret News, 3 December 1896.

[41]Ibid.

in California can appreciate the struggle and sacrifices made by the Elders and the Saints. . . .

Through the struggle, we felt confident that in time the Mission would be one of the great fields in which the Church would thrive and develop.[42]

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[42]Tanner to Muir, 6 December 1946.

Chapter 2

A SUNDAY SCHOOL, A BRANCH, AND A MISSION CONFERENCE

During the first few months of 1895 the number of missionaries serving in the California Mission climbed to sixteen. With the increase in missionaries, President Tanner opened new cities to missionary work, including Los Angeles. The first two missionaries assigned to Los Angeles, Elder John R. Smith of Sugar City, Utah, and Moroni H. Thomas of Ogden, Utah, arrived in that city on 16 March 1895. They brought with them the name and address of Eliza W. Woollacott, who had written mission headquarters requesting that missionaries be sent to Los Angeles.[1]

Eleven years previously, on 5 July 1884, Henry J. and Eliza W. Woollacott had arrived in Los Angeles. With them were two of their daughters, Nellie and Winnifred, and two grandsons, Albert Henry Thomas and William Howard Thomas. They had moved from Salt Lake City so that their family might be together since their oldest son, Henry, Jr.,

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[1]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity in California, 1:109.

had earlier moved to Los Angeles to make his fortune. Much of the credit for the beginnings of the Church in Los Angeles belongs to the Woollacotts.

When Henry and Eliza moved to Los Angeles in 1884 there were only two other known Latter-day Saints in the city, August L. and Freda H. Hedberg, Swedish immigrants who had moved from Ogden, Utah, the year before.[2] Within five years, however, several other Mormons were engaged in business enterprises in the city, including Hans C. Jacobson, later to be first president of the Los Angeles Branch, who opened a bakery on the same block where Henry Woollacott, Jr. ran a wine importing and exporting business. It was also during this time that Eliza was left a widow, Henry having died in May 1888 after a long illness.

Because of a lack of records, almost nothing is known concerning the Church in Los Angeles during the years prior to 1895. What is known is that because of limited contact with the Church resulting from a lack of missionary activity in California, the emphasis placed on the "gathering," and the federal government's crusade against polygamists, these families were mostly left to provide for their own spiritual needs.

The first stop Elders Smith and Thomas made in Los Angeles was at Eliza Woollacott's home. Elder Thomas wrote in his journal that when Eliza saw that missionaries had

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[2]Ibid., 1:108-109.

been sent to Los Angeles she wept tears of joy, and told them that "she had been praying to the Lord that He would send missionaries to her home."[3]

With her prayers answered, Eliza worked to assist the missionaries in their work. The Woollacott home at 220 North Grand Avenue became the cradle and refuge for Church members and missionaries during the infancy of the Church in Los Angeles as its doors were always open for missionary cottage meetings. Eliza's encouragement of the missionary program and her influence and enthusiasm paid dividends as Elders Thomas and Smith were able to baptize eleven people during their first six months in Los Angeles and located a number of Saints who had migrated from Utah.[4]

In addition to being open for missionary work, the Woollacott home was also used for Sunday School and for sacrament services as well as social activities. With the increase in Church membership and with the growing number of investigators, larger quarters were soon needed. Accordingly, the elders rented a small storeroom at 516 W. Temple, the rear portion of which was used as a missionary apartment.

By June 1895, however, these quarters also were outgrown. Eliza, therefore, gave to Elder Thomas a letter of introduction to her son, Henry, Jr. As a result, Thomas

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[3]Ibid., 1:109.

[4]Deseret News, 20 October 1897.

was able to obtain at no cost the use of a large third story room in Henry's business on Spring Street. Thus, this building, known as the Foresters' Lodge Hall, became the third meeting place in three months for the small Los Angeles Mormon colony. While the Foresters' Lodge could be used only on Sunday and occasionally on a week day evening, it could seat more than one hundred comfortably and provided space for socials.

Only seven months after Elders Thomas and Smith had arrived at Eliza Woollacott's door, a branch of the Church was organized in Los Angeles. On 18 October 1895 President Henry S. Tanner arrived in the city to attend the first meeting of the Southern California Conference of the California Mission and to organize the Los Angeles Branch of the mission. Of this first conference, held 20 October 1985, Elder Thomas informed the Deseret News:

> Friday afternoon Elder Henry S. Tanner . . . arrived from San Francisco . . . and arrangements were made for a Sunday School, a Branch and a Conference organization.
>
> This morning [Sunday] we met and organized a Sunday School with about twenty pupils. Elder William N. Woodland was appointed superintendent . . .
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> At 2 p.m. the meeting was called to order. After a devotional exercise, Elder Parley T. Wright was chosen president of the Southern California Conference. . . . A branch of the Church was also organized with Hans Jacobson as president and Emile Berg as clerk. There were forty at our afternoon services . . .
>
> There were eighty at our evening services who listened attentively to Elder Tanner depict the rise and progress of the Church . . .

> Sister Woollacott will give an entertainment for the Saints in this city next Thursday evening. She deserves special mention for her extensive hospitality. She has done everything in her power to make this part of the mission a success.[8]

With a branch of the Church established in Los Angeles, membership continued to grow until by the end of 1895 there were seventy members, including children, listed on the mission records. Within a year of its organization, membership in the branch had reached 120, and the Los Angeles Branch was the largest in the state. A major portion of this increase was the result of migrants from the intermountain area coming to California for its expanded educational and economic opportunities, and its warmer climate which often aided in the recovery from illnesses. Also, the missionaries laboring in Los Angeles were meeting with good success. In the five months following the organization of the Los Angeles Branch, forty-seven cottage meetings were held, eight hundred tracts and five thousand Article of Faith cards were handed out, and several new converts were made. Prior to the completion of the Adams chapel, baptisms were performed in a covered municipal swimming pool on the corner of Third and Vermont which the city let the missionaries use on the fourth Saturday of each month.[9]

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Elsie Conover Dyer, "Talk to Westwood Ward Relief Society," 1976, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake materials, BYU.

In November 1896, thirteen months after he organized the Los Angeles Branch, Henry S. Tanner was replaced by Ephraim H. Nye as president of the California Mission. Like Eliza Woollacott, President Nye was born in England, and joined the Church there before immigrating to Utah. He later returned to serve a mission in his native England prior to being called to preside over the Saints in California.

Unlike many other areas of the world where missionaries labored and the Church expanded during this time, anti-Mormon feelings in California seldom, if ever, reached a fever pitch. In England missionaries were tarred and feathered, mobs gathered against the Mormons, and rocks were thrown at chapels as vicious stories circulated concerning Mormon polygamy and tunnels which led to Salt Lake City. The strong opposition, however, did not hurt the missionary efforts as large numbers of the converts continued to be made. The same was true in the Southern States Mission where persecutions and anti-Mormon feelings ran high and where baptisms were the greatest of any mission in the Church. However, while the Church grew in California, the numbers were far less than in areas where open opposition brought the Church to the foreground. The problem in California was one of indifference to the missionaries' message. One missionary informed those at home, "If we were to judge from apparent apathy manifested in religious

matters, we would be compelled to say that the 'honest in heart' are extremely scarce."[7]

Street meetings were the normal means of preaching the gospel, with special emphasis placed upon reaching those attending holiday events, like the annual Los Angeles celebration, "La Fiesta."[8] Street meetings normally consisted of missionaries gathering on a street corner, singing a hymn to attract attention, and then delivering sermons to those who would listen. As a missionary tool, these meetings were successful, for "large, intelligent audiences, approaching the hundreds" would often gather with the results that friends of the Church were made, many prejudices disappeared, sacrament attendance increased, and "some baptisms" realized.[9] During one four-month stretch eight baptisms resulted from street meetings. The sphere of influence of street meetings held in Los Angeles, however, was not limited to the city, but extended throughout the nation since many of those reached by the missionaries were vacationers from the East who then returned home with better impressions of Mormonism and often asking for missionaries to be sent to their homes.[10]

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[7]Deseret News, 12 April 1896.

[8]California Mission, Manuscript History, 18 April 1897, LDS Church Archives.

[9]Ibid., 26 April 1897.

[10]Conference Report of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 1902, p. 35.

Under the direction of President Nye the Los Angeles Branch was "perfected." On 21 April 1897 George L. Matthews and Frederick Brown were sustained as counselors to President Jacobson in the Branch Presidency. The following month, on 7 May 1897, a Relief Society and Mutual Improvement Association were organized in the branch. Eliza Woollacott was called as the branch's first Relief Society President and H. E. Peterson was sustained as MIA President.

As branch membership continued to increase, the branch once again outgrew its quarters, and a small chapel was acquired on 10th Street, just east of Grand Avenue. This building had been used by a Scandinavian Lutheran congregation until they also outgrew their quarters and offered them for rent.

In 1899 Hans and Margaret Jacobson returned to Utah and George L. Matthews became the new branch president. Also, Freda H. Hedberg replaced Eliza Woollacott as the Relief Society President. Records show that as the twentieth century approached, branch membership fell to 107, including children, with attendance at meetings ranging from forty-five to eighty-seven persons. The decline resulted from many Saints, like the Jacobsons, being caught up in the spirit of the "gathering" and moving to Utah.

This spirit of gathering to Zion presented a real problem as the Church attempted to grow in California. At

the Church's 1903 General Conference, Joseph E. Robinson addressed this issue:

> We can only make converts fast enough to replace those who come to Zion, in spite of the fact that we do not preach to them to gather. We would rather have them stay with us to strengthen the branches; but as President Rich has said, the spirit of gathering comes upon them when they have taken upon them the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.[11]

In the spring of 1901, President Nye was released as the California Mission President after four years of service to become president of the Southern States Mission. The responsibility for the work in California then fell upon thirty-three-year-old Joseph E. Robinson.

Born in Pinto, Utah, and raised in Kanab, Utah, Robinson was a merchant by profession and was active in Utah politics. He served in the Utah State Legislature and was a member of the Utah Constitutional Convention which drafted the state's constitution in 1895. He was called as a missionary to California in June 1900, and then called and sustained as President of the California Mission in May 1901, a position he would occupy until April 1919--a total of nearly eighteen years.

Following his call as mission president, Elder Robinson moved his family from Kanab, Utah, to the mission headquarters situated in San Francisco. Here the family remained until 1906 when the mission headquarters were moved to Los Angeles following the San Francisco earthquake and

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[11]Ibid., April 1903, p. 44.

fire. When the great earthquake rumbled through San Francisco at 5:13 a.m. on 18 April 1906, the mission home at 609 Franklin Street survived with little damage, but did not escape the resulting fire.

On 28 April 1906, President Robinson moved his family to Los Angeles and initiated construction of a mission home on West Temple near conference headquarters. President Robinson did not make clear the reason for the move, but like many in the city he probably worried about future earthquakes.[12] Additionally, life in San Francisco had been disrupted and would remain so for some time. Therefore, a new location would provide the most conducive environment for continuing missionary work. Furthermore, by the time of the earthquake, there were more Saints in Los Angeles than in San Francisco, and within a dozen years Los Angeles would experience what President Heber J. Grant called "the greatest [Church] growth of any city in the history of the world."[13] With the mission headquarters in Los Angeles, the way was opened for the Church to have the necessary local leadership in the city when migration from the Intermountain West, then a trickle, became a flood following World War I.

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[12]William G. Hartley, "Saints and the San Francisco Earthquake," BYU Studies 23 (Fall 1983): 455.

[13]Deseret News, 3 February 1923.

After a short period of time on West Temple, the mission home and office was moved to a house on 10th Street, next door to the Los Angeles Branch chapel. Rooms of the mission home were then available for use as Sunday School classrooms by the branch.

Also in 1906 George and Julia Handy moved to Los Angeles from Idaho and introduced the first parents' class into the Los Angeles Branch Sunday School; prior to this time Sunday School instruction had only been for children. Also during this time, Church leadership began evaluating the lessons of the various organizations in the hopes of better correlating them. As part of this effort, George D. Pyper, General Church Sunday School Superintendent, wrote President Robinson regarding the viability of Sunday School instruction in the California Mission. Robinson's reply stated that he found Sunday School to be "the best <u>organized</u> missionary, if I may be permitted to designate it that way" as throughout the mission non-Mormons attend the meetings "because of the very atmosphere of genial fellowship."[14] He also found the manuals to be, for the most part, very profitable.

However, in one of the first articulations of what has come to be known as the "Wasatch Syndrome," he identified two problems in using Sunday School manuals written

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[14]Joseph E. Robinson to George D. Pyper, 11 January 1911, Joseph E. Robinson Letterpress Copy Book, LDS Church Archives. Emphasis in original

mainly for Mormonism's rural majority in Utah and trying to adapt them to urban California, in particular, and the mission field in general. First, these manuals often "dealt with many questions peculiar to our people in their own villages, etc," such as taking care of city parks, which could not easily be applied outside Utah. Second, many of those in attendance were either new converts or investigators who usually "had not graduated from anyone of the lower grades of the Sunday School" and did not have the background to "jump from Nephi to Helaman, then Alma, Mormon or Moroni for some doctrinal point . . . for they do not know who these men are nor the conditions of the people of their day and time." As a result, the Saints in California studied the Standard Works chronologically to give them this background and then seized "upon the doctrinal points as they have been met."[18]

During these early years visits by General Authorities of the Church to Los Angeles were common and helped strengthen the Mormon community. Frequent visits were made possible by the completion of a railroad line in 1905 directly connecting Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. Often the Brethren visited the branch on their way to other areas, and at other times they came primarily for the healing effects of the ocean breezes. The Church even purchased a

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[18]Ibid.

retreat home in Santa Monica in 1913 where members of the First Presidency could go to relax.

In 1912, Hyrum G. Smith, the President of the Los Angeles Branch, became one of the General Authorities of the Church. Smith had moved from Salt Lake to Los Angeles to attend the University of Southern California Dental School and following graduation had remained in the area to establish his practice. When George L. Matthews was released as branch president in 1911, Hyrum Smith became the new branch president, serving until he was released to become the Patriarch to the Church the following year.

That same year the Church's membership in Los Angeles received a boost from Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution. When Wilford Woodruff issued the "Manifesto" forbidding the practice of polygamy in the United States, many Saints moved to Canada and Mexico to continue this practice. Several Mormon communities were established in northern Mexico. When these families were forced to flee Mexico and the revolution, some returned to Utah, others helped lay the foundation for the establishment of the Church in Arizona and Texas, and several families migrated to Los Angeles.[18]

Even though the Church was growing, its numbers were still relatively small. In 1912 it was estimated that there

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[18]Orson Haynie, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

were only three hundred Church members in all of southern California and these were spread over large distances. The Los Angeles Branch embraced an area extending from Orange County to the San Fernando Valley.

Because of the distances involved in going to church and because relatively few members owned automobiles, those who did seldom went to church with only their family but would usually pick up others and take them to meetings. For those without access to cars, attending Sunday services was often a journey. Elise Connover Dyer's family, for example, lived near Griffith Park. To attend Sunday services, her father drove their horse and buggy to Western Avenue and Hollywood Boulevard where the family caught the red street car to downtown and then the yellow line to a stop near the meeting place, a trip that took nearly two hours.[17] Because of the distances involved, it is hardly surprising that no attempt had been made to organize a Primary and that the Relief Society and MIA meet irregularly. For a period of time, Sacrament Meeting and Sunday School were even scheduled back to back.

By 1912 there was a measurable Church membership in the southern portion of the county. As a result, a Sunday School was established at Long Beach.[18] Sixteen members attended the first meeting held in the home of Sussana

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[17]Dyer, "Talk to Westwood Ward Relief Society."

[18]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:115.

D. Morrison. Subsequent meetings were held in the Morrison and Lars J. Larson homes. Two classes were taught, one in theology for the adults and the other in primary instruction. A Relief Society was organized in December 1914 with Christina Larson as president, and the following month an MIA was organized. While the Saints met in Long Beach for these meetings, they came to Los Angeles Sunday evenings for Sacrament service. These organizations dependent upon a mother branch not only allowed local leadership to more fully develop in preparation for the day when an independent branch would be established, but also assured that the mother branch still had sufficient strength to thrive.

In 1913 a Sunday School was established in Ocean Park and Santa Monica. Unlike the Long Beach organizations, however, it was dependent upon the California Mission and not the Los Angeles Branch.[18] Therefore, missionaries, rather than members, filled the leadership positions and continued to staff those positions they could. The one position usually filled by local members was Relief Society President because of the lack of sister missionaries. In July 1918 a Relief Society was established in Ocean Park with Adelaide Snyder as its president.

Because of the creation of the Ocean Park and Long Beach Sunday Schools, the Sunday schedule of the Saints in these areas became much more convenient. Instead of

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[18]Ibid., 1:116.

traveling to Los Angeles twice each Sunday (once for Sunday School and again in the evening for Sacrament meeting), they now could stay home for Sunday School and had to go downtown only once. This also relieved some of the overcrowding at the Los Angeles Branch Sunday morning.

Nevertheless, Church membership in 1913 was still greater than the South Spring Street facilities could accommodate and the decision was made to build the first LDS chapel in Los Angeles.[20] Robert Taylor was given the assignment to draw up the plans, and President Robinson appointed Samuel Dailey, a building contractor and recent convert, to supervise construction. A large piece of land was purchased on Adams Boulevard for $5,500, and construction of the Los Angeles Branch Chapel began.

Early in 1913, a cornerstone, containing a brief history of the Los Angeles Conference of the California Mission and the Standard Works of the Church, was laid in the right front corner of the new building by President Anthon H. Lund of the First Presidency and Elder George Albert Smith of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. On 4 May 1913, President Joseph F. Smith dedicated the building, which was referred to as the Los Angeles Branch Chapel or the Adams Chapel.

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[20]A brief history of several of the chapels of the Los Angeles Stake, including the Adams Ward, is found in Michael Evan Ensign, "The Buildings of the Los Angeles Stake" in Chad M. Orton, More Faith Than Fear: The Los Angeles Stake Story (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1987), pp. 331-339.

Construction of the chapel cost $20,000 with most of the funds being donated by the Church and only a minor portion being raised locally. It was built of red brick, accentuated with red sandstone imported from President Lund's hometown of Manti, Utah. The Adams chapel served as an important focal point for the Church in the Southland for many years, as the first two stakes in California, following the discontinued stake in San Bernardino, were created within its walls and immigrants from Utah in the 1920s would often make it one of their first stops in Los Angeles. An important feature of the building was the chapel's size; it was built to accommodate four times the branch's population and was believed to supply the needs of the Saints for many years. Yet, in spite of such foresight, local leaders did not anticipate the growth to come and the chapel still was not large enough to handle the membership of the Church in Los Angeles following World Ward I. Within ten years a chapel ten times the branch's population would have overflowed. North of the chapel a new mission home and missionary quarters were also built.

These structures not only provided adequate facilities for Church activities, but also served as a valuable missionary tool. The Adams Chapel was an attractive place where members could bring non-Mormons and functioned as a visible symbol of the presence and viability of Mormonism to

the larger Los Angeles Community. Of this point, President Robinson stated:

> People who before were indifferent towards us, when they see what we have done, have been led to interest themselves and to seek our society, to ask advice and counsel at our hands, and they want to know what we think of various conditions other than that which we call religious. This offers an opportunity for telling something of the Gospel . . .[21]

Prior to 1919, there is no record of Primary being held in Los Angeles. However, with permission of branch and mission leaders, Ada Gygi Hackel organized the first Primary Association at her home on East Santa Barbara.

The year 1919 also saw the appointment of Elder Joseph McMurrin of the Church's First Council of Seventy as President of the California Mission to succeed President Robinson who was to be released after nearly nineteen years of service. On 21 April 1919 a testimonial was held in honor of President and Sister Robinson. In attendance were President Heber J. Grant and Elder Rudger Clawson of the Council of the Twelve.

At this testimonial, President and Sister Robinson were presented a cashier's check for the sum of $3,838 by President William J. Reeve of the Los Angeles Branch, as a token of the love and esteem of the Saints for his years of service to the Church in California. This money had come from the Saints throughout the mission and was given with

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[21] Conference Report, October 1913, p. 115.

the suggestion that it be used to build a home, preferably in California.[22]

This gift would eventually be used to purchase a home in Los Angeles where the Robinsons resided until they died. In the meantime, however, as President Robinson told Liahona: The Elder's Journal, "Whilst it is not expected that one could leave a life's work without some heart throbs and pangs of regret at separating from friends and loved ones, yet it is with joy I turn my face homeward to the Stakes of Zion where the house of the Lord is and his holy servants preside."[23] In this brief statement, Robinson underscored the importance not only of expanding the blessings of Zion and its stakes to the Saints in California, but also those blessings which can be had only in a temple.

During President Robinson's administration, the California Mission, which covered California, Nevada, and Arizona, had experienced remarkable growth. From 1901 to 1919 Church membership had grown from less than 600 to 5,000 located in fifteen branches presided over by local leaders and four branches presided over by the elders. Church possessions had grown from "some meager pieces of household furniture and furnishings" to "real estate and buildings

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[22]Liahona: The Elders Journal 16 (27 May 1919): 1448.

[23]Ibid., 16 (10 June 1919): 1464.

with furnishings valued at more than $100,000."[24] In addition, the Saints had experienced a rich outpouring of the spirit.[25]

At the close of President Robinson's administration, it was indeed apparent that remarkable progress had been made in California. Not only were Church members moving to the state, but most immigrants were viewing California as an ideal location for permanent residency, where before many would only stay for a short time before "gathering" to Utah. To these Saints were added a growing number of converts who helped the Church to become viable. The members of the Church who resided in California were not the less faithful Church members as in the past, nor were they necessarily perceived to be; the prevailing feeling was that Zion could also exist outside the intermountain area. This feeling was fostered by the new pioneers of the Church in California, such as Eliza Woollacott, who showed that Church members could indeed live in the world and not be of it. Their examples paved the way for the first steps in the extension of Zion in California: the creation of branches and the building of chapels, which in turn were the motivation for Saints to come and the impetus for those already there to stay. Partially as a consequence of the faithfulness of those living the gospel in California, Church leaders, while

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[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

not encouraging the Saints to leave Utah, were no longer publicly encouraging them to gather there.

During the twenty-four years between the creation of the Los Angeles Branch and the time that Joseph Robinson was released as mission president, the number of Saints in Los Angeles grew ten fold from around 40 to nearly 400. Not only were they enjoying the blessings of California, but they were also enjoying many of the blessings of the Church and laying a foundation to build upon. Few members could have anticipated the remarkable growth of the Church upon that solid foundation laid by the faithful Saints of the Los Angeles Branch and the California Mission.

CHAPTER 3

EXODUS AND PROMISED LAND

Few periods of growth in the Church have paralleled its expansion in California during the first eight years of Joseph W. McMurrin's leadership of the California Mission. When President McMurrin took over the mission in 1919, there were eighty-five Church organizations (conferences, branches, Relief Societies, MIAs, Primaries, and Sunday Schools) in California. Within a year, that number had increased to 115 organizations and by 1921 it had grown to 160. The significance of this growth can be seen in the fact that between 1919 and 1927, nearly one-third of the branches established in the missions of the Church were created in the California Mission.[1] Between 1923 and 1927, over 60 percent of all wards and branches created in the stakes of the Church were created in California, most of them in the Los Angeles area.[2]

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[1]Based on figures published in the Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac, p. 253.

[2]Ibid.

By 1923 the membership in Los Angeles County alone had mushroomed from a 1919 level of around four hundred to nearly four thousand, necessitating the creation of a stake. In 1927, the eighth year of President McMurrin's administration, nearly eight thousand Mormons lived in the Los Angeles area, requiring the creation of a second stake in the city.

In addition to the nearly eight thousand Latter-day Saints living in Los Angeles in 1927, another four thousand lived in the Bay Area and a stake was organized in San Francisco. There were also sizeable Mormon communities located in San Diego, Sacramento, and Gridley. In the space of eight years the number of Mormons residing in California had grown from less than two thousand to nearly twenty thousand.

This remarkable growth of the California Mormon community came not so much from convert baptisms as through migration from Utah and surrounding states following the end of World War I. Between 1900 and 1920 Utah's population grew from 276,749 to 449,396. This growth was the consequence of the state's larger than average family size, Mormons "gathering" to Utah, and an influx of non-Mormons coming to work in Utah's expanding mining and smelting industries. With the outbreak of World War I, Utah's economy was able to absorb this increased population as greater demands were created for the state's minerals, manufactures, and agricultural products. Almost all areas

of the economy doubled as compared with the pre-war years, and even marginal farm land became profitable.

When the war ended in 1918 and demands for its products were reduced, Utah, along with almost all states in the Union, suffered a depression. Unlike most states where the down-swing was severe but short, Utah and other inter-mountain states would experience only a partial recovery. These states were far removed from the nation's major population centers and the cost of moving goods long distances over underdeveloped transportation networks prevented them from competing with products grown and manufactured near those centers. As a result, farm income in Utah declined to less than one-half the level of the war years, retail sales dropped even below the average experienced a decade later during the Great Depression, and the liability of Utah businesses that failed during 1921-1924 was greater than the liability of failures ten years later.[3]

Because of such conditions at home, Utahns, like many of those in the nation hard hit by the depression, looked to other areas of the country for better opportunities. Mormons went east to Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, and other major cities where they helped form the nucleus of Church membership in those areas. California, because of its climate, proximity to Utah, and resilience to

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[3]Thomas G. Alexander, "From War to Depression," in Richard D. Poll et al., eds., Utah's History (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), p. 469.

depression, was viewed by many migrants as the ideal place to seek work; no community in California better combined these factors than did Los Angeles.

Following the war and for years afterwards, thousands of Mormons from the Intermountain West joined the tide of migration to the shores of the Pacific. Almost every Sunday new arrivals from Utah and the Intermountain States would join with the California Saints, who, having been in a similar position a short time before, not only welcomed them with open arms, but also sought them out to discover where they were from, to learn what was happening in their former residences, and to share news of those who had previously moved to the Southland.[4]

The large Mormon migration to Los Angeles carried with it major challenges. It was no small task to assimilate new arrivals, both spiritually and temporally, as rapidly as possible into their new environment, to procure meeting places for the rapidly increasing Church population, and to provide effective leadership for the new units which

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[4]This desire for information lead to the publication of the California Intermountain News, which was published "in the interest of former residents of the intermountain states now living in southern California," and included information concerning the Church in California and local happenings in Utah and other Intermountain states. In 1947, its format became more southern-California oriented and its masthead which had shown a plane, car, and train leaving the Rocky Mountains for California was changed. In 1985, the California Intermountain News ceased publication.

had been created. The responsibility of addressing these new problems of mission management in Los Angeles, and throughout California, and at the same time overseeing missionary work in California, Nevada, and Arizona, fell to Joseph W. McMurrin.

In many respects a leader better able to meet these challenges scarcely could have been found. Not only was he the mission president, but as one of the General Authorities of the Church he had full authority to accomplish his task. One acquainted with President McMurrin described him as a man who "knew Church procedure and was tactful and methodical in dealing with people. . . . Aside from [his] authority, and perhaps transcending it, this man was in his own right a great leader of men. He possessed tremendous spiritual vigor. He had a profound and unfaltering faith."[5]

Joseph McMurrin was born 5 September 1858 in Tooele, Utah, and as an infant moved with his family to Salt Lake City. As a young man he worked as a teamster in Utah's mining camps. At seventeen he was called on a mission to Arizona to help colonize the town of St. Joseph. Following his release from that mission he married Mary Ellen Hunter on 1 April 1879. Two years later he was again called on a mission, this time to the British Isles where he served in the Scottish Conference for two years.

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[5]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:104.

Joseph McMurrin went on a second mission to the British Isles in 1886, this time in England, returning to Utah four years later. In 1896 he was called to serve in the presidency of the European Mission. While on this, his fourth mission, he was called and sustained as a member of the First Council of Seventy. In January 1919 he was appointed President of the California Mission, a position he held until January 1932 when illness prevented him from continuing in that calling.

By the later part of November 1919, the Saints in Los Angeles County had outgrown the Los Angeles Branch Chapel on Adams Street and the decision was made to create a second independent branch of the California Mission--at Long Beach--to help relieve the overcrowding. At least three factors favored the creation of the Long Beach Branch. First, the Church population in the southern portion of the county was sufficient to sustain a branch organization. Second, by 1919 a Sunday School, Relief Society, and MIA were functioning in the homes of members located in Long Beach. While it was difficult for auxiliaries to function on a large scale in an urban area, such as all of Los Angeles County, they functioned well on a smaller scale. Thus, with these organizations, the major nucleus of a branch already existed with members experienced in running them. Finally, the Saints had prepared themselves for a branch by making arrangements for building a chapel. They

had begun a fund raising campaign, and by September 1919 had purchased a chapel site on Atlantic Boulevard.[6] The only thing lacking was authority from Church leaders to hold their own sacrament services and the appointment of a branch president to oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Saints in the area.

On 23 November 1919, the Long Beach Branch of the California Mission was established under the direction of Joseph McMurrin with George M. Tonks as Branch President. The following week, on 30 November, the cornerstone was laid for a chapel. By early autumn 1920 the new building had been completed at a cost of $22,000 and dedicated to the Lord as a house of worship.

By the spring of 1920 there were enough members in the northwest portion of the county to justify the creation of an independent branch there. On 16 May 1920, President McMurrin organized the third independent branch of the California Mission in Los Angeles County.[7] Although the Saints met at the Masonic Hall in Santa Monica, they unanimously agreed that the name of the branch should be Ocean Park. Otto J. Monson was sustained as the first branch president.

As Church membership continued to grow over the next two years, branches and Sunday Schools were established

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[6]Ibid., 1:115.

[7]Ibid.

throughout Los Angeles County. Branches were organized in Alhambra, Garvanza, Hollywood, Huntington Park, and Inglewood; Sunday Schools were established in Belvedere, Boyle Heights, Glendale, and San Pedro. Unlike the independent branches at Long Beach and Ocean Park, these new organizations were dependent branches and Sunday Schools. However, the strength of the Los Angeles Branch was such that these organizations were dependent on the branch and its president, William J. Reeve, rather than directly upon the California Mission.

As the number of Latter-day Saints increased throughout the county, they began to express a desire for a temple in their area. Church leaders in Salt Lake City listened to their request and investigated the possibilities of building one in Los Angeles. During the latter part of 1920, Harry Culver, developer of Culver City, offered the Church a six-acre tract for a temple. At first this offer was considered favorably by Church authorities, but after pursuing the matter during the winter of 1920-21 they declined it.[8] Evidently, the Brethren in Salt Lake City felt that building a temple at this time would only increase what was seen as an already alarming migration from Utah to California, which large migration, while strengthening the mission, was also adding a great burden on the mission's leadership. They were also concerned that accepting this

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[8]Ibid., 1:465-466.

gift would later involve the Church in obligations not then foreseen.

One monumental building erected during this time, however, was the Ocean Park Chapel. In October 1920 the Saints in Ocean Park began laying plans for a fund raising campaign to build a chapel. In February 1922 these plans were undertaken in earnest when a letter was received from the Masonic Lodge informing the branch that it could no longer use lodge facilities.[9] On 15 February a meeting was held at the First Presidency's retreat home in Santa Monica to discuss purchasing a building site. Among those present at the meeting were President Heber J. Grant, and Elder John A. Widstoe of the Council of the Twelve. There it was agreed that the branch should purchase a lot on the corner of Washington and Strand in Santa Monica for $4,000.[10]

Only seven months elapsed from the time the lot was purchased until the Ocean Park Chapel was dedicated on 24 September 1922 by President Grant. The Chapel cost $41,600 to build, with the local Saints contributing $12,000 and almost all the labor. Like the beautiful Adams Street Chapel, the Ocean Park Chapel was constructed to be the finest the Saints could build.

There were at least three reasons why these new pioneers, working to establish the Church in Los Angeles and

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[9]Ibid., 1:116.

[10]Ibid.

California, tried to make their chapels and their activities the finest possible. First, all the buildings and activities were dedicated to the Lord, and they desired to give Him their best. Second, while the stereotypes portraying the Mormons as ignorant, backwards people were disappearing, the Saints in California wished to show the world that those images had little basis in fact and that Mormons did not take a back seat to any other denomination. Finally, through these buildings and activities Church members were able to gain a sense of community among themselves by not only getting together for activities in a beautiful setting, but also by making the membership proud of their collective accomplishments in building chapels and organizing activities.

The need to create and maintain a sense of community was especially important in an area such as Los Angeles where members were few. It was often difficult to achieve a sense of identity with the Church and as a Church when there was only one Latter-day Saint for every three hundred residents in the city, especially after coming from areas where Mormons were the majority. In Utah, where people had constant contact with the Church and its members, and ward boundaries often encompassed only a few blocks, a sense of community was relatively easy to achieve. Ward buildings, socials, activities, such as plays, dances, and choirs, served to reinforce that sense of community, rather than

create it. As the Church expanded into California, the needs of the Church members were different from those in Utah--and different from needs of Church members in a latter day in California--and, therefore, they approached socials, activities, and chapels in a different way. The Saints felt that as pioneers for the Church they could not approach anything half-heartedly.

Chapels built in urban areas where Latter-day Saints were a minority gave Church members something in which to take pride because of their beauty. They also served to unite the Saints socially in a common goal as they labored together to build chapels that, when finished, served as symbols that the Saints were, indeed, a community and that the Church had made a commitment to remain in the area. A chapel also helped to legitimize the existence of the Church in the eyes of non-Mormons by providing a visible representation of its existence.

As a result of the fact that chapels became more than just places of worship to these pioneers, these structures built during the early years of Church expansion in California were often more ornate than those in Utah, a fact which many in the intermountain area, saw as an extravagance. The need for chapels as symbols diminished over time, however, as the Church became more well known and especially when a more lasting and more impressive symbol, a temple, was built in the area.

Socials and activities serve the needs of Church members in much the same way as chapels. While dances had been a regular part of the Mormon experience in Utah, they became even more important in the urban centers and were always of the finest quality. In Southern California, these activities helped assimilate new arrivals into the LDS community by giving members of the group a sense of identity with each other and with the Church. Activities and socials were also used as missionary tools and, as such, the quality of the event was always emphasized.

While socials and other activities were important for all members, they were viewed as particularly important for the youth to ensure that they married within the faith. Because there were seldom even a handful of Mormons at school, the only major contacts with other Latter-day Saints for most youth of dating age came on Sundays and at socials and activities. Therefore, to help instill the values of Church leaders concerning temple marriage, it was important for young people to socialize in large gatherings with those holding similar values.[11]

One of the major concerns of the Latter-day Saints has always been that of keeping family members active in the Church, and as the Saints moved from Utah to gentile southern California, that concern was magnified. Parents

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[11]One means undertaken to facilitate socialization was the "Thrift Chorus." For a discussion of this chorus see Orton, More Faith Than Fear, pp. 47-48.

and Church leaders were especially concerned because they were a minority group and the values they had shared with their fellow Saints in rural Utah were not shared to the same degree by the majority in urban Los Angeles. Church leaders, therefore, gave added emphasis to the importance of the family in combating those forces that came in conflict with Church standards.[12] Shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles, President McMurrin was encouraging the Saints in Los Angeles to set aside one night a week for the family.[13]

While Church leaders worked to minimize the problems associated with belonging to a minority religion in an urban environment, their expressed concerns led to a rumor spreading through the Ocean Park Branch that the Brethren in Salt Lake City desired all Church members to return to Utah. Even though the Church had publicly discouraged gathering to Utah for several years and had encouraged the Saints to build up Zion wherever they resided, the Saints in Ocean Park asked Branch President Otto J. Monson during the summer of 1921 to write President Heber J. Grant concerning the "sentiment among the leaders of the Church against the movement of the Mormons to California."[14] When President

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[12]Russell R. Rich, Ensign to the Nations (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1972), p. 542.

[13]Edna West Sant, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[14]Salt Lake Tribune, 9 October 1921, as cited in Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 9 October 1921, LDS Church Archives.

Grant visited the Ocean Park Branch in October 1921 he assured the Saints that the day of the gathering to Utah was over and that "the idea of a permanent Mormon settlement at Santa Monica was in full accordance with Church policy."[15] Thus, from the Prophet himself, the Saints in the Southland received word that Los Angeles in the 1920s was as much "the right place" as Salt Lake City and Utah had been in the nineteenth century.

Not only did the Saints in Santa Monica stay in this promised land, but so did most of the Saints in Los Angeles County, and new arrivals were continually added to their numbers. In the April 1922 General Conference, President McMurrin reported on the migration and spoke of what it meant to the Church in Los Angeles:

> These newcomers are strengthening, to a very wonderful degree, the branches of the California Mission. I suppose the largest branch that has ever been known in the Church is located in Los Angeles. This branch has a membership of about three thousand souls. The Los Angeles Branch is divided into a number of subdivisions . . . where Sabbath schools are being held, where a preaching service is conducted every Sabbath, and where Relief Societies have been organized.[16]

With this rapid growth it became apparent that the needs of the individual Saints in Los Angeles, as well as the Church, would be better served by the creation of a

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[15]Ibid.

[16]Conference Report, October 1922, p. 33.

stake.[17] Thus, early in 1922 President McMurrin sent a recommendation for a stake to Church officials in Salt Lake City who, after studying the proposal, concurred.

During the month of April 1922, President Grant visited with George W. McCune, soon to be released as president of the Eastern States Mission, in the mission offices in New York City. President McCune's diary for 14 April noted, "I saw President Grant and received first hand word of my call to preside over a Stake of Zion to be established in Los Angeles."[18] He accepted the new call and made preparations to move California. Although his home was in Ogden, Utah, McCune had previously expressed the possibility that following his release his family would join the thousands of Utahns who were moving to Los Angeles.

Shortly before President McCune was released from his mission, President Grant wrote him of his conviction that the step they were taking was the right one: "I believe that the organization of a stake in Southern California will do an immense amount of good. The more I

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[17]Unlike mission organizations, "which generally must receive strength and leadership from the Church, a stake is able to give strength and stability to the Church, just as stakes support a tent." Richard O. Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), p. 266.

[18]As cited in Rededication Program of the Los Angeles California Stake Center (n.p., 1978), p. 3, photocopy, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

think of this organization the better pleased I am with the conclusion that we came to, to have it organized."[19]

Following his release at the end of June and a short visit to Utah, McCune moved with his wife, three sons and a daughter to Los Angeles. By September 1922, four months prior to the stake organization, the McCunes had settled into a new home in Santa Monica, which had a reputation as a strong family community.

When the McCunes moved to Los Angeles they were not unfamiliar with the area, having visited the city on family vacations. However, the Los Angeles they moved to was drastically different, so far as the Church was concerned, from the one they had previously known. As President McCune became acquainted with the stake over which he would preside, he could not help but notice the differences among the Saints since he had last visited the area three years earlier. While the members of the Los Angeles Branch were faithful members in 1919, McCune found them even more so in 1922 and admitted that he was "astonished . . . at the wonderful devotion and interest shown by our people in the gospel of our Redeemer in that portion of the vineyard."[20] He further noted that these "people are taking a very active interest in the gospel, a keener interest even than they had

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[19]Heber J. Grant to George W. McCune, 29 May 1922, George W. McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

[20]Conference Report, October 1922, p. 152.

taken at home." McCune also noted the remarkable growth of the Church evident during his visits to the various branches. On his first Sunday in Los Angeles he attended the Sunday School at Ocean Park and noted that "the little hall would not wholly hold our Sunday School children. As many as twenty-five children had to stand." That same day he also attended the services at the Los Angeles Branch:

> When I left that place a little over three years ago, their chapel was ample to accommodate them all. When I returned I found that little chapel was wholly inadequate for the Sunday night meeting, and every available space was taken for standing room. On the next Sabbath I visited another branch where the chapel was built about a year ago [Long Beach]. In that time the building had become inadequate. The next Sunday I attended services in our little chapel in Ocean Park. It is estimated that about 1200 attended our services there, and the new chapel was inadequate to hold the people.[21]

As indicated in this passage, McCune used the four months between his arrival and the stake organization to visit every branch in Los Angeles County to become acquainted with the members who would be in his stake and identify those men and women qualified to be stake officers and ward leaders. Not only were there sufficient numbers to justify a stake organization, but there was also sufficient leadership to run it effectively.

While McCune attempted to observe others for their leadership abilities, he himself was also being observed for his ability. Apparently, President McMurrin had not been

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[21] Ibid.

apprised that George McCune was to be the stake president, but recognizing McCune as a strong leader, he called him to be the Ocean Park Branch President in December 1922.[22] Although realizing that his calling would only be temporary, President McCune gladly accepted it in the same spirit in which he had accepted all Church assignments throughout his life.

As with the task of Joseph Robinson, George W. McCune was well suited to the task of leading the first stake in a metropolitan area. Born in Nephi, Utah, in 1872, he spent his boyhood in that city before graduating from the University of Utah. In January 1896 he was called on a two-year mission to England where he first became acquainted with Joseph McMurrin, then a member of the European Mission Presidency. During the latter part of his mission McCune joined with other conference presidents in England in drafting a resolution urging the General Authorities to secure better places of worship for the Saints in the British Isles.

Because he was soon to be released, McCune was designated to present the resolution to the First Presidency. After hearing the resolution, the First Presidency invited him to present the matter before the Priesthood Session of the April 1898 General Conference. McCune accepted the invitation and made an appeal for Church

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[22]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:117.

members to help provide better meeting places for the Saints in Europe.[23] From his experience in England, he learned the importance of the meeting place, and as President of the Los Angeles Stake he would insist that the Saints seek out the best possible environment in which to worship.

Following his mission to England, McCune moved to Ogden, Utah, where he was employed by John Scowcroft and Sons, a dry goods firm. He married Sara Alice Scowcroft, and their union was blessed with four children. Sara passed away in 1931, and McCune married Florence Lysle Schofield, to whom was born one daughter. In 1919 he was called to preside over the Eastern States Mission, a position he held until he was released to preside over the Los Angeles Stake.

While McCune became acquainted with the Saints in Los Angeles, he also entered into successful banking, real estate, and insurance ventures. With a group of other Mormons in the Santa Monica area he formed the California Intermountain Investment Company which purchased a sizeable tract of land in Mar Vista where the investors hoped to attract a large Latter-day Saint community. Many streets in this development were given Mormon names, with the main street originally to be named after President Heber J. Grant until the prophet asked the developers to change it.[24]

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[23]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, p. 2:72.

[24]Heber J. Grant to George W. McCune, 11 January 1923, McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

McCune was also an organizer of the Bank of America and one of its directors for many years, which bank and its name were later merged with the larger Bank of Italy.

Just as the direction of the United States was shaped to a great extent by its first president, George Washington, so also was the Los Angeles Stake shaped largely by the example of its first president. Its achievements found their source of inspiration in the pattern of action instituted by George W. McCune, who has been characterized by almost all who knew him as "a refined gentleman." He would never give less than his best and he refused to allow stake members to give less than theirs.

At the same time that McCune accepted the position as Ocean Park Branch President, President Heber J. Grant was visiting Los Angeles. Upon his return to Salt Lake City, he announced on 22 December 1922 that the time was right for the creation of a stake in California and that this momentous event would take place on 21 January 1923 at the next mission conference scheduled in Los Angeles. While President McCune continued to direct the affairs of the Ocean Park Branch, he also made quiet preparations for the organization of the stake. By the appointed day things were ready for the creation of the first stake in the Church in a

major metropolitan area, and one of the first outside the intermountain area.[25]

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[25]The Los Angeles Stake has often been labeled as the first stake outside the Intermountain area after the main body of the Church moved to Utah. Other stakes, however, preceded it outside the conventionally defined Intermountain area. In addition to the San Bernardino Stake, other short-lived stakes were created in the 1850s, including one in St. Louis, Missouri. In the 1880s stakes were established in Mexico and Canada, with the Canadian Stake still in existence today. In 1901 the Union Stake was created in central Oregon. In each instance, these were rural stakes where Latter-day Saints were either in the majority or were a large minority. The creation of the Los Angeles Stake, however, was the first attempt to establish a stake in an urban area where Church members were a small percentage of the population.

CHAPTER 4

THE LOS ANGELES STAKE OF ZION

On Friday afternoon, 19 January 1923, a meeting was held at the Los Angeles Branch chapel on West Adams Street as part of the quarterly conference of the Los Angeles Conference of the California Mission.[1] In attendance were local and general Church leaders, including Presidents Heber J. Grant and Charles W. Penrose of the First Presidency, Elder George Albert Smith of the Council of Twelve, Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley, President Joseph W. McMurrin of the California Mission and a member of the First Council of Seventy, Axel Madsen and Preston Nibley of the YMMIA General Board, and George W. McCune. This meeting marked an important transition in the history of the Church for its purpose was to discuss the creation of the Los Angeles Stake of Zion on the following Sunday. During the meeting George W. McCune's appointment as stake president was confirmed, as were those of Leo J. Muir and George F. Harding as counselors in the stake presidency. An important new era was

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[1]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:150.

dawning both for the Church and its membership in southern California.

The next day, while the General Authorities and general Church officers made the final preparations for the conference sessions, the new stake presidency considered individuals to fill the high council and other leadership positions.[2] Theirs was a herculean task for in one day they had to create the framework for a stake organization where none had previously existed. By the end of the day, however, sufficient progress had been made that a stake could be organized with a majority of the presidencies, superintendencies, and high council positions filled.

Sunday morning, 21 January 1923, was a beautiful southern California winter's day as the Saints gathered at the Adams chapel for this historic occasion. A sense of excitement pervaded the Mormon community and in anticipation of the large numbers that would attend the conference, unsuccessful attempts had been made to secure a larger hall. However, as one newspaper reported, "an auditorium twice the size of the chapel could not have housed" the large congregation, for attendance at the two general sessions and priesthood session exceeded three thousand.[3] At the afternoon session alone, twelve hundred people

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[2]Ibid., 1:150.

[3]Deseret News, 3 February 1923.

crowded into the chapel. In addition, overflow meetings for the general sessions were held in the recreation hall.

During the first session on Sunday morning, a priesthood meeting, Presidents Grant reminded the audience of the momentous importance of the step they were about to take for both the Church and the Saints in southern California. Commenting on the growth of the Church in the area he noted: "No city in the history of the world has had the phenomenal [Church] growth as the city of Los Angeles, and to start out at this time with a great stake of Zion I firmly believe, will lead to great development for the Church and its people in this district."[4]

He then submitted to the Priesthood for approval the General Authorities of the Church, the stake officers, and the name of the stake: the "Los Angeles Stake of Zion." The vote for approval was unanimous. In addition to the Stake Presidency, other officers sustained were James Thomas, Stake Patriarch; Alexander Nibley, Stake Sunday School Superintendent; and Vern O. Knudsen, YMMIA Superintendent. Eight members of the high council, sufficient for a quorum, were also sustained.

President Grant presented the stake boundaries which included Los Angeles county and embraced the cities of Los Angeles, Ocean Park, Long Beach and San Pedro, and noted that initially the stake would consist of seven wards: Ocean

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[4]Ibid.

Park, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Pedro, Huntington Park, Boyle Heights, and Hollywood. Alhambra, Belvedere, Garvanza, Glendale, and Inglewood would be branches of the new stake.

During the afternoon session President Grant again submitted the names of stake and general Church officers along with the name of the stake, this time for approval of the general membership. In addition to those officers submitted to the Priesthood, Katherine R. Stewart was sustained as Stake Relief Society President and Veda Savage as YWMIA President.

In the closing session of conference held Sunday evening, each member of the new Los Angeles Stake Presidency as well as President Grant spoke. Among topics covered, President McCune advised the Latter-day Saints still in the Mountain West to consider carefully before leaving their homes for California in order to ensure that the numbers arriving in the state were not greater than employment opportunities. "Do not encourage members to come to California if there is nothing for them to do when they come here," he counseled.[5]

With the close of the first Los Angeles Stake conference, a new era of Church history was inaugurated. Although the Los Angeles Stake was the 88th stake organized

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[5]Gustave O. Larson, "The Los Angeles Stake of Zion," Improvement Era 26 (March 1923), p. 469.

in the Church since the Saints moved to Utah in 1847, it was one of the first stakes outside the intermountain West and the first in a major urban area. As a result, the boundaries of Zion were officially extended to the Pacific Ocean and for the first time in the Church's history a stake was created in an area where non-members overwhelmingly outnumbered members of the Church.

Although the Saints were excited that Zion had extended her borders, fears were expressed concerning whether a stake could survive in such an environment. The Church in Los Angeles has had to adapt to its environment, but its experience, especially during the early years, has shown that the Church not only could endure outside of Utah and a rural environment, but also could flourish. Sixty years after the organization of the Los Angeles Stake over 1600 stakes were located throughout the world, the majority in areas where Mormons were a small minority, and many in the world's major urban centers.

Following the organization of the stake there was still much work to be done before members could enjoy its full benefits. Stake organizations needed to be staffed and wards created, which would take several months to complete, and stake offices needed to be established. However, neither the Adams, Long Beach, or Ocean Park chapels were equipped to be conveniently used as stake offices. As a result, offices for the stake were rented on the third floor

of the Hiberian building, on the corner of Fourth and Spring Streets.[6] Each Wednesday evening the Stake Presidency held its meetings there and on the second Wednesday of each month it met with the high council. Other stake organizational meetings and all stake conferences and conventions were held at the Adams Ward chapel.[7]

Creating a stake organization where one did not exist presented both problems and benefits to the California Saints. The major problems included the fact that the entire stake leadership had to be chosen largely from among people who had no experience in running a stake organization. In addition, stake leaders often did not know each other and therefore faced special challenges in learning to work together.

At the same time, the new stake had some administrative advantages, for the new leaders were not tempted to make the situation fit too rigidly some preconceived understanding of how a stake should be run. Instead, they were able to create stake programs and positions to fit the special needs of the Church in their area. Most Church organizations then existing were geared for rural or small metropolitan areas, and many of the programs with a Utah orientation were unworkable in the huge urban setting where the Saints were a minority. Local Church leaders, there-

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[6]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:153.

[7]Ibid.

fore, had to look to their own experiences and special circumstances to determine what would be best for the success of the Church in Los Angeles, since, in many cases, Church leaders in Salt Lake City could give little advice, having never had to address issues related to an urban Church organization. As a result, the early leaders of the Los Angeles Stake set a precedent for that stake to become one of the most innovative in the Church. Recognizing the challenges which the stake was facing, the Deseret News predicted at the time of organization, "the Los Angeles Stake should prove itself one of the most progressive in the Church."[8]

Within a few weeks of the creation of the stake most of the remaining leadership positions were filled. William G. Brown, a recently released California missionary who had helped organize the Ocean Park Branch and a former mission secretary, became stake clerk and the vacancies in the high council were filled. It was over three months, however, before Cora W. Leaver was sustained as president of the Primary Association and Lars J. Larson became president of the Los Angeles Stake High Priests.[9]

In addition to filling stake positions, the new stake presidency set about creating wards. On 11 February 1923, three weeks after the stake was organized, stake

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[8]Deseret News, 24 January 1923.

[9]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:151, 153.

leaders met in the Ocean Park chapel to organize the first ward in California since the closing of the San Bernardino Ward in 1857. President Heber J. Grant presided at and conducted this meeting. David O. Stohl, who had recently moved to Los Angeles to establish California offices for Beneficial Life Insurance Company, was installed as the first bishop. He thus became not only the first bishop of the Ocean Park Ward, but also the pioneering bishop in the new era of the Church in California.

The formation of the other six wards was completed by the end of April. While most wards kept the name by which they were known as branches, the name of the Los Angeles Branch was changed to the Adams Ward after the street on which the chapel was located. Inasmuch as the stake covered all of Los Angeles City and County and the ward did not, the decision was made to identify the ward with the area it covered. This changed also eliminated any possible confusion which might arise over whether the ward or the stake was being discussed.

By the end of the year Church membership had grown so rapidly that all five branches of the Los Angeles Stake had become wards. In addition, two new wards, two independent branches, and four dependent branches were formed out of existing wards with bright prospects for the creation of additional units. On 10 June 1923 the Alhambra Branch became the Alhambra Ward and the Garvanza Branch became the

Garvanza Ward. On that same day the Adams Ward was divided and the Florence Ward, later Matthews Ward, was created out of the portion of the Adams Ward south of 54th Street. With the creation of the Florence Ward, the stake presidency was hoping to relieve the congestion at Adams Ward, which continued to be the gathering place for new arrivals.

On 26 August the Glendale Branch was reorganized as the Glendale Ward and the same day, Boyle Heights Ward was divided at the Los Angeles River and the Belvedere Ward created out of the eastern part.

During November 1923, the Inglewood Branch became the Inglewood Ward and a branch was established at Virginia City (now North Long Beach). The following month the Huntington Park Ward was split and the Home Gardens Branch organized. Dependent branches were located at Monrovia, Pasadena, Lankershim (North Hollywood), and Redondo Beach. The Monrovia Branch was eventually transferred to the California Mission.

Like previous growth, most of this expansion was the result of migration. In spite of President McCune's plea at the organization of the stake, Church members kept coming to Los Angeles. While most eventually found work, few had guaranteed jobs upon arrival. As a result, stake leaders had to work not only to meet the spiritual needs of the newcomers, but often their physical needs as well. More than a decade before the Church officially established its

famous welfare program, the Los Angeles Stake began to use its own resourcefulness to meet the demands placed upon it.

One of the first actions taken by stake officials was the creation of an information bureau/employment office to help new arrivals in settling their new home. At first the regular stake officers functioned in this capacity, but by July 1924 James A. Rasmussen was designated as manager of vocational direction and employment for Southern California.[10] Willard J. Anderson, a member of the Garvanza Ward, took it upon himself to gather surplus furniture, clothing and other goods that could be given to the poor, and his efforts can be seen as foreshadowing the establishment of the Deseret Industries.

The Stake Relief Society played an active role in meeting the welfare needs of the burgeoning Latter-day Saint community, and it also assisted in various city, county, and state welfare organizations. During the first part of the twentieth century, "auxiliary members tended to see their role as encompassing the larger society as well as the Mormon community."[11] Thus, when the Child Guidance Clinic was established in Los Angeles the Stake Relief Society became a charter member.[12] Relief Society President

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[10]Ibid., 1:466.

[11]Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 125.

[12]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:152.

Katherine Stewart and her associates contributed generously to the Los Angeles Children's Hospital. Stake Relief Society members not only attended conventions of the state welfare societies, but also sponsored several of these conventions. This involvement provided opportunities to serve the larger Los Angeles community, to learn of various welfare programs which could assist Church members, and to teach the gospel. At one convention in Sacramento, the Los Angeles Stake Relief Society operated a booth where it displayed quilts, household textiles, and articles of clothing made by the sisters of the stake.[13] The Relief Society also desired to establish a maternity home in the city and while nearly $3,000 was donated by the sisters of the stake, the project was never brought to fruition.[14]

This same spirit of community involvement was also exhibited by the other auxiliaries in the stake. In some other areas where the Church was well entrenched, some of its members during this time "became dubious about the legitimacy of considering compassionate and social service outside wards and stakes as service in the Lord's kingdom."[15] This view would become widespread in the Church especially following the adoption of the welfare program.

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Monies raised for the maternity home were later transferred to the stake's building fund. Ibid.

[15]Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, p. 126.

However, members in the Los Angeles, because of their lack of numbers and the need to draw strength from wherever they could, have not necessarily made that distinction, and they have found that in their service to the community they have also been serving the Church.

By working to meet the physical needs of its members, the Los Angeles Stake was able to progress in its responsibility for the spiritual needs. In April 1924, the Deseret News carried a report, written by a member of the stake high council, David W. Cummings, on the stake's progress during its first years and the challenges it still faced.[18] Cummings began by recounting some of the unusual conditions the Los Angeles Stake faced, and in so doing exemplified the true pioneering nature of the stake. While the unique characteristics of the stake were the exception rather than the rule in 1923, they now (1989) typify the majority of areas in which the Church is established: a ward that doubled in membership in a year; another ward that encompassed 200,000 people but only two hundred members; stake officers who must travel fifty miles or more each Sunday largely through dense traffic; most members having to travel between one and fifteen miles to go to church. "These," Cummings observed, "are but a few of the strokes one might use in painting a word picture of the Los Angeles stake--the only stake in the Church located within a large

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[18] Deseret News, 12 April 1924.

metropolitan area, and consequently, a stake that presents characteristics strikingly unique and interesting." While most large urban areas had branches of the Church for several years, Cummings noted,

> when it came to forming a stake, the most intricate subdivision in the Church system, in a city which offers in the extreme the complexities of modern metropolitan life, there was encountered an entirely new set of problems, the working out of which is providing one of the most interesting experiences in Church history.
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> It was quite a novelty, for example, to set ward boundaries in a city of a million people, when only a small fraction of that million were concerned with or even knew anything about these boundaries. It gave one somewhat the feeling of trying to make chalk marks on a pool of water.

Cummings further noted that widely lacking in the stake was that

> force for permanence and stability which emanates from a ward owning its own meeting place. Only three chapels have been erected prior to the organization of the stake. . . . All the other wards are assembling in rented halls, scarcely any of which can be secured for all the meetings it is desired to hold. This fact has proved a stumbling block to the organization of several auxiliaries, including the Primary and Relief Society.

In addition, these quarters were proving inadequate because of the phenomenal growth.

Another unique problem he identified was traffic. "It is not uncommon for a Church member to spend anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour and a half to get to Sacrament meeting, particularly if he must go by street car." Consequently, with the multiplied activities of a stake, this handicap became a serious obstacle to the efforts of

stake members and leaders to travel to the many activities they needed to attend.

Cummings continues that the most complicated problem, however, was Los Angeles itself with its

> perennial spirit of play--its restlessness--its hordes of visitors and shifting population--its orgies of scandal and crime--its waves of reforms--its manifold allurements to Sunday amusement away from Religious observance--its dauntless optimism--its fads and fancies --its amazing opportunities for wealth--its constant excitement for greed--its streaks of Puritanism through its mass of worldliness--the flashing, fascinating, hectic, endlessly varied movement and color in the rushing currents of life.
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> These influences all have deep reactions upon the minds and hearts of the Saints, which the stake as a church organization must deal with--some to temper and some to completely counteract.
>
> With these new problems in this untried field of Church organization, what success has been encountered? Measured in actual statistics it has been astounding.

In spite of these challenges, Cummings noted that during the first month of its existence, the Los Angeles Stake was the top stake in the Church in the percentage of members attending Sacrament Meeting, a position which it continued to hold nearly every month for a year.[17] In December 1923, the Los Angeles Stake established a then Church-wide attendance record at Sacrament Meeting with a 67 percent average throughout the stake. This percentage stands out in contrast to a Church-wide average of less than

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[17]Ibid.

20 percent attendance at the time.[18] This statistic reflects the fact that in such an environment where members were few, sacrament meeting attendance initially was a more vital part of the Church experience and commitment than it had been in Utah, although a reorientation to the importance of attendance at meeting was taking place throughout the Church.[19]

In addition to its high sacrament attendance, according to Cummings the stake led the Church in the other two statistics published for December: 100 percent ward teaching and 77 percent of the ward teachers attending Sacrament Meeting.[20] "Moreover," he continued, "in the numerous ways which never appear in statistics, and yet which speak far more eloquently, they are demonstrating an aggressive fervor and solid unity that clearly explains the phenomenal success of the stake." This unity, he concluded, began with the challenging period of settlement when the members were part of the California Mission, and, he said, "today's harvest is the result of seeds faithfully and skillfully sown."

He also stated that in spite of what the stake had accomplished, there was still much work to be done, including the completion of organizations, finding quarters,

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[18]Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century, p. 69.

[19]Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, p. 114.

[20]Deseret News, 12 April 1924.

providing amusements "under the proper influence," and furnishing opportunities for the youth to mingle with others of their religion. "Each of these problems is being dealt with earnestly and intelligently and with an interest perhaps all the keener because there are few precedents," he wrote. "The people were unanimous in their conviction that the establishment of the stake was divinely inspired and that it has already provided a great blessing to them. It may safely be predicted that during the next few years Los Angeles will be the scene of a development which will have a profound influence upon Church history."[21] And through the efforts of stake members, it has.

Shortly following the creation of the stake, the Boy Scouts of America and the Los Angeles Stake became closely allied. What is believed to be the first LDS Boy Scout troop in southern California was organized in December 1923 under the direction of the Belvedere Ward MIA. Wallace E. Lund, who arrived a month earlier from Utah, organized the troop and served as its first scoutmaster. The creation of scout troops not only helped provide activities for the boys of the stake but also served as an important missionary tool. In this first scout troop non-Mormons outnumbered Mormons eighteen to fourteen.[22]

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[21]Ibid.

[22]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:333.

In addition to scout activities, a stake recreation committee was organized. Because there were so many worldly temptations in the city, such as pool halls and non-LDS dance halls, special emphasis was placed upon appropriate activities for the youth. Almost every Friday evening dances and parties were held. In addition, special dances were also held on such occasions as Christmas (usually on Christmas day itself) and Valentine's Day. These dances were often elaborate affairs organized and sponsored by the M-Men and Gleaners of the Stake.

Athletics also played a large role from the early days, with most wards fielding basketball teams each year.[23] In addition, a track meet was held each May. The young women of the stake served as cheerleaders for their ward's team. Since the stake possessed no suitable hall for amusements, buildings had to be rented throughout the city for youth activities.

The building of new chapels also became one of the primary concerns of the stake. The need arose not only from the desire for "permanence and stability" within the stake, but also from the inadequacy of outside halls: few buildings rented by the wards could be secured for all activities such as Primary, Relief Society, MIA, and ward socials; most halls were also insufficient for the size of the wards.

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[23]Two teams from the Los Angeles Stake, Glendale Ward in 1933 and Arlington Ward in 1941, took first place in the All Church Basketball Tournament.

Within a few years, six new chapels were erected by the Matthews, Belvedere, Huntington Park, Home Garden, Lankershim, and Virginia City Wards, and an additional chapel was purchased to house the Alhambra Ward.[24]

The growth of the Latter-day Saint community in Los Angeles not only necessitated the obtaining of larger buildings, but also compelled the creation of additional wards. While there was no limits placed on the size of wards, it was recognized that it was in the best interest of the members and the Church to keep them small. Some, like the Adams Ward, exceeded fifteen hundred Saints. For the individual, smaller units, both stakes and wards, allowed for greater personal attention from leaders, provided more opportunities for service, and created a more cohesive community; for the Church, it meant a greater chance of progress by giving more people responsibility for the success of the work. In December 1924 the Home Gardens (later South Garden) and Virginia City Wards. Branches were organized at Pasadena and Torrance in 1926 and the Lankershim Branch became a ward in January 1927.

At the April 1925 General Conference, President McMurrin summarized the growth of the stake and then discussed a problem even more challenging than growth: the near constant turnover of membership. "I do not suppose," he commented,

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[24]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:154.

> that in any other mission it can be said that there were received and recorded, during the year 1924, over thirty-six hundred Church members . . .who had come from other sections of the country. . . .
>
> There have also been a large number who have been transferred, probably thirteen hundred or fourteen hundred Church members have received their certificates of membership during the year, and have transferred to other communities. This, of course, causes changes in officers. There have already been in the Los Angeles stake since its organization changes in four or five different bishoprics, and there have also been a number of changes in the high council.[25]

The problem of turnover has constantly plagued the Church in urban areas, and there are several reasons for it. For one thing, members who work for large corporations are continually being transferred. More significant, it appears, is the fact that many Saints in these areas do not own their own homes. When members have no tie to the community, which home ownership promotes, they often tend to move whenever things become rough or when even a slightly better opportunity presents itself. President McMurrin identified these problems as major reasons for the outflux of Latter-day Saints from Los Angeles.[26]

President McMurrin closed his remarks by reaffirming the plea made by President McCune when the stake was formed for members not to move to Los Angeles without being sure of the economic opportunities.[27] Such a plea was given not

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[25]Conference Report, April 1925, p. 142.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

only to discourage the Saints from moving into situations which may be no better than the ones they left, but also, hopefully, to ease the problems faced by authorities in connection with the constant growth and turnover as well as the welfare problems which were growing out of these problems. In spite of such pleas, Church members kept arriving. In 1925 the membership of the Los Angeles Stake was nearly six thousand and by 1927 it was almost eight thousand.

The growth of the Church in Los Angeles was not limited to Anglo-Americans, for during this time missionary work began also among the city's Spanish-speaking people. It was estimated that some fifty thousand Hispanics lived in Los Angeles and another twenty-five thousand in adjacent areas. In August 1924, the first two Spanish-speaking missionaries were assigned to work among the Hispanics in Los Angeles. President McMurrin had arranged with President Rey L. Pratt of the Mexican Mission to transfer two missionaries to the California Mission. Elders Jessup W. Thomas and Frank Copening were selected by President Pratt for the new assignments in Los Angeles.[28] They labored among the Spanish-speaking people until March 1925 when Elder Thomas was released to return home and Elder Copening was called to become mission secretary. No one, however, was assigned to

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[28]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," p. 399.

replace them, and so the Spanish-speaking community of Los Angeles had no missionaries working full-time among them for over a year. Then, early in 1926, the Mexican government began to enforce the provision of its constitution that prohibited foreign missionaries from functioning in Mexico. This forced the Church to recall all missionaries from that country and by August four of them had been reassigned to work with the Los Angeles Hispanic community, most of whom had immigrated from Mexico.[29]

In August 1927 a conference was held for Mexican converts and investigators in Los Angeles, with Elder Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of Twelve in attendance. There were 103 people at this first Spanish-speaking conference. In February 1928 another conference was held with President Anthony W. Ivins of the First Presidency in attendance. Having been raised in Mexico, he was able to speak to over 120 people in their native language. Work continued in the Hispanic community and on 16 June 1929 the Los Angeles Branch of the Mexican Mission was organized with Juan Migael Gonzales being sustained as branch president, a position he would hold until 1944. Earlier in 1929 the mission home of the Mexican Mission was transferred from El Paso to Los Angeles, but following the death of President Pratt in 1931 it was transferred back to El Paso and most of

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[29]Ibid., p. 400.

the missions efforts again directed towards Mexico and Texas.

In 1936 the Spanish-American Mission was created from the Mexican Mission and had direct responsibility for missionary work among the Spanish-speaking within the United States.[30] By this time, however, the Los Angeles Stake had been split and most of the work with Spanish-speaking people was carried on within the boundaries of stakes in the eastern portion of the city, where the Hispanic community resided. Missionary work among Hispanics in the Los Angeles California Stake remained nearly dormant until the 1960s, when revolutions in Central and South America brought a large number of Spanish-speaking refugees to western Los Angeles and helped re-establish the work among them.

Meanwhile, the growth of the English-speaking congregations reached a point where the creation of a second stake in Los Angeles became necessary if the stake was to remain manageable. With almost eight thousand members and nineteen wards and branches, the growth of the stake had outstripped its capacity for providing the kind of effective leadership, personal attention, and frequent contact between the leaders and the members that Church leaders deemed essential, especially in an area where church contact was limited.

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[30]Ibid., p. 402.

On Friday, 18 February 1927, Presidents Heber J. Grant and Charles W. Nibley of the First Presidency met with stake and mission leaders in the California Mission Home next door to the Adams Ward chapel.[31] There the decision was reached to divide the Los Angeles Stake, then barely four years old. It was also decided that the division should take place during the next scheduled stake conference, which was in May, and that a campaign should be launched for raising funds to construct one building to serve the needs of both stakes following the division. The idea of using one building to serve two stakes was unusual in the early twentieth century, but was also reminiscent of the early days of the Church in Utah when a tabernacle was built for a city, rather than for the exclusive use of one group of Saints. The previous month, in January 1927, in what President McCune called "a very remarkable deal," Bishop David P. Howells of the Adams Ward completed arrangements for the purchase of a parcel of land for $90,000 on the corner of Manhattan Place and Country Club Drive near the Los Angeles Country Club in one of the most exclusive areas of Los Angeles.[32]

A fund raising committee was appointed by the stake presidency and on 27 February 1927, immediately upon

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[31]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:154.

[32]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to Heber J. Grant, 25 January 1927, George W. McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

receiving its assignment, the committee held its first meeting in an automobile parked in front of the Adams Ward chapel to plan a fund raising campaign.[33] Before the end of March the fund raising drive began in earnest and by 6 April 1927 over $105,000 had been pledged towards the new building and a telegram was sent to President Grant telling of the success of the campaign. During a session of General Conference, President Grant read the telegram and informed those in attendance that the Church would match whatever the Saints in Los Angeles raised towards the building of their tabernacle. As a result of the pledges of the local Saints, he told the congregation, "there will be in southern California quite a fine building, as a further evidence [to the Church's critics] of the 'decaying of the Church.'"[34]

Preparations for the new Los Angeles Tabernacle did not take priority over plans being laid for the creation of the new stake, the 98th in the Church. One of the first decisions made was the name for the new stake--Hollywood. The proposed creation of a Hollywood Stake provided the occasion for a bit of humor in the eastern press. The Washington Independent Herald wrote: "If the Mormons start a church at Hollywood they will find plenty of fellows there

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[33]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:154.

[34]Conference Report, April 1927, p. 175.

who have had a lot of wives already."[38] The Brooklyn Times of 29 March 1927 commented tersely: "Mormons announce they will establish a church in Hollywood: That's carrying coals to Newcastle."[39]

By May all arrangements had been completed for the creation of the second stake in Los Angeles. Other major metropolitan areas such as Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, and San Francisco were still preparing for their first stake while Los Angeles was preparing for its second.

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[38]Washington Independent Herald, 18 April 1927, as cited in Journal History, 18 April 1927.

[39]Brooklyn Times, 29 March 1927, as cited in Journal History, 29 March 1927. The saying "carrying coals to Newcastle" has the connotation of wasting time and effort and the use by the Brooklyn Times most likely refers to the belief that the state of the movie industry at the time was not compatible with religion.

CHAPTER 5

FORWARD HOLLYWOOD

On 22 May 1927, Elders David O. McKay and Stephen L Richards of the Council of Twelve presided at an especially important quarterly conference of the Los Angeles Stake, held at the Adams Ward chapel. There the four-year-old stake was divided, resulting in the creation of the Hollywood Stake, the 98th in the Church and the second in a major metropolitan area. Outside Los Angeles, Church members took little notice of what was happening for, unlike the wide publicity given the organization of the Los Angeles Stake, only one short report appeared in the Deseret News.[1] Some thirteen years later the name of the Hollywood Stake was changed to Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Stake became the South Los Angeles Stake.[2] The Hollywood Stake, then, became the direct precursor of the present Los Angeles California Stake.

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[1]Deseret News, 25 May 1927.

[2]For consistency, records created by the Hollywood Stake from 1927-1939 will be cited as Los Angeles Stake records since that is how they are filed in the LDS Church Archives.

The boundary between the Los Angeles and Hollywood Stakes, as drawn during a meeting of local leaders and General Authorities on Saturday, 21 May 1927, consisted of a more-or-less east-west line beginning at the Pacific Ocean north of Redondo Beach and progressing east to the Los Angeles-San Bernardino county line.[3] Those wards and branches north of this line became members of the Hollywood Stake; those south of the line remained in the Los Angeles Stake. Also at this time, the Adams Ward was divided along Vermont Avenue with the western half of the ward becoming the Wilshire Ward of the Hollywood Stake and the eastern half retaining the designation as the Adams Ward of the Los Angeles Stake.

Following the division, the Los Angeles Stake consisted of the Adams, Home Gardens, Huntington Park, Inglewood, Long Beach, Matthews, Redondo, San Pedro, and Virginia City wards and the Torrance Branch. The Hollywood Stake included the Wilshire, Alhambra, Belvedere, Boyle Heights, Garvanza, Glendale, Hollywood, Lankershim, and Ocean Park wards and the Pasadena Branch. The baptized membership of the stakes was listed at 3,401 for Los Angeles

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[3]Deseret News, 25 May 1927. Stake minutes, however, mention no eastern boundary, but rather state that the line dividing the two stakes extended "indefinitely." Los Angeles Stake Manuscript History, 22 May 1927, LDS Church Archives.

and 3,269 for Hollywood.[4] Interestingly, almost one third of the Hollywood Stake's membership was in the new Wilshire Ward.

George W. McCune, former President of the Los Angeles Stake, was sustained as President of the new Hollywood Stake, while his former First Counselor Leo J. Muir was sustained as President of the Los Angeles Stake. George F. Harding, former second counselor in the Los Angeles Stake presidency, was set apart as the new first counselor in the Hollywood Stake with John S. McCune becoming the new stake clerk. However, no second counselor was sustained at that time.

Eight members of the Hollywood Stake high council were sustained at the organization. William J. Reeve was sustained as President of the Stake High Priests, and seven Elders Quorums were organized for the ten units. Other officers sustained included Katherine R. Stewart as Stake Relief Society President, Alex Nibley as Superintendent of Sunday Schools, Charles H. Norberg as YMMIA President, Winifred W. Poulton as YWMIA President and Cora W. Leaver as Primary Association President.

Although the Hollywood Stake was created in May, the final break was postponed until 1 July 1927 to allow for both stakes to begin with relatively complete organizations. Two days following the split, 3 July, the Wilshire

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[4]Ibid.

Ward was officially organized at a meeting of the Adams Ward. Until the Wilshire Ward could secure a place of its own, the two wards followed the unusual practice of meeting together, with each ward's bishopric presiding on alternating Sundays.[5]

When the new stake was created, Elders McKay and Richards recommended that the two stakes in Los Angeles continue with the plan of building one stake center. However, the Los Angeles Stake soon expressed a desire to build its own stake tabernacle and requested a meeting with the First Presidency regarding the matter.[6] On 15 July a special meeting was held and the First Presidency endorsed the Los Angeles Stake's plan for separate stake tabernacles. It was agreed that the money pledged towards the single building be split according to the pledges received from the members residing in each stake. President Grant recommended that since the Los Angeles Stake had the beautiful Adams Ward chapel, which many members of the Hollywood Stake had helped to build, the Los Angeles Stake should give to the new stake an additional $10,000.[7]

When this plan was presented to the members of the Hollywood Stake high council they unanimously agreed that

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[5]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:170.

[6]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 September 1927, LDS Church Archives.

[7]First Presidency to Leo J. Muir, 29 August 1927, as cited in Ibid., 31 December 1927.

the stake should build a joint stake house/ward house. They also authorized President McCune to begin conferring with the First Presidency regarding the acquisition of a building site.[8] Because the site purchased for the two-stake tabernacle at the corner of Manhattan Place and Country Club Drive was within the boundaries of Wilshire Ward, President McCune approached the Brethren for permission to use this property for the joint Hollywood Stake house and Wilshire Ward chapel, and it was granted. Until this new structure could be built, or other quarters located, the stake presidency and high council continued to meet in the Hiberian building, with all other stake meetings held in the Ocean Park chapel.

The first Hollywood Stake conference was held 28 August 1927. At this time President McCune outlined for stake members the proposed building program for the stake tabernacle. An important matter of business was also undertaken when Arthur H. Sconberg was sustained as second counselor in the stake presidency and ordained a high priest and set apart in his new calling by Elder McKay. Stake Clerk John McCune recorded in the conference minutes a note that showed the wisdom of organizing two stakes on a smaller scale thus allowing greater participation. There were 756 in attendance at the afternoon session and, except for the conferences when the Los Angeles and Hollywood Stakes were

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[8]Ibid., 24 August 1927.

created, "no larger crowd was ever recorded prior to the division of the Stake."[9]

The large attendance also reinforced the need to erect a structure that could comfortably accommodate the stake's membership. When the Hollywood Stake was organized, only four of the ten units (Lankershim, Ocean Park, Alhambra, and Belvedere) had their own buildings, and they contained no adequate facilities for stake offices, were not centrally located, and were not equipped to handle large crowds. Consequently, building the stake center became an important priority for President McCune who later recalled that of the many challenges which faced the new stake, "the chief source of discouragement [was] the complete lack of a suitable place to hold our meetings. . . . [The Hollywood Stake] literally had no place to lay its head."[10] Although this was an urgent need, President McCune was a man of vision whose past experience with chapels in England would not allow him to settle for second best. As he recalled at the new stake center's dedication:

> A large, cheap structure could have been erected in a comparatively short time and satisfied this deficiency for the time being--but in doing so the greatest opportunity that has yet been given the church would have been completely lost--that is, to preach the Gospel to the world by means of a structure that would place Mormonism on a par with her sister churches. . . .

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[9]Ibid.

[10]"Dedication Program for Hollywood Stake Tabernacle," Hollywood Stake Herald, April 1929, p. 2, LDS Church Archives.

> Should the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints take a back seat to any of these? Should we be satisfied with the commonplace when others are dwelling in marble halls?[11]

For President McCune and the members of the stake the answer was a resounding "no." Consequently, they would erect one of the finest edifices, outside of the temples, ever built in the Church. Although the stake had nearly $60,000 dollars pledged towards the tabernacle, which would build a nice structure, President McCune envisioned a building for the Hollywood Stake of comparable magnitude to what had originally been planned for the two stakes.

An important element in this effort to erect the finest building possible was the enlistment of someone who could effectively translate the desire into reality. Fortunately for stake members, the junior partner in the Salt Lake City architectural firm of Pope and Burton, Harold Burton, had recently moved into the stake for health reasons and had opened a Los Angeles office of the firm. By September 1927 President McCune had engaged Harold Burton in drawing up the plans for the new stake center.[12]

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[11]Ibid.

[12]That the stake was even able to draw upon the talents of Harold Burton was the result of the efforts of Joseph Nielson, a Utah architect. In the early 1920s the Church began experimenting with an architectural department and standardized plans for meetinghouses. However, in 1924 Nielson had complained to President Grant that such a policy was unfair to local architects since what work they got on the local level often made the difference between success and failure. After considering the matter, President Grant changed the policy and announced that local units could hire

While Harold Burton worked to design the permanent home of the Wilshire Ward, a temporary home was located on the sixth floor of the Odd Fellows Hall, located at the corner of Oak Street and Washington Boulevard. There was one minor draw-back to this temporary home, however. A radio station was located on the seventh floor, and this fledgling industry naturally created a great deal of interest. It was not unusual for some of the young people, therefore, to skip a meeting in order to watch the excitement behind the station's glass windows.[13] Nevertheless, these quarters so delighted President McCune that the stake offices were also moved into the building.[14]

Stake leaders soon found it necessary to make a few adjustments among the units in the stake, and in September the decision was made to organize an independent branch at Edendale, which would eventually become the Elysian Park Ward. In October the Belvedere Ward was transferred to the Los Angeles Stake and the Inglewood and Redondo Wards were transferred to the Hollywood Stake, bringing to twelve the number of units in the stake.

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local architects to design their buildings if they so desired. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, p. 122.

[13]Ralph R. Rolapp, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Collection, BYU.

[14]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 December 1927.

In November preparations for the combined Hollywood Tabernacle and Wilshire Ward chapel had progressed to the point where ground could be broken and the site dedicated. On 13 November 1927 the Saints in the stake gathered for ground-breaking ceremonies for the new stake center.[15] In attendance were Charles W. Nibley of the First Presidency, Elder Richard R. Lyman of the Council of the Twelve, and over two thousand members of the stake.

Major steps had been taken towards the construction of the stake house, but there was still much to be done. Fortunately, those who were overseeing the work--President George W. McCune, Bishop David W. Howells of the Wilshire Ward, and his wife Adele Cannon Howells--shared a similar vision and would not settle for what they felt was second best. Thus, they were not willing to rush the process or sacrifice quality.

President McCune believed not only that the Saints in the Hollywood Stake were entitled to the finest facilities available, but also that their activities should be worthy of the chapel he envisioned and demonstrate the best in taste and, at times, even elegance. Perhaps the glamor of their Hollywood setting as well as the fact that many Saints in this area were both affluent and influential,

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[15]Journal History, 14 November 1927. The Deseret News, 29 November 1927, lists 20 November as the date the ground was dedicated. It is possible that ground was broken one week and dedicated the following week.

contributed to these attitudes and practices that were not necessarily common elsewhere in the Church. A rumor even circulated in Salt Lake City that the General Authorities should take tuxedos with them when visiting the Hollywood Stake.[16] This rumor actually had some basis in fact for many social activities, especially those involving stake leaders, were formal affairs requiring tuxedos for men and gowns for women.[17] Outside Hollywood, dressing one's best normally did not require more than a business suit, but since most major social affairs in that somewhat exclusive community required tuxedos, President McCune felt the Saints should do the same and not take a back seat to anyone.

Not only did he feel that stake members should dress in their finest, but he also desired that all things be done in the best way, not just to help ensure that the Church would be held in the best light, but also because the Lord and His Saints deserved the best. Thus the numerous cultural activities, including concerts and plays, and the many dances were planned to be something special, and they were carried out in a grand manner that exhibited a touch of class. LeGrand Richards would later say that he wished he could hold up the Hollywood Stake's dances as a model for

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[16]Samuel H. Hanks, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

[17]Zatelle Sessions, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU; Lucille C. Tate, LeGrand Richards: Beloved Apostle (Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1982), p. 150.

all the Church.[18] In striving for the best, a sense of unity and a sense of satisfaction in belonging to the Hollywood Stake apparently was achieved among most of its members.

Some of the means implemented by President McCune to give stake members a feeling of identity and unity have seldom been used in other areas. A stake seal or emblem was created consisting of a beehive encircled with a holly wreath and the inscription "For the Glory of God" and stake colors--green and red--were chosen.[19] In addition, a stake hymn and stake rally song were written.[20]

The stake hymn, "Forward! Hollywood!," was sung occasionally at stake conference, and both the hymn and the "Hollywood Stake Rally Song" were sung at large stake gatherings, such as fund raisings, where active participation was desired. They were especially popular during the time the stake center was being planned and built.

While George W. McCune, David P Howells, and Adele Cannon Howells were the driving forces behind the completion of the new building, their vision of a beautiful stake

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[18]Hanks, Questionnaire.

[19]Hollywood Stake Herald, July 1928, p. 6, LDS Church Archives.

[20]"Souvenir Book" prepared by the Hollywood Stake for President Heber J. Grant, 1932, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives. The stake hymn, "Forward! Hollywood!" was sung to the tune of "Men of Harlech"; the stake rally song was set to the music of "Boola, Boola."

center could not have been realized without the financial and physical help of the members of the stake. The Wilshire Ward chapel was truly a stake effort.

As 1928 began, the architectural plans were nearing completion, arrangements were being made for fund raising, and President McCune was asking that the stake house be given a top priority in the hearts of stake members.[21] In February work began on the new building with the Lynch-Cannon Construction Company as contractors and a major portion of the labor being performed by volunteers from the stake.

Unfortunately, when the drawings of the new stake center were unveiled, many stake members were less than enthusiastic. Harold Burton greatly admired Frank Lloyd Wright's simplicity and had designed a structure which was to be built of exposed concrete, a style gaining popularity at the time. Many in the stake felt that a more elaborate building was appropriate. When it was completed, however, it was apparent to almost all that Burton had designed an appropriate stake house whose beauty resulted, in part, from its simplicity. It was, in fact, a magnificent structure in which Church members could meet, and one which contributed to the beauty of the community. It received high praise from Church members and non-members alike. Indeed, when

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[21]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 March 1928.

Architectural Concrete undertook a contest to find the finest cement building in America, the Wilshire Ward Chapel was awarded first prize.[22]

On 15 April 1928 the cornerstone for the new building was laid by President McCune with a "splendid crowd" in attendance and a "good spirit prevailing" among stake members.[23] Two equally important priorities faced the Saints of Hollywood Stake in their quest for a stake house--building the structure and raising the necessary funds. Because Wilshire Ward members would receive the greatest benefits from the new building, they were asked to work two nights each week, while members of the other wards in the stake were asked to volunteer one night each week.

A goal was set to have two hundred men and boys working each weekday evening and Saturday; usually this number was exceeded as almost everyone in the stake contributed labor. On many an occasion stake members worked well into the night pouring the 86,400 cubic feet of concrete the building contains.[24] Most evenings Bishop Howells presided at the cement mixer making certain that the

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[22]Architectural Concrete, November 1935, as noted Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:172.

[23]Los Angeles Stake Manuscript History, 15 April 1928.

[24]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:172.

fifteen thousand bags of cement and the 640 five-ton trucks of sand and gravel were properly mixed.[25]

Pouring cement was only one of the many jobs performed by stake members who also helped to place the beams, level the ground, and do all the work that did not require skilled labor. The work on the stake house was not limited to full time stake members and on one occasion even President Heber J. Grant picked up a shovel while visiting the chapel site and did his part that day in landscaping.[26]

Recalling the days of working on their chapel, the "Memory Book" for the 1945 Wilshire Ward reunion recounts the efforts of ward and stake members:

> Working in the evenings, sometimes under the lights, was like a big family gathering. The women would serve food and refreshments while the men would alternately work and loaf and count the trips the different ones would make to the water bucket. Blisters and aching backs would soon turn into muscle and callouses as we dug the basement, drove the tractor, held the scraper, shovelled sand and gravel into the cement mixer while Bishop Howells would kid us on our feeble efforts. The hod carriers wore blisters on their shoulders, and the disposal of plaster refuse and scrap lumber seemed to be an endless task, but the real fun was scraping the paint off the thousands of little glass panes in the doors in the recreation hall. When the work was done, we would be fed by the Relief Society and the Gleaners, and then we would build hugh bon fires and have community singing. All seemed right with the world. The building of our great chapel was indeed a work of

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[25]"Memory Book for Wilshire Ward Annual Reunion, 19 January 1945," p. 1, photocopy, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

[26]Photo included in Hollywood Stake, "Souvenir Book."

love.[27]

While building the chapel required great effort, in many respects it was less work than obtaining the money to purchase materials and to pay for the work of the contractors. During this period the Church usually built its chapels with "matches," that is, Church headquarters would match on a fifty-fifty basis what the wards and stakes contributed. However, the cost of the building the Hollywood Stake wished to construct was greater than Church authorities were willing to match, largely because of the increasing demands which were being placed upon Church resources. As a result, stake members had to come up with the majority of the building's $250,000 cost. Consequently, the importance of fund raising was a constant exhortation during the time of construction.

Even though over $60,000 had been pledged, a good portion of this total still needed to be collected, in addition to considerable more money necessary to see the building to completion. A special fund raising committee was established and few methods were left untried to raise the needed money. On 1 April "a big pep rally" for all stake and ward members and workers "was held in the Wilshire Ward Hall under the auspices of the Stake President for the purpose of arousing enthusiasm for raising funds to go on

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[27]"Memory Book," pp. 1, 3.

with the work at the Stake House."[28] Every member of the High Council was asked to discuss fund raising on his visits to the wards. The Garvanza Ward responded by placing tin banks in every home in the ward to enable its members to save for the stake house. Elysian Park Branch held a fund-raising bazaar. Several of the wards sponsored fund-raising dinners. The children in the stake conducted newspaper drives in their neighborhoods trying to beat the record of one Los Angeles school which had earned two hundred dollars in one day from collecting newspapers.

Additional help was provided by local businesses. Piggly-Wiggly and Safeway grocery stores offered a percentage of their sales to Church members towards the stake center. Blackstone Cleaners and Dryers donated twenty percent of its profits from business brought in by stake members.[29]

Stake members were also continually encouraged to make contributions and to pay their pledges.[30] One man who

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[28]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 1 April 1928.

[29]Notices in Hollywood Stake Herald, July and October 1928.

[30]The Hollywood Stake Herald included several notices reminding people to donate. An example from the October 1928 Herald:

B ecome a helper mighty quick
U se your strength and never kick;
D etermination always wins
G et on the job with friendly grins
E xcuses never build a Church.
T ry climbing down from your old perch.

paid his pledge early good-naturedly advised others against the practice since stake leaders would then ask for additional money.[31]

As 1928 drew to a close it looked as if the stake, in spite of its efforts, would have to go into debt to finish the chapel. However, Preston D. Richards argued persuasively against the idea and stake leaders renewed their determination to complete the building without borrowing.[32] Instead of going into debt a special gifts committee, which included Adele Cannon, was created and a special list was drawn up of individuals whose financial situation would allow them to be approached to make special donations.[33]

As the time for the January 1929 Stake Conference approached, the decision was made to use the building itself to spearhead the drive to raise the last $25,000. On 27 January stake conference was held in the cultural hall of the unfinished tabernacle, and each session was filled to near capacity. President McCune told stake members that if

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[31]Samuel H. Hanks, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

[32]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 12 December 1928.

[33]Ibid.; Helen Wooley Jackson, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

the additional money could be raised, the building would be dedicated in three months, at the next conference.

During the months between conferences, the Hollywood Tabernacle became the site of other fund-raising activities. On one occasion the MIA sponsored a fund-raising dance in the partially completed recreation hall with nearly one thousand in attendance. On another, a fund-raising dinner was held in the unfinished hall.

So great was the struggle to raise funds that even President McCune, the eternal optimist, grew discouraged and asked Church leaders to release him.[34] At the heart of the problem was the difficulty he had experienced with Church officials in Salt Lake City over the whole matter of such a huge and costly stake center. From the beginning, even though they had allowed the Hollywood Stake to proceed, Church leaders had objected to President McCune's costly plans and refused to provide extra financing from Church funds.[35] Finally, on 9 April 1929, only two weeks before the chapel was to be dedicated and with the stake still needing substantial funds to pay off the tabernacle, President McCune wrote President Grant recommending that he be released at the next conference, because of the differ-

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[34]George W. McCune to First Presidency, 9 April 1929, photocopy, McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

[35]Ibid.

ences he had with the Brethren. President McCune still believed that his view was correct, and told the prophet,

> Our people are very proud of the building they have erected and we feel that it will do estimable good for the church in this locality. I regret very much that you brethren feel that we have spent too much money on its erection but I believe that within a short period of time the growth here will justify this expenditure and everybody will be happy with the matter.[36]

After receiving this letter, President Grant immediately wrote President McCune with the good news that, at least to some degree, he and his associates had softened:

> It seems to us that it would be a fine thing for you to remain in your present position for at least a few months after the completion of your building, to enjoy some of the fruits of your energetic labors. . . .
>
> The thought of you retiring just at the completion of your building has caused our hearts to soften, and we have decided to help you an additional $10,000.[37]

Even with this additional money, there was still not enough money for an organ, although it would be purchased within a year. Nevertheless, the stake had created something fine, and there were few who could deny it then, or now. The dedication program contained words of praise from both Church, state, and local leaders, and almost all who beheld the Wilshire Ward/Hollywood Stake Tabernacle raved about it. In spite of his concerns over the cost, when President Grant saw the finished building he said: "I am paralyzed. I thought you were building something good, but

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[36]Ibid.

[37]First Presidency to George W. McCune, 12 April 1929, photocopy, McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

it is far more elaborate and substantial than I ever dreamed of. It is splendid."[38]

By the time of the April 1929 stake conference all but the organ was in readiness for the dedication of the permanent home of the Wilshire Ward and Hollywood Stake. The building had been finished and, at last, paid for.

The dedication activities were attended by President Grant and his first counselor, Charles W. Nibley, and continued over three days.[39] Friday evening, 26 April, a concert was given in the chapel, following which a reception was held in the reception room and a ball held in the cultural hall. The next afternoon, a party was given for seven hundred children of the stake at which time they donated a bushel of pennies toward the purchase of an organ for the chapel. In the evening, a general priesthood meeting was held.

During the general sessions of conference on Sunday, the huge congregation in attendance overflowed into the cultural hall. President Grant dedicated the building in the afternoon session and congratulated stake members on their

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[38]Hollywood Stake Herald, October 1928, LDS Church Archives. A detailed description of the Hollywood Stake Tabernacle/Wilshire Ward is found in Adele Cannon Howells, "Forward Hollywood," Improvement Era 32 (July 1929): 751-755.

[39]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 March 1929.

generosity and their beautiful building.[40] He also told them that outside the temples and the tabernacle in Salt Lake City it was the finest in the Church. Indeed, when the stake house was completed, only the temples had cost more to construct and few buildings other than the temples were as elaborate.

The feeling of some that a church "is judged very considerably by its buildings," may have been exaggerated, but the Mormon colony in Los Angeles at least wanted those who looked at the Wilshire Ward building to give the Church the consideration it deserved as the restored church. Ultimately more important, however, was the fact that the new building was not just exquisite in appearance, but it also had the facilities necessary for housing and enhancing the activities of the Hollywood Stake. The beautiful, well appointed chapel provided a setting conducive to worship, and the spacious cultural hall and very adequate classrooms provided a long-needed place for a variety of social, recreational, and instructional activities.

While the major emphasis of the Hollywood Stake during the first two years of its existence had been on finding a suitable home, the building of the kingdom did not give way to the building of the stake house. In early February 1928, as construction began on the stake tabernacle, the decision was made to divide the Ocean Park Ward. The division took

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[40]Deseret News, 29 April 1929.

place on 26 February, with the northern portion of the ward becoming the Santa Monica Ward and the Southern portion the Mar Vista Ward. Thus five years after becoming the first twentieth-century ward in California, the Ocean Park Ward was dissolved.

Inasmuch as the Ocean Park chapel was within the boundaries of the Santa Monica Ward, the Mar Vista Ward was without a place to meet. Although President McCune had requested at the first of the year that the building of the stake house be given number one priority, he gave permission for the ward to undertake a building project as long as it did not interfere with the building of the stake house. In May 1928 land was broken and dedicated and work began on the Mar Vista chapel that same month. Four months later, on 23 September 1928, President Heber J. Grant dedicated the new Spanish-style structure.[41]

While work was progressing on the Mar Vista Chapel the decision was also made to divide the Redondo Branch. This decision was related to unspecified difficulties among members of the branch and on 1 July 1928 the El Segundo Branch was created.

Unfortunately, disagreements among the Saints were not limited to El Segundo. In the Santa Monica Ward

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[41]In his October 1928 Conference address, Heber J. Grant called the building of the Mar Vista chapel as "the most remarkable accomplishment in that length of time of any building we have erected in the various wards." Conference Report, October 1928, p. 4.

difficulties arose between several members of the ward and the bishop over the release of a Sunday School teacher.[42]

The appearance of difficulties in the wards and branches might be ironic evidence that many Church members were beginning to believe that the Church had indeed been established fully in Los Angeles, a fact reinforced by the building of the Mar Vista and Wilshire Ward houses. The fact that prior to this time the number of problems arising were amazingly few might be explained, in part, by the perceived need of the members to bury their differences and work hard to establish the Church in the area. But when these Saints began to feel that the Church had arrived, so to speak, many seemed to turn their focus inward to the frailties of leaders and other members, thus at least partly hampering their ability to work together effectively. Such human frailties were not, of course, limited to the Hollywood Stake, but they illustrate the continuing challenges faced by Church leaders and members alike in their efforts to build the kingdom.

At the October 1929 stake conference, a new ward in the Westwood, Sawtelle, and Santa Monica area was carved out of the Mar Vista and Santa Monica Wards. In an unusual move, Elder Melvin J. Ballard had taken this action at the request of President McCune but without the approval of the rest of the Council of the Twelve. A month later, the new

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[42]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 13 May 1928.

ward did not even have a name or any definite boundaries, though Westwood Ward was the favored name.

On 20 November, Elder Ballard returned to Los Angeles and called a special meeting of the Hollywood Stake high council. There he reviewed the reason for forming the new ward, explaining that while it was unusual for a member of the Twelve to act without taking up the matter with the other members of the Council, it was not unprecedented. He then told stake leaders that when the matter was discussed among the Brethren, it was decided that Elder Ballard should disband the newly created ward. The major reason was that the Church was experiencing a lack of funds and was not appropriating money for new meeting houses. As a result, the creation of the new ward was postponed. Elder Ballard told stake leaders: "Good will come from this if we are patient. I made a mistake. I regret it but I am willing to do what will help the cause in any way."[42] Although disappointed in the outcome, President McCune pledged the stake's support of the decision.

As the Church's centennial year drew to a close, the stake records for 31 December 1930 indicated that the baptized membership stood at 5,871, an increase of 2,500 in a little less than three years. Most of the growth, however, had come in the previous year when the nation had

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[42]Los Angeles Stake Manuscript History, 22 November 1929.

been plunged into the great depression, for stake membership had grown by less than one hundred its first year of existence. This membership was located in fourteen wards and branches: Alhambra, Boyle Heights, Garvanza, Glendale, Inglewood, Lankershim, Santa Monica, Wilshire, Hollywood, and Mar Vista wards, and the El Segundo, Elysian Park, Pasadena, and Redondo branches. During March 1931 the fifteenth unit in the stake, the Burbank Ward, was created by a division of the Glendale Ward.

The centennial year of the Church found the nation in the grips of a great depression, brought about in part by the stock market crash of October 1929. Thirty billion dollars in stock market assets vanished almost overnight, with an additional forty billion disappearing in the next two and a half years. Nearly a third of the nation's banks failed. Between 1929 and 1933 unemployment increased from 1,499,000 to 12,634,000, over one-fourth of the work force. Millions more earned only starvation wages, as almost all sections of the economy cut back production. There were those living in $100,000 homes who could not pay the utilities. A new car often could be bought for under one hundred dollars, but incomes barely covered the necessities, let alone luxury items.

As was the case following World War I, thousands of Latter-day Saints from the intermountain area tried to escape the great depression and fled their homes for

California in the hope of a better life. Like most areas of the country, however, Los Angeles was not completely immune from the effects of the depression. Apartment buildings near Wilshire Boulevard could be purchased for fifteen to thirty cents on the dollar, but few could afford this opportunity.[44] However, as with the depression following World War I, Los Angeles fared somewhat better than most of the nation, particularly the mountain west. For the Saints in Los Angeles necessities were often scarce, and occasionally it was not certain where the next meal would come from. Nevertheless, as bad as the situation was in Los Angeles, for many Saints who stayed in Utah it was worse. While in some wards of the Hollywood Stake unemployment ran as high as 20 percent at the height of the depression, this was significantly less than the high of 36 percent unemployment for the state of Utah in 1931, one of the highest percentages in the nation.

The rudimentary welfare program that had been implemented in 1923 to help meet the needs of the great influx of migrants from the intermountain west was expanded during the early months of the depression, and means were provided for bishops and the Relief Society to help poor Church members. Among the first steps taken were efforts to help the unemployed.[45] Once again a stake employment center

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[44]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 156.

[45]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:287-288.

was established; the Melchizedek Priesthood gave a party to benefit the unemployed, which was reportedly very successful in both a social and financial way. Each of the wards worked to collect funds, above and beyond fast offerings, to help those less fortunate.

Where possible, county, state, federal, and voluntary organizations were used to supplement the assistance provided by the local stake and Presiding Bishop's Office during these early days of the depression. For many new arrivals from Utah, assistance from the Church was of vital importance since state and county organizations would only help those who had been in Los Angeles for at least three years.

To escape the realities of everyday depression life, entertainment was especially important for both the nation and the Saints in Los Angeles. Throughout the nation, the movie industry, radio industry, and book industry did brisk business as people sought momentary escapes from their problems. The need for entertainment was strongly felt in the Hollywood Stake, as dances continued to be sponsored regularly, with the M Men and Gleaners hosting the majority of them. These dances needed to pay for themselves, and consequently they were well planned, presented, attended in the grand tradition of the Hollywood Stake, and more often than not, broke even. In addition, to stake sponsored dances, Mormon dance groups, with the Debonairs the most

notable, were also organized.[46] Other forms of entertainment, such as stage productions, were also popular. In March 1931, for example, the stake presented a grand opera in the Wilshire Ward under the direction of the stake MIA, which was well attended.

In spite of the good intentions of stake leaders, the desire to do things nicely was carried to the extreme by some stake members. For example, a social organization was started among some of the wives of high councilors, called the Ladies of the High Council, who reportedly were the ones insisting upon tuxedos at the parties for stake leaders.[47] Following the dedication of the Wilshire Ward, many young people desired elaborate weddings in the beautiful chapel before they went to the temple, though a temple marriage usually followed. Such problems were hardly major, but they did raise some concerns, especially among some of the Brethren in Salt Lake City. Thus, when Church leaders acted upon President McCune's request to be released, they went outside the stake for the new stake president and selected a man capable of helping the stake maintain the high standards which President McCune had set while eliminating the excesses of some members.

Nevertheless, as the Hollywood Stake approached its fourth anniversary it may well have been said of the Saints

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[46]Ibid., 1:468-469.

[47]Sessions, Oral History.

in Los Angeles that they were laying the foundation of a great work. As with any new situation, of course, mistakes were made, but compared with the accomplishments, the mistakes were minor. These Saints and their leaders were trying their best to face the challenges involved in nourishing the Church in a new environment, under changing circumstances and, at the same time, dealing with the myriad problems of unusually rapid growth. For the most part the Saints in the Hollywood Stake had met their challenges in a most commendable manner and left an important legacy for the Saints of a later day.

CHAPTER 6

HOLLYWOOD STAKE: PART II

Eight years after he had been sustained as the first stake president in Los Angeles, and four years after the Hollywood Stake was organized, George W. McCune was released at the April 1931 Stake Conference. LeGrand Richards, later the Presiding Bishop of the Church and after that a member of the Council of the Twelve, was sustained as the new Hollywood Stake President.

The calling of LeGrand Richards as stake president, as with the calling of George McCune, suggests the concerns of Church authorities over providing outlying areas with leaders who could effectively nurture the Church outside of Utah and would not allow questionable practices to get out of hand. It was not uncommon during those days of expansion in the early twentieth century to have leaders for locations outside the intermountain area chosen from among those most recently arrived from Utah, or, at times, from Utah resi-

dents who were then asked to move to the locations involved.[1]

Thus, when Elder George F. Richards, LeGrand's father and a member of the Council of the Twelve, entered his son's real estate office in Salt Lake City in late December 1929, sixteen months prior to the April 1931 Hollywood Stake Conference, it was by assignment of the First Presidency and the result of concerns for the still youthful Mormon community in Los Angeles. "President Grant wants to know," George F. asked, "whether you would be willing to move to California and serve as the president of the Hollywood Stake?"[2]

"Well, Father," the younger Richards responded, "I have my business here with a dozen people depending upon me for their jobs. I don't know what I'd do for a living in California." Then he added, "You'd better tell the President that I think enough of the Lord, the Church, and him that if this is what he wants, I will go down and look around to see how I can earn a living."[3]

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[1]As the Church was being established in Chicago, the story circulated among the city's Church members that the next branch president would have arrived on the last train from Utah. Nan Beckman, Oral History, interview by David M. Walden, 1985, typescript, pp. 27-28, Outward Migration Project, Center for Family and Community History, Brigham Young University.

[2]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 141.

[3]Ibid.

Within a month of his new call, Richards had sold his business, put his house up for sale, and was heading by himself in the family car for southern California. Once in California, he joined with former Utah friends and fellow Church members Alex Nibley and Preston Cannon selling real estate in the Rossmoyne residential development. Within a couple of months he purchased a house in Glendale and moved his wife, Ina, and his children to California.

The reason for Richards's move to Los Angeles was not announced, and it was not until 1978 that most people became aware of the circumstances.[4] As a result, shortly after Richards's arrival, and unaware that he was to become the new stake president, President McCune recommended him for bishop of the Glendale Ward. When President Heber J. Grant became aware of the proposed call, he suggested to President McCune that before receiving such a demanding position Richards ought to be given time to settle in. When Richards learned of President Grant's recommendation, however, he immediately wrote his father:

> Glendale Ward is down on everything, and I think I'd better be bishop while I'm getting acquainted. If I am appointed stake president now, there will be an insurrection on the part of the leaders down here to think that a man was sent down from Salt Lake when they have so many talented men here in the stake. If I

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[4]In the 1978 Rededication Program for the Wilshire Ward, many stake members who worked closely with President Richards in both the Glendale Ward and Hollywood Stake learned for the first time that he had been called to Los Angeles. Hanks, Questionnaire.

> could lift Glendale Ward up, that would be my approach to the other appointment.[5]

As a result of this letter, President Grant approved Richards as the bishop of the Glendale Ward, and he was sustained in absentia while on vacation with his family at San Diego in late June 1930. Bishop Richards worked hard to turn around the ward by restructuring programs, putting all members to work, and then showing them a good time through effective ward socials. Within six months, the Glendale Ward had become a model of unity and growing spirituality.

LeGrand Richards had demonstrated great insight into human nature as well as the situation in Hollywood Stake when he told his father that there would be an "insurrection" if someone were sent down from Utah to replace President McCune. His concerns were realized when, on 25 April 1931, he was called into a meeting with Elders George Albert Smith and Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve, who were in town to reorganize the stake. Members of the high council, he was informed, were circulating a petition against the release of President McCune.[6]

Somehow, news of the impending reorganization had begun to circulate even before there was any discussion with President McCune himself, and he learned about it early in April from two Beehive girls who were staying at his home

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[5]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 144.

[6]Ibid, p. 147.

and had received the information at an MIA meeting.[7] Deeply hurt at the fact that he seemed to be among the last to know, he wrote President Grant that he "would have been happy and satisfied if my labors could have been rewarded with just an honorable release coming in the proper way."[8] President Grant quickly replied that while the matter had not been handled in the best manner, President McCune would, indeed, be given an honorable release in the proper way.[9]

Several prominent stake members, however, discovered what had happened and, feeling that their beloved stake president was not receiving the respect he deserved, but was being removed from office as a result of differences with the Brethren over the cost of the Hollywood Tabernacle, began circulating a petition protesting his release.

At the meeting with the two apostles, Richards stated that if it would be better for someone else to serve as stake president, he "would be perfectly happy to continue as bishop of Glendale Ward." He further suggested that it might be wise to discuss the matter with the priesthood at

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[7]Notes of a conversation with Florence S. McCune, 1986, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[8]George W. McCune to Heber J. Grant, 18 April 1931, as cited in First Presidency to George W. McCune, 22 April 1931, McCune Collection, LDS Church Archives.

[9]First Presidency to George W. McCune, 22 April 1931.

its meeting the following evening to learn how priesthood members felt. The apostles agreed to this proposal.[10]

At the Priesthood Meeting, Elder George Albert Smith announced that President George W. McCune had been given an honorable release by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Smith then told the priesthood brethren that they would be given a chance to express their choice for a successor. After a period of discussion, the matter was put to a vote and LeGrand Richards received nearly the same number of votes as the popular first counselor, Arthur Sconberg.[11] This was a strong enough showing in favor of Richards that the apostles decided they would reorganize the stake presidency with LeGrand Richards as the new president. David H. Cannon and Charles H. Norberg were chosen as counselors.

At the Sunday afternoon session, 27 April 1931, the Hollywood Stake presidency was officially reorganized. Elder George Albert Smith reviewed the dedicated labors of President McCune, mentioning that two years previously he had asked to be released, but the General Authorities felt it best for him to continue to serve.[12] Elder Smith's call

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[10]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 147. While having priesthood members vote on a possible stake president was not a common practice in the Church, it was not unknown. See Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, pp. 107-108.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 June 1931.

for an expression of appreciation for the service of President McCune and his counselors was greeted with a heartfelt vote by stake members. Elder Smith then presented the new stake presidency for approval, with John McCune continuing as stake clerk. No mention is made in the minutes of how this proposal was accepted by the people, but it seems safe to say that most members put aside their differences and pledged their support.

Nevertheless, some observers felt that there was much work to be done in the Hollywood Stake for almost no part of it had escaped the formation of factions. There were even those who threatened to resign their Church positions after the new presidency was put in.[13] Understandably, the new stake president felt that changes were needed in attitude, organization, and social patterns, and with his counselors he identified four major areas of concern: first, to overcome rifts and factions among stake members; second, to unite the stake family; third, to harness the talents and abilities of stake members; and fourth, to build spirituality.[14]

One of the first changes undertaken by President Richards was to remove some of the "Hollywood" from the Hollywood Stake in the dress required for stake-sponsored

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[13]Samuel Hank, "Conversation"; Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 6 May 1931.

[14]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 148.

socials. Admitting that he enjoyed wearing his tuxedo as much as the next person, Richards nevertheless declared that until every member in a stake leadership position or bishopric could comfortably afford to wear one, formal dress would be optional and he would set the example by wearing his Sunday suit.[15]

Always a great believer in the need for parties and socials in the lives of Church members, President Richards fostered them on both a stake and ward level. Each month, two high councilors were assigned to plan an activity for stake officers and their companions, and at Christmas time a party was given for all stake and ward leaders and their spouses. These events, in a less formal setting, helped further to promote unity and closeness among stake leaders. The stake also continued to sponsor many activities for general members, and bishops were encouraged to raise the level of recreation in the wards to make sure that the Saints were more sociable and that all were entertained.[16]

To further strengthen unity between ward and stake organizations, President Richards invited members of the high council and stake auxiliary board members to accompany the stake presidency to each ward conference. This was not general Church policy at the time, but as the bishops saw

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[15]Ibid., p. 150.

[16]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 18 October 1931.

such support being given to their conferences, they gave greater support to quarterly stake conferences. Within the first eighteen months, attendance at stake conference had more than doubled. In addition, stake and ward leaders were no longer given preferential seating at conference, but all seats were opened to everyone who came.[17]

The youth were not forgotten by President Richards, who emphasized that their social contacts must be considered seriously and that more attention must be given to special entertainments in order to help strengthen them in the gospel. Under his leadership buildings were considered not only as religious and social centers, but also as recreation centers where all the youth could mingle.[18] In addition to regularly scheduled dances, an annual M-Men and Gleaner banquet was held, and the young people assigned each year to preside over the event worked hard to make each banquet more successful and attractive than the last.

Renewed emphasis was given to Family Night as parents were encouraged to set aside one night a week for their children, either at home or in a family outing. Since earlier efforts had not been coordinated, few undertook the effort. However, the stake presidency and high council, with the approval of the bishops, recommended that each

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[17]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 149.

[18]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 12 August 1931.

Monday night be set aside throughout the stake as Family Night, and that no meetings be held on that night.[19]

For the October 1931 Stake Conference the stake center's cultural hall was equipped with permanent loud speakers and several hundred people seated there were able to hear the sessions of conference.[20] That conference was a historic occasion for another reason, also: Katherine Higginbotham was sustained as stake clerk, possibly the only woman ever to hold that position.[21] From the time the Wilshire Ward was dedicated, Katherine Higginbotham had served as receptionist at the stake house and had done much of the detailed work for the stake clerk. An employee of Bishop Howells, she worked full-time as a kind of bureau of information for the Church in Los Angeles, answering the questions of visitors who might visit the new building. An office was built for her just inside the east entrance. During the summer of 1931, President Richards obtained President Grant's approval to appoint her as stake clerk. Such approval was necessary for Church policy usually requires that this position be filled by a Melchizedek Priesthood holder. Clearly, President Richards, who had

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[19]Ibid., 12 August 1931.

[20]Ibid., 25 October 1931.

[21]Ibid., 26 August, 1931; Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 148.

great faith in the ability of women, was not one to let tradition interfere with practicality.

During President Heber J. Grant's administration the Brethren in Salt Lake City began placing renewed emphasis on various aspects of gospel living, and no doctrine was preached more diligently than the Word of Wisdom.[22] In 1921 adherence to the Word of Wisdom became a requirement to attend the temple. During the early 1930s, as the nation moved towards the repeal of prohibition and as the Church looked forward to the centennial of the Word of Wisdom in February 1933, the topic was given even greater emphasis. The Hollywood Stake also took up the same campaign, and few stake conferences passed without the Word of Wisdom being discussed. Unfortunately, some members of the stake even began to feel that too much emphasis was being placed on it and complained that it could hardly be distinguished from the gospel itself, and one member of the high council eventually went inactive over the issue.[23]

When the matter of implementing greater observance of the Word of Wisdom was discussed by members of the stake presidency, they decided to follow the course generally adopted throughout the Church. Leaders of auxiliary organizations who used tobacco would be worked with to help

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[22]For a discussion of this topic see Alexander, Mormonism in Transition, pp. 258-271.

[23]E. Conway Stratford to Wilfor G. Edling, 13 April 1948, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

them overcome their habit. However, less leeway was given to younger members of the Church who had not been entrenched in their habits for so many years.[24]

Less attention was given to alcoholic beverages for the eighteenth amendment had, theoretically, taken care of the problem of "strong drink" by limiting its supply. Unfortunately, however, a few stake members became caught up in the Hollywood environment by partaking of the liquor served at its many parties, as well as using other items forbidden in the revelation. A 1937 survey of active stake members revealed that 77 percent strictly obeyed the Word of Wisdom by never using tea, coffee, liquor, or tobacco, while nearly 18 percent reported that they were occasional users, and a little over 5 percent were frequent users of these items.[25]

To help those members who needed to overcome such habits, and to help ensure that other members, especially the youth, were educated as to their evils, the stake followed Church precedent and established an Anti-Liquor and Tobacco Committee which functioned for many years. The committee also tried to carry the message of the Word of Wisdom to the non-Latter-day Saints. During the 1932 Los

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[24]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 22 May 1932.

[25]G. Byron Done, "The Participation of the Latter-day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1939), p. 229.

Angeles County Fair, for example, the California Mission and the Hollywood Stake were sponsors of a Word of Wisdom exhibit which was reportedly well attended.[26]

Another emphasis throughout the Church at this time was on the payment of tithing. With the onset of the depression, the amount of tithing being paid by Church members had greatly decreased, and the Brethren noted that the majority of Hollywood Stake high councilors and stake officers were not on record for having paid tithing during the first three months of 1933.[27] They urged that greater care be used in setting an example. As the depression continued, however, it seems that less attention was given to the commandment. A survey of active stake members found that 76.4% paid tithing, but only 38.1 percent could be classified as full-tithe payers.[28] Bishops were instructed to push this principle and see that temple recommends or priesthood advancements were not given to non-tithe payers.

Another topic receiving renewed emphasis was temple marriage. During the January 1933 stake conference, a special high council meeting was called at which Elder Melvin J. Ballard discussed one of the greatest challenges facing the youth--marrying outside the Church. He stressed

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[26]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 September 1932.

[27]Ibid., 30 June 1933.

[28]Ibid.

the continuing need for better social opportunities where LDS youth could meet and become acquainted, and he told stake leaders that one result of so many marriages outside the Church was "the problem of running a spiritual hospital."[29]

The need for Church-sponsored socials for the youth was apparent, but President Richards also noted that parents were shirking their duties if they relied entirely upon the Church to provide social activities for their children. He recommended, in one of his characteristic displays of wisdom, that parents with young people in their homes should also give parties at their houses to help introduce their children to other youth with similar values.[30] The responsibility to see that socials were given to help their children find partners worthy of temple, or celestial, marriage was as much with the parent as it was with the Church, President Richards suggested.

President Richards also placed considerable emphasis upon missionary work in the stake. In connection with the January 1933 stake conference, Elder Melvin J. Ballard accepted an invitation from the stake to conduct four member-missionary meetings the following week. These meetings were designed to help teach non-members about the

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[29]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 22 January 1933.

[30]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 22 January 1933.

gospel and motivate the Saints towards the importance of doing missionary work. Attendance at the meetings averaged over one thousand per night. Nearly one-third were non-members, and the increased emphasis on missionary work soon paid dividends in converts. During 1933, 486 cottage meetings were held in the homes of stake members and 140 converts made, all without the assistance of full-time missionaries.[31]

At the October 1933 Stake Conference, Presidents Heber J. Grant and J. Reuben Clark were the visiting General Authorities, and over 1,900 stake members were in attendance. To have two members of the First Presidency attend a stake conference suggested that something important was in the offing, such as a division of the stake or the calling of a new stake president. Neither change took place, but between the Sunday sessions of conference the two Church leaders called President LeGrand Richards to preside over the Southern States Mission, beginning in January 1934.[32] Having originally been called to the Southern States as a young man only to have his call changed to the Netherlands, President Richards was delighted that the call had come again.

President Grant informed him that they would not make the announcement but that he was free to make it as he

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[31]Tate, LeGrand Richards, p. 153.

[32]Tate, LeGrand Richards, pp. 163-164.

saw fit. On 25 October, at the first high council meeting following stake conference, President Richards told stake leaders of his new assignment. On 20 December the Richards family left California for a brief visit in Salt Lake City before going to Atlanta, Georgia.

The man chosen to succeed LeGrand Richards as the third president of the Hollywood Stake was David H. Cannon. Born in Salt Lake City in 1893, Cannon was the son of Elder Abraham H. Cannon, a member of the Council of the Twelve. He fulfilled a mission to the British Isles from 1912 to 1914 and then married Marguerite Callister. Following graduation from George Washington University Law School in 1917, he became an Assistant Attorney General of the United States, a position which ultimately brought him to Los Angeles in 1924. He eventually entered into private practice, specializing in postal law.

Elders Rudger Clawson and George Albert Smith of the Council of the Twelve presided at the 24 January 1934 Stake Conference where David H. Cannon was unanimously sustained to lead the stake. President Cannon chose as his counselors Charles H. Norberg and Wilford G. Edling.

On 24 December 1933, the Presiding Bishop of the Church, Sylvester Q. Cannon, called a special meeting of Priesthood leaders in Los Angeles to inform them that the economic situation of the Church had improved to the point where it could once again help local congregations obtain

suitable meeting places.[33] When the nation was thrown into the Great Depression, the Church had placed a moratorium on chapel building since the decrease in income experienced by most Church members also resulted in a dramatic decrease in the amount of tithing being paid. This moratorium caused at least a few in Los Angeles to wonder whether they should remain in California, since having an appropriate structure in which to meet was viewed, to a certain extent, as confirmation of Church support of their decision to leave Utah.

Following Bishop Cannon's announcement the southern California Mormon newspaper, News 'n' Nuggets, ran the headline, "Permanency of Mormons in Southern California Assured." The accompanying article concluded, "the restraint under which the Church in this section of the country seems to have been held by the officials with regards to building has been dispelled."[34] The article also stated that because chapels could again be erected, divisions which were badly needed in many of the wards would finally be made, thus assuring the vitality of the Church in Los Angeles.

In 1934 baptized membership in the Hollywood Stake exceeded 8,000 members, a doubling in size since the stake

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[33]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 24 December 1933.

[34]News 'n' Nuggets, September 1934.

was created six years earlier. Size of units within the stake ranged from El Segundo Branch with 114 members to Wilshire Ward with 1,813 members. Statistical reports suggested, however, that much needed to be done before the Saints were perfected. For example, only 20 percent were attending sacrament meeting, still above the Church-wide average, but a far cry from the record 67 percent of December 1923.

On 1 January 1935, the San Fernando Branch of the California Mission became the seventeenth unit of the Hollywood Stake. Later that month the eighteenth unit was added with the creation of the Arlington Ward. On 20 January 1935 a special high council meeting was held in conjunction with the bishopric of the Wilshire Ward at which President Grant was in attendance. The meeting was called to discuss the division of the Wilshire Ward to relieve its crowded conditions, and it was decided to divide the ward at Adams Boulevard. Those residing south of Adams became members of the new Arlington Ward, while those north of Adams Boulevard continued in the Wilshire Ward. On 27 January the Arlington Ward was officially created at a meeting of the Wilshire Ward and Lyman H. Robison was sustained as bishop. When the Arlington Ward first met in March 1935 meetings were held at the Masonic Lodge on Western Avenue.

The eighteen wards and branches in the Hollywood Stake were well beyond the optimal number for an effective stake organization. Consequently, the decision was reached to split the stake at its April 1936 quarterly conference.[35] Not only had the Hollywood Stake grown but so had the Los Angeles Stake, which contained sixteen units, and a decision was made to split that stake, also, at its May quarterly conference.

President David O. McKay, second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, was the presiding authority at the division of Hollywood Stake. The wards and branches which were to be part of the new stake were Alhambra, Burbank, Elysian Park, Garvanza, Glendale, Lankershim, Pasadena, San Fernando, and Hollywood. The wards and branches remaining in the Hollywood Stake were Arlington, El Segundo, Inglewood, Mar Vista, Santa Monica, Boyle Heights, Wilshire, and Redondo. In addition, the Adams Ward was transferred back to the Hollywood Stake from the Los Angeles Stake. When the Los Angeles Stake was divided the following month and the Long Beach Stake created, the Redondo Branch was transferred to the new Long Beach Stake and the Boyle Heights Ward was transferred to the Los Angeles Stake.

The announcement concerning the proposed division of the Hollywood Stake was made in the Saturday evening

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[35]The California Intermountain News, 9 January 1936, ran an article announcing the pending division of the Hollywood Stake.

priesthood session of stake conference. Following the meeting the Melchizedek Priesthood holders of the new stake were asked to meet in the recreation hall. President McKay then asked each man present to submit two names for the new stake and the names of three brethren for the new stake presidency.[36] These recommendations were then prayerfully studied.

The next morning as the last speaker during the Sunday morning session of conference, Wilford Edling was giving his farewell address as an outgoing member of the Hollywood Stake presidency when he was handed a note that President McKay wished to speak to him immediately. Cutting short his remarks, President Edling left the conference to meet with President McKay, who had been his mission president in England ten years earlier. During their meeting, President McKay informed him that the Lord wanted him to be the new Hollywood Stake President and that he had two hours to chose his counselors and seven members of the high council, the minimum number needed to make a quorum.[37]

At the Sunday afternoon session, President McKay presented the proposed division of the stake along with the name of Pasadena for the new stake. David H. Cannon was

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[36]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 June 1936.

[37]Wilford Edling, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, typescript, p. 2, The James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

sustained as the president of the new stake with Rulon H. Cheney and LeRoy J. Buchmiller as his counselors.

Wilford G. Edling was unanimously sustained as the new president of the Hollywood Stake with Preston D. Richards and Jesse R. Pettit as counselors. Katherine Higginbotham continued for a time as stake clerk. At the same time the Adams Ward was received into the Hollywood Stake by a vote of the people.[38]

Thirty-three year old Wilford Edling, a native of Ogden, Utah, was a tax consultant and certified public accountant by profession. Following his mission to England, he had attended George Washington University in Washington, D.C., before finishing his schooling in southern California. He came to California in 1927 and the following year married Relia Schade in the Salt Lake Temple. His accounting training would later be put to service in the Church when he accepted the position as chairman of the Church Finance Committee.

Throughout the 1930s the nation remained in the grips of depression. At the April Conference of 1936,

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[38]Although the Saints in southern California knew of the impending division, they weren't prepared for its extent. In its report the California Intermountain News reported, "It is now evident that Pres. McKay and his associates, Elders Reed Smoot and John A. Widstoe, members of the Quorum of the Twelve, were authorized to administer extensive surgical treatment to the stakes in Southern California. And they did it--with a free hand and with anaesthetics." California Intermountain News, 23 April 1936.

President J. Reuben Clark announced the particulars of the Church's new welfare plan, called "The Church Security Plan." Prior to this time, however, the essence of the program had already been implemented in the Hollywood Stake and throughout Los Angeles, both through local initiatives and the special emphasis placed upon the area by the Church's Welfare Committee, under the direction of Harold B. Lee.

As noted before, one of the first steps taken by the stake was the establishment of an employment committee. In 1932 Alice H. Osborn of the Adams Ward, one of the wards hardest hit by the depression, opened an Inter-stake Employment and Relief Office which operated out of her home until room was obtained at the Adams Ward chapel.[39] In addition, each ward was asked to make work, where possible, for its unemployed and underemployed members. Charles H. Norberg was appointed work director for the stake.[40] At first the elders quorums and Relief Societies undertook drives to bring clothing and furniture to the storehouse, but in time this program was taken on by the unemployed.

Initially, each ward provided the means for distributing clothing and furniture, but for better efficiency and service a bishop's storehouse was created in the old mission

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[39]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:227-228.

[40]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 10 March 1937.

home. A storehouse was also created for food items, which initially were distributed at ward houses or from the homes of local leaders.[41] At first anyone could come and select items from the storehouses, but as time progressed and abuses were noted it was decided that materials could be obtained only with an order from a bishop or Relief Society president. Requiring such an order helped ensure that the worthy poor received the benefits.[42] As abuses continued in the system, such as non-Mormons contacting all the bishops in Los Angeles for assistance, Leona Fetzer was appointed by the Church to work with the Relief Society in clearing applications for assistance.[43]

In March 1938, the Hollywood and Pasadena Stakes opened a cooperative self-help salvage program in Glendale which, by the end of the year, proved so successful that it was taken over as part of the Church's southern California welfare efforts and its scope was expanded to include all the Saints in Los Angeles.[44] In October 1939, this effort at helping people to help themselves became the Deseret Industries of Southern California.

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[41]Sessions, Oral History.

[42]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 December 1936.

[43]Ibid., 17 October 1937.

[44]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:288.

The welfare efforts of the Saints were a model of cooperation and good will. Fast offerings actually increased, and storehouse provisions came not only from these funds but also from other contributions, such as Relief Society canning projects. Within its first six months of operation the new storehouse provided food for 265 families. The next year saw various wards and quorums establish programs for milling flour and growing fruits and vegetables. Many LDS physicians and dentists donated their services, wards financed men who wanted to set themselves up as gardeners, the Adams Ward Relief Society made fifty quilts, and the Inglewood elders' quorum helped one of its needy members build a home.[45] In truth, there were few who were not involved in the welfare effort.

Following the announcement in late 1933 that chapel construction could once again begin, the Hollywood Ward began looking for a permanent meeting place and a lot was purchased in the eastern portion of the ward. Since this was not the most ideal location, however, building plans were delayed. During a further search for a better location it was discovered that the Mt. Olivet Methodist Church on Normandie Avenue was for sale. This structure, which had been built in 1924 at a cost of $100,000, was for sale for $35,000. While the location and price were right, questions

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[45]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 1 March 1939.

still remained about whether a chapel could be purchased from another church, and Bishop Raymond L. Kirkham contacted President Grant for advice. Upon hearing of the deal, President Grant told Bishop Kirkham that he would personally come down, look at the property, and decide what should be done. After looking the structure over, he told the brethren to "buy it immediately."[46] On 5 November 1937 the Hollywood Ward met in its new home for the first time. Two weeks later, on 18 November, the purchase was consummated.

When the Wilshire Ward was dedicated, President McCune stated that the stake's next major building goal was a temple in the Southland. The feeling that the Saints in Los Angeles needed a temple was also shared by Church leaders in Salt Lake City, and in 1934 a committee of members of the Los Angeles LDS community was asked to make an intensive search for a temple site. During the search, President Cannon and his counselors made several trips each month to check on possible locations.[47]

Early in the search for a temple site it became obvious that there were many differing opinions as to where the temple should be located. Most Church members favored a site in the downtown area or in the eastern part of the city, which was more developed than the western section.

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[46]John M. Russon, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, typescript, p. 2, The James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

[47]Edling, Oral History, p. 3.

Several times sites were found, but on more than one occasion desirable properties were taken off the market when the owners learned that the property would used for a Mormon Temple.[48] Other sites which the Church could have purchased were not approved by the Brethren in Salt Lake City, including a lot on the corner of Santa Monica and Wilshire Boulevards in downtown Beverly Hills.

Finally, a 24.33 acre site was located in Westwood on the north side of Santa Monica Boulevard between Manning and Selby Avenues and extending to Ohio Avenue. It was the property of the Harold Lloyd Motion Picture Company and contained the old Harold Lloyd estate, a large stucco building with a tile roof, which had also been used as the company offices and in 1937 was being used as a sorority house by students attending nearby UCLA. This impressive site contained considerably more property than would be needed for a temple. Upon seeing it, however, President Grant emphatically approved the location stating that it would better serve the needs of the Church than would a smaller piece. In April 1937 the purchase was completed and the title to the property transferred to the Church. The purchase price as reported in the Deseret News was $175,000.[49]

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[48]Ibid.

[49]Deseret News, 6 March 1937. Ralph R. Rolapp recalled that his father-in-law, Preston D. Richards, who served as the Church's legal counsel in southern California,

Many local Saints, however, questioned the purchase of a site for a temple in Westwood, which was in the northwestern portion of the Los Angeles Basin. The wisdom of the decision was soon confirmed, nevertheless, for what was then the outskirts of Los Angeles became engulfed by the city as it expanded to the north and west, rather than to the east as most felt it would at that time. Also, the temple is now conveniently located near freeways that were not envisioned at the time, making it accessible to everyone living in the Los Angeles area.

Following the purchase of the temple lot, Bishop Howells was appointed chairman of the California Temple Building Committee. On 8 May 1937 this committee sponsored its first fund raising evening, a turkey dinner at the Wilshire Ward.

By September 1937, Church authorities had appointed a Board of Temple Architects to draw up plans for both the Idaho Falls, Idaho Temple and the Los Angeles Temple.[50] The six members of this board prepared several possible floor plans, including a one level temple, separate facilities for endowments for the living and dead, and the use of one room for the endowment ceremony, rather than the four rooms

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stated that the purchase price was only $41,000. Rolapp, Oral History.

[50]The Board of Temple Architects is discussed in Paul L. Anderson, "Mormon Moderne: Latter-day Saint Architecture, 1925-1945," Journal of Mormon History 9 (1982): 70-84.

traditional at the time. From the beginning, however, it was difficult for the board to be creative as a group for its members could seldom agree upon designs. They finally agreed that each would prepare sketches reflecting his own idea and that all the sketches would be submitted to the First Presidency, who would then chose the design. The First Presidency chose for the temple in Los Angeles the design of board members Lorenzo S. Young and Ramm Hansen, which featured a central tower.[51] However, before that temple could be built the decision was made to erect a larger one, and the new Los Angeles Temple architect, Edward O. Anderson, would freely borrow from the Young and Hansen design.

In July 1939, at a high council meeting held at the home of President Wilford Edling, a decision was reached to create a new ward from the western portions of the Wilshire and Hollywood Wards. A. Eldon Rex was approved as bishop of the new Beverly Hills Ward with William F. Jackson and C. Dean Olson as counselors. Estelle Dixon was the first Relief Society President. The first meeting of the Beverly Hills Ward was held on 6 August 1939 at the Beverly Hills Women's Club at 1700 Chevy Chase Drive, where the ward continued to meet until its chapel next to the Los Angeles Temple was completed in 1953.

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[51]This design was published in Nels Benjamin Lundwall's 1941 edition of Temples of the Most High (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1941).

On 18 November 1939 a special priesthood meeting of the Hollywood Stake was called by Elder Stephen L Richards of the Council of the Twelve. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss another division of the Hollywood Stake. Elder Richards first announced that the Hollywood Ward would be returned from the Pasadena Stake, after a three-years' absence, and that the Torrance and Redondo Wards would be brought in from the Long Beach Stake. He then recommended that the stake be divided so that one stake would include the Adams, Arlington, Beverly Hills, Hollywood, and Wilshire Wards and the other would include the Santa Monica, Mar Vista, Inglewood, Torrance, and Redondo Wards and the El Segundo Branch. This division was approved by those in attendance. Elder Richards then stated that the stake would no longer be called the Hollywood Stake, but would henceforth be known as the Los Angeles Stake. The name of the existing Los Angeles Stake was changed to the South Los Angeles Stake, and the newly created stake would be the Inglewood Stake. This action was also unanimously approved. A special stake conference was held on 19 November 1939 at which all these changes were made official.

Exactly why the name of the Hollywood Stake was changed and why it was done at a special conference rather than waiting until a regular stake conference does not appear in the official records. However, several reasons have been proposed. Some stake members, such as former

Presidents Wilford Edling and Winfield Cannon, have suggested that for some time President Grant and President McKay had expressed concern about the atmosphere of the movie industry, which was synonymous with Hollywood in many people's minds. They wanted the name of the stake to be changed so that a stake of Zion would no longer be associated with that industry in the public mind.[52] There seems to be some justification for this, for the month before the special priesthood meeting was called Presidents Grant and J. Reuben Clark spent four days at Twentieth Century Fox consulting with executives on matters relating to the production of the film "Brigham Young." They had ample opportunity to observe the false glitter and facade of the industry.

Some even recall that President Grant had such a dislike for the movie industry that he vowed there would never be another Hollywood Stake in the Church. However, some who have studied his life feel that he had a great admiration, not dislike, for it, and could separate the acts of a few individuals which gave it such a bad name from the industry itself and the town in which it was located.[53]

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[52]Edling, Oral History, p. 5; Winfield Q. Cannon, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

[53]Observation of James V. D'Arc, Archivist of Film and Sound, Brigham Young University Archives.

Others have suggested that since the stake center was not located in Hollywood, but in Los Angeles, changing the name would be more consistent with the unofficial Church policy of the day of naming Church units according to the areas in which their stake or ward houses were located. For three years Hollywood and the Hollywood Ward had not even been in the stake.[54] Still others have suggested that Church authorities in Salt Lake City did not want to build a temple within the boundaries of a stake named Hollywood, seeing that name as incompatible with what the Church stood for.[55]

Whatever the reason, an important era in the history of the Church came to a close after twelve years with the end of the Hollywood Stake. The preceding twelve years was a time of remarkable growth in Los Angeles, during which many important things were accomplished. Not the least of these was the building of the beautiful Hollywood Stake tabernacle/Wilshire Ward chapel, the creation of three additional stakes in Los Angeles and one in the valley, the instigation of the welfare program to help take care of the Saints' temporal needs, and the purchase of land within the stake boundaries for a temple to help further fulfill the spiritual needs of all the southern California Saints.

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[54]Russon, Oral History, p. 1.

[55]Huntington Park California Stake, "Sixtieth Anniversary Souvenir Booklet," LDS Church Archives.

As the year 1940 approached and the "new" Los Angeles Stake began its existence, the Church in Los Angeles appeared to have a bright future. While much had been accomplished during the period of the Hollywood Stake, much more needed to be done and the Saints in the Los Angeles Stake were gearing up to handle the challenges ahead. At the same time it could be seen that the dark war clouds over Europe caused by Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939 were spreading over the horizon of the United States and would eventually plunge the nation into a new world war. That war would momentarily sidetrack some of the California Saints' hopes and dreams, particularly with regard to their long-awaited temple.

CHAPTER 7

THE WAR YEARS AND BEYOND

On December 7, 1941, a date labeled by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt as one "which will live in infamy," the United States suddenly found itself actively involved in a world-wide war that had already engulfed much of Europe and Asia. Americans everywhere suddenly became more united than they had been in generations, as they prepared for a time of trial and sacrifice in order to bring the war to an end. "With confidence in our armed forces," President Roosevelt assured them the next day, "with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God." Among the Mormons in California, problems arising from a world at war could not be avoided and the struggle of America to achieve its victory also became one of the many important challenges the "new" Los Angeles Stake would face in the 1940s.

Though its name was changed, little else had as the stake continued to be one of the leaders in the Church in many respects. More importantly, stake members were continually of service to their fellow Saints throughout the

area and were willing to sacrifice to do their part in building the kingdom. Once again stake members pioneered new programs and continued to adapt to the challenge of living the gospel in a growing urban center, a situation made more challenging by a world at war.

At the January 1940 stake conference, the first for the "new" Los Angeles Stake, it was reported that 37 percent of the Aaronic Priesthood in the stake attended priesthood meeting, as opposed to an anemic Church average of 27 percent.[1] This represented a 15 percent stake-wide increase during the last six years, but still left much room for improvement. However, attendance of 20-25 percent at sacrament meeting and stake conference continued to nearly mirror Church averages.[2] Those who attended stake conference heard their leaders address the concerns of both the stake and the Church: ward teaching, tithing, fast offerings, welfare work, the Word of Wisdom, the adult Aaronic Priesthood program, observance of the sabbath day, missionary work, activity in the Church, marriage within the Church, the law of chastity, and other principles of the Gospel.

By 1940 plans for the anticipated Los Angeles Temple seemed to have fallen on hard times. One problem was the

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[1]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 20 January 1940.

[2]Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century, p. 69.

apparent lack of enthusiasm for genealogical and temple work throughout the Church. In July the Genealogy Committee in Salt Lake City announced that at the rate temple work was being done, the Salt Lake Temple could handle all the work in the Church by itself.[3]

Other reasons for delay were related to the war. In 1941 President David O. McKay was asked when work on the temple would begin. His reply was that it would not begin until after the Idaho Falls Temple was finished, and it was estimated that this would be in 1942. Consequently, funds for the Los Angeles Temple were included as part of the Church's 1942 budget.[4] The attack on Pearl Harbor, however, brought the United States into the Second World War and resulted in the delay of all building that was not war related, including the Idaho Falls Temple. As a result, that temple was not dedicated until September 1945, a month following the end of the war.

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[3] Margaret E. Gordon, supervisor for genealogy work in the California Mission, addressed this matter and what it meant for the anticipated Los Angeles Temple. In an article in the California Intermountain News, 26 July 1940, she declared:

> Our people must be awakened to the fact that there is much to be done and that unless we all take an interest in seeking after our kindred and having the work done for them there will be no need for more temples. That is the situation we in California face. Until the Mesa Temple is unable to handle our work why should there be a temple here?

[4] Ibid., 17 October 1941.

It would be another eleven years, however, before the Los Angeles Temple would be dedicated. In the meantime, not only delays associated with the war but also attention given to other aspects of building the kingdom took precedence over the temple.

Although the worst of the Great Depression was past, welfare work continued to be a major theme during stake conferences and continued to receive much of the attention of stake members. The welfare projects in the Los Angeles Stake covered a wide range. The Wilshire Ward Relief Society made children's clothes, rag rugs, and dolls' clothes from second-hand materials collected by the Deseret Industries.[6] Adams Ward erected a woodworking shop on the property adjoining its chapel where a variety of projects were undertaken to pay welfare allotments, stake budget, and retire ward indebtedness.[8]

Another welfare project which began in the Adams Ward was a sewing factory.[7] Bishop Jay Grant of the Adams Ward was owner and manager of Grant Apparel Company, one of the leading manufacturers of blouses on the west coast. Bishop Grant offered employment opportunities to Church

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[6]Ibid., 23 August 1940.

[8]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 March 1942.

[7]Ibid., 30 June 1942.

members, and all blouses made during the training period were given to the welfare program.

This program proved so successful that stake leaders came to feel that clothing production could be a welfare project in which stake members could participate relatively easily. Food production and processing, on the other hand, had proven difficult in an urban setting. In 1948, therefore, a stake sewing center was established in the former California Mission Home next to the Adams Chapel.[8] For a number of years, this served as the main welfare project of the Los Angeles Stake, becoming the main supplier of men's and boy's shirts for the welfare system. The "Shirt Factory," as it came to be known, received favorable coverage in the Los Angeles Times, and continued to help the image of the Church in Los Angeles.[9]

In the late thirties Church leaders continued to express concern over youth marrying outside the Church. In an attempt to deal with the problem, Adams Ward projected a plan for improving the piece of property located next to the chapel to be used as a recreational park.[10] The idea was to help LDS youth get together in a desirable atmosphere, with no cost to themselves. At the time, young people were

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[8]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:295.

[9]Los Angeles Times, 5 July 1952.

[10]Notes of a conversation with Jay S. Grant, June 1986, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

having to pay out money for their recreational programs with less than satisfactory results, for when they were taken away from the ward centers their surroundings were not always conducive to good morals and LDS ideals. The Adams Ward recreation center was opened in November 1940.[11] This park would play an important role in the recreational needs of the Los Angeles Latter-day Saint community for many years, and especially during World War II.

On 24 February 1941 the La Cienega Branch was created out of portions of the Wilshire, Arlington, Beverly Hills, and Mar Vista Wards. Although it was created mainly from wards of the Los Angeles Stake, this new branch became part of the Inglewood Stake.

By the fall of 1941 the United States was gearing up for possible involvement in war, and the Church was making preparations to assist its members in the armed services. Hugh B. Brown, the Church's Religious Coordinator for Servicemen, came to Los Angeles to ask the Saints' help in providing suitable entertainment for Mormon boys who come there on leave from the many military establishments on the Pacific Coast.[12]

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[11]The park, enclosed by a fence had a basketball standard, volleyball, badminton, ping pong, and tennis courts. There were places for shuffleboard, horseshoes, sand boxes, swings, slides, and jungle bars. Picnic tables were placed under shaded trees and a drinking fountain was installed. Fluorescent lights were added to illuminate the park. California Intermountain News, 15 November 1940.

[12]Ibid., 17 October 1941.

The Los Angeles Stake responded to the call and sponsored the first dance for servicemen on leave on Saturday, 1 November 1941. Young ladies of the stake who desired to help out were asked to save the evening for a "date with a soldier."[13] That night families in the stake put up the soldiers in their homes and provided them with home-cooked dinners on Sunday. Another dance was held on Armistice Day, 11 November 1941, following MIA, and the servicemen were again provided with home cooked meals that evening.

The events at Pearl Harbor on Sunday, 7 December 1941, brought the United States into full involvement in World War II and brought about many changes for the Church in Los Angeles. Because Los Angeles was located on the coast it was felt that there was the possibility of enemy attack, and local authorities requested that all buildings be blacked out if the air-raid signal sounded. During the first high council meeting held two days after the Pearl Harbor attack, the air-raid signal sounded and the stake center was blacked out.[14] As a result of the possibility of meetings being disrupted because of air-raids, Church leaders in Southern California decided that changes should be made in meeting schedules. Most southern California

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 10 December 1941.

wards and stakes cancelled all evening meetings and began to hold Sacrament Meetings in the afternoon or immediately following Sunday School.[15] MIA was also moved from the evening to the afternoon.

The Los Angeles Stake adopted a schedule in which Priesthood meeting was held from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, Sunday School at 10:30 A.M. and Sacrament Meeting at 11:30. This arrangement continued until May 1942, when the First Presidency issued a circular letter stating that the scheduling of back to back meetings was not the policy of the Church and that the practice should be abandoned.[16] Sacrament Meeting was therefore moved back to 6:30 P.M.

Another reason why meetings were scheduled back-to-back was the rationing of fuel. In Utah, most members were close enough to travel to Church without much difficulty. In Los Angeles, however, where distances were greater, traveling to meetings several times on Sunday became a burden and, consequently, some of the Saints curtailed their Church activities for they did not have enough gasoline coupons to attend all their meetings.[17]

The war brought other changes. Visits of General Authorities to stake conferences, for example, were reduced. Instead, quarterly bulletins were issued from Salt Lake City

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[15]California Intermountain News, 26 December 1941.

[16]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 13 May 1942.

[17]Edling, Oral History, p. 12.

outlining changes in various programs and giving messages of hope. Leaders in Salt Lake City also requested that all stake auxiliary meetings, such as conventions and institutes, be discontinued, and that ward activities be curtailed. While some ward primaries continued to meet at chapels during the week, others were moved to Sundays while others were held in homes.[18] Monthly Relief Society luncheons were still held, but only when enough ration tickets had been gathered to purchase the food. Initially, because of war conditions, the MIA General Board requested that all stake socials, except the Gold and Green Ball be discontinued. However, because of the charge that had been given to provide proper entertainment for LDS servicemen, stake leaders petitioned the First Presidency for permission to hold dances more often. In August 1942 permission was given to hold two dances each month.[19]

When the First Presidency authorized the stake to hold two parties per month, it was with the understanding that they would be opened only to members of the Church and investigators and that restrictions would be placed upon the attendance of non-members. Prior to this time, Church-sponsored dances had been opened to all soldiers, but several unpleasant incidents had occurred which Church

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[18]Church News, 30 October 1942.

[19]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 5 August 1942.

officials hoped to avoid in the future. In order to comply with the First Presidency's wish, cards were issued by the various bishops, and admittance to Church sponsored events was limited to those with cards.[20] A card could be obtained only through an interview with the bishop, or in the case of non-members, through the recommendation of someone who possessed a card. Thus through greater supervision, the goal of providing a wholesome atmosphere where young Latter-day Saint men and women and non-members of similar standards could gather was accomplished.

Making the need for appropriate entertainment all the more acute was the fact that southern California beaches were closed for a time because of fears of a possible attack, and most of the parks in Los Angeles were taken over by the military. Consequently, the Adams Ward Recreation Park was a boon for providing Saturday activities for stake members as well as for servicemen. Beginning in 1944, each Saturday Night during good weather a dance was held on the park's dance floor.[21] Games, activities, and refreshments were also provided, with the Gleaner Girls of the stake serving as hostesses. Thus, while the recreation center had been built initially to serve the needs of the youth of the stake, it also helped fill the pressing need of assuring that LDS servicemen had an enjoyable evening with Church

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[20]Edling, Oral History, p. 15.

[21]Grant, "Conversation."

members in an atmosphere conducive to maintaining Church standards.

In November 1942, the only time figures were published, there were 144 men and women of the Los Angeles Stake serving in the armed forces.[22] Many of these were members of the Hollywood Ward, which periodically held "Hollywood Ward Night" during Sacrament Meeting under the direction of Bishop John M. Russon. At these meetings letters were read from the ward's servicemen and members of the ward were called upon to bear their testimonies.

Under the direction of the stake MIA, headed by Ira L. Hurst, Stake YMMIA President, and Mona Kirkham, Stake YWMIA President, the Los Angeles Stake furnished a recreation room at Camp Haan where servicemen not on leave could go during their leisure time.[23] Each of the wards and the various stake organizations accepted specific assignments in furnishing the room. In addition, a project was undertaken to see that meeting times of the various wards were posted in nearby military camps.

LDS servicemen on leave frequently visited Hollywood, a favorite gathering place for many American servicemen. Because there were not enough motels and hotels in the area, they sometimes resorted to sleeping in the streets. When the Hollywood Ward Elders Quorum became aware

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[22]California Intermountain News, 27 November 1942.

[23]Ibid., 16 April 1943.

of the situation, it encouraged ward members to open their homes on the weekends for LDS servicemen who were visiting Hollywood or who were attending Church-sponsored activities. To help this undertaking, cots were purchased from ward budget funds and stored at the chapel for use by ward members.[24] Nearly two hundred servicemen could be housed any particular evening because of the efforts of the Hollywood Ward.

The members of the Los Angeles Stake were also directly involved in the war effort. The Hollywood Ward undertook a project to sell war bonds, selling in excess of $15,000 worth. The stake's MIA joined with other MIA's throughout the Church in selling war bonds to help purchase rescue boats for planes.[25] Stake members responded to Red Cross calls and organized blood drives. The Beverly Hills Ward organized a Victory Garden Committee which supervised four ward garden projects encompassing about seven acres.[26]

The stake's war effort also proved a means for innovative welfare work. The Los Angeles Stake undertook a project in cooperation with the United States Employment Service, the Labor Division of the Department of Agriculture, and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce to help

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[24]Ibid., 19 February 1943.

[25]Ibid., 14 May 1943.

[26]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 June 1943.

harvest Southland crops that might otherwise have remained unharvested because of a lack of labor. When it was learned that there were fields that needed harvesting, stake members organized to help. Those who worked on this project not only earned credit for Church Welfare activity but also helped the war effort by harvesting badly needed food.

As the war progressed Los Angeles' population grew as people came from throughout the country to work in the rapidly expanding war industries. These industries, in fact, brought not only an increase in population but also an increase in traffic, a greater demand for land, a rise in housing costs, and the beginnings of serious problems with smog. No longer was unemployment a major concern of the welfare program in Los Angeles. However, the increase in the number of Latter-day Saints created a major new welfare concern--finding adequate housing for newly arrived Church members.

To meet the demands for war-related goods, factories began running three shifts a day, and as men were drafted, women began taking their place in the factories, ushering in a permanent change in the work force and contributed to a gradual change in perspective concerning the place of women in society. Because of the increasing population, the accelerated movement of people, and the constant changes taking place in work schedules and the makeup of the labor force, a major problem faced by the Los Angeles Stake and

other stakes in the area was filling ward and stake positions and seeing that programs, such as ward teaching, were adequately run. Consequently, a major portion of the energy of stake leaders was spent trying to fill the holes which continually seemed to arise in the organizational structure.[27]

When the war finally ended in August 1945 and peace was brought momentarily to the world, it had not been without tragic cost to the Los Angeles Stake. Records indicate that at least twenty-two members of the stake lost their lives as a result of the war.[28]

While the war took a top priority during the early 1940s, there was other work that needed to be done in the stake. In October 1941 ground was broken for the Arlington Ward chapel. The following month construction work commenced and all employable members of the Church in Los Angeles who were receiving welfare assistance were assigned to be part of the labor force. In December 1942 the Arlington Ward moved into its new building, though until the chapel was dedicated services were held in the recreation hall. The dedication service, originally scheduled for April 1943, had to be postponed because of the restrictions Church leaders had placed upon General Authority travel.

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[27]Edling, Oral History, p. 13.

[28]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to Mark E. Petersen, 12 June 1946, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

Finally, in June 1943, President David O. McKay dedicated the Arlington Chapel.

The Arlington Ward was not the only ward to undertake a building program during the war. In May 1943, after six years of planning and fund raising, Hollywood Ward members, under the direction of Bishop Russon, began an intensive and extensive renovation, redecoration, and refurnishing program for their chapel, which lasted for six months. On 23 November 1943 the Hollywood Ward chapel was rededicated by Elder George Albert Smith, President of the Council of the Twelve.

With the end of World War II, the Saints helped the nations of the world to pick up the pieces. To help aid the Saints in war-torn Europe, clothing and non-perishable food drives were undertaken throughout the Unites States. Nearly $60,000 worth of goods was gathered by the Church in Los Angeles and sent for the relief of the European Saints. At the same time, to help pick up the pieces at home, the Los Angeles Stake presidency appointed George W. McCune to visit and administer to Latter-day Saints at the Veterans Hospital at Sawtelle.[29]

The Los Angeles Stake grew rapidly during the war, mostly because of members coming from the intermountain area for employment in defense industries. At the beginning of 1947, stake membership stood at 5118, an increase of over a

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[29]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 7 July 1948.

thousand since the beginning of the war. All this created the need for a sixth ward in the stake, and on 30 June 1946 the La Brea Ward was created from portions of the Wilshire, Hollywood, and Beverly Hills Wards. G. Lynn Hogan was sustained as the first bishop and Gunhild L. Beckstead as Relief Society president. Initially the meetings of the La Brea Ward were held in the Wilshire Ward chapel.

In November 1947 members of the First Presidency came to Los Angeles to visit the temple site. On 15 November, President George Albert Smith announced in the Church News that Church leaders were "thoroughly satisfied with the site and if assurances can be had that zoning laws will protect the surrounding area we will be ready to proceed with construction."[30] Preston Richards, a member of the Los Angeles Stake Presidency and a former law partner of J. Reuben Clark, was given the responsibility to do the legal work for the temple. Finally, the long awaited day of having a temple in Los Angeles seemed near at hand. In December the Church took the first formal step when the Los Angeles City Planning Commission was asked to approve construction.

January 1948 marked the 25th anniversary of the creation of a stake in Los Angeles, and this called for a celebration. On Sunday, 25 January 1948, a commemorative meeting was held at the Adams Ward Chapel, where the stake

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[30]Church News, 15 November 1947.

was organized, to which all those who were present at the organization were especially invited. There were 104 in attendance who were present twenty-five years earlier, including all members of the original stake presidency.

The growth of the Church in the twenty-five years that had passed since the organization of the stake is seen in the fact that the original twelve wards created the first year were now located in six stakes that included over fifty wards. Church membership in Los Angeles had grown from around 4,000 in 1923 to nearly 40,000.

A major concern among Church leaders continued to be youth marrying outside the Church. During the early months of 1948 Bishop Jay S. Grant of the Adams Ward felt great concern when statistics showed that less than 50 percent of his ward's youth were marrying within the Church. A subsequent survey of all the wards of the stake revealed that nearly 60 percent of the youth of the stake were marrying outside the Church, with a majority of those losing all contact with the Church.[21] Seeing a need to be met, Bishop Grant, with the blessing of President Edling and Howard W. Hunter, President of the Pasadena Stake and Chairman of the regional stake president's council, set out to find a solution.

Shortly after he had been put in the Adams Ward Bishopric, Bishop Grant and his wife, Nina, had held what

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[21]Grant, "Conversation."

they called "get acquainted parties." They invited to their home for games and refreshments different groups of long-time ward members plus new move-ins or converts. This program not only proved successful in establishing friendships, but occasionally resulted in the marriage of some of the young people who met at the Grant home. The Grants decided to try the principle with the LDS youth in general by arranging for parties where they could meet each other in a positive, Church-related atmosphere. Using their own home and financial means, and a committee of stake members, they set out to establish a "get acquainted party" for the M-Men and Gleaners in Los Angeles.[32]

Bishop Grant contacted the leaders of each of the six stakes, who were asked to furnish lists of the unmarried M-Men and Gleaners in their stakes. Personal invitations were sent, and at the first party in August 1948 nearly six hundred showed up, some from as far away as San Francisco.[33] To attend the party, guests had to obtain a card from their bishops, such as those used for dances during the war, verifying that they were members in good standing.

These initial parties proved so successful that the Los Angeles Stake scheduled a "get acquainted dance" at the stake house in the later part of September 1948. Other stakes scheduled similar dances, and hardly two weeks passed

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[32]Church News, 1 September 1948.

[33]Ibid.

without a "get acquainted dance" being held in one of the stakes in the Los Angeles area. Not only were the youth getting to know other members of the Church whom they might not have known otherwise, but the goal of increasing temple marriages was achieved as at least ninety-three couples who were introduced to each other for the first time at these socials were married in the temple.[34]

At a stake conference held on 16 January 1949, with Elders Spencer W. Kimball and Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve in attendance, Wilford Edling was released as President of the Los Angeles Stake after thirteen years of service. John M. Russon, bishop of the Hollywood Ward, was unanimously sustained to take his place. As counselors, President Russon chose Melvin Keller and Orson Haynie, and Ralph T. Rolapp was sustained as stake clerk.

The usual expressions of appreciation given to retiring stake presidents were especially deserved by President Edling. During the last six years of his presidency he lived in Los Angeles while his family lived in Salt Lake City, and only an occasional visit could be made. In 1943 Relia Edling's asthmatic condition had deteriorated to the point that a change of climate was needed to escape the effects of the ocean breezes. For years the Edlings had desired to move to Glendale, partially to escape the

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[34]Grant, "Conversation."

breezes. But since that was outside the stake boundaries they remained where they were so that President Edling could fulfill his assignment as stake president. Because Relia had family to stay with in Utah, and relatives there in the medical profession, she finally moved to Salt Lake City for what they initially felt would only be a short separation. As the length of separation grew, however, President Edling approached President David O. McKay on several occasions regarding the possibility of being released so that he could be reunited with his family. Each time he was approached, President McKay discussed the matter with the First Presidency and each time President Edling would be told, "Yes, there will be a change, but not yet."[28]

Consequently, the Edlings tried to make the best of the situation. The family made summer visits to Los Angeles as long as Relia's health would permit and President Edling visited his family in Utah when the occasion would allow. During the war years these visits were especially infrequent because of gasoline shortages. Whatever trips could be made during this time were usually by train. Following his release, the Edlings did indeed move to Glendale.

The new stake president, John M. Russon, was born in Salt Lake City and moved with his family to Southern California in 1924. After graduating from Hollywood High he

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[28]Wilford G. Edling, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

studied at the University of Utah and served in the Swiss-German Mission. Professionally, he worked in the life insurance business, specializing in estate analysis and planning.

The welfare needs of the Church in Los Angeles continued to be a concern and shortly after John Russon became stake president, the Los Angeles Stake joined with the South Los Angeles and the Inglewood Stakes in trying to find one location suitable for a welfare center that would meet the needs of the entire area. Shortly, an excellent site was located in East Los Angeles on Soto Avenue, between 11th and 12th streets. The IRS had placed a tax lien upon the property and its buildings and it was to be auctioned to the highest bidder. With the assistance of Elder Henry D. Moyle of the Council of the Twelve, this property was purchased for $175,000, roughly one-third its actual value.[38]

In September 1949 the Church placed funds in escrow, and by January 1950 the property was cleared for the creation of a huge welfare center for the southern California region. The buildings on the property provided nearly 80,000 square feet of space, and remodeling began

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[38]Following the purchase, the Church was offered $170,000 for part of the property, but it had an ideal location for carrying out its welfare program and declined the offer. Jay S. Grant, Conversation.

immediately.[37] By 1951, the Deseret Industries, the Bishop's Storehouse, and other welfare activities had all been moved to this location.

In June 1950 the Church made its second major welfare purchase of the year in Southern California when it bought the 505 acre ranch of Louis B. Mayer at Perris in Riverside County. The Perris property was a beautiful horse ranch complete with ranch house, nine guest cottages, a race track, eleven barns containing horse stalls, a garage, a blacksmith shop, a paint shop, a machine shop, chicken coops, feed sheds, farm land, and complete equipment to operate the farm.[38] The ranch also contained an extensive underground irrigation system, five wells, and thirty-five miles of fencing which had been installed at a cost of $10,444 per mile.

Elder Henry D. Moyle was instrumental in locating the property and persuading the stake presidents in southern California to purchase it as a welfare project. The asking price for the land was $400,000, which Elder Moyle believed was a fraction of its true value. To purchase the property required a down payment of $100,000, and the Saints in the Los Angeles area were given less than one month to come up with the money.[39] The stake presidents were taken aback at

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[37]Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity, 1:290.

[38]Ibid., 1:290-291.

[39]Russon, Oral History, p. 13.

the prospect of raising that amount until they were reminded that it was a small step from $100,000 to two dollars, which was the amount that each member in the area would have to come up with to reach the down payment.[40] The stake presidents accepted the challenge and within two weeks had come up with the money. The remaining cost of the ranch would be paid outright by the Church, with the region expected to repay the Church over the next five years.

Various projects were envisioned for the ranch, including the raising of beef and dairy cattle, turkeys, and chickens, and these were divided among the varies stakes. The Los Angeles stake initially was given responsibility for the potato project. In addition, volunteers were needed to fix and maintain the ranch. Most of the buildings required new paint jobs and new roofs along with other maintenance projects.

As a welfare farm, however, the Perris ranch failed to measure up to expectations. Within a couple of years most welfare projects gave way to the potato project, since that could be carried out more easily than the daily care required by animal projects. Moreover, the expenditure of manpower and money that it took to operate and maintain the property forced operations in the red. Just to bring water to the land, for example, cost over $5,000 a month.[41] One

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[40]California Intermountain News, 4 July 1950.

[41]Russon, Oral History, p. 13.

stake president soon composed a song entitled "Some Day the Ranch Will Pay," which was sung at the various welfare meetings that dealt with the farm and resulted in many a good laugh from the other presidents.[42] Feeling that the efforts of members in southern California could be used more productively, therefore, the stake presidents recommended that the ranch be sold and that other welfare property, such as citrus groves, be purchased. At first the proposal was met with opposition in Salt Lake City, mainly from Elder Moyle who felt that if the region held onto the ranch it could be sold at a substantial profit. It was finally sold at a fair profit and the money was used to purchase other welfare projects, including a citrus grove.[43]

While the Perris ranch failed to measure up as a welfare farm, President Russon saw its importance as extending far beyond the welfare work. Later he said that he felt that the raising of $100,000

> was the Lord's way of preparing the hearts of the people of Southern California to respond to the request to help build the kingdom. . . . I believe that that was the seed that enabled us to have . . . the overwhelming success that we did when it came to raising the funds for the temple. . . . Had it not been for that and the faith of the people demonstrating that they would respond and could raise those sums of money, I don't think we would have had the

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[42]John M. Russon, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[43]Russon, Oral History, p. 18.

> temple nearly as early as we did in the Los Angeles area.[44]

The first decade of the "new" Los Angeles Stake was one filled with challenges brought about by events not only in Los Angeles but throughout the world. The problems that were met and overcome not only helped strengthen the Church in Los Angeles, but also helped prepare the Saints for the blessings of having a temple in their midst. Meeting such challenges as continued population increase, the needs of servicemen, the requirements of the war, the needs of the welfare program, the concerns of youth marrying outside the Church, and the continued filling of a calling by a stake president separated from loved ones showed that while their tasks were not always easy, stake members continued to be anxiously engaged in building the kingdom.

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[44]Russon, Questionnaire.

CHAPTER 8

A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

On 17 January 1949, the First Presidency presided at a meeting of southern California Church leaders at the Wilshire Ward chapel. At this meeting, President George Albert Smith announced that the time was now right for a temple to be built in Los Angeles. President Smith also announced that the proposed Los Angeles Temple would be substantially larger than the one envisioned in previous architectural plans. Instead of seating two hundred people, the ordinance rooms would seat three hundred, the same capacity as those of the Salt Lake Temple. Also, a large priesthood assembly room would be added. When President Smith asked for a sustaining vote on the proposal to build a temple in the Southland, approval was unanimous.

Three weeks earlier, on 27 December 1948, the members of the First Presidency had sent a letter to the eight stake presidents in southern California announcing the meeting and indicating that "it would seem we have come to the point where we may with wisdom go forward with this long desired

and anticipated construction of a House of the Lord."[1] Building the temple had been delayed, the letter said, because of problems relating to World War II and the need to "forestall, if possible, the establishment of industrial and business operations" in the area surrounding the temple "which would be undesirable."

The letter also recommended that the stake presidents meet as soon as possible to discuss a fund raising campaign. When a fund-raising program had been undertaken for the Idaho Falls Temple ten years earlier, the response of the Saints in Idaho was less than Church leaders had hoped for.[2] Understandably, they were anxious to avoid similar problems in southern California.

Shortly following this long-awaited announcement, local Church leaders sent a letter to the southern California Saints discussing "the benefits, and opportunities afforded the Church membership to make contributions towards the erection of this Temple."[3] It also discussed the advantages of building a temple on Santa Monica Boulevard and President Heber J. Grant's inspiration in selecting the site. "It is

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[1]First Presidency to the Stake Presidents of Southern California, 27 December 1948, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[2]Ibid.; Minutes of Los Angeles Temple Committee, 28 February 1949, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[3]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to Saints in Southern California, undated typescript, Los Angeles Stake Collection. See also David H. Cannon to the members of the Los Angeles Temple Committee, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

the highest point in elevation between Los Angeles and the ocean, and the great highways and contemplated freeways running north and south and from the east meet within a short distance of the Temple lot, affording excellent transportation facilities." Furthermore, the letter said, the temple "will add greatly to the already developing cultural life of the educational community in which it is situated." The letter reminded the Saints that the words of Brigham Young concerning the Salt Lake Temple also applied to the Los Angeles Temple, "It shall be a monument to the City . . . and an acknowledgement of our faith and devotion to God."

With the announcement of the temple, it was anticipated that ground-breaking and the fund-raising campaign would take place within the year. However, two years would pass before ground was broken, and three years before fund-raising and construction began. There were several reasons for the delay. One was the need to draw plans for a larger temple. For almost two years Church architect Edward O. Anderson and his staff labored to complete the working plans, which had to be submitted to the city for approval. After that, final drafts and specifications still needed to be prepared. Next, there were legal problems to take care of. Several branches of city government--the planning commission, the city engineer, the building department--had to be consulted and all their regulations met. Preston

D. Richards, a former counselor in the Los Angeles Stake Presidency and the Church's legal counsel in southern California, worked, at no expense to the Church, to obtain the necessary permits, plan approval and zoning changes. After nearly two years, Richards' efforts were finally rewarded on 9 January 1951 as the Los Angeles City Council approved construction of the temple. "I thought I knew what red tape was until I ran into the Los Angeles building restrictions and requirements," he later commented.[4] A final reason for the delay was that shortly following the city's approval of the plans, President George Albert Smith passed away, and the natural delays surrounding the installation of a new First Presidency postponed some of the temple preparations.

On 22 September 1951, ground was broken for the Los Angeles Temple. The ceremony was not publicly announced, but was a small, "brief and more-or-less informal" ceremony with only the California stake presidencies and their wives and city officials invited to attend.[5] Since facilities were not available to accommodate a larger crowd, which Church officials estimated would have been at least 10,000 if all Church members were invited, the numbers were kept

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[4]California Intermountain News, 27 September 1955.

[5]First Presidency to John M. Russon, W. Noble Waite, and Howard W. Hunter, 14 September 1951, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

small. Also in attendance were more than a score of general authorities.

President David O. McKay told those present that "a hundred years from now men will read with great interest the happenings of this day."[6] He then led the group to what would be the southeast corner of the temple and, with a gilded shovel, dug into the earth. Other leaders also took turns breaking the earth, which proved to be so hard that President McKay obligingly "softened it up" with his shovel for some of the brethren, much to the delight of those in attendance.[7] Following the ground-breaking, President McKay dedicated the site for a House of the Lord.

Two weeks later the stake presidents in the Los Angeles Temple district were invited to meet with President Stephen L Richards, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, during October General Conference to discuss fund raising. President Richards reminded them that it was customary for members in a temple district to make contributions and then informed them that the First Presidency had "decided that possibly a million dollars would be your fair share."[8] President Noble Waite of the South Los Angeles Stake, chairman of the fund raising committee, later commented that President Richards did not know

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[6]California Intermountain News, 27 September 1955.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Conference Report, October 1952, p. 75.

how nearly [he] knocked out fourteen stake presidents with that statement. We kept our chins up and it was only afterwards when we got out, and we confided in each other that we were really staggered. But we had received the commission . . . and our instructions were to make a plan, organize, and submit the plan, and get the approval of the First Presidency.[9]

President Richards suggested that the total amount should be divided between the stakes in the temple district and Church members living in the California Mission. However, it was the desire of the First Presidency that no individual assessments be made, but each person should give what he or she was able, on the principle of the widow's mite. President Richards also recommended that a guide be created indicating how much families in a particular income bracket might give. The Brethren were confident that if local members were directed as to possible contributions, local leaders would be able to raise their share.

When the stake presidents returned to California they formulated a plan, which, with a few modifications, was accepted by the First Presidency. The assessments to the stakes and the mission were made according to population, with the Los Angeles Stake being responsible for raising $70,000. A pledge card was created so that "every giver may determine for himself and according to his own circumstances the size of his Temple contribution."[10] Each stake was to

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[9]Ibid.

[10]Los Angeles Temple Fund Pledge Card, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

see that all Church members receive copies of the guide through the wards. The wards were to obtain pledges from their members and turn the total over to the stakes.

President McKay agreed to come to Los Angeles and officially launch the fund-raising campaign. On Sunday, 3 February 1952, the Prophet met with twelve hundred stake and ward leaders and assured them that all was finally in preparation for building a temple, and that construction would shortly begin. He also discussed the fund raising campaign and commended the group for the spirit of cooperation and unity being shown in this campaign to construct the "largest temple ever built in this dispensation." He urged the leaders to "let the young people, even the children in the cradle, contribute to the temple fund, for this is their temple, where they will be led by pure love to take their marriage vows."[11]

President Waite later told a General Conference audience that the fund raising plan would not have been as successful "if it had not been for the soul-inspiring discourse of President McKay. He electrified those 1200 people, and they went out of that meeting with a determination in their hearts that they were going to consummate that commission that was given by the First Presidency."[12] To help ensure that this determination remained in the hearts

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[11]California Intermountain News, 5 February 1952.

[12]Conference Report, October 1952, p. 76.

of the southern California Saints, President McKay also exhibited a three-foot scale model of the anticipated temple, which would be displayed in the various stakes throughout the fund-raising campaign.

Sunday, 17 February 1952, was the day set aside in the Los Angeles Stake for gathering pledges. During the previous week each family in the stake had been sent a pledge card and souvenir folder of the temple. Prior to Sunday each family was to consider a pledge and seal it in an envelope. Between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. on the appointed day, a representative of the bishopric (priesthood leader, ward teacher, visiting teacher, or other ward officer) visited each home in the stake to pick up the envelope and answer any question the families might have. After totaling their pledges, each ward conveyed its total to President Russon. When all the pledges had been received and the stake's total known, the figure was telegraphed to President McKay that evening. The following morning President Russon received a telegram from the First Presidency: "Congratulations to Los Angeles Stake Membership on being first in Los Angeles Temple District to complete canvass for temple subscriptions amounting to 238 percent of quota. Commendation and Blessing."[13]

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[13]First Presidency to John M. Russon, 18 February 1952, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

Instead of the $70,000 they had been asked to pledge, the members of the Los Angels Stake pledged $163,450 that Sunday and an additional $18,000 in the next several weeks. When the total of the pledges of all the stakes were added together, over $1,648,000 had been pledged, or nearly 165 percent of what the local Saints had been asked to give.

By July 1952 all preparations for work on the temple were complete, and the following month work began. Overseeing the construction was Church architect Edward O. Anderson, who moved his office from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles. He located it first in the old Harold Lloyd estate and then in the basement of the temple's Bureau of Information (Visitors Center) when it was complete. During the time that he oversaw the work on the Los Angeles Temple he also prepared the plans for the London and Swiss temples.

Steadily the temple took shapc, with its progress being followed almost weekly in the California Intermountain News and the Church News. As the work progressed, few were unimpressed with the massive undertaking. President McKay, on touring the recently poured foundations, commented that he could not believe he had approved a project as vast as this one. He mentioned that in the blueprints it just did not look like it would be that huge an operation.[14]

And huge it was. The temple was 364 feet wide, 241 feet deep and contained 190,614 square feet of floor space,

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[14]Russon, Oral History, p. 13.

or approximately four and one half acres. The concrete foundations were twenty-four feet deep and two feet thick. The excavation for the footings and foundations and the pouring of the foundations took nearly six months. The height of the building, including the tower, was 257 feet, eight and one-half inches, with the tower rising 151 feet, eight and one-half inches above the roof. Atop the sacred building was a statue of the Angel Moroni, which weighed 2100 pounds and was fifteen feet, five and one-half inches tall, with an eight foot trumpet. When the temple was planned only one other building in Los Angeles was taller--the Los Angeles City Building--and when completed, it could be seen by ships twenty-five miles out to sea. During the period it took just to build the Los Angeles Temple, another temple, the Swiss Temple, was planned, built, and dedicated.

As work progressed on the temple, stake members also faithfully progressed toward paying their pledges. Although they had greatly over-subscribed their quota, they worked to meet the amount they pledged, as did those in the other stakes. One young deacon filled out a pledge card for $150. When the bishop saw the amount he felt sure the deacon must have made a mistake. The deacon assured the bishop, however, that he wished to give $150 to the temple and that the amount was within his reach.[18] Whatever money this young man earned from his paper route, mowing lawns or

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[18]Conference Report, October 1954, p. 73.

other odd jobs that came his way, he gave to the temple fund. Within two and one-half years he had met his pledge. One elderly widow, in frail health and nearly blind, pledged $400 dollars and gave that amount and more from her meager savings. As she neared her total pledge in September 1954 she told her bishop: "I hope and pray the Lord will bless me and preserve my life until I can have the privilege of going through the Los Angeles Temple."[18]

These were only two of many examples that could be given of sacrifices made to build a House of the Lord. Children emptied their piggy banks, families put off making home improvements, buying new cars, or taking vacations to donate to the temple. Stake presidents throughout the temple district reported that donating to the temple was a faith-promoting and testimony-building experience for the members in southern California, and that peace and happiness were the result of taking the opportunity to contribute.

Stake members donated not only their means, but also their time. While full-time laborers did the actual building, Church members helped in other ways. They performed clean-up work on the grounds, for example, and armed with hoes and shovels they assisted in seeding the lawn and landscaping. They also contributed funds for landscaping beyond their original contributions.

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[18]Ibid., p. 73.

As the Saints in southern California continued to give of their time and financial means, President Noble Waite told a General Conference audience:

> We are enthusiastic. . . . We are very happy and proud, and we are very thankful that the First Presidency and the other General Authorities of the Church are building a temple in our area. I am sure it is going to do a great deal of good in Southern California.
>
> I vision a spiritual renaissance in that area. Our people will be spiritually uplifted. It will be a great blessing. . . . Unflinchingly and unhesitatingly, we shall move forward doing everything in our power to see that everything goes in accordance with the plans of the First Presidency of the Church.[17]

As the temple rose, thousands of interested people came to visit. In April 1953, the Los Angeles Stake High Priests Quorum was conducted through a tour of its shell. Between sessions of the October 1953 stake conference held at the Westwood Ward, President John Russon led nearly one thousand stake members to the unfinished temple for a tour. But stake members were not the only ones interested, and as the massive structure took shape so many visitors stopped that a Temple Mission was created to answer their questions and to conduct guided tours of the grounds so that the work could progress uninterrupted. One visitor, a writer for the Southwest Builder and Contractor, wrote, "It is already

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[17]Ibid., October 1952, p. 77.

quite apparent that nothing more impressive has ever been built in Southern California."[18]

By December 1953, the building had risen to the base of the tower, and work had progressed to the point where a cornerstone could be laid. On 11 December, ten thousand Church members and nearly all of the General Authorities attended the cornerstone laying ceremony, one of the largest gatherings of Latter-day Saints in California up to that time. President McKay conducted the ceremony and President Stephen L Richards laid and dedicated the cornerstone on the east side of the building.[19]

In addition to those in attendance, countless others listened by radio as the ceremony was broadcast both in Los Angeles and over KSL radio in Salt Lake City. The ceremony was also filmed and recorded for the benefit of future generations.

In October 1954, ten months following the cornerstone laying, the imposing Angel Moroni statue was placed atop the temple. Originally the statue faced south, towards the front of the temple, but it was turned a quarter turn to face east, the same direction that the angel Moroni on the Salt Lake Temple faces. The story is told of a neighbor to the east of the temple who, when asked if she had visited

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[18]As cited in the California Intermountain News, 3 November 1953.

[19]Improvement Era 57 (January 1954): 8, 50-51.

the temple grounds, replied "No, I'm waiting until the angel turns around and faces me." She later told one of the guides on the temple grounds, "Imagine my surprise when I woke up one morning and discovered that the angel was looking right down my street."[20]

Frederick G. Williams, President of the Temple Mission, relates some of the other humorous stories associated with people who visited the temple. One well-dressed woman asked if it was the Angel Gabriel on top of the temple. When told it was the Angel Moroni she replied that her husband had said there were only two individuals who could blow a horn like that, the Angel Gabriel and Louis Armstrong, and she was sure it wasn't Louis Armstrong. A man upon seeing the reflecting pool at the front of the temple wanted to know if all the neighbors would be permitted to use the swimming pool or would it be restricted only to members of the Church. One Jewish visitor told a story which reflected the pride felt in Los Angeles for the new temple even among non-Mormons. When her family visited Salt Lake City, she said, her nine-year-old son told a Temple Square guide, "You should see our temple in Los Angeles. It's bigger and prettier than this one, and it has ninety rooms in it."[21]

By autumn 1955 the work on the temple was nearly complete, and the building was opened to public tours before

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[20]California Intermountain News, 8 March 1956.

[21]Ibid., 27 September 1956.

dedication. At first it was unclear whether non-members would be allowed to tour the temple without a Church member accompanying them, but so many expressed a desire to see it that the decision was made to open the pre-dedication tours to all those who wished to attend. As a trial run, two thousand area Church leaders and their wives were invited to tour the temple on 25 November 1955.

On 19 December it was opened for public viewing and it remained open to the public until 18 February.[22] By that time over 662,000 people had visited the temple, far exceeding the number anticipated. Often the line of people waiting to enter the temple would form a semi-circle around the grounds, four abreast, even though the wait was several hours.

Visitors came from throughout the West as chartered busses brought them from as far away as Seattle, Washington and Utah. Local sightseeing companies made the temple tour part of their tours of the city. Among the visitors was Cecil B. DeMille, then directing the movie, "The Ten Commandments," who was taken through by President David O. McKay, and actor Harold Lloyd from whom the temple property had been purchased in 1939.

The .61 mile tour usually lasted approximately 45 minutes once the visitor was inside the Temple. Guides from

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[22]For a detailed look at the public tours see Improvement Era 59 (March 1956): 156-159, 187-190.

the Los Angeles area were stationed throughout the temple to answer visitor's questions. Members of the Los Angeles Stake and the other stakes in the area donated a great number of hours to see that all went smoothly for the visitors. One day Willard P. Burnham of the Wilshire Ward pushed fourteen wheelchair visitors through the temple tour.

The tours eliminated much of the misunderstanding that existed among non-members concerning the purpose of the temple. One rumor had surfaced that the Mormons were going to bring their dead to the temple to baptize them; as a result several homes near the temple were put on the market, often at reduced prices. Not only did the tours clear up such misinformation, they also allowed non-members to learn of the purpose of the temple and to partake of its beauty.

Those who attended often wrote local leaders concerning their feelings. The Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles adopted a resolution congratulating the Church for its wonderful edifice. The resolution read, in part, "Not only spiritually but architecturally it constitutes one of the notable additions to the life of Southern California."[23] Another visitor wrote: "It was a day we will never forget. The beauty and magnitude were completely overwhelming. One thing we all noted was how friendly and helpful everyone was--always a smile, but then I guess they have so

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[23]Ibid., p. 156.

much to be proud and grateful for."[24] From another visitor came this note: "Last evening my husband and I had the rare privilege of seeing your new temple which is truly beautiful and inspiring. . . . I think if you knew what a tremendous spiritual uplift we both experienced you would forgive me for the small contribution I am sending."[25] The opening of the temple was also covered favorably in the local papers as well as national magazines such as Time.[26]

Following the last day of tours on 18 February 1956, the temple was closed for nearly a month as workmen finished the last details and worked to get everything in order for the dedication services in March. The final details were supervised by the first Temple President, Benjamin L. Bowring, and Sister Leone Bowring, the Temple matron. The Bowrings came to this assignment from Hawaii where they presided over the Hawaii Temple.

On Sunday, 11 March 1956, the long-anticipated day had arrived when the Los Angeles Temple was to be dedicated.[27] Between Sunday and Wednesday, March 14, eight dedicatory sessions were held. At each session nearly 6,700 Saints were in attendance, seated not only in the assembly hall,

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[24]Ibid., p. 159.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Time, 16 January 1956.

[27]See Improvement Era 59 (April 1956): 228-232 for a more detailed account of the dedicatory services.

but also in the ordinance rooms and other places throughout the temple where the services were carried over closed circuit television. The services were open to all members of the Church who could qualify for a recommend and over 50,000 Saints attended.

At the opening session President McKay paid special tribute to three great Church leaders who passed away before construction began: President Heber J. Grant, Preston B. Richards, former counselor in the Los Angeles Stake Presidency, and David P. Howells, former bishop of the Wilshire Ward, had carried much of the responsibility for purchasing the temple property and laying the spiritual and legal groundwork allowing for its construction. Following addresses by the counselors in the First Presidency and Noble Waite, who represented the Saints in Los Angeles, President McKay offered the dedicatory prayer.

Those present then joined in singing "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning," a song that had been sung at the dedication of the Church's first temple at Kirtland, Ohio, and at every temple dedication since. They also gave the traditional "Hosanna Shout," a shout echoed in spirit by members throughout the Church.

By the time of the Los Angeles Temple dedication, the spiritual renaissance envisioned for the Saints in southern California had already begun. For several years the entire Latter-day Saint community had worked with the common goal

of seeing the temple to completion. The Saints had sacrificed both time and money, but they saw that their efforts had brought forth great blessings, including a noticeable increase in spiritual strength. One observer has commented that because of the temple within its boundaries, the Los Angeles Stake progressed from being a "social stake" to becoming a spiritual stake.[28] While it cannot be said that spiritual matters were not emphasized earlier, it was nevertheless clear that because of the temple spiritual matters took on a new importance and direction. There were several reasons for this.

As discussed earlier, when Church finances would not allow for the building of chapels during the depression, some members in California had doubts as to whether they were to remain there. When Church leaders announced a short time later that chapel building would resume, few could doubt that the Church was in California to stay. Such can be the power of a building. Since the Los Angeles Temple was the most expensive and most sacred Church building in California, its construction strongly affirmed that the Church was now firmly entrenched.

No longer need southern California Church members be concerned about establishing their identity through socials and stage productions; these now become more a source of

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[28]Notes of a conversation with Arthur P. Wallace, 1986, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

fellowship than identity. Now the Saints could gather to the House of the Lord and gain an even more special identity and unity with each other through performing eternal ordinances for the living and the dead. They could also gather on the temple grounds as family, friends, ward members, and fellow Saints and simply enjoy the spirit of the imposing temple reaching heavenward, taking their thoughts with it.

All this helped remind Church members that having built the temple they were obliged to work even harder than before to fulfill the mission of the Church. Thus the temple became a blessing to member and non-member alike as renewed emphasis was given to that mission. Before long it was clear that missionary work had increased, temple and genealogical work had increased, and greater emphasis was being placed on preparing the youth for temple marriage and on preparing all the Saints to enter the House of the Lord.

Finally, the temple provided an opportunity to participate more often in the sacred temple ceremonies that always enhance the lives of the Saints. Previously only a few trips could be taken to the nearest temple each year, but now the Saints could attend on a monthly, even weekly basis. While the Spirit is often overshadowed by the hustle and bustle of everyday life, for members to enhance their spiritual lives, a new source of spirituality and a new means for building the kingdom was created with the comple-

tion of the Los Angeles Temple. With the varied opportunities for service associated with both building and visiting the temple, it is little wonder that the Church in southern California would experience a great rebirth of the Spirit.

Chapter 9

AN ERA OF TRANSITION

The spiritual renaissance that came from anticipating a temple in their midst began early among the Los Angeles Saints, as donations of both time and money, as well as other evidences of deeper, more wide-spread commitment to building the kingdom, increased. During the time the temple was under construction, stake members responded to a call from President John M. Russon, the result was a 50 percent increase in fast offerings. Tithing donations also increased, in spite of the many other contributions stake members were asked to make. These included donations to the temple, other building funds in the stake, and an increased welfare assessment resulting from the unprofitable nature of the Perris Ranch.

Anticipating the completion of the temple, stake leaders also increased their emphasis on preparing for and attending the temple. In 1954, two years before the temple was dedicated, there were sixty-one marriages in the stake,

and forty, or 66 percent, were temple marriages.[1] This represented a remarkable increase over a few years earlier, when 60 percent of the youth were marrying outside the Church and among the rest there were few temple marriages.

Meanwhile, other events were taking place that would have important and long-lasting consequences for the Saints in the Los Angeles Stake. During the 1950-51 school year, Ray L. Jones, principal of the Logan, Utah Seminary, was appointed by the Church Educational System to introduce the seminary program into the Los Angeles area. After examining all possibilities, Jones concluded that, because of the numerous after-school activities, the only time available for seminary was before school. He proposed, therefore, an early-morning seminary program, even though such programs had not been highly successful when they had been tried in other places.[2] Interest was so great, however, that when the school year began, six classes were operating within the boundaries of five different stakes, two hundred students were enrolled, and an equally large number were anxious to attend. Halfway through the year seven new classes were added and enrollment exceeded 450.

At the beginning of the following school year, twenty-six early morning seminary classes were being taught

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[1]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 December 1954.

[2]Latter-day Sentinel, 5 January 1985; Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century, pp. 249-251.

in various ward meetinghouses throughout the Los Angeles area. The generally enthusiastic response to early-morning seminary assured Church authorities of its viability and eventually the program was introduced throughout the Church.[3]

On 13 January 1951 the Beverly Hills Ward broke ground for its new chapel, located on Ohio Avenue, on the back portion of the temple property. LeGrand Richards, Presiding Bishop of the Church, was in town to attend the Los Angeles Stake Conference, and he turned the first shovelful of dirt. By coincidence, the City of Los Angeles had given approval for the building of the temple earlier that week.

The ground-breaking ceremony marked the end of a ten-year struggle to obtain a chapel for Beverly Hills Ward. It began in 1940, under the direction of Bishop A. Eldon Rex, when the bishopric asked permission to build on what seemed the best location--the property purchased for a temple.[4] The request was denied, however, for the Brethren in Salt Lake City felt that to allow the ward to use that property would give it an unfair advantage over others, for no other ward in the Church shared property with a temple.

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[3]For a more detailed look at the early-morning seminary program see Orton, More Faith Than Fear, pp. 199-200.

[4]Beverly Hills Ward Bishopric to the Presiding Bishopric, 17 December 1940, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

With the coming of World War II, any thought of a building for the Beverly Hills Ward was put on hold. Following the war, however, the new bishop, Marvin L. Saunders, continued to look for property in Beverly Hills, the geographical center of the ward. When they approached the city council about the possibilities of building a chapel, most members felt that there were enough churches in the city already, and they refused to give their support.[5] The ward eventually turned its eyes back to the north end of the temple lot and finally secured two acres of that land from the Church prior to the announcement of the building of the temple.

In 1949, C. Dean Olson became bishop of Beverly Hills Ward and it was his responsibility to oversee the chapel's construction. Like the Wilshire Ward before it, however, Beverly Hills Ward faced a major problem in raising funds as the Church would pay only around 20 percent of the cost of the building. The ward tried many fund-raising projects, such as fairs, carnivals, and dinners at the Beverly Hills Women's Club.[6] However, these fund-raising dinners proved less than successful as only a few hundred

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[5]C. Dean Olson, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

[6]Zatelle Sessions, ward Relief Society President, later estimated that she cooked and served thousands of meals as part of this effort. Zatelle Sessions, Dictation, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

dollars was raised at any one time. Those in charge soon recognized that they were probably just "spinning their wheels."

Finally, early in 1952, the ward took a different approach by putting on a major theatrical production. Arrangements were made for the University of Utah's Glee Club and Men's Chorus to perform during the break between Winter and Spring quarters at the University of Utah. Bishop Olson, meanwhile, arranged with Charles P. Skouras, a Fox-Western executive married to a member of the ward, for the ward to use one of his company's theaters, the famous Carthay Circle in Beverly Hills. For the headline performer Bishop Olson had arranged with a talent pool for a Hollywood star to appear.

As the appointed time approached, however, no headline had been obtained, and Bishop Olson took it upon himself to try to arrange for one. He contacted the famous comedian Danny Thomas about the possibility of helping his church raise money for a new building. In the gracious and generous spirit for which he is still known, Thomas agreed.[7]

On 21 March 1952 the Beverly Hills Ward presented an "Evening at Carthay Circle," with Danny Thomas as the featured guest. From ticket sales and advertising in the

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[7]Olson, Oral History, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

program, over $20,000 was raised for the building fund.[8] From that time on, according to Bishop Olson, money seemed to flow in.

Members of the Beverly Hills Ward donated not only their means but also countless hours of labor toward completing the chapel. Unfortunately, however, the chapel was not completed without a tragedy. On a Monday morning in November 1951, volunteers were pouring cement for the tower when one of the gears to the platform Richard Hunter was working on slipped and the pulley wheel went over the restraining blocks, sending him tumbling off. Hunter landed on his elbow with such force that it pushed his collar bone through his spinal cord, severing a vertebrae in his neck and leaving him a paraplegic.[9]

As work progressed on the chapel, local leaders decided that the name of the ward should be changed, since it would no longer be meeting in Beverly Hills. On 13 July 1952, a special meeting was held at the stake center to consider a new name and the name eventually chosen was Westwood Ward.[10]

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[8]Ibid. According to the Church News, the amount raised was $11,000. Church News, 2 April 1952.

[9]Arthur Wallace Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[10]Other names considered were Temple, University, Village, and Hilltop. California Intermountain News, 5 August 1952.

On 11 September 1952, the Westwood Ward Primary began meeting in the unfinished building. On 14 December the ward used its chapel for the first time for Sunday meetings. Four months later, on 12 April 1953, the Westwood Ward Chapel was dedicated by Elder Harold B. Lee of the Council of the Twelve.

The Beverly Hills/Westwood Ward was not the only unit to change names or meeting places in this era. On 12 January 1952, a branch for the deaf was organized in the Adams Ward chapel and it became a unit of the Los Angeles Stake. Its beginnings, however, were during World War II.

As the number of LDS deaf grew in Los Angeles, largely as a result of war-time industries which could employ the deaf in the noisy environment with a minimum of discomfort, a Sunday School class for the deaf was organized in 1941. Seven people, five members and two investigators, began attending, but by November 1942 the number had grown to over twenty-five. The "Silent Class," as it was called, soon became a permanent part of the Vermont Ward Sunday School and met in a specially-built room in the Vermont chapel. As the deaf population grew in the area, Joseph Evans and Rhoda Evans Moulder were called by the South Los Angeles Stake Presidency as missionaries to the deaf. By 1946, the number enrolled in the class exceeded one hundred.

As the "Silent Class" grew, its members began to express their hopes for a branch organization and a small

chapel of their own. Initially, they approached President Hugh C. Smith of the San Fernando Stake about the possibility of adding a deaf chapel onto the North Hollywood chapel then under construction. Eventually, the matter was referred to the First Presidency of the Church, who sent Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve to Los Angeles to hold a conference with the deaf.[11] As a result of this conference, a committee composed of the local stake presidents was asked to draw up recommendations for the creation of a deaf branch. After approval from Church Headquarters, the Deaf Branch was created as a unit of the Los Angeles Stake in January 1952, both because of its central location and because of the support given to the deaf by stake leaders and by Wayne McIntire and Ray Jones, two prominent members of the stake who had a great interest in the deaf. Providing a home for the Deaf Branch was seen by President Russon as one of the stake's major accomplishments in this period of time.[12]

Joseph F. Evans, father of the "Silent Class," was sustained as branch president with Joe F. Brandenburg, first counselor, Walter J. Huggins, second counselor, and Carl E. Torrell as Clerk. While Evans and Huggins could hear, Brandenburg and Torrell were deaf. Torrell was also a

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[11]Church News, 22 August 1951.

[12]Russon, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

recent convert to the Church, having been taught the gospel by members of the "Silent Class" with whom he worked.

The first meeting was held the following week in a building behind the Adams Ward chapel that had once served as the Bishop's Storehouse. Meetings were scheduled at the same time as the Adams Ward so that hearing children could attend the Adams Ward Sunday School.

Besides the Westwood Ward and the Deaf Branch, another unit made a change in meeting places during this time. Beginning in March 1951, the LaBrea Ward moved out of the Masonic Temple on South Arlington and returned to share the stake center with the Wilshire Ward.

In December 1953 a new LDS Institute of Religion building adjacent to the USC campus was dedicated by Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve. Located just south of campus on the corner of McClintock and 36th street, the building also served as headquarters for the seminary and institute system in Southern California, as the social center for the institute program until other institutes were built at other area universities, and finally as the meeting place for the University of Southern California Ward after it was created.

Some of the problems that confronted stake leaders during the 1950s were reminders that the Latter-day Saints, like everyone else, lived in a secular world with all its secular temptations and diversions. One of these was the

frequently recurring problem of juvenile delinquency, which surfaced again within the Latter-day Saint community. Both in the 1930s and 1940s the problem had, at times, become quite severe. In March 1935, for instance, there were over 125 teenage members of the Church in Los Angeles County either on probation or being dealt with for delinquency, an average of over four per ward.[13] Left to their own initiatives as to how to deal with such problems, stake leaders usually organized delinquency committees to work closely with those in trouble and continued to emphasis youth programs, especially scouting.

In the 1950s Church leaders again became greatly concerned over the number and seriousness of Latter-day Saint juvenile problems. In 1954 Lyman Thompson, a member of the Hollywood Ward who worked for Los Angeles County at Juvenile Hall reported that 166 LDS youth were being dealt with by county officials. The following year the number increased to 244.[14] While most of the problems were minor in nature, some were very serious and even included a murder.[15] Even though most of the LDS youth involved were not members of the Los Angeles Stake, stake leaders never-

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[13]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 31 March 1935.

[14]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 25 March 1956.

[15]Notes of a conversation between Edward B. Nadle and John M. Russon, 1987, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

theless spent much of their time dealing with the problems that existed and trying to prevent others.

Unlike previous times, however, the youth problems of the 1950s were not limited to major urban areas such as Los Angeles, but were a source of concern throughout the Church. The social changes taking place in the country brought many of the youth into a spirit of rebellion against traditional values and institutions, and the Latter-day Saint youth were not unaffected. As a result, the efforts of local leaders were combined with changes in the Church's youth program to help combat trends toward juvenile delinquency by giving the youth a greater sense of involvement in the Church and its activities.

A significant change was made in the Aaronic Priesthood program in 1954 when the Presiding Bishopric announced that the age at which worthy boys could be ordained to the office of teacher had been lowered from fifteen to fourteen, and the age for ordination to the office of priest had been lowered from seventeen to sixteen. This action was taken, it was explained, because fourteen-year-old boys were restless as deacons and did not wish to be grouped with the younger boys. The following year, the "Duty to God" award was established as part of the Boy Scout program, and this distinctive honor recognized achievement in religious activity as well as in scouting.

The MIA also responded by sponsoring more recreational and cultural programs. In 1954 it began to sponsor regional conferences in which the youth had opportunities to participate in dance, drama, speech, and music festivals. Prior to this time such festivals had been held annually in Salt Lake City. The first of these regional conferences was held in Los Angeles in August.

The large numbers attending the conference created a few problems for the city of Los Angeles. The music festival featured a chorus and orchestra of over fifteen hundred, more than the stage of the Hollywood Bowl could hold without violating fire codes. The fire marshall tried unsuccessfully several times to limit the size of the choir but finally gave up, concluding, "Oh, hell, the Mormons don't smoke anyway."[18] At the Sunday morning service, the handful of policemen on hand to direct traffic soon became inadequate, and reinforcements had to be called in. The conference, however, was a huge success so far as the Church was concerned, and it established a pattern that continued for several years.

The stake also redoubled its efforts with respect to the youth. At stake conferences President Russon spoke of the need for love and of the necessity of demonstrating affection in the home in order to combat juvenile delinquen-

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[18]Wallace, Oral History, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

cy. He also requested that family members meet together on Sunday afternoons in a form of family home evening, and he pledged that no stake or ward meetings would be held at that time. He also set aside the third Friday of each month as "Family Recreation Night," when no stake or ward activities would be held, and urged families to use the time for participating together in activities.[17]

Besides asking families to pay increased attention to the needs of their own youth, the stake undertook additional means to help. Scouting was given renewed emphasis. In addition, the stake created a softball diamond in the vacant field behind the Westwood Ward chapel, which not only gave the youth another wholesome activity to participate in but also prevented the Emerson Junior High located next to the field from exercising eminent domain and taking over the property.

While great emphasis was placed upon the young men, who constituted the majority of the juvenile delinquency problems, the young ladies were not forgotten. Under the direction of Stake YWMIA President Audrey Snow, the Los Angeles Stake sponsored personal improvement courses at the stake center.

In 1954 the Church began what leaders hoped would become a successful program for teaching the gospel to the

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[17]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 26 January 1958.

Jews.[18] Because of the large number of Jews in Los Angeles, especially in the western portion of the Los Angeles Stake, a pilot program was inaugurated there, and it later spread to other large cities with sizeable Jewish populations. Instrumental in establishing the program were LeGrand Richards, who had become a member of the Council of the Twelve, and swimsuit designer Rose Marie Reid, a member of the Westwood Ward.

Elder Richards had always had a great love for the Jews and once told his father that "if the Church ever undertook the work in earnest among the Jews," he "would certainly like to have a hand in it."[19] As a result, he wrote a work entitled Judah! Do You Know?, but later, at the suggestion of Rose Marie Reid, changed the name to Israel! Do You Know?. Reid felt that the Jews might not readily understand the implications of the reference to Judah.

Born and raised in Alberta, Canada, Rose Marie Reid showed an early talent for design. Following the death of her husband, she moved to Los Angeles and opened her famous swimsuit company. Through her business in an industry dominated by Jews, she naturally made many Jewish friends.

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[18]For an account of the Church's Jewish Mission see Arnold H. Green, "A Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts to the Jewish People" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967.

[19]LeGrand Richards, The Dawning of Israel's Day (Provo: BYU Extension Publications), p. 1, as cited in Green, "A Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts to the Jewish People," p. 50.

A descendant of Orson Hyde, who in 1841 had dedicated the land of Palestine for the preaching of the gospel, she had a great personal interest in the Jews and recalled that as a young girl her father had often told her that during her lifetime the Jews would return to Jerusalem. All this led to the development within her of a great desire to share her religion with them.

In 1953 Sister Reid met Michael Silver, a Jewish accountant with whom she had business dealings, and eventually she began to teach him the gospel. When he asked for literature, however, she hesitated, for almost everything written in the Church had been written for Christians. She felt that the Jews could be appealed to more effectively through literature designed especially with their background and religion in mind. She was delighted, therefore, to learn from Elder Richards' daughter of the book he was writing, and she was able to obtain a copy for Michael Silver.

Following the publication of Israel! Do You Know? in 1954, the moment that Elder Richards and Sister Reid were waiting for arrived when the First Presidency gave permission for the establishment of an experimental "Jewish Mission" in cities with large Jewish populations. This mission was to function without the use of full-time missionaries. Rather, proselyting efforts were to be the

responsibility of Church members already living in the cities who would be called as part-time missionaries.

In November 1955, Elder Richards contacted President Russon and asked if he would organize and supervise a trial Jewish Mission in Los Angeles.[20] Elder Richards recommended that two missionaries be called from each stake to work specifically with the Jews people. Fifteen people from six stakes, including Rose Marie Reid, Herond N. Sheranian, and J. Leland Anderson of the Los Angeles Stake, accepted such calls. A recent Jewish convert, Jerome Horowitz, was also recruited to help out in the Los Angeles Jewish mission.

Before these missionaries could begin active proselyting, methods for teaching Jews still had to be developed. For some time Reid had been experimenting with ways of presenting the gospel to her Jewish friends, and both she and Horowitz drew upon their experiences and wrote suggested door approaches for the missionaries. In addition, at the suggestion of LeGrand Richards, Reid wrote a sixty-five page booklet entitled Attention Israel as an introduction to Elder Richards' Israel! Do You Know?. These publications served both as the primary literature to be read by the Jews and as the Jewish mission's plan for teaching the gospel. Later, Reid wrote a detailed plan to be used by the missionaries, Suggested Plan for Teaching the

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[20]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 17 November 1955.

Gospel to the Jewish People. It was almost two hundred pages long and included ten lessons for teaching the gospel. When sent to Salt Lake City, however, it failed to receive Church approval, which left the Jewish missionaries to devise their own proselyting methods. Most continued to rely upon the writings of Rose Marie Reid, which she published at her own expense.

According to one account, even after several months of the Jewish Mission, "virtually no missionaries had been adequately trained, little actual proselyting had been done, and few Jewish persons were close to accepting Mormonism."[21] Reasons for these problems included a general lack of knowledge among the missionaries as well as differences of opinion as to how the gospel should be presented to the Jews. There was also the lingering question as to whether it was proper at all to organize special proselyting activity just for Jews.

During the summer of 1956, Leo J. Muir, was appointed as coordinator of the Jewish Mission. To raise interest in the mission, Reid, Horowitz, and Muir began speaking at the various wards in Los Angeles about Jewish proselyting activities. By the end of the year the number of missionaries serving in the mission had grown to nearly fifty.

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[21]Green, "A Survey of Latter-day Saints Proselyting Efforts," p. 74.

The mission continued to function until March 1959, when the First Presidency issued a statement that missionary efforts directed specifically at the Jewish community should be discontinued.[22] While the Jewish Mission was not as successful in bringing Jewish converts into the Church as had been hoped, it met at least with some success as nearly two dozen Jewish people were converted.

Los Angeles Stake, meanwhile, continued to face its own internal challenges, one of which was the unfortunately low morale in LaBrea Ward. From the time of its creation, this ward had not done as well as stake leaders had hoped, and at least three problems seemed to be involved. One was a feeling prevalent among some members that it had been a mistake to create the ward in the first place. Such negativism cast a shadow over the ward from the beginning, for many who were assigned to attend refused to do so and simply continued going to their old wards.[23] The fact that the La Cienega Ward of the Santa Monica Stake was closer for many than were the meeting places of the LaBrea Ward did not help, and some simply yielded to the temptation to attend there.

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[22]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 2 April 1959.

[23]Winfield Q. Cannon, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, untranscribed Audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

Another problem was that some members of the ward began to feel almost as if they were merely step-children of the stake and that, at least to some degree, the ward was being used as a pawn in dealing with stake problems. When certain changes were made in ward boundaries, for example, some members complained that stake leaders were simply gerrymandering in order to locate leaders or to keep a good balance in other wards. When attendance at the Arlington Ward exceeded capacity, for instance, portions of that ward were transferred to LaBrea. Later, however, after many members refused to attend LaBrea because the Arlington Ward chapel was closer, this section was transferred back. Soon afterward, Merlin Sant, who lived in the area in question, was made bishop of Arlington Ward.[24] Although the stake presidency clearly explained why the action was taken, there were those who believed that the transfer had taken place only so that Sant could be the new bishop.[25]

In addition, after 1952 the LaBrea Ward was the only ward in the stake without a chapel. Consideration had been given to the possibility of building one, and a site had been selected, but when it became clear that city zoning could not be changed to accommodate the chapel the plans

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[24]California Intermountain News, 22 September 1953.

[25]Cannon, Oral History, untranscribed audiotape.

were abandoned.[26] The LaBrea Ward thus became a permanent resident of the Wilshire chapel, but some ward members felt discriminated against because they did not have their own.

A third problem was the fact that almost from the beginning the vitality of the ward was gradually sapped as many families, especially young families, began moving out of the ward and few moved in to replace them.[27] These families were joining the "white flight" to the suburbs, which was occurring not just in Los Angeles but in most major American cities. The problem was both social and economic, and reflected a major crisis in American race relations as well as in American urban development. As black families began moving into formerly all-white neighborhoods, racial bias induced many whites to move out, often selling their property at less than market value. This resulted in dramatic drops in property values, and as whites who may not have otherwise moved saw economic disaster on the horizon they also put their property up for sale. This only provided more opportunity for the usually less affluent blacks to move into the vacuum, and the cycle continued in neighborhood after neighborhood.

The effect on the Church was foreseeable. As blacks began moving into the boundaries of LaBrea Ward, many members, not immune from the prejudices of the day, began

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

moving out and ward membership declined dramatically. Between January 1954 and May 1955 it dropped from 650 to 430. Part of the problem, of course, was the fact that at the time blacks were not allowed to receive the priesthood and its accompanying blessings, and this fact alone made members reluctant to allow their children to associate with other young people who would not eventually be eligible to marry in the temple. Church policy even prohibited active proselyting among blacks, which provided little incentive for blacks themselves to investigate the Church, though if any inquired concerning the gospel they could be taught. Though all this would change later, the reality of the time was that "white flight" was creating an administrative disaster so far as LaBrea ward was concerned.

While LaBrea Ward was the hardest hit, it was not the only ward in the stake affected by racial and other issues. With changes in the inner city resulting not only from the growing black population but also through expanding industrialization, young couples began settling in more outlying areas, such as within the boundaries of Westwood Ward. As a result of a series of housing acts passed by Congress, new housing was available within the ward which required little or no down payment, unlike older homes in some of the more well established areas. All this only helped hasten the decline of Church membership in the older parts of the city. Most Los Angeles wards, therefore,

except the Westwood Ward and the Deaf Branch, had been losing membership for several years, and between 1950-1955 total membership in the stake declined by over six hundred, from 5000 to 4400.

Because so many young families were leaving, the social structure of the wards also began to change. In 1950 there were only twenty-one Aaronic Priesthood holders in the Wilshire Ward among a total membership of over one thousand. In the Adams Ward there were only fourteen Aaronic Priesthood holders. This reflected the fact that in these wards, as in LaBrea and Arlington, there was a preponderance of older members, especially widows. There was also a shortage of Melchizedek Priesthood in the stake as 60 percent of the families had no Melchizedek Priesthood holder in the home, a statistic that reflected not only the growing number of widows but also the consequence of so many marriages outside the faith. This not only left many families without the blessing of the priesthood, but it also had a potentially devastating effect upon the potential for leadership in the wards and the ward teaching program.

Since 1950 stake leaders had done their best to deal with these problems by occasionally realigning boundaries in order to help the wards remain viable. No sooner was one problem solved, however, than others arose, and it became apparent to President Russon and his counselors that these frequent changes were disruptive to the smooth functioning

of the wards. Consequently, they decided that a major reorganization of the stake was needed in order to alleviate the need for so many future changes.

In April 1955 a survey was conducted to determine exactly where stake members lived, and what changes in ward boundaries would be needed to best keep the wards functioning and properly staffed and to ensure that each ward had adequate Melchizedek Priesthood.[28] As a result, stake leaders determined that the best way to reach this goal was to dissolve LaBrea Ward, distribute its four hundred members to surrounding wards, and change the boundaries between the remaining wards in the eastern part of the stake. At the same time, the increase in population of the Westwood Ward to over eleven hundred, along with an adequate number of Melchizedek Priesthood holders, allowed for the division of that ward.

Near the end of May, the stake presidency submitted their recommendations to the First Presidency who approved their recommended changes.[29] President Russon then called an unprecedented meeting of stake members to be held at the stake center on 3 July 1955.

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[28]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 13 April 1955.

[29]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to First Presidency, 27 May 1955, Los Angeles Stake Collection; First Presidency to John M. Russon, 9 June 1955, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

President Russon told the stake members gathered for this special meeting that changes in boundaries must be made from time to time, mentioning the shifting population and the influx of blacks into portions of the stake as major contributing factors.[30] He then announced a complete reshuffling of boundaries. The most important changes were the dissolution of the LaBrea Ward and the creation of the Westwood Second Ward. In addition, portions of the Hollywood Ward went to Adams, Hollywood and Wilshire Wards exchanged selected areas, and a portion of Arlington was made part of the Adams Ward.

When the dissolution of the LaBrea Ward was presented and the membership of the ward was called upon to sustain the stake presidency in this matter, about seventy-five members stood in the negative.[31] Even though some of them had felt that the creation of the ward was a mistake in the first place, and continued to think so through the years, their trials had created such a special unity among them that even the thought of being split up among adjacent wards was distasteful. Nevertheless, the LaBrea Ward was disbanded, and its members residing south of Adams Boulevard became part of the Arlington Ward, while those north of Adams were assigned to the Wilshire Ward.

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[30]John M. Russon, Notes for talk given 3 July 1955, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[31]Cannon, Oral History, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

The Westwood Ward was divided at Santa Monica Boulevard, with the Westwood First Ward north of that line and the Westwood Second Ward south of it. William F. Jackson was released as bishop of the First Ward to become bishop of the Second Ward. Arvo Van Alstyne became the new bishop of the First Ward. Except for the Deaf Branch, the Westwood Second Ward was the smallest unit in the stake, with 520 members, and next to it was the Westwood Ward, with about 580. With the temple and the UCLA medical center under construction, however, and with this being one of the few areas with undeveloped land, the area covered by these wards was seen as the only part of the stake where substantial growth was still possible. The Wilshire Ward was now the largest unit in the stake, with membership in excess of nine hundred. Each of these changes were effective as of 17 July 1955.

By October 1955 it became apparent to the stake presidency that having a temple within the stake presented a golden opportunity for missionary work in the area. To emphasize this, President Russon released four high councilors living near the temple to serve stake missions.[32] This emphasis on missionary work paid dividends as eighty-six converts were made in the Los Angeles Stake Mission during the first nine months of 1956.

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[32]California Intermountain News, 22 October 1955.

The Los Angeles Stake presidency was also concerned about the spiritual well being of the many college and university students within its boundaries. Following the dedication of the new Institute building at the University of Southern California, Sunday services began to be held in its chapel and students living near the campus were free to attend either these meetings or the Adams Ward. With experience, however, stake leaders saw that such an arrangement was unsatisfactory, for many students were becoming "neither fish nor fowl," shifting between the two units and not developing a feeling of responsibility toward either. The lack of ties to any one ward was reflected in low tithing and fast offerings and in a lack of concern among many students for the inactive Latter-day Saints on campus.

At the time there were 204 LDS students at USC, and since many of them were married, the number of people tied to the university was much larger. Although USC is a "commuter school" and many of its students come from some distance to attend classes, sixty students lived within walking distance of the campus. When their families were counted, approximately one hundred young people were close at hand, and stake leaders felt this was enough to justify the organization of a campus branch of the Church.

After much consideration, therefore, the stake presidency determined that the needs of students at the University of Southern California could best be served by

their own branch, and in January 1957 wrote the First Presidency of the Church about such a possibility.[33] The recommendation was favorably considered, and the stake was given authority to create a ward rather than a branch if that seemed best.[34]

On 17 March 1957 a ward was established for students at the University of Southern California. It was named the University Ward and Melvin Keller, a member of the USC dental school faculty, was sustained as the first bishop. During the early years membership in the ward averaged around 150-200.

For the students, the organization of the ward meant many things. Demands on their time were extremely heavy, so married couples, especially, found great strength and comfort in the new ward through their close association with others who were experiencing similar academic pressures and financial struggles. Some felt that other Church members may not have fully understood their special problems, and the understanding of the University Ward leaders as well as supportive stake leaders helped all of them feel closer to the Church. Their social lives, too, were enhanced through ward activities geared especially to their needs.

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[33]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to First Presidency, 8 January 1957, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[34]Henry D. Moyle to John M. Russon, 19 February 1957, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

In addition, the intellectual lives of students were enhanced as they found that their testimonies and faith were not drawn into question just because they wanted to discuss in some detail some of the new ideas they were being exposed to as frequently had been the case in other wards. Because he was associating with people in similar circumstances, one ward member felt the Lord had answered his prayers and made a place for him in His church.[35]

By 1958 the shifting population of the stake had again become a problem. Although the stake population had fallen by only fifty-six since 1955, the population of the Adams Ward had fallen by more than 250 and ward membership stood at less than 450. Average family size was less than 1.6, as many members were single and/or elderly.

The downward trend in the Adams Ward was not likely to reverse itself, for the residential area in the ward was fast becoming blighted through increasing industrial and commercial development. This had been spurred by the beginning of the construction of the Interstate Highway System in 1956, including the Harbor Freeway which ran near the Adams Ward chapel and cut the chapel off from the major residential portions of the city. As business and industry moved into the area, families moved out and ward membership declined, making it increasingly difficult to staff the ward

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[35]Notes of a conversation with James B. Allen, 1987, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

and conduct all ward programs adequately. In addition, the growing black population in the area resulted in the same "white flight" experienced as in the LaBrea Ward.

Adams was not the only ward undergoing changes. Both the Wilshire and Arlington Wards were also losing membership, primarily through "white flight" but also because of industrialization. The makeup of the Hollywood Ward was also changing, but its problems resulted from an apartment building boom within its boundaries that caused its population to mushroom. The nature of the new arrivals, however, was different from those in other wards, for many of them were star-struck singles who were attracted to the romance associated with Hollywood. The makeup and stability of the ward was changing, then, for apartment living gave no real tie to the area, and the ward was becoming highly transient and somewhat unwieldy for one bishop to manage.

As business and industry accompanied the freeways into the area around the Adams Ward, property value jumped and as early as 1956 the Church received lucrative offers for the Adams Ward property.[38] Although stake leaders saw that the demise of the ward was imminent, they felt it premature to sell at that time and declined the offers. Even if the ward was disbanded, the location was ideal for the Deaf Branch, which shared the property, for it was near

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[38]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to A. M. Foutaine, 13 November 1956, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

the freeways and the branch's membership came from the entire Los Angeles area. Branch membership, moreover, was growing. Thus the Adams property appeared to have continuing value to the Church, even if the Adams Ward were disbanded.

As the area around the Adams chapel became more commercialized, however, the desirability of holding that property for Church use diminished. When lucrative offers to purchase the property came again early in 1958, stake leaders gave them more serious consideration. They were faced with the inevitable conclusion that the Adams Ward must soon be disbanded, that the stately old chapel was not essential for Church use, and that, in the long run, the best use of the property was for commercial purposes.[37]

Such a decision was not to be made lightly, however, for the Adams Ward had been the mother ward in California and its chapel had served as a landmark for forty-three years. This tradition weighed heavily on many ward and stake members, and considerable emotion was attached to it. Nevertheless, recognizing that the Arlington, Hollywood, and Wilshire Wards could use the increased membership that would result from dissolving the Adams Ward and that the Church would benefit economically by selling the Adams property, the stake presidency recommended all of this to the First

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[37]California Intermountain News, 4 December 1958.

Presidency.[38] In November 1958, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve gave their approval to disbanding the Adams Ward and disposing of its chapel.[39]

An agreement was reached with the Lightolier Corporation and within a very short time a branch of the United Bank of California was built on part of the property. Originally some long-term leases were involved, but eventually all the property was disposed of. Part of the stake's share of the transaction was used for building an addition onto the Wilshire Ward chapel for the Deaf Branch.[40]

A special meeting was called at the stake center for 30 November 1958, at which time the approved changes were presented to stake members. President Russon began by

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[38]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to First Presidency, 20 October 1958, Los Angeles Stake Collection. The decision to sell the property next to the chapel had been made by early 1958 as it was in escrow by April 1958.

[39]Although the official letter from the First Presidency giving approval for the disbanding of the ward and the selling of the chapel is dated 2 December 1958, two days after the ward was disbanded, stake leaders had apparently received verbal clearance before undertaking such an important step.

[40]The Church's portion became the basis for further transaction with the Lightolier Corporation through which the Church was able to obtain the property on which the Salt Palace was built in Salt Lake City. Russon, Oral History, p. 11.

telling those present that this was, in reality, a continuation of the special meeting which had been held in 1955.[41]

The first order of business was presenting to the congregation for its sustaining vote the dissolution of the Adams Ward after thirty-five years of active life plus a history dating back to the organization of the Los Angeles Branch in 1895. The proposal was approved, but the Adams Ward left behind a legacy that has extended throughout southern California. In a sense, Adams Ward gave birth to almost all the wards within the Los Angeles area, and they became a magnificent progeny.

The membership of the Adams Ward was transferred to other wards, with 120 members going to the Arlington Ward, 260 to the Wilshire Ward, and sixty to the Hollywood Ward. In addition, 120 members were transferred from Wilshire to Hollywood, most of whom had been transferred to Wilshire in 1955.

The announcement then was made that the Hollywood Ward would be divided along a more-or-less East-West line, principally along Normandie Avenue. Those residing west of the line were members of the Hollywood Ward, with Sullivan C. Richardson as bishop; those east of the line became members of the Hollywood Second Ward, with Edward C. Nadle as bishop.

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[41]John M. Russon, "Proposals to the Membership of the Los Angeles Stake," Los Angeles Stake Collection.

Finally, President Russon announced the selling of the Adams property. Although most members knew that the sale of the building was inevitable, few were untouched by the announcement. This, after all, was the first chapel erected in Southern California, and the second built in California. Within the building the first stake in a major metropolitan area was created, as was Hollywood Stake, forerunner of the present Los Angeles California Stake. During the early days of the Church in Los Angeles this chapel was one of the first places new arrivals from Utah would seek out. Here many couples met for the first time, many Church stalwarts were baptized and instructed in the gospel, and it was not uncommon to hear a sermon from the President of the Church or another General Authority or to meet such leaders informally in the chapel's hallways. It was known in Los Angeles as a monument to Mormonism, and most deservedly so.

Selling the Adams chapel and disbanding the Adams Ward exemplified more than anything else the transition that was taking place in the Los Angeles Stake. At the same time that stake leaders were making changes in order to assure the viability of the remaining wards, their actions were also destroying two of their strongest links to the past. In some ways, both the Adams Ward and its chapel epitomized the early twentieth century white, Anglo-Saxon church, deeply intertwined with Utah Mormonism. Their demise

epitomized the fact that Mormonism was no longer a Utah church, but a church for all people and that it must relate to its surroundings if it is to remain viable. In 1958, the actions taken by the stake presidency were necessary to maintain the Church's vitality, but they were also partly influenced by both national and Church policy toward the black minority. As time has passed, however, and racial views and practices have changed, members of the Los Angeles Stake have adopted new policies in order to fulfill their stewardship regarding all the inhabitants of Los Angeles.

The month following the closing of the Adams Ward, the stake presidency wrote the First Presidency for permission to organize a ward at UCLA.[42] Such action had been delayed to determine how the program would work at USC and also because the membership at UCLA was smaller than at USC. In addition, the students at UCLA did not have their own building, but shared the university's Religious Conference Center.

On 11 January 1959 a special meeting of UCLA students and their families was held at the Westwood Ward chapel. The organization of the new University UCLA Ward was approved and Arvo Van Alstyne, Assistant Dean of the UCLA Law School, was sustained as Bishop.

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[42]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to First Presidency, 9 December 1958, Los Angeles Stake Collection. The reply to this letter is found in Stephen L Richards to John M. Russon, 18 December 1958, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

Almost all of the students attending UCLA at this time were enrolled in graduate programs or professional schools and were, therefore, old enough to be married and have children. At its creation, in fact, the UCLA ward had more children per capita than any other ward in the stake. Within a year of its creation, however, almost half of the ward was comprised of single students, as the married ones had finished their schooling and single students were more seriously considering UCLA for undergraduate studies.[43]

As a result of all these changes, a great measure of stability was brought to the stake. For over a decade no major changes were undertaken outside the establishment of a Spanish branch in 1966. Occasionally, boundary changes would be made, such as when seventy members were transferred from the Westwood Ward to the Hollywood Ward in 1961. These, however, were minor as compared with the major changes that took place in the stake between 1955 and 1959.

On 12 June 1962, President Russon read to the high council the official notice of his release as president of the Los Angeles Stake and his new call as president of the Swiss Mission. During his thirteen years as stake president, the stake had undergone a tremendous transition. His administration witnessed the end of an era of Church stability in Los Angeles and the beginning of a new era

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[43]UCLA Ward Annual Ward Conference Reports, 1960-1962, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

brought about largely by changing demographics in the city. Although two wards had been disbanded, the number of units in the stake had increased to nine with the creation of the Hollywood Second, University, University UCLA, and Westwood Second Wards and the addition of the Deaf Branch.

In spite of the many changes, President Russon had skillfully led the stake through times that were trying to most of its members and had helped these members to grow spiritually in the process. Although he would be half a world away when the issues which were just beginning during his presidency were brought to a head, he had helped bring to the presidency the man best suited to help the stake face its continuing challenges.

CHAPTER 10

A STAKE FOR ALL PEOPLE

The decade of the 1950s was characterized in America by prosperity and conservatism. Having done without for so long because of the Great Depression and a world-wide war, Americans lost much of their pre-war taste for activism and change and settled down to enjoy the good life. There were still those who saw a need for reform, however, and some important steps were taken, especially in the area of civil rights.

In its 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, the Supreme Court struck down the doctrine of seperate but equal and began the process of breaking down legal segregation throughout the United States. The following year, when Rosa Parks, a black seamstress, was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give her seat on a city bus to a white man, the outraged black community began a boycott of city transportation, led by the Reverend Martin Luther King. In addition, the number of blacks moving from the South and settling in major urban areas approached record numbers. Instead of bettering themselves economically as they had

hoped, however, they found themselves caught in a web of poverty and the victims of prejudice and discrimination. The breaking down of racial barriers was slow in coming, and the reformers of the 1950s were disappointed as they failed to gather the wide support for which they hoped.

In the 1960s, however, more rapid changes took place with respect to the rights of blacks and other minorities. While many Americans were appalled, even frightened, at the prospect of change, most citizens became much more positive toward the idea of eliminating racial inequality. As black leaders adopted passive resistance and non-violent answers to discrimination, the nation's political leaders were stirred to legislative action against many historic wrongs. Unfortunately, their best efforts could not produce jobs or equality in housing, nor could they eliminate the prejudice that was still widespread. By 1965, therefore, many young blacks, frustrated by the inequalities of the system, were turning towards militancy and aggressive defiance. The tragic result was racial riots over the next several years in many of the nation's larger ghettos.

Not only were young blacks finding themselves disillusioned with their world, but so also were many white youth. They questioned society's traditional values and institutions, contrasting the affluence of their parents with the poverty around them. What seemed like selfishness and complacency in the older generation led some young

people to search for new traditions and values. Youth of the "beat generation," as it came to be known, gathered to large cities where they shared their rebellion and contempt for middle-class values through a counter-culture characterized by "rock" music, a life-style that rejected material possesions, and a manner of dress that included tattered clothes, sandals, beads, and long hair.

As the 1960s began, serious international tensions were also causing divisions at home. Fears of an expanding "red menace," for example, led President John F. Kennedy to send military aid and advisors to support the government of South Vietnam in its fight with communist opposition forces. By 1962 there were over sixteen thousand Americans fighting in Vietnam. Two years later, student protest movements began on the nation's university and college campuses, largely as a response to American involvement in Vietnam. The war continued to escalate, and by 1965 the nation was deeply divided over the morality of its invovlement in the conflict.

The Church could hardly escape the problems of the 1960s, and part of its response to the challenges was the establishment of priesthood correlation which included a renewed emphasis upon the home teaching and family home evening programs. On the local level, the Los Angeles Stake and its members were especially vulnerable to the effects of these problems. Because it was part of a large metropolitan

area that already had problems such as those relating to race and poverty, its challenges were only magnified as tensions in Los Angeles flared and as discontented youth from around the nation poured into the area seeking refuge and like-minded companionship. The stake needed strong leadership in these times of stress and change, and in the minds of the members it was never more evident that the Lord had prepared the right men and women for the needs of the day. Fully aware of the new problems and challenges of their times, these leaders faced them with courage, inspiration, and imagination, concentrating more on the needs of the people than on maintaining traditional programs and procedures.

In 1962 Arvo Van Alstyne, a member of the UCLA law facutly, became President of the Los Angeles Stake. In a sense, he symbolized some aspects of the new age for, unlike previous stake leaders, he was not from the Mountain West or from a family steeped in the LDS tradition. Born and raised in New York City, he was converted to the Church, along with his family, by Ernest L. Wilkinson, later president of Brigham Young University. After graduating from Yale, he served during World War II as a military flight instructor stationed in San Francisco, where he met his wife, Ruth, a native of California. His limited contact with the Church during the war years lead him into inactivity. After the war he returned to Yale, where he attended law school.

Following graduation, he turned down several offers of employement in the East, inclulding one from Wilkinson's New York law office, accepted a position in southern California, and moved to Hollywood.

When Wilkinson learned of this and wrote John M. Russon, then bishop of Hollywood Ward, asking him to be on the lookout for the Van Alstynes. The Van Alstynes, meanwhile, determined they needed a church and decided to give his a try first. They looked up the Hollywood Ward, and Bishop Russon and the ward members welcomed them with open arms. Arvo quickly became active again and Ruth was baptized. Bishop Russon, feeling that there was no better way to learn Church government than as the ward clerk, called Van Alstyne to that position.[1] When Van Alstyne accepted a position on the law faculty at UCLA, the family moved into the Westwood Ward, where he served as bishop of both the Westwood and UCLA Wards.

In June 1962, while President Russon was preparing to leave for the Swiss-German Mission, Arvo Van Alstyne was finalizing preperations for a summer that included a teaching assignment in San Francisco followed by one in Salzburg, Austria. A week before the quarterly stake conference, Elder Mark E. Petersen arrived in Los Angeles to interview possible candidates for stake president. Follow-

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[1]John K. Carmack, Oral History, inverview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, typescript, p. 5, The James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

ing his interview with Elder Petersen, Van Alstyne became concerned enough about the possibility that he might be called that he wrote a brief, or memorandum, for Elder Petersen explaining why he could not be stake president. He then left for San Francisco a few days before the scheduled conference. As John Carmack later observed, however, his brief only served as further evidence that Arvo Van Alstyne was the man the Lord had prepared to lead the stake at this time, for he was not only worthy and capable, but also so well-reasoned.[2] As final preperations were being made for stake conference, Elder Petersen reached Van Alstyne in the Bay area and asked him to return, for the Lord needed him as the stake president. This he did, while his family remained in San Francisco.

On 24 June 1962, Arvo Van Alstyne was unanimously sustained as President of the Los Angeles Stake, with Edward A. Nadle and Winfield Q. Cannon as his counselors. Following the conference, he returned to San Francisco and then headed for Salzburg. Nadle, a Chicago native who joined the Church after moving to Los Angeles, was the virtual stake president while the Van Alstynes were in Europe that summer.[3] After a little over a year in the stake presidency, Nadle was called as a mission president. Winfield

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[2]Ibid., p. 4.

[3]Ibid., p. 6.

Cannon then became first counselor and Merlin Sant was set apart as second counselor.

Because he was neither a life-long member of the Church nor steeped in the traditions of the stake, President Van Alstyne was able to bring a perspective to his callings that many could not. He knew what it was like to be an outsider who had been given a chance and was accepted on an equal basis by the majority, and he was willing to give all that same opportunity. His legacy to the stake was not in chapels built or wards created, for there were none. Rather, it consisted in the attitude he helped instill in stake mambers that all men and women are God's children. His strong views concerning the rights of individuals, largely a result of his training as a constitutional lawyer, had an important influence upon future leaders who were responsible for shaping the direction of the stake as it became, in reality, a stake for all people.[4]

One way President Van Alstyne began slowly to make changes was in filling stake leadership positions. While he continued to use men well established in the Church, he did not use them exclusively. Rather, he gave people of different ages, backgrounds, and economic status the opportunity of serving in prominent positions. For example, he called to the high council men in their late twenties and early thirties. This may have lowered the prestige of the

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[4]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

high council in the minds of some members, but it gave valuable training to future leaders, such as John K. Carmack and William W. Tanner, who would use that training over the next twenty years as they served in the stake presidency.[5] In addition, the diversity in President Van Alstyne's appointments gave the stake presidency the benefit of a wide range of viewpoints.

President Van Alstyne was the perfect leader for the stake during the years of unrest in the early 1960s, for he was level headed, knowledgeable, committed to the Church, and highly regarded by all groups. He also understood the changing situation in Los Angeles and quietly, but with courage, he was willing to take whatever action was necessary. He worried little about what effect change would have on the traditional nature of the stake, but rejoiced in the advances that were being made toward making it a stake for all people.

Meanwhile, other significant developments were taking place in the stake. At the same conference in which President Van Alstyne was sustained, a new annex to the Wilshire Ward was dedicated as a home for the Southern California Branch for the Deaf during the afternoon session.[6]

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[5]Ibid., p. 5.

[6]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 24 June 1962.

As an alternative to the counter culture spreading throughout America, stake and ward leaders sought ways to provide members with more and better opportunities to both participate in and see fine cultural events. As a result, almost all the wards in the stake produced outstanding dramas, with the Wilshire Ward's summer productions in the early 1960s of such Broadway musical hits as "Meet Me in St. Louis" and "Oklahoma" deserving particular note.

Not only did these plays provide notable cultural experiences, but they also helped unify ward members in a common goal and they provided activities for the many transient LDS youth who came to Los Angeles seeking summer employment. Even though they were not regular members of the ward or stake, ward leaders were as much concerned with them as with any other Church members. They also recognized the merits of summer theatrical productions, for they not only made use of the talent already available in the ward but also gave the young transients a full, worthwhile, fun-packed summer where they could sing, dance, act, build sets, make costumes, work lighting and sound equipment, and generally become involved in the ward.[7]

In the spring of 1965, President Van Alystne faced a challenging dilemma when he was approached by Stanford University about serving as a visiting professor in its law

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[7]For a more detailed account of the Wilshire Ward productions see Orton, More Faith Than Fear, pp. 237-238.

school for the 1965-66 school year. Since this was one of the top law schools in the country, he recognized that the invitation was both a great honor and a potential help to his professional career. At the same time, he felt deeply his commitment to the Lord as well as to the members of his stake, and he had been stake president for only three years. Unsure of what to do, he made arrangements to discuss the matter with President David O. McKay.

After hearing the story, President McKay had only one question: "Is there adequate leadership in the stake if you should go?" President Van Alstyne later recounted that as soon as the question was asked the strong face of Winfield Cannon came into his mind, and without mentioning whose face he had seen, he simply replied, "Yes, there is." "Then I think you should go to Stanford," President McKay immediately responded. "We will replace you."*

At the June 1965 Los Angeles Stake Conference, Winfield Q. Cannon was called as the new stake president. President Van Alstyne's initial inspiration has been confirmed. President Cannon selected as his counselors Merlin W. Sant and John K. Carmack.

Winfield Q. Cannon was born in Rotterdam, Holland, where his father, Sylvester Q. Cannon, was serving his second term as president of the Netherlands-Belgium Mission. After the family's return to Salt Lake City, Winfield grew

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*Carmack, Oral History, p. 8.

up there, attended the University of Utah, served for thirty months in the Swiss-German Mission, and then went to Utah State University where he graduated with a degree in civil engineering. While attending Utah State he met his wife, Wanda Parkinson, and they were married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1932.

It was not long before the Cannons joined thousands of other Saints who were migrating to California because of the Great Depression, and they settled initially in the Hollywood Ward. As their family grew they moved from one place to another in the Hollywood area before eventually purchasing a home in the Wilshire Ward. They became members of the LaBrea Ward when it was created, and Cannon served as its last bishop.

The new stake presidency continued the enlightened attitudes and policies of President Van Alstyne's administration. The complexion of the stake had already begun to change as minorities, especially Hispanics and Koreans, began moving more rapidly into its boundaries. President Cannon and his counselors believed not only that Saints in these minority groups should be taught the gospel in the language they prayed in, but also that special organizations should be created for them to help meet their needs. The stake presidency, therefore, initiated various special programs to help these minorities find their places in the LDS community. A Spanish branch and a Korean Sunday School

dependent on the Wilshire Ward were organized within a year after Cannon became stake president. In addition, programs were started to help meet the needs of the increasing number of unmarried adults in the stake.

Within two months of the installation of the new stake presidency, the racial tensions and frustrations that had been smoldering among the black youth of the nation's ghettos erupted in riots and other violence that continued in the cities of the nation for several summers. In August 1965, in Los Angeles, riots were touched off in the Watts area that lasted for several days and resulted in mass destruction and looting of property. Even though the riots and racial difficulties were centered outside Los Angeles Stake boundaries, they were not just a fringe worry but had a direct effect upon the stake and its members in many ways. Bert Scoll, for example, a member of the high council, was watching television when news of the Watts riot broke. As he sat there he suddenly saw pictures of his own medical clinic, which had just been fire bombed, and realized that he was watching the destruction of his own property even as it was happening.[8]

The animosity of many blacks in the ghettos was directed not only at whites but also, at times, against other blacks--especially those who had become economically

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[8]William W. Tanner, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, rough transcript, p. 31, the James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

successful and had migrated out of the ghetto. Those who lived near the Wilshire Ward tended to be in this class, and a black congregation had purchased a church across from the Wilshire Ward. These people were therefore possible tragets of violence, and a curfew imposed by the city extended to the area around the stake center. All this resulted in the cancellation of all Wilshire Ward meetings during the period of the riots, and for some time afterwards no meetings could be held at night. Following one Sunday morning high council meeting, stake leaders felt the ominous implications of the times as they had to pass by the national guard and its armored vehicles on their way home.[10]

The Watts riot brought turmoil and stress to all of Los Angeles, and because of its policy against giving the priesthood to blacks the Church found itself the object of some hate and bitterness. As a result, some of its buildings were not safe. One night several people were caught trying to break into the temple.[11] Threats were made against the USC institute, and it did not make local Church members feel any better that the headquarters of the militant Black Panthers were located on the corner of Vermont and Exposition, just three blocks from the institute. Around each of the threatened buildings, therefore, security was enhanced. Even after the curfew was lifted,

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[10]Ibid., pp. 31-32.

[11]Ibid., p. 29-30.

Church members were afraid to go to the Wilshire Ward for meetings, especially at night, because of continuing animositites. Consequently, almost all meetings in the building were held during daylight hours.[12]

During the presidency of Winfield Cannon the Vietnam War escalated, bringing several related problems to the stake. The war became a deeply emotional political issue and, as with the rest of the nation, stake members were divided and unfortuate tensions were created among some of them. In addition, the number of young men eligible for the draft who could serve on missions was limited, by Church agreement with selective service officials, to one per ward. This placed a terrible burden on the shoulders of stake and ward leaders who had to make the final decision as to who could go and who could not go. At the same time, limiting the number who could fulfill missions also resulted in a decrease in the number of missionaries in the field, including in the California Mission, and this only increased the responsibility of local units for missionary work.[13]

It was during President Cannon's administration that the "hippie" movement moved into full swing, and the Los Angeles Stake was not immune from its consequences. As young people began to wear long hair, beads, and headbands, and began to speak differently, some members publicly

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[12]Ibid.,

[13]Cannon, Oral History, untranscribed.

expressed their strong disapproval. While some felt that it was best to try to understand the movement, others were aghast and felt that anyone who seemed to show any sympathy for the youthful counter-culture was spiritually disloyal. It appears, however, that most stake members steered a middle course, recognizing that it was partly a fad that would pass and that most of those involved were trying to express their individuality and reassess their roles in life. Stake leaders also recognized that simply choosing to dress differently, or to listen to different music, was not necessarily contrary to God's commandments, and that those involved were still people who needed ministers. They took the position that it was possible to make room for a number of points of view and that it was not wise to creat issues that did not really exist. Rather, they tried to take advantage of the great talent and testimony exhibited by people of differing points of view. The integrity of the Church as an institution had to be maintained, however, and when it came to more important questions, such as the use of drugs or premarital sex, things clearly contrary to the commandments of God, stake leaders stood firm.[14]

In addition to the famous Haight-Asbury district of San Francisco and Greenwich Village of New York City, another gathering place for "hippies" was in Hollywood, along Sunset Boulevard and in the canyons. Many Latter-day

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[14]Carmack, Oral History, pp. 17-19.

Saint youths caught up in the movement left home, often without telling their parents where they were going, and presumably went to the "hippie pads" in the Hollywood area. Stake leaders often recieved ten to fifteen contacts a month from concerned parents asking for help in locating their children.[15]

On 16 June 1968, at a stake conference attended by Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve and Elder Franklin D. Richards of the First Quorum of Seventy, President Cannon was released because he had been called to preside over the West German Mission. At the same meeting Merlin W. Sant was sustained as the new stake president.

President Sant had been a long time resident of the Los Angeles Stake, having come with his family from Idaho in 1920. From 1923-1925 he served a mission in the Netherlands, and upon his return he married Edna West. By profession he owned and operated a construction company. At the time of his call to lead the stake he was a youthful sixty-four years old and still included waterskiing among his favorite activities. Not unlike his predecessors, President Sant was not afraid to break with tradition and he was willing to address the problems of the stake in a straight-forward manner. Some of the changes he worked hard

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[15]The major responsibility for trying to locate runaway Latter-day Saint youth fell upon the Hollywood Ward bishop, Farrell Miles, in whose boundaries most of the "pads" were located. Winfield Q. Cannon, Dictation, rough transcript, p. 14, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

for, however, would not be realized until years after his release.

When it came to selecting counselors, Elder Petersen admonished the new president to consider younger men who might be trained eventually to lead the stake.[16] Sant, following Elder Petersen's advise, selected John K. Carmack and William W. Tanner, both young men in their thirties who would later serve as stake presidents.

Prior to 1968, the work was conducted solely by members of the Deaf Branch, largely because Church policy prohibited extending mission calls to those with severe hearing problems. In 1968, however, the policy was changed and the first deaf missionaries in the Church were called in connection with the Los Angeles Deaf Branch. Initially, eight full-time missionaries were assigned to Los Angeles, five of whom were hearing impared. For at least two, their calls came in fulfillment of patriarchal blessings which stated that they would serve missions in spite of their handicaps.[17] The other missionaries could hear and had to be trained in sign language.

It was difficult for the missionaries to contact the deaf, who had been made the victims of so many schemes and con games that they were suspicious of almost everyone.

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[16]Merlin W. Sant, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials; Carmack, Oral History, p. 11.

[17]California Intermountain News, 16 May 1970.

Fearing the motives of strangers, they were often afraid to open the door. It was also difficult to tract since the deaf could not hear a knock on the door or the doorbell. Consequently, the missionaries relied largely upon referrals. In spite of these difficulties, within a year of the organization of the deaf mission eighteen converts had been made, including two brothers who were deaf, dumb, and blind.[18]

Paritially as a result of missionary work, the Deaf Branch grew in strength to almost three hundred and the decision was made to create a Deaf Ward. In June 1972, Joseph Brandenburg, who had been the first deaf branch president in the Church, was sustained as the ward's first bishop. In addition, a second deaf branch had been established in 1971 in Fullerton.

In the early 1960s many Koreans began coming to America for educational purposes, and soon a sizeable group of Korean Latter-day Saints were attending USC or residing within stake boundaries. Under the direction of President Cannon, therefore, President Carmack organized a Korean Sunday School, which met at the USC institute and had a membership of around fifty.[19]

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[18]John K. Edmunds, Oral History, interview by Gordon Irving, 1980, typescript, pp. 120-123, the James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

[19]Cannon, Oral History, Untranscribed.

Around 1970, a member of the Korean Sunday School approached California Mission President John K. Edmunds for help with missionary work in the growing Korean community. President Edmunds promised to assign two of his finest missionaries if the man would serve as interpreter and share his testimony with those they contacted. The man agreed, and through the ensuing missionary efforts the little congregation continued to grow.[20]

As their numbers increased, members of the Korean Sunday School began to express a desire to become a branch. Stake leaders agreed that a dependent branch should be organized, feeling it important that the Koreans have their own leaders and learn to assume their own Church responsibilities. Church policy, however, required the approval of Salt Lake City before any branch could be created, and the Los Angeles Stake presidency's proposal was turned down. Unsatisfied, stake leaders tried again, this time arranging for a meeting in Salt Lake City at conference time with a committee of the Brethren that handled the creation of new units. During the meeting it became apparent to the stake presidency that the proposal had been rejected because the Brethren had differing opinions as to the proper course the Church should take regarding minority units.[21]

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[20]Edmunds, Oral History, p. 126.

[21]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 47-48.

Although they had previously approved such units, problems had arisen that caused some of the Brethren to rethink their positions. Some felt that by organizing special language units the Church built in segregation and second class citizenship, and that if minority families were placed in the mainstream they could be taught the basics of Church government and their children could be brought up with the cultural advantages of the integrated ward. Other members of the committee suported minority units as a way to provide better Church training without the interference of language and cultural barriers. Many Saints simply could not speak English, and it seemed better to provide worship services and other Church programs in their own language than to require them to attend services week after week and not understand them.

As they met with this committee, the members of the stake presidency were given a chance to explain why they felt it was in the best interest of the Koreans to organize a branch. One concern was that because of the more reserved Korean culture, the Koreans would not integrate well into American wards. Another was the language problem, and it was observed that the men, who had come for the purpose of attending school, could function well in English, but their wives could not and therefore probably would be unable to function in a standard ward.

Stake leaders returned to Los Angeles hoping to hear soon from the committee, but nothing came. Some Korean members, meanwhile, became discouraged, feeling that perphaps the Church was uninterested in them, and some gradually became inactive. For the time being, however, the Korean Sunday School continued to function, though with increasing difficulty.[22]

Another concern of the stake was the growing number of single adults. Members of the Church were following the national trend of marrying later in life, after they had established a career, which meant that an increasing number of young men and women moving into the Los Angles Stake because of the many employment opportunities were single. In addition there was a growing number of divorced and widowed members of the Church.

Stake leaders became vitally concerned with the problem, realizing that many serious needs really were not being met. In talking with the single adults, stake leaders realized that the singles had a perception that the leaders had a lack of interest in them.[22] Because stake leaders were interested, they realized that something had to be done to change that perception, provide better support for the singles, and give them greater opportunities for meeting possible mates among Latter-day Saints.

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[22]Ibid., p. 48.

[22]Ibid., pp. 136-137.

One of the first things the stake did was to reintroduce, on an expanded basis, the "Get Aquainted" program begun by Bishop Jay Grant in 1946.[24] Ensign and Erma Call were assigned as co-chairmen of the stake's new "Get Aquainted" committee, positions they would hold for the next twelve years. The committee planned a dance every three weeks, a monthly square dance, a monthly fireside, a quarterly dinner-dance, and an annual luau. The stake welcomed all LDS singles to these activities, regardless of whether they lived within its boundaries, and the program soon began to attract people from throughout the area. This even led to some criticism from other stakes, but it seemed inconsistent with the aims of the program to keep people away simply because they did not live within certain boundaries. The purpose of the program was to increase the opportunity for single LDS adults to meet each other, and this seemed to be the best approach at the time.[25]

Singles from throughout the Los Angeles area came to these events, sometimes with the hope of meeting a prospective spouse and sometimes just to socialize. Some marriages resulted, and one that made the newspapers was between a woman with seven children and a man with eight.[26] After

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[24]Ibid., p. 138.

[25]Erma Lunt, "The Southern California Group," Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[26]Ibid.

their marriage they also had a child of their own. One long-range impact of the program was that it eventually became the basis for a Church-wide "Special Interest" program.[27]

While much had been done under President Cannon's administration, much more remained to do before the needs of the single adults were met. Dialogue continued, and early in the administration of President Sant stake leaders learned that the single women wanted to attend Relief Society but couldn't because it was held during the day on weekdays, when most of them worked. It was decided to organize a Sunday morning Relief Society.[28]

When this proposal was presented to the stake's correlation council some people objected, simply because it was not specified in the handbook. President Sant, however, simply sat back in his chair and said, "Well, I'm the president of the stake, and I have the authority to do what's needed for the people. We feel as a presidency that that needs to be done. Now if the Brethren don't like it, they can always release me."[29] He had the courage to innovate if the situation called for it, and the program proved to be very successful.

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Tanner, Oral History, p. 137-138.

[29]Ibid., p. 138.

The Relief Society was just for the women, however, and the singles of the stake also felt the need for getting together as a group to learn the gospel. Stake leaders, therefore, worked with the institute director and USC and a special evening class was begun.[20] The singles were delighted, and the class proved successful.

As time progressed, the perception once held by many single adults changed as they began to realize that stake leaders really were concerned for their well being. Perhaps this gave them courage to discuss an even greater concern. They appreciated all that had been done, but they still felt their needs were not being fully met. What they wanted was a ward or branch of their own, where they could meet together on a permanent basis, study the gospel together, and promote regular progams and activities geared to their particular needs and problems. As they talked with stake leaders, the singles pointed out that in the wards they attended they had little in common with other members, for those wards were geared towards families. They were also tired of explaining why they were not married and trying to convince people that they were not really "abnormal."[21] As a result of such problems, many had become partially or totally inactive.

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[20]Ibid., pp. 139-140.

[21]Tanner, Oral History, p. 140.

In addition, even though the "Get Acquainted" activites were going well, many singles were finding them less than satisfactory so far as finding LDS marriage partners was concerned. Some succeeded, but others were marrying outside the Church, or not getting married at all. Many complained that they were being expected to choose marriage partners simply by attending dances or eating punch and cookies in the cultural hall following firesides, where association was often limited to looks. As one single man put it, the situation had created "an army of lookers."[32]

Stake leaders agreed that a ward or branch exclusively for single adults could be extremely valuable, and that this was the right way to go. In March 1969, therefore, they petitioned the First Presidency of the Church for the creation of such a ward.[33] They gave many reasons. There were several hundred unmarried persons between the ages of twenty-one and forty who, because of the high concertration of apartment dwellings and the convenience of urban employment, resided in the stake. Most were concentrated in the Wilshire and Hollywood Wards. These, stake leaders pointed out, were also the wards with the greatest administrative problems and some of the lowest statistics, for the singles felt they had little to contribute, that the

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[32]Mike Ownby to Daken K. Broaadhead, 25 November 1969, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[33]Stake Presidency to First Presidency, 26 March 1969, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

wards had little to offer them, and that if they were seeking mates they wanted to go "where the action was." Church attendance by single adults in their own wards, if at all, averaged about 20 percent. Too many were marrying outside the Church, and while the M-Men and Gleaner program provided some social contact, it was not effectively meeting the marriage needs.

A ward especially for these single adults, stake leaders argued, would help many of them come back into Church activity. It would serve as a center where they could unite in an atmosphere that would also provide the social contacts that could lead to temple marriage. They proposed that the new unit be called the Beverly Hills Ward, that it meet at the USC institute, and that its membership be limited to those between twenty-one and forty.[34] They recognized that this was a deviation from the Church norm, but argued that it was nevertheless necessary because circumstances in the stake were not normal. They also felt that they would be derelict in their calling if they failed to take action to solve the problems they were facing.[35] In July 1969, however, the First Presidency wrote back that

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

after much discussion the Brethren had rejected the proposal for they felt that it presented too many problems.[36]

As with the Korean proposal, stake leaders did not give up after one attempt and again approached the Brethren. Again, however, they were unsuccessful and finally the matter had to be dropped.[37] Unfortunately for the singles, many more became inactive, and the question as to whether or not the proposed ward would have helped remained unanswered.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s the Church's practice of not allowing blacks to hold the priesthood again became a heated issue. Several universities, including Stanford, refused to participate in athletic events with BYU because of this policy, and as teams traveled to other universities they experienced both threats and acts of violence. When priesthood days were held at the Los Angeles Temple, protestors showed up. There were also bomb threats against some of the Church's property, including the temple and the USC institute, and the life of President Joseph Fielding Smith was threatened when he came to Los Angeles.[38]

The priesthood issue had a direct effect on Los Angeles Stake. For one thing, the Church ran into problems with the Los Angeles Redevelopment Agency over the Institute

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[36]First Presidency to Stake Presidency, 3 July 1969, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[37]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 140-141.

[38]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

of Religion at USC. The area around the university had been designated by the City of Los Angeles as part of the nation's urban redevelopment campaign to help restore the decaying central cities. As a result of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, however, businesses or private organizations involved in the targeted area must sign a master plan development contract (an owner's participation agreement) with a non-discrimination clause. Since the institute was located in the heart of the area, there was a question as to whether the Church would have to sign the agreement in order to keep the institute open, though some in the legal profession held that the Church was not subject to the agreement because it did not receive federal funds. The major problem, however, was connected with the fact that the institute building had been enveloped by the expansion of the university and was thus effectively located on campus. The university had expressed interest in the property, and local leaders feared that unless the Church signed the agreement the rights of eminent domain would be exercised by the redevelopment agency on behalf of the university and the Church would not be adequately compensated. With the agreement, local leaders felt they would have sufficient leverage with the university that it would assist in

locating an acceptable new site for an institute building if the property were taken.[39]

On the other hand, both President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency and the Church's legal counsel felt that the Church should not sign the agreement, but, rather, surrender the building if it was required. They were concerned that by signing this agreement, the Church might put itself in a tenuous legal position if a discrimination suit were filed.[40] Local leaders felt, however, that the institute would have no difficulty living within the simple and standard non-discrimination clause, since all races were welcome in any of its classes. The problem, they recognized, was with the ward that shared the building, even if it was only as a guest of the institute. If necessary, they reasoned, it would be rather simple to differentiate between the institute, which was open to all, and Church organizations, where priesthood was an issue, simply by moving the ward to another location. Afraid of possibly losing a valuable piece of property without receiving anything in return, and possibly losing the institute program as well, stake leaders recommended that the agreement be signed.[41] In the end, however, the Church did not sign it. The

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[39]John K. Carmack to John H. Vandenberg, 29 August 1972, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[40]Wilford W. Kirton to John K. Carmack, 5 September 1972, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[41]Carmack to Vandenberg, 29 August 1972.

university, nevertheless, did assist the Church in finding a new location and, until new facilities were finally obtained, neither the university nor the redevelopment agency expressed any desire to force the institute out of its building.

During the 1960s, blacks continued their expansion into the southwest portion of the stake and white families continued their exodus from the area. As a result, stake membership declined to around 4000 people in 2500 families. As families moved out, membership in the Wilshire, Hollywood and Arlington Wards became chracterized by a prepondarance of older members, especially widows and women who had never married. This presented a problem to the wards, since the priesthood of the ward, already depleated, had to spread itself even more thinly.

No ward was more troubled or depleated than the Arlington Ward. Its building was located in the middle of a depressed black community, and soon it was unsafe even to attend Church services. In addition, ward membership, which at one time had been as high as fourteen hundred, had been declining for several years, and when C. N. Schaap was called as bishop in March 1969 he was told by President Sant that most likely it would be for only a short time.[42] When the decision was made to disband the ward, membership had

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[42]C. N. Schaap, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

dwindled to around 150, and a good percentage of this number had actually moved from the ward but returned on Sundays to fill their assignments and keep the ward functioning.

When it became unsafe to walk the streets after dark, meetings were held in daylight hours. Nevertheless, some sisters were knocked down and had their purses stolen as they left Relief Society. Vandalism became a problem at the chapel as windows were broken almost weekly and the building was broken into at least three times. Following one funeral a group of youth congregating on the steps ouside the chapel refused to move aside for the casket and had to be physically removed. One night outside the chapel Bishop Schaap had a gun placed against his head by two men demanding money and his watch. Acting as if he were taking off his watch, Schaap put the car in gear, stepped hard on the gas and took off. On another occasion the ward received a letter from the "Black Panthers" demanding $8,000,000. Other congregations in the area had their meetings disturbed by militant groups and, as a result, ward members were instructed that if any of their meetings were disturbed, even if during the Sacrament, they were to leave the building quietly, go home and have a closing prayer there; and only the bishopric was to stay.[42] Fortunately, nothing untoward ever happened.

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[42]Ibid.

Serious as they were, these problems produced at least one postive result as members of the ward drew especially close to each other, with everyone taking an interest in the well being of evenryone else. Also, partly because some of the most faithful members continued to attend the ward, it was often on top of the stake percentages during its last years.[44]

Nevertheless, the dwindling numbers coupled with concerns for the safety of ward members led stake leaders to propose to the First Presidency that the ward be disbanded. On 16 June 1971 the stake presidency, with deep regrets, dissolved the Arlington Ward, transfering those living in the ward boundaries to the Wilshire Ward and asking those who had been returning on Sundays to attend their home wards.

Even before the Arlington Ward was dissolved and its chapel sold, stake leaders had been giving consideration to selling the Wilshire Ward chapel. As with Arlington, there was a question of saftey. Some of the feeling may have been the result of prejudice, for the chapel was in a black neighborhood, but a few incidents involving stake members made safety a real concern. As a result, many members and ward leaders began to say that they would neither go there

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[44]Ibid.

nor let members of their wards go there, especially for night meetings, and finally night meetings were curtailed.[45]

Unlike the situation at Arlington, however, little thought was being given to disbandoning the Wilshire Ward. Under the direction of President Sant, nevertheless, the stake presidency began looking for potential chapel sites within ward boundaries that would reduce the risks Church members were subjected to in going to the chapel.

After considering several locations, the stake presidency selected a parcel of land on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Muirfield Road, near the Los Angeles Country Club in the Hancock Park area, as the best location for a new chapel. In the fall of 1970, the Church purchased it for one million dollars.[46] Stake leaders were confident they would be able to get the property rezoned for building a chapel.

The building envisioned for the Muirfield property was similar to the highrise which the Church had recently purchased in New York City to serve as home to the Manhattan Ward and as a stake center. Stake leaders hoped that the new building would house not only the Wilshire and USC wards, but also the stake center, a mission office, a branch campus for BYU, and as an institute of religion for USC and

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[45]Tanner, Oral History, p. 33.

[46]Ibid., p. 34.

Los Angeles Community College.[47] This, however, was only one of the options being considered, and it was never taken past the discussion stage.[48]

The Los Angeles Stake was not the only one under going change. All the surrounding stakes were also declining in population. The membership of the Inglewood and Santa Monica Stakes dropped, for many members could no longer pay the high taxes required to live in those areas. Like the Los Angeles Stake, Huntington Park was also losing population as the racial makeup of its membership changed. During the last part of President Sant's administration and the first few years that John K. Carmack led the stake, therefore, it was not only the future of the Wilshire chapel and ward that was in question, but also, in the minds of some, the future of the stake. The suggestion was even made that the stake should be dissolved, with the eastern wards being placed in Huntington Park Stake and the western ones in the Santa Monica Stake, thus creating two strong stakes out of what were becoming three weak stakes.[49]

Other solutions to the problems created by change were proposed by committess called to consider possible

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[47]John K. Carmack to Church Building Committee, 27 December 1972, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[48]Tanner, Oral History, p. 33.

[49]Alan K. Parrish, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

alternatives for changing the boundaries of the stake. One suggestion was that wards be created not on the basis of geographic boundaries but, rather, on the basis of special needs, such as ages of children, since everyone had to travel to Church meetings anyway, and such an arrangement would make little difference to the members of the stake so far as their time was concerned.[80] Theoretically, these new kinds of wards, like special wards for single adults, could better meet the special needs of all members. As with the building of a high rise structure, however, these ideas were never carried past the discussion stage.

These and other uncertaintites concerning the future of the stake as its membership continued to decline only added to the many challenges stake leaders had to confront in these rapidly changing times. While the challanges related to a declining Anglo population did not go away, they would be exchanged for another challenge when President John K. Carmack and his counselors make a commitment to keep the Church strong within the stake boundaries, regardless of the skin color or national background of those residing therein: a commitment exemplified in what happened later in the Wilshire Ward chapel, which the stake continues to use.

Even though the decade of the 1960s was a most trying and challenging period for the Los Angeles Stake, it was, in a special sense, also a time of progress. There are

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[80]Ibid.

those who might argue that because of declining population, the stake failed even to hold its own. Its achievement, however, was in the fact that in this time of conflict and rapid change it met its challanges straight on. It helped serve as an anchor and calming influence in a time of turmoil and adversity by making its members as comfortable as possible with the situation in which they found themselves. In addition, its leaders were preparing the stake for future growth.

CHAPTER 11

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

In June 1972 Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve, a former member of the Los Angeles Stake, returned as the visiting general authority at stake conference. He had been assigned to reorganize the stake, for President Merlin W. Sant had been called to preside over the New Zealand South Mission. After all the priesthood leaders had been interviewed, Elder Hunter called John K. Carmack to preside over the stake. He also indicated that the feelings of those he had interviewed were nearly unanimous in this move, which, he commented, spoke well for the unity of the stake.[1] William W. Tanner and Romney Stewart were sustained as counselors.

Elder Hunter told President Carmack that the Los Angeles Stake was one of those key stakes which the Brethren in Salt Lake City watched closely, and he counseled him to take full advantage of the inspiration that would come in the months and years ahead. He also suggested that the new

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[1]John K. Carmack, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

president not be too efficient, reminding him that one of the most important roles of a stake president is to meet with the people, to work with them, to feel their spirit, and to be accessible to them. Elder Hunter also recommended a few changes in the way things had been done in the stake.[2]

John K. Carmack was born in the small railroad town of Winslow, Arizona, in 1931. During World War II, his family moved to California, eventually settling in Santa Barbara. Following a mission to Montana and Wyoming he attended Brigham Young University, where he graduated with a political science degree. He then entered the army and served among the U.S. occupational troops in Seoul, Korea. There he also became group leader for the small group of Saints in that city. Following his release he entered the UCLA Law School. While attending UCLA he met Shirley Fay Allen, whom he married in the Los Angeles Temple in 1958.

President Carmack and his counselors continued the important traditions of the stake, maintaining great respect for those who had gone before, but they also recognized that the stake and its needs were changing. Their greatest responsibility, they realized, was to make a unified stake out of one that was being fragmented by many different nationalities and backgrounds. They tried, therefore, to teach by both word and example that the stake existed for

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[2]Carmack, Questionnaire; Carmack, Oral History, pp. 11-12.

all people, including a number of different ethnic groups as well as members of all ages. They also taught through example that the stake existed to serve, unify, and love everyone and that all members could make the adjustments necessary to work in close harmony with those of different languages and cultures.[3] Thus, the stake effectively left behind its traditional past in which members were basically one in background and language, and stake leaders taught that the present, although greatly different, was also a glorious reality. President Carmack later expressed the feeling that the greatest accomplishment of his administration was the instillation of a feeling of "unity in diversity."[4]

In October 1972, the First Presidency of the Church, under the direction of President Harold B. Lee, sent a letter to the stakes and missions requesting that "adequate attention be given to members of the Church who do not speak the language of the majority where they live."[5] The letter reminded local leaders that they had the responsibility for members of different racial, language, or cultural groups within their boundaries, and suggested that language barriers should be broken down though translation. It

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[3]Carmack, Oral History, p. 12.

[4]Carmack, Questionnaire.

[5]First Presidency, Circular letter, 10 October 1972, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

encouraged priesthood leaders to foster the welfare of foreign-language minorities through Sunday School classes taught in their own languages, while still trying to integrate them into the mainstream if possible. The letter also authorized specialty units, but only where there was a sufficient minority living within a stake's boundaries.

Leaders of the Los Angeles Stake welcomed the interest Church leaders were expressing in minority members, for it only confirmed what they had been trying to do for years in breaking down barriers. They also recognized, however, that the new guidelines for dealing with minorities were not completely adequate for their stake.

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once stated that the life of the law was not logic, but experience. Such, stake leaders found, also held true regarding minority units in southern California. While it seemed logical to say that minorities should be integrated into regular wards, their experience had taught them not only that "adequate attention" usually required specialty units for minorities with language and cultural barriers, but also that adequate units could be created only by going beyond stake boundaries. They had already tried other means, including offering English classes for Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters and providing translators, but experience indicated that the best way to nurture the minorities further along was through love, enfranchisement,

and eventually letting them learn leadership through leading. Stake leaders adopted this attitude not because it was logical, but because it was right.[6]

Bringing some of the minorities into what were essentially Anglo-American wards often deprived them of the leadership training they needed. Specialty branches, on the other hand, gave opportunity for personal growth to members who might otherwise do little more in the Church than sit on the back row at meetings they barely, if at all, understood. To help them become leaders in the Church did not require teaching them English as much as it did giving them first-hand experience in administering Church programs by organizing them into specialty units and then allowing them to interact with the English-speaking majority in the stake through translators.[7] In addition, having a branch president who understood both the language and the culture of a particular group greatly improved the capability for counseling branch members and assisting in their spiritual welfare.

At the same time, stake leaders recognized that specialty units should be created only if they were really needed. A large number of Armenians, for example, lived in the Hollywood area and the Hollywood Ward created an Armenian Sunday School for their benefit. Most of these

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[6]Carmack, Oral History, p. 17.

[7]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 35-60.

members, however, had little problem with the language or culture and a majority had a greater desire to be part of the Hollywood Ward than to have their own unit. The Armenian Saints continued to attend that ward, therefore, where they learned the gospel in English.[8]

In addition to organizing specialty units, stake leaders tried to become aware of the special challenges faced by members of different cultures. Minority members were invited to participate in stake leadership meetings and conferences, and special training meetings were held on both the stake and ward levels for those units with members with special needs.[9]

The emphasis was not only upon minorities but also upon those with special needs, such as the deaf. When better communication facilities were made available for the deaf, stake leaders readily took advantage of the new technology. Telecommunication devices were placed in the home of both the stake president and the branch president so that deaf members could more easily communicate with their leaders without having to show up on their doorsteps or use interpreters.[10]

Throughout its history the Los Angeles Stake has been plagued by the problem of transiency, along with the

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[8]Carmack, Oral History, p. 16.

[9]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 39-40.

[10]Ibid., 51-53.

directly related challenge of keeping stake and ward positions filled. It has been estimated that some 50,000 Saints have lived within the stake boundaries, and because so many have stayed for only a short time before moving out into the suburbs or back to Utah, someone once dubbed it a "hotel stake."[11] During the administration of President Carmack the entire stake seemed to be in a constant state of motion. Every bishopric and branch presidency was reorganized at least once because one of its members left the stake. The high council turned over almost completely. When openings did arise, new members of the stake, minority members, and singles were often called upon to fill the openings and to receive the training that went with them.[12]

Hollywood Ward was a dramatic example of the problem, with an average turnover of about 10 percent each month.[13] Members would be trained in Church callings but, after functioning only for a short time, move from the ward and usually from the stake. The problem of keeping the ward staffed become so acute that the bishopric began meeting new arrivals at the door on Sunday morning, finding out where they were from, calling their former bishops to discover if they were in good standing, issuing them a call, and then

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[11]Arthur Wallace, Conversation, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[12]Tanner, Oral History, p. 40, 146.

[13]Notes of a conversation with Bob Little, 1987, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

introducing them and sustaining them in their new callings that afternoon in sacrament meeting.[14] Instead of attempting to visit each new arrival immediately, the bishopric was forced to contact new members and welcome them to the ward through registered letters.[15]

The entire urban area of Los Angeles was having difficulty maintaining Church population during the 1970s, particularly with respect to young families who were moving from the city to Orange County or to San Fernando Valley. People left not only to escape the changing patterns of the neighborhoods, but also because they disliked the growing practice of busing in order to achieve integrated schools. Others left because of inflated property values and the accompanying rise in property taxes. One of the areas of the stake hardest hit by these issues was Bel Air, in the Westwood First Ward, where parents were not only paying high taxes to support the schools, but were also having their children bussed downtown to integrate the inner city schools.[16] While many of those who moved from Bel Air left the stake, others tended to move into the Cheviot Hills area

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]As a result of the highly controversial busing issue, a number of private schools were established in the Los Angeles area. Some groups within the Church requested the use of Church buildings for such schools. The matter was debated thoroughly, but the conclusion was that Church buildings could not be used for private schools. Tanner, Oral History, pp. 87-88

of the Westwood Second Ward where schools were integrated and the threat of bussing was removed.

The wards in the eastern part of the stake were also experiencing great changes, but for different reasons. The area encompassing Wilshire, Hollywood, and Hollywood Second Wards was becoming a high crime area, and an increasingly undesirable place to live. So many families were moving from these wards, in fact, that few youth remained, and in order to have thirty or forty in attendance at MIA meeting the three wards combined for that activity.[17] It was a difficult time for these wards, but in a way it proved a blessing as the members who remained intensified their support for each other and a special spirit and unity developed among them.

Many parts of Hollywood had deteriorated badly and the city was no longer the attractive place for families it once had been. There were many apartment dwellers in the Hollywood wards as well as many welfare problems. There was also a growing drug problem in the city, and Church membership rolls included a number of people who were trying to straighten out their lives. All these things contributed to the fact that even though many good, faithful, and active people remained in Hollywood, there were fewer established

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[17]Frances Whitney Richardson, Questionnarie, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

families.[18] Another reason why the Hollywood Second Ward was getting smaller was that many Latter-day Saints did not want to live in an area with a growing homosexual population.

The demographics of Wilshire Ward was also changing, as many younger families moved out leaving a larger population of older singles. At one time, for example, there was a total membership of over 600, but more than half were members of the Relief Society and these were mainly widows over sixty-five. An unusually large share of the responsibility for the success of the ward, therefore, fell upon the ward Relief Society President, Marian Pinkston.[19]

Active members in these wards, especially Melchizedek Priesthood holders, found themselves spread very thin. The Hollywood Ward, for example, had only twenty-four high priests and the Hollywood Second Ward had only thirteen, in spite of the fact that the membership of both wards exceeded five hundred. The average attendance of elders was 21 and 28 percent, respectively, with over 60 percent of the elders in each ward not attending any meeting. Seldom, if ever, therefore, were two Melchizedek Priesthood holders assigned together as home teachers, and seldom were home teachers assigned less than six or eight families. Occasionally a

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[18]At one point the ward included 440 families, but only 560 members. Cannon, Oral History, untranscribed.

[19]Carmack, Questionnaire.

home teacher was assigned fifteen or eighteen families and instructed to try to visit the whole group every other month.[20]

One significant result of all these changes was the fact that when the Hollywood and Wilshire Wards celebrated their fiftieth anniversaries in 1973 and 1977, respectively, they were substantially different wards from those that had been created a half-century earlier. The fact that Wilshire Ward's celebration featured ethnic foods symbolized much of what was happening. Some older members of both wards, of course, remembering the different atmosphere of former days, were still uncomfortable with what was taking place around them, and a few were heard to say that while they had not left the ward, the ward had left them. Others, however, not only accepted what was happening but also glorified the changes as the only way for the Church to accommodate both the present and the future.

Amid all the changes taking place in Los Angeles Stake, the two Westwood wards remained the strongest, and were largely self-sufficient. As a result, they were required to assume an increasing share of the responsibility for the success of the stake, and their members were called upon more frequently to fill stake leadership positions. The changes also resulted in President Carmack and auxiliary heads spending relatively little time with the Westwood

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[20]Cannon, Oral History, untranscribed.

wards. Instead, most of their time and the time of their successors was spent with the struggling minority units and the rapidly changing wards in the eastern part of the stake training future leaders.[21]

One of the first and most important decisions made by the stake presidency under President Carmack was to keep the Wilshire Ward chapel. During the early months of President Carmack's administration, he and his counselors continued to ponder the building's future. Conventional wisdom still held that it was only a matter of time before it would be sold and a new one built in a better neighborhood, but as they evaluated the situation they began to see the future of the chapel as sound and exciting. They noticed that, in actuality, it was being used more than ever before, and by a wider variety of people. While Anglos were moving from the Wilshire Ward, other groups such as blacks, Koreans, Filipinos, and Latins, were filling the void, and even though there had been some problems they were basically good neighbors. For stake leaders, whose responsibility was not just to think of the present but also to consider the future, it was clear that the chapel's best days could still be ahead, serving the wide variety of minorities living nearby. In addition, there was artistic and historical value in the magnificent structure that also argued for its

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[21]Notes of a conversation with William W. Tanner, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

retention. Thus, the longer they analyzed the situation the more the members of the stake presidency moved towards keeping the chapel. Not only did they deliberate its future, but they also spent considerable time petitioning the Lord to discover His will.

Finally, on one occasion while President Stewart was out of town, Presidents Carmack and Tanner were earnestly praying about the matter when they received the inspiration that it was not the Lord's desire that the chapel be sold. The spiritual impression was that whatever happened the stake should not abandon it for the Lord needed it in that location, not only because those Saints still living in the area needed a place to meet, but also because there were going to be converts made from among the people who had moved in. The Wilshire chapel might be disposed of at a later time, possibly during the Millennium, but it was not supposed to be done away with at that time.[22]

After receiving this inspiration, the stake presidency determined to restore the building as much as possible to the condition it was in when dedicated by President Heber J. Grant. Because it had been felt that the building might be sold, it had become sadly neglected and hardly a room did not need some work. In some areas the roof leaked badly and, as a result, the acoustical ceiling tiles had come loose in the cultural hall. New carpet was need throughout

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[22]Carmack, Oral History, p. .

and the chairs on the stand in the chapel had become tattered. In addition, the kitchen had fallen into disrepair and needed to be modernized.

When the stake presidency presented its decision to refurbish the building to the high council and bishops, the ensuing discussion revealed a wide range of opinions, including the feeling that it may not be wise to put money into a building that logic said would have to be sold. But the stake presidency pressed the issue, feeling that as a stake they "should have more faith than fear" and follow the inspiration of the Lord.[23] As a result, when stake leaders were asked to pledge their support of the stake presidency they did so, even though some continued to question the wisdom of the decision.[24] The message was also sent throughout the stake that the Wilshire Ward chapel would continue to serve those who lived near it, who would most likely constitute an entirely different group from the one it originally served.

Stake leaders then forced the issue.[25] In June 1974 the stake presidency asked that the Muirfield property be sold, for the stake no longer had an interest in building in

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[23]Tanner, Oral History, p. 35.

[24]Carmack, Oral History, p. 13.

[25]Tanner, Oral History, p. 35.

that area.[26] In November 1974 they wrote to the Church Building Department for permission to place the Wilshire Ward complex again in good repair.[27]

Even though the stake had decided to keep the chapel, there were still those who continued to contend that it was too dangerous to attend meetings there. Stake leaders, therefore, recognizing that there were some dangers, tried to minimize them and make it as safe as possible for all. A back-to-back meeting schedule for all units using the Wilshire Ward was approved so that all Sunday meetings were held during daylight hours. Feeling that it would also be less dangerous if lighting around the chapel was improved and more parking was available, the stake also took steps in that direction. When a convalescent hospital immediately south of the building was put up for sale in November 1974, it was purchased and the property was made into a parking lot, thus allowing almost everyone who came to the chapel to park on Church property.[28] As stake members continued to go to the chapel some unfortunate incidents occurred, but gradually the problems declined.

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[26]Los Angeles Stake Presidency to Building Division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 19 June 1974, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[27]John K. Carmack to Building Division, 13 November 1974, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[28]Ibid.

In October 1975 the Wilshire Ward renovation project was approved by the Church Building Department and work began immediately. This major renovation project included installing beautiful red carpeting, similar to that originally in the building. The chairs on the stand were redone, as was a portion of the woodwork inside the chapel. One of the original painters who helped paint the many geometrical patterns in the chapel, Eddy Lundquist, was located and he produced the original stencils so that even the walls and ceilings were restored to their original condition.[29] A new roof was placed on the building and extensive repairs were completed throughout. Indeed, few efforts were spared to restore the Wilshire Ward to the very beautiful building that it was, and still is.

As work began on the building and before the great numbers of Hispanics began swelling the ranks of the stake, President Carmack received a powerful spiritual confirmation of the decision stake leaders had made. A vision came to him in which he saw that while the building then served as a home for only one Spanish-speaking branch, it would one day serve many Spanish wards and be a center of Spanish activity.[30]

Another Church unit which received a permanent home was the UCLA Ward. From the beginning the university's

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[29]Rededication Program, p. 16.

[30]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 34-35.

religious conference center had been used by both the ward and the Institute of Religion, although that arrangement had proved less than ideal. The desire had always been for an institute building that the ward also could use, but efforts to acquire one had been unsuccessful. The Church owned property near the campus, but it was not adequate by itself for an institute building. Other potential sites were located, but the Church was unable to obtain zoning variances. Finally one day in 1970, when most Church leaders were despairing that a suitable location could be found, Bishop John H. Webster was traveling along the Santa Monica Freeway when he felt inspired to drive down Hilgard Avenue and stop at the sorority house next to the Church's property. Visiting the house was its owner, who, when asked, said she would be willing to sell. By the summer of 1972 the sorority house was converted into an institute building suitable for ward use.[31]

Now that the Church had its own building near UCLA, the single adult institute program was moved there, partly over concerns about the future of the USC institute. In addition, this new location was more favorable to the needs of the singles for it was closer to Santa Monica and the San Fernando Valley, where many were living. The number of singles attending the institute classes as well as the UCLA Ward soon mushroomed, and the stake ended up with what was

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[31]Bob Little, "Conversation."

essentially a singles ward meeting in connection with the UCLA Ward.[32] The singles, many of whom were professionals who had come to the area to start their careers, found that the UCLA Ward was uniquely able to satisfy their desires to associate with people of their own faith and circumstances. It was also evident to stake leaders that these single Saints desired not only to have an enjoyable time, but also to participate fully and responsibly in the Church, and that this desire was best being met at UCLA.

As word of the opportunity at UCLA spread, the building soon was filled to capacity each Sunday with students and non-students alike from throughout the Los Angeles area, some from as far away as San Bernardino. The main chapel could seat around 150 people, and there were people standing in the back, sitting on the steps that led into the chapel and in the various rooms throughout the institute where the services were transmitted. While all were welcome to attend the activities and Sunday services, only students could become ward members and receive callings. Consequently, many singles became part-time students so they could have an opportunity to become a part of the ward and to serve in an environment that met both their spiritual and social needs.[33]

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[32]Parrish, Oral History, untranscribed.

[33]Ibid.

Changes were also taking place on a Church level to help meet the needs of the increasing number of single adults. In 1972 President Harold B. Lee stated, "We have found that we have been neglecting some of our adult members--those over eighteen who have not yet found their companions, or who are perhaps widowed or divorced. . . . but we are endeavoring to reach those for whom we have had no adequate programs."[34] Elder James E. Faust was appointed to head up the Church-wide effort to provide for greater involvement of singles in Church activity, which included the establishment of the Young Special Interest Program for singles under forty. As part of the new emphasis, a singles ward was organized in the Federal Heights Stake in Salt Lake City. Shortly after its creation, Elder Marion D. Hanks, whom Los Angeles Stake leaders had approached previously about the need for a singles branch, called President Carmack, telling him that if the stake would again apply he would personally walk the application through the process and recommend its approval to the First Presidency.[35]

On 27 January 1974 a special meeting of the UCLA Ward was held at the Westwood chapel to organize the first singles unit outside Salt Lake City. The new unit was

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[34]As cited in Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century, p. 356.

[35]Carmack, Questionnaire.

called the Los Angeles First Branch, and Richard Stratford was sustained as branch president.

Membership in the single adult branch was limited to those singles residing within the confines of the Los Angeles Stake. It was initially recommended that membership should be open to all who desired to attend, regardless of where they resided. Leaders of some surrounding stakes, however, opposed the creation of the branch on such a condition for it would continue to draw members away from their stakes. Those singles residing outside Los Angeles Stake boundaries were asked to return to their home wards, though they could become members of the branch if they received written permission from their home ward and stake as well as from President Stratford and President Carmack.

As one member of the branch recalled, however, this policy was not without its problems:

> On the first Sunday of the new branch, it appeared that there could possibly be a slight problem--within a month it was confirmed: the majority of the women lived within the stake, and the majority of men lived outside of the stake.
>
> Within six months, President Stratford, seeing that he had a crisis on his hands, was busy buttonholing single male visitors from outside of the stake to obtain the necessary signatures to become a member of the branch. He was very successful in this endeavor. Within a year or so, most of the banished had returned to become members of the branch.[28]

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[28]Kathleen P. Allyn, "The History of the Los Angeles First Ward," Los Angeles Stake Collection.

The establishment of the singles branch presented some challenges, one of which was adapting Church curriculum and programs to the needs of the singles. Thus, a Sunday School class developed by branch members focused on the problems peculiar to single adults, such as dating, self-esteem, loneliness, and marriage, instead of the traditional family focus. Branch members were also organized into home evening groups which met every Monday and served the function of "Family Home Evening" in building a unity and concern among group members.[37]

The creation of the branch produced great rewards for its members and for the Church, many unexpected. All who wished could now be involved, since nearly everyone in the branch could hold a position of responsibility. Thus branch members, the majority of whom were professional and well educated people, were able to develop their abilities in ways that often were not possible in traditional wards. The branch also brought single people out of inactivity, many of whom had been unknown to Church leaders. At the branch's initial tithing settlement, for example, President Stratford found that almost half were attending Church for the first time in their adult lives.[38]

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[37]Ibid.

[38]Richard and Sally Stratford, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

Stake leaders also found that the branch was a marvelous vehicle for encouraging repentance and helping many single adults come to grips with the need to put their sins behind them.[39] Since these singles felt that they now had a place in the Church and that Church leaders cared for them, the number of cases handled by the branch president were not insignificant. The branch, therefore, accomplished a great purpose in helping people bring their lives more fully in tune with the principles of the gospel.

Part of the goal in establishing this branch was to create alumni, so to speak, who would "graduate" to family wards by getting married. While no complete record has been kept, the fact that between 1979 and 1984 seventy-eight marriages took place between branch members suggests that at least in part this goal has been met.[40]

Within a year of the creation of the Los Angeles First Branch, the Santa Monica Stake followed suit and created a singles ward. Other stakes then also created singles wards and by 1987 there were nine such wards in the Los Angeles area. Unlike the singles unit in Los Angeles Stake, which has become an older, special interest ward,

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[39]Rodney H. Brady, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, rough transcript, p. 25, the James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

[40]Allyn, "The History of the Los Angeles First Ward."

these wards cater to the younger single adults. In 1978 the Los Angeles First Branch became the Los Angeles First Ward.

The August 1974 statistical report listed the membership of the stake as 3,571, a decrease of 1600 members in twenty-five years. These members, however, were contained in a larger number and greater variety of units than existed in 1950: Hollywood I and II Wards, Los Angeles Spanish Branch, Los Angeles First Branch, Los Angeles Ward for the Deaf, University UCLA Ward, University USC Branch, Westwood I and II Wards, and Wilshire Ward. Of the total membership, almost one thousand belonged to the student wards, the singles branch, the Deaf Ward, or the Spanish Branch.

The decrease in stake membership would have been far greater had it not been for missionary efforts. Beginning in the mid-1970s the Los Angeles California Stake led the mission in baptisms, largely as a result of missionary work among Hispanics. This increase in missionary momentum, however, presented a new problem for, in effect, the stake was trading old experienced members for new and inexperienced converts. As a result, many who might otherwise not have received great responsibilities quite so soon were given assignments and challenges relatively early in their Church careers. Their lack of experience was more than made

up for, however, by the fresh insights and enthusiasm they brought to their callings.[41]

By 1977, the Korean Sunday School was still in operation, although its numbers remained small. Its members continued to express their desires for a branch, however, and stake leaders continued to recognize that need. During the January 1977 stake conference, Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church, was the visiting general authority. As the stake presidency outlined for him the challenges in the stake, they mentioned the situation with the Koreans and what the stake had done to hold them, though mostly without success. Bishop Brown then informed the stake presidency of a recent change in the Church's Handbook of Instructions. While stakes still could not organize independent branches without permission from Salt Lake City, the policy had been changed so that permission was no longer needed to organize a dependent branch.[42] The stake Presidency determined that this branch should be tied to the Wilshire Ward where it would receive tremendous support from the ward's bishop, Stephen Eldredge, whose wife, Yoshie, was Japanese.

On 6 March 1977 the long struggle to provide a special unit for the Koreans came to an end when a dependent Korean Branch was organized at Wilshire Ward, with Tae Mun

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[41]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 142-144.

[42]Carmack, Oral History, p. .

Lee as branch president. The Koreans now had the identity and place in the Church they sought. Attendance revived, and many members who had been inactive came back into full activity. The branch received a needed boost by the calling of Korean-speaking missionaries to labor in Los Angeles. The first of these missionaries had been reassigned to the area for health reasons, but before long other missionaries were called to labor in the area known as Korea Town, not far from the Los Angeles Stake center.[43]

As the membership grew, approval was given for the creation of an independent branch. In a meeting in the high council room of the stake center on 18 December 1977, the Korean Branch was reorganized as the Los Angeles Second Branch with President Lee continuing as branch president. This meeting demonstrated that the branch had sufficient priesthood as the majority of Koreans present were priesthood holders. A major concern, however, was the lack of sisters, and only two attended the first Relief Society the following Sunday. Members of the branch came from throughout the area, however, and before long the number of women increased. The attendance, growth, and percent of individual participation of the Korean Saints was excellent as attendance was often nearly 100 percent.

In the spring of 1977, President Carmack was called to be one of the Regional Representatives of the Twelve.

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[43]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 157-160.

Consequently, on 12 June 1977, at a stake conference presided over by Elder Robert D. Hales of the First Quorum of the Seventy, Rodney H. Brady was sustained as president of the stake. Robert H. Millard and Stephen Eldredge were selected as counselors.

President Brady was born in Salt Lake City in 1933 and raised in Sandy, Utah. After completing a mission to the British Isles, he attended the University of Utah, where he received a B.A. in accounting as well as an MBA degree. He then went on to Harvard University and earned a Doctorate in Business Administration. In 1966 he accepted a position with Hughes Tool Company in Los Angeles and moved into the Westwood Ward. He served as a member of the high council and in the Westwood Ward bishopric before becoming bishop of the ward in 1968. In December 1970 he accepted a position as Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In 1972 he returned to Los Angeles as executive vice-president of Bergen Brunswick Corporation, a chemical and pharmaceuticals conglomerate. Shortly thereafter he was called as second counselor to President Carmack when President Stewart moved from the stake.

By March 1978, the Wilshire Ward and the two Hollywood wards had diminished in strength to the point that it was apparent that two stronger wards should be maintained as opposed to three weaker ones. Consequently, the

Hollywood Second Ward was disbanded and its membership transferred to the other two wards.

The Deaf Ward, on the other hand, continued to grow to the point that it outgrew its facilities in the Wilshire Ward annex. A decision was made to split the ward, but it had become apparent that most of its membership lived outside stake boundaries, either in the San Fernando Valley or in the Torrance area. It was decided, therefore, that wards ought to be established in those areas. On 16 April 1978 the Los Angeles Ward for the Deaf was disbanded and the San Fernando Valley Ward for the Deaf and the Torrance North Ward for the Deaf were created. This change not only better served the deaf, but also freed the Wilshire annex to become a permanent home for the Korean Branch.

Three months following the division of the deaf branch, one of the most important events in the history of the Church took place. On Friday, 9 June 1978, the First Presidency held a press conference to read a letter dated the previous day which announced that the Lord had heard the pleadings of the Brethren "and confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple."[44]

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[44]First Presidency, Circular letter, 8 June 1978.

Over the previous several months the General Authorities had discussed the possibility of all worthy male members receiving the priesthood, and President Spencer W. Kimball had often sequestered himself in the Salt Lake Temple to plead for guidance from the Lord on the subject. After extended meditation and prayer President Kimball received a revelation that this was the time. On 1 June 1978, in a meeting with the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, President Kimball again brought up the subject, expressing hope that all might receive a clear answer. All present were asked to express their feelings on the matter, and after two hours of discussion it was clear that the brethren were of one mind. They then prayed, with President Kimball serving as voice, and during the prayer the revelation came and the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve "all heard the same voice, received the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord."[45]

By the following Thursday, 8 June 1978, a letter had been written to local leaders announcing this change in policy, and this letter was later incorporated into the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration--2. The

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[45]Bruce R. McConkie, "The New Revelation on the Priesthood," Priesthood (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), p. 128, as cited in Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century, p. 391.

following day, the First Presidency held its news conference.

Few will forget where they were when they first learned of this grand new revelation. Some were at home and heard it on radio or television. Some were driving in their cars, others were in the temple, and still others learned of the change through the phone calls and personal visits of excited friends, both members and non-members. Many of those in their cars pulled over to the side of the road to consider what it meant and to offer prayers of thanksgiving. Many Saints wept tears of joy, others hugged each other and jumped about their rooms with unbridled happiness. Some leaders first heard of the revelation from local members. Robert L. Jachens, bishop of the Wilshire Ward, heard it from Andrew Pulley, a young black member of his ward who had heard it from another ward member. "Don't you believe it," Jachens told Pulley. "Someone has played a very cruel joke." The bishop called Salt Lake City, however, then hurried to tell Pulley it was true, rejoicing that the black members of his ward could now enjoy all the blessings of the Church.[48] Naturally, there were those who said they really could not believe it until they saw a black member blessing and passing the sacrament or a black couple being married in the temple--all of which happened a short time later.

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[48]Frances Whitney Richardson, Questionnaire, p. 3, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

The new revelation was also the direct fulfillment of a prophecy made to a member of the stake. A couple of months earlier, President Brady had an opportunity to counsel a recent female convert who, after her baptism, had learned that blacks could not hold the priesthood. This upset her greatly because the father of her young daughter was black and she realized that when her daughter reached marriageable age she might be denied the blessings of the temple or, at the very least, her children might not be able to hold the priesthood. After discussing the matter at great length with her, and realizing that he was going out on a limb, President Brady felt inspired to tell her, "This may appear to us to be a problem now, but I assure you that by the time it makes a difference to that young lady it won't be a problem."[47]

As a result of the new revelation on priesthood, active missionary work was begun among blacks throughout the world, and missions were opened in Nigeria and Ghana. In Los Angeles, missionary work began in earnest and in 1987 a sizeable percentage of the Wilshire Ward was black.

By coincidence, two days following the announcement of the revelation on the priesthood, the Los Angeles California Stake was scheduled to hold stake conference, and as part of that conference the Wilshire Ward chapel was scheduled to be rededicated. The building was originally

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[47]Brady, Oral History, pp. 18-19.

scheduled for dedication in July 1977 but this had been postponed for nearly a year because of delays in the building schedule. This combination of events, however, served almost as a confirmation of the decision of stake leaders not to sell the beautiful, stately building, but to keep it as if it was intended to be used by minority members. Elder LeGrand Richards had been invited back to the stake for the conference and to rededicate the building he had known and loved as stake president. On Friday he called President Brady to inform him of the details surrounding the revelation and to ask him to read the First Presidency letter as part of stake conference.[48]

Present at this memorable conference were about ten black members of the stake and the sister who had been promised by her stake president that the restriction on the priesthood would not affect her daughter. At the conclusion of the meeting these Saints were among the first to reach the stand. There they threw their arms around President Brady and Elder Richards with emotion-packed gratitude, and shared a special spiritual moment with an apostle of the Lord.[49]

Since the rededication, all the members of the high council who initially fought against the decision to keep the Wilshire Ward have said to the stake presidency, "We're

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[48]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[49]Ibid., p. 18.

glad you hung tough, and you didn't give in to our objections."[50] The Wilshire Ward is used more today than it ever was, and by more diverse groups. The importance of the decision can also be seen in the fact that over the last several years the neighborhoods around the chapel have started on the upswing and the building has been a convenient gathering point for the minorities in that area. Perhaps President Carmack best summed up the outlook of stake leaders and members towards the importance of the stake center when he wrote for the rededication program:

> We don't look back in this stake. There are too many young people to train, saints to serve, converts to baptize, organizations to perfect and create. Our faith and energy are equal to our challenges. The Los Angeles Stake center stands as a symbol of the solid faith of our people in this great community which is Southern California. This is its center historically and the signal continues to go forth from here.[51]

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[50]Tanner, Oral History, p. 38.

[51]Rededication Program, p. 11.

Chapter 12

A VISION THAT WE MUST CAUSE TO BE FULFILLED

Even though it was natural that the largest growth of the Latter-day Saints in southern California should come among the Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking population, the large Spanish-speaking minority was not forgotten. The history of the Hispanic Saints in Los Angeles is one of small beginnings, sporadic growth, exemplary faith, questions over how to deal with linguistic and cultural differences within the Church, and, finally, the organization of a Spanish-speaking stake.

Missionary work among the Spanish-speaking people in Los Angeles began in the mid 1920s. By 1929 a Spanish branch, later known as the Dittman Branch, had been established under the jurisdiction of the California Mission.[1] In the early 1950s the Dittman Branch and other Spanish-speaking branches were placed under the jurisdiction of stakes. However, these branches were located in the eastern portion of the city, outside the stake boundaries, where the

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[1]Campbell, "History of the Church in California," pp. 399-402.

vast majority of the Hispanic population resided. Since few stake leaders spoke Spanish, the Saints attending these branches were left virtually to themselves to carry on as best they could, except for the occasional stake leader who spoke Spanish and was willing to work closely with branch leaders. The branches were also helped, though infrequently, by Spanish-speaking missionaries assigned to Los Angeles. Most contact was limited, however, for while the Spanish American Mission was in existence, nearly all its missionaries were assigned to Texas or to border towns.

In the early 1950s missionary work among the Hispanics in Los Angeles gained new vitality, and by 1953 at least six full-time missionaries were working with them. Because the Spanish-speaking population in the western half of the city was so small, most efforts continued to be directed towards the eastern half. In April 1953 the missionaries tried to conduct a Spanish Sunday School class at the Adams Ward.[2] Very few people attended, however, and those who did seemed to be more interested in hearing Spanish spoken than in hearing the gospel in Spanish.

In time other branches were established, including the Arroyo Branch in Glendale and the Belvedere Branch in the East Los Angeles Stake. Those few Spanish-speaking Saints who lived within the Los Angeles Stake usually had their memberships transferred to the Arroyo Branch or else

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[2]California Intermountain News

were required to attend the English-speaking ward in whose boundary they resided.

At the same time, the Spanish-speaking population was growing throughout the western United States, and in 1958 the Church established the West Spanish American Mission, with responsibility for missionary work among the Spanish-speaking population in the western states. The Hispanic community was also growing in the western half of Los Angeles and missionary work was undertaken there, but no effort was made to open a branch of the Church in that part of the city. Instead, as new converts were made, their records continued to be transferred to the Arroyo Branch.[3]

The story of Trinidad Reyna and her family, who moved from El Salvador to Los Angeles in 1963, suggests the difficulties faced by some Spanish-speaking Saints in southern California during this time. Seven years earlier, Trinidad and her daughters, Carmen and Yolanda, had been baptized members of the Layco Branch of the Church. Trinidad was sustained as the Layco Branch's Relief Society President shortly following her baptism, and her daughter Yolanda fulfilled a mission in the Central American Mission.

Once in Los Angeles, the Reynas became members of the Arroyo Branch, but attended only a handful of times because of transportation difficulties. Nevertheless, still

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[3]A. Marden Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch," Los Angeles Stake Collection.

having a strong desire to continue fellowshipping with the Saints in their new country, the family occasionally attended the Wilshire Ward, in whose boundaries they resided. Since Trinidad spoke no English, however, and her daughters very little, they became irregular in attending their meetings.

In 1964, Josefina Gallardo, who had known the Reynas in El Salvador, came to Los Angeles to attend her daughter's wedding and sought out the Reynas to renew acquaintances. When Sunday came Josefina was interested in how the Church functioned in the United States and asked the Reynas to take her to the ward they usually attended. Trinidad admitted that they could not attend the Spanish-speaking branch because it was too far away and that they attended the local ward's services only infrequently because they were conducted in English. Josefina suggested, nevertheless, that they should be attending every Sunday to partake of the Sacrament and feel the Spirit. Josefina and the Reynas not only began attending the Wilshire Ward but they contacted members of the Arroyo Branch living in the area and invited them also to attend.[4]

Some began to do so, and it was not long before they met Orestes Rodriguez, a ward member who spoke both Spanish and English. He not only made them welcome but also arranged with Wilshire Ward Bishop Varnell Rozsa to organize

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[4]Ibid.

a Spanish-speaking Sunday School. This class met in the baptismal room of the Wilshire Ward and Rodriquez served as teacher. Attendance at these early Spanish-speaking Sunday Schools averaged about ten.[5]

Anxious to increase their numbers, members of this Sunday School began doing door-to-door missionary work in the evenings and on weekends.[6] They worked dutifully for two years and were rewarded with success as membership increased.

By the end of 1964, the Spanish-speaking Saints were holding their own Sacrament Meeting and the members of the Spanish-speaking Sunday School class had organized themselves into the Spanish Group. Edward T. Aaron, a returned missionary whose wife was from El Salvador, served as group leader with Quenten P. Goodman, first counselor, and Mario Russo, second counselor.

As the Spanish-speaking population grew, an important step for the Hispanic Saints in the Los Angeles Stake was taken on 5 June 1966 when the Spanish Group was organized into a dependent Spanish-speaking branch of the Wilshire Ward under the direction of Stake President Winfield Q. Cannon.[7] Mario Russo of Argentina was selected

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Rosario Salazar, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[7]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 5 June 1966.

as the first branch president. Carlos Vivanco of Chile served as first counselor with Roberto de Leon of Central America, second counselor, and George Solorzano of Mexico, secretary. Josefina Gallardo, who was so instrumental in laying the groundwork for the branch, was sustained as its first Relief Society president. The branch continued to meet in the baptismal room.

During these early days, Spanish-speaking Saints came from throughout the western portion of Los Angeles County and from the San Fernando Valley to attend branch services. Because of the distances they had to travel, many were forced to make a day of it, bringing lunches to eat between meetings and giving their children naps on the floor.[8]

On 30 October 1966, only four months after the dependent branch was created, President Sant presided at an all-important meeting where the Spanish-speaking Saints were organized into the independent Los Angeles Spanish Branch.[9] Mario Russo continued as branch president with Mario Vivanco, first counselor, Alberto Medina, second counselor, and Orestes Rodriguez as branch clerk. Luisa Lopez was sustained as Relief Society president. As a result of this

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[8]Mario G. and Anabella Vivanco, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[9]Los Angeles Stake, Manuscript History, 30 October 1966.

important change, these Saints were able to worship together more fully in the language in which they prayed, and had the opportunity for greater growth through Church callings.

They could also worship in an environment relatively free of prejudice. Unfortunately, however, some stake members, recalling the stake's glory days, publicly objected to associating with the Hispanics and to the changes they were bringing to the stake. In the Wilshire Ward, for example, prejudice had grown to the point that a few ward members even suggested that the bishopric should not accept tithing from the Spanish-speaking Saints.[10]

Even after the creation of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch, there was still opposition to the Hispanic Saints. Because minor problems arose, such as crumbs being left on the floor after they ate their sack lunches, some members of the Wilshire Ward tended to blame the Spanish for all problems at the meeting house. Charges ranged from causing the ceiling tiles in the recreation hall to come loose because they played so much basketball to stealing the microphones from the chapel.[11]

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[10]Vivanco, Oral History, untranscribed.

[11]A. Marden Duke Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU; Frances W. Richardson, "South of Olympic," Dialogue 15 (Winter 1982): 120. The ceiling titles had actually been loosened by water damage caused by the Wilshire Ward's state of disrepair.

In spite of such opposition from some Anglos, however, and in spite of all the other challenges associated with being a minority attempting to live the gospel in a new land, this small but enthusiastic group of Spanish-speaking Saints was determined to make their new branch a success. Their efforts were made easier through the steady support given them by the leadership of the Los Angeles Stake and through Spanish-speaking missionaries, although for a time the structure of the missionary program often hindered the work as much as it helped it.[12]

Four full-time missionaries of the West Spanish American Mission were assigned to the Los Angeles Spanish Branch. At the same time there were also English-speaking missionaries who often labored in the same area. The feeling at the time was that missionaries who spoke different languages, such as Spanish and English, should be in separate missions even though they might be laboring in the same area. As a result both the California Mission and the West Spanish American Mission operated on an overlapping basis in Los Angeles.

In theory, whenever English-speaking investigators were found they were to be taught by missionaries of the California Mission, and Spanish-speaking investigators were to be taught by missionaries of the West Spanish American Mission. In practice, however, things were far from ideal. Potential

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[12]Edmunds, Oral History, p. 137.

investigators were often lost in the process of sending the names between the missions. In addition, cooperation between the missions often got lost in competition over which mission could baptize the most. This resulted in many Hispanic investigators with marginal English skills being taught by English-speaking missionaries in hopes of getting credit for the baptism, regardless of the fact that the investigator would have been better served by Spanish-speaking missionaries. In addition, while each mission's responsibility seemed clear-cut on the surface, there developed a problem of distinguishing which mission would handle missionary work among families in which only one spouse was Hispanic. It was decided that the father's nationality would be the determining factor, but competition again prevented the theory from working in practice.[13]

Such problems associated with two missions operating in the same area were not limited to Los Angeles, and in 1970 the decision was made to disband the West Spanish American Mission. The Spanish-speaking missionaries were then transferred to the various missions in whose boundaries they were working, and this solution seemed to be welcomed by all concerned. As a result, around forty Spanish-speaking missionaries were transferred to the California Mission.

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[13]Ibid.

To assist him in overseeing the work of the Spanish-speaking missionaries, California Mission President John K. Edmunds asked David G. Clark, a former mission president in the Guatemala-El Salvador Mission, to serve as his counselor. Clark not only helped the comparatively small number of Spanish-speaking missionaries from being lost in the shuffle, but also helped lay the successful foundation for conducting joint missionary work among Anglos and Hispanics.[14]

During these early days of missionary work among the Hispanics in the Los Angeles Stake, Spanish-speaking people joined the Church at a lower rate than those who spoke English. The Los Angeles Spanish Branch, nevertheless, experienced a steady growth, largely as a result of immigration from Latin America. Some came for economic reasons, some for family reasons, and others to escape political upheaval.

Within a year of its organization, the Los Angeles Spanish Branch had outgrown its quarters in the baptismal room under the Wilshire Ward chapel. The branch then moved into the annex of the stake center, which it shared with the Deaf Branch.[15]

Late in 1968 President Russo, unable to find suitable employment, returned with his family to Argentina.

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[14]Ibid., p. 138.

[15]Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch."

William F. Jackson, a former missionary in the Spanish American Mission, former bishop of both Westwood Wards, a man of financial means who could greatly assist the struggling branch, and a man greatly respected in the English-speaking community, was sustained as branch president. Because he was so well respected, Jackson further aided in giving the Spanish-speaking Saints a greater feeling of identity with the rest of the Saints in the area as well as an image of legitimacy in the minds of Anglos. He also helped the Spanish Branch become permanently established at the Wilshire Ward chapel.

Shortly after Jackson became branch president, attendance at Sacrament Meeting often exceeded one hundred. The decision was then made to move branch meetings into the Wilshire Ward chapel. Because their numbers were small relative to the capacity of the chapel, the first ten rows were roped off for Sacrament Meeting. While this move better served the general needs of the Spanish, the fact that there was no office space available for the branch created a major problem. Consequently, President Jackson, a successful contractor by profession and not one to be pushed around, moved his construction crews into the Wilshire Ward, without even asking permission, and built offices for the branch in a classroom across from the chapel.[18]

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[18]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 35-36.

In 1968 another important Anglo leader, A. Marden Duke, became associated with the Spanish-speaking Mormon community. Duke was a local chiropractor, a member of the Hollywood Ward, one of the first missionaries to serve in Argentina, and a member of the Los Angeles Stake high council. When President Sant became aware that he had an ex-Spanish speaking missionary on his high council, he assigned him to oversee the Spanish Branch.[17] Although Duke had not made a concentrated effort to maintain his Spanish, he had found occasion to use it infrequently when Spanish-speaking Saints visited the Hollywood Ward. Because so few Anglos spoke Spanish, a high council representative whose Spanish needed refreshing was better than one who spoke none.

Calling Duke to oversee the growth of the Hispanic Saints within the Los Angeles Stake proved to be an important boon to them. In addition to serving as the branch's high council liaison, Duke served twice as its president. He also served as bishop of the Spanish-speaking Los Angeles Fourth Ward. While many Anglos have exhibited great love towards the Hispanics, most of the Spanish-speaking Saints living within the boundaries of the Los Angeles Stake would agree that few have shown that love as deeply as has Marden Duke. It has been reciprocated fully.

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[17]Duke, Oral History, untanscribed.

Because the stake's efforts to provide translation services during the early days of the branch were less than adequate, Anglo leaders such as Jackson and Duke were important in teaching the Hispanic Saints how to manage all aspects of local Church organization. To help him refresh his Spanish, Duke read whatever Church handbooks and other publications that had been translated into the language. As a result, he not only remastered Spanish but also became an expert on the programs of the Church.[18]

On 7 June 1970, William Jackson was released as branch president and A. Marden Duke was called to serve in his place. Under his direction, the branch was more fully organized as efforts were undertaken to establish a Primary and a seminary program. When the branch was organized, there were almost no children and few youth, but by 1970 there were seven Primary-aged children.[19]

Efforts to organize a Primary in the branch were frustrated more than once. Because most parents worked, Primary could not be held on weekday afternoons, as were most Primaries throughout the Church. At the same time, after the MIA was organized in the branch it met on Friday night and, as in many of their homelands, most members attended. MIA thus became an organization for those from

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[18]Tanner, Oral History, p. 37.

[19]Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch"; Vivanco, Oral History.

twelve to 102, not just for young people.[20] With experience, it eventually became an activity just for the youth, but meanwhile, since many children were already coming with their parents, it was decided also to hold a primary that night, and Florentin Bustillos was called as Primary President. It soon became clear, however, that holding Primary at such a late hour was unsatisfactory for the children. Primary was then tried on Saturday mornings, but so many other activities conflicted that the parents did not always have time to bring their children to Primary. Next, the branch tried holding Primary and Relief Society on Sunday at the same time as Priesthood, and this proved to be very successful. However, after one member of the General Primary Board in Salt Lake City found that the branch was holding Primary on Sunday, a strong directive was received by stake leaders stating that it was not Church policy to hold Primary on Sunday and also that it was not being done anywhere else in the Church.[21] Consequently, Primary was again tried on Saturday morning, and again it was unsuccessful.

President Duke finally brought to the attention of the stake presidency the difficulty branch leaders were having in starting a Primary and presented a plan to again

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[20]Vivanco, Oral History.

[21]Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch."

hold it on Sunday. President Sant understood the problem and, in spite of Church tradition, authorized the branch to do so. Beginning in the early 1970s, therefore, the Los Angeles Spanish Branch adopted a form of consolidated meeting schedule with all meetings, except youth activities, being held on Sunday. The meetings were also scheduled back-to-back to better facilitate the attendance of the many Spanish-speaking Saints who came great distances. Otherwise, they would have to spend all day at the Wilshire Ward or miss some of their Sunday meetings. As a result, the only change the branch needed to make when the Church later adopted the three-hour consolidated meeting schedule was to shorten the time branch members spent in Sunday meetings.[22]

Just as the Los Angeles Branch served as an important source of spiritual and social strength in the early days of the Church in Los Angeles, so also have the Spanish branches and wards. There, through association with others, the Spanish-speaking Saints have found great comfort and spiritual hope amid the problems of an every-day life often associated with minimum wages and the consequent substandard living conditions. Association with the Church has become at least a partial replacement for family left behind. At the same time, even though they share the bond of a common language, and most share the experience of starting over in a new land, the Spanish-speaking Saints

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[22]Ibid.

represent many different cultures and countries. Their great diversities, therefore, must be bridged, but without undermining their ties to the best aspects of their native cultures. Because of these special social and cultural needs, certain unique activities have been given great emphasis.

One important activity, begun by President Duke, continues to help the Spanish Saints fulfill their social needs and share their different cultures. This is the annual Fiesta Folklorica. Here, in a colorful atmosphere of native dress and decorations, food typical of the various countries is served, and this is followed by a program of traditional folk dances and music. Often this program ends with the singing of the national anthem and "God Bless America."[22]

Over the years this fiesta has served four important functions. First, it has helped the Spanish-speaking Saints to overcome differences through sharing cultures and backgrounds. Second, it has served as an important missionary tool. Church members often bring non-member relatives and friends to the fiesta where they are not only treated to an enjoyable evening, but are also exposed to the gospel. Next, as the Anglo community has begun attending these

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[22]A. Marden Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Fourth Branch and Ward," Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

activities, the talents of the Hispanic members and the beauty of their heritage has helped to erode many prejudices against them. Finally, the Fiesta has served as an important fund-raising activity for branch and ward budgets.

In October 1972 A. Marden Duke was released as branch president and called again to the high council. He continued to associate with the branch, however, serving again as high council liaison. Antonio Feliz was sustained as the new branch president, but after a year his work took him out of state. Duke was appointed in November 1973 to supervise the branch until a new president could be called, and in February 1974 President John K. Carmack called Duke to serve as branch president for a second time.

During this time the Church implemented a policy with respect to missionary work that, at least for a time, slowed down the spread of the gospel among Hispanics in the American Southwest. In Texas, the Church had run into problems with U.S. immigration officials when it was discovered that some of its missionaries were actually illegal aliens as were many of those they were baptizing. Many converts had been made from among those who were entering the United States illegally in order to escape the trying economic and political conditions at home and whose circumstances had made them especially receptive to the gospel. This was interpreted, however, as Church encouragement of illegal immigration, and American officials threat-

ened legal action to stop it. In order to avoid further problems, therefore, Church leaders adopted a policy that missionaries were not to work with those illegally in the country.[24] Instructions were issued that missionaries were not to baptize those who could not prove their citizenship or demonstrate that they were in the country legally. Missionaries then began asking for green cards and proof of citizenship. The result was that the number of baptisms greatly declined.

Following the implementation of this policy, however, many local leaders began to question its wisdom. The gospel was meant for all people, they said, regardless of where they might be living. They also observed that under the new policy missionaries were, to a certain extent, assigned to act as immigration officials and enforce the laws of the nation by checking up on citizenship. Furthermore, they said, the Church had taken too drastic a step, for under the old policy it was not really encouraging illegal immigration, it was only providing immigrants with the blessings of the gospel once they had come. If they should be required to leave the country, they would at least take those blessings with them.[25] Hispanics observed that even though the immigrants had broken man's law by crossing

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[24]Ibid.; Frederick S. Williams, Oral History, interviewed by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed audiotape, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[25]Williams, Oral History, untranscribed.

the borders, remaining in their native countries often kept them from obeying a higher law, that of providing for their families.[26] Such cruel dilemmas were not easy to resolve, either in or out of the Church.

In 1976 the matter was reconsidered by the Brethren in Salt Lake City, and the policy was changed.[27] Once again the gospel was made available to all Spanish-speaking people in Los Angeles, regardless of their status in the country, and the work among them was accelerated. In 1977 there were 158 baptisms in the Spanish Branch, and in the first four months of 1978 there were fifty-eight.

As political unrest became more intense throughout Central and South America, the branch, as well as wards, received greater strength in numbers and Church experience from members fleeing to the United States. Many came as political refugees, others to improve their economic conditions and to find a better life, while still others came to be reunited with family members who had already come. All came with great hope, regardless of the fact that they were unable to speak English and had no prospects for employment. Almost all found themselves in difficult situations when they arrived, and the stories of hardship

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[26]Rafael N. Seminario, Oral History, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, rough transcript, pp. 32-33, the James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Archives.

[27]Williams, Oral History, untranscribed; Duke, Oral History, untranscribed.

will probably never be fully told. Most came without legal papers or money and with only the few personal items they could carry, and many were robbed of the few possessions they began with. Others were exploited by ruthless "coyotes" (unscrupulous people who bring illegal aliens over the border for profit), while others were abandoned in the deserts by those who were supposedly helping them.[28]

Somehow many made their way to Los Angeles, and once they arrived they sought out the Church, relatives, friends, and shelter. Because most of the Hispanic Saints already there had once been in similar dire circumstances, they looked out for the new arrivals with the kind of special love that grows only out of hardship. Apartments already crowded, as several families shared to economize, always had room for the new ones until they could get established. There was always room for one more at the table no matter how meager the day's meal might be. One sister often greeted those in need by leaving money in their palms without a word of explanation, or wanting a word of gratitude.[29] She did this although her situation was not much better than those she was helping.

By April 1978 almost five hundred people were regularly attending the Sacrament Meeting of the Los Angeles

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[28]Tanner, Oral History, p. 78; Duke, Oral History, untranscribed.

[29]Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Fourth Branch and Ward."

Spanish Branch, an increase of three hundred over five years earlier. As a result, the decision was made to divide the branch, and on 23 April 1978 the Los Angeles Third Ward and the Los Angeles Fourth Branch were created by President Rodney Brady. Rafael Seminario, who had been in the Church for only five years, was made bishop of the new Los Angeles Third Ward, while President Duke was retained as president of the Los Angeles Fourth Branch. The Third Ward continued to meet at the Wilshire Ward but the Fourth Branch moved into the Hollywood Ward. At the time of its division, membership in the Third Ward was over four hundred while the membership of the Fourth Branch was around two hundred. Five months later, on 17 September 1978, the Fourth Branch became the Los Angeles Fourth Ward and Duke was sustained as its first bishop.

Those who made up the leadership of the Los Angeles Third Ward presented a very interesting picture as almost all, including Bishop Seminario, had been converted in the Los Angeles Spanish Branch. A few had been members when they arrived in Los Angeles, but only Samuel Robles, the ward executive secretary, had been born in the United States.[30]

An important event in the integration of the Spanish-speaking Saints into the Latter-day Saint community

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[30]A. Marden Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Third Ward," Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

occurred during the May 1980 Southern California Area Conference held at the Rose Bowl. There, before a huge audience, President Spencer W. Kimball gave a memorable address in which he commented warmly on the place of the Hispanic Saints:

> More than thirty years ago, while in Arizona, I caught something of the vision of the future of our Hispanic brothers and sisters. At that time they were few in number, had very little education, and very little of this world's goods. They were struggling to find their way in the Church. In my heart and in my mind's eye I could see a better day dawning for them. Lately I have begun to see some fulfillment of that vision, for we find these brethren and sisters coming to the temple in great numbers. They are loving fathers and mothers. Many of them are well educated and excelling in many of the areas of business, industry, and education. But this is just the beginning. They are but a vanguard of the vast numbers who will follow in their footsteps. We must do our part to help them, to lift them up, to call them to the positions of responsibility and leadership, and give them opportunities to serve so that they and their people can come into the Church by the thousands and then tens of thousands, for that is my vision, and it is a vision that we must cause to be fulfilled.[31]

When President Kimball spoke of his vision and gave this charge concerning the Hispanic people, it provided, in a way, dramatic support for the direction the Los Angeles Stake was already taking in promoting their growth and development. Some stakes in the area seemed to view the Hispanics almost as a plague, feeling that they ought to

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[31]President Spencer W. Kimball, Address to the Southern California Area Conference, 18 May 1980, as cited in "Conferencia de Organization Estaca Para miembros de Habla Hispana de Los Angeles, California, 3 de Juno de 1984," p. 1, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

learn English and attend English-speaking wards.[32] Even if Spanish-speaking units were created, the Hispanics were often left on their own, with little energy being exerted to explain to them how the Church should be run. Early in their association with the Spanish-speaking Saints, however, Los Angeles Stake leaders adopted the attitude that while one might complain about the inconveniences caused by the Hispanic Saints, they were here to stay and should be treated as brothers and sisters in the gospel.[33] The Church was for all people, they believed, and these Saints had just as much right to its programs as did anyone else. Because they had special needs and problems, therefore, the stake must accommodate them, not vice versa.

Stake leaders adopted this attitude because they recognized that even though Hispanics could learn English and attend English-speaking wards, many would fall away before that would happen. Because of the size of the Los Angeles Spanish-speaking community, it was more difficult to bring them fully into American society than it was with other minority groups, for the only time they really needed English was when they attended Church. Since everyone in their neighborhoods spoke Spanish, signs were often posted in the Spanish sectors of the city which read, "English is

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[32]Tanner, Oral History, p. 44; Notes of a conversation with Skip Drinkwater, 1986, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

[33]Tanner, Oral History, p. 44.

Spoken." With little motivation for learning English, therefore, there was also little desire to learn it, and many would not go through the struggle, preferring instead to drop out of Church activity.

Los Angeles Stake leaders placed great emphasis on trying to meet the special needs of the Hispanics. Following President Kimball's address, many stake members began to catch his vision, and stake leaders caught it to an even greater degree. There were some in the stake who had opposed expending so much energy working with the Spanish Saints. Stake leaders had listened patiently to their complaints, but then pushed ahead in spite of the objections, and the area conference provided warm confirmation that their decision was right.

In the Wilshire Ward, where the Anglos had the greatest contact with the Spanish and where the opposition was strongest, ward leaders were selected from among members who not only had the necessary leadership abilities but who had also exhibited a willingness to work with the minorities and to treat the Spanish-speaking occupants of the building as equals, rather than just tolerating them.[34]

Spanish-speaking members of the stake were given assignments at the stake level, not just for what they could do for the stake, but also because of what the calling could do in training them to be leaders. Initially, most of those

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[34]Ibid., pp. 35-36.

who filled positions on the high council and auxiliary boards were bilingual, such as Rafael Seminario who was called as a member of the high council in 1976. However, as means of translation improved, non-English speaking members were also called, and a translator was provided at any meeting that even one non-English speaking person was to attend.[36]

From the beginning, stake conference sessions were translated, but this required the Hispanics to sit in special areas, such as the balcony of the Wilshire Ward chapel where special ear phones were installed. Eventually, however, the stake purchased new receivers that allowed the Spanish-speaking members to sit any place rather than forcing them to sit as a group.[38] These receivers contributed greatly to their growing sense of belonging to the stake as a whole rather than being an isolated part of it.

Many hours were also put into training the Spanish-speaking Saints in all the programs of the Church, even if this required additional time and meetings. The Stake Relief Society under the direction of Ella Farnsworth, for example, held additional training meetings just for Hispanics.[37] Farnsworth was bilingual and had spent much of her married life in Spanish-speaking countries. Shortly after

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[36]Tanner, "Conversation."

[38]Ibid.

[37]Tanner, Oral History, p. 39.

she moved into the stake, President Tanner called her as president, a position with which she was very familiar for she had served several times previously as a ward or stake Relief Society President.

After analyzing the situation concerning the Spanish, Farnsworth instructed her board to make low-cost teaching aids, such as posters made from brown grocery bags and crayons, and to prepare for leadership meetings to be held entirely in Spanish. The Anglo sisters on the stake board were apprehensive as they prepared for the first all-Spanish-speaking leadership meeting, but they were given the names of members who could translate for them and could coach them on correct Spanish pronunciation. Also, many prayers were offered for the success of the meeting.

The training meeting and its prayer meeting were conducted entirely in Spanish; most attending did not understand a word. Later, however, board members reported that this experience had helped them to understand more fully the problems of the language barrier, and a member of the Spanish Relief Society presidency commented, "At last we can finally understand what you have been trying to teach us to do."[38] Through this and subsequent meetings, the bonds between Anglo and Spanish sisters were made stronger.

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[38]Mareen Keeler, Questionnaire, Los Angeles Stake Materials, BYU.

The stake presidency, high council, and other stake organizations also devoted many extra hours to help in the training process. Because Bishop Seminario had no experience in running a ward, he called upon stake leaders to help him and they willingly responded, often meeting with him until 1:00 A.M.[39] During the first part of President William W. Tanner's administration, a great portion of his time and that of other stake leaders was spent working with the Spanish-speaking Saints. President Tanner counts as one of the greatest achievements of the stake the way so many stake members unselfishly responded to the call, and how all this not only helped create a solid core of well-trained leaders but also contributed to the growth of an impressive spiritual strength in the Spanish-speaking LDS community.[40]

By June 1983 the number of Spanish-speaking Saints in the stake had grown to almost one thousand, with the majority residing in the Los Angeles Third Ward. The decision was made to create three Spanish-speaking wards. At a special meeting of the Los Angeles Third and Fourth Wards on 26 June 1983, the boundaries of the wards were changed and the Los Angeles Sixth Ward was created from the southern portion of the Los Angeles Third Ward. Like the Third Ward, the Sixth Ward also shared the Wilshire Ward chapel. Gustavo Velasquez, a former high councilor in

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[39]Seminario, Oral History, p. 12.

[40]Tanner, Oral History, p. 65.

Guatemala who came to the United States to escape political persecution, was sustained as bishop of the new ward. At the same meeting, Bishop A. Marden Duke was released after twelve years of presiding over the Los Angeles Spanish Branch and the Los Angeles Fourth Branch and Ward and was again called to be a member of the high council. Mario Mendoza, former second counselor in the Los Angeles Fourth Ward, was sustained as the new bishop.

Not only was work increasing among the Spanish-speaking people in the Los Angeles Stake, but it was also growing in the surrounding stakes. In 1969 a Spanish Branch was established in the Santa Monica Stake. The Huntington Park Ward was organized as a Spanish-speaking ward on 16 April 1978, with English-speaking members transferred to other wards in the Huntington Park Stake. Three years later, in August 1981, the Grant Ward was created from a division of the Huntington Park Ward. In the Inglewood Stake, the Inglewood Second Ward was organized 21 December 1980. In addition, ten other Spanish-speaking units were operating in the greater Los Angeles area, a total of seventeen units scattered between Torrance and Hacienda Heights.

Because of the tremendous growth among the Spanish-speaking, the need for special leadership training became apparent, and a special multi-regional auxiliary training meeting was held at the Los Angeles Stake Center on 10

December 1983. This meeting demonstrated that there were sufficient numbers of strong Hispanic leaders who could assume stake leadership positions. As a result, the stake presidencies of the Huntington Park, Inglewood, Los Angeles, and Santa Monica Stakes began taking the steps necessary for the creation of the first Spanish-speaking stake in the United States.

As early as 1972 a recommendation was made that a Spanish-speaking stake should be created in Los Angeles.[41] No action was taken at the time, however, for even though there were enough members, sufficient leadership had not been developed. Nevertheless, it was the general feeling that it would be only a matter of time until the first Spanish-speaking stake was created, and that this would take place in the eastern portion of Los Angeles, where the Hispanics were more well established. The Spanish-speaking Saints in the western portion of the city, however, had greater support from English-speaking leaders who envisioned their potential and had prepared them for that day.

In 1984 the Brethren in Salt Lake City finally gave approval for the creation of a Spanish-speaking stake on an experimental basis.[42] On 3 June the Spanish-speaking Saints

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[41]William, Oral History, p. 15.

[42]First Presidency to the stake presidencies of the Los Angeles California Stake, Los Angeles California Inglewood Stake, Los Angeles California Santa Monica Stake, and Huntington Park California Stake, 1 May 1984, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

from the Huntington Park, Inglewood, Los Angeles, and Santa Monica Stakes gathered in the Huntington Park Stake Center for the momentous occasion.

The new stake, with a membership in excess of 2200, consisted of seven wards: Grant, Huntington Park, Inglewood, La Cienega (name changed from the Santa Monica Spanish Branch at this time), and the Los Angeles Third, Fourth, and Sixth Wards. The new stake was named the Huntington Park West Stake, and its offices were located in the Huntington Park Stake Center. The stake presidency consisted of President Rafael N. Seminario, former bishop of the Los Angeles Third Ward, First Counselor Francisco Yanez, former bishop of the Grant Ward, Second Counselor Ramon Riquelme, former president of the Santa Monica Spanish Branch, and Edger Orellana as Stake Clerk.[43]

As the number of Hispanics in Los Angeles continues to increase, many projections concerning the Church suggest that they will become the largest group in the central city, and that the Anglos will, to a certain degree, turn the guardianship of the Church in that area over to the Spanish-speaking Saints. If the past is any indication, they will be equal to the task, in spite of the many challenges they face.

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[43]An account of the organization of the Huntington Park West Stake is found in the Latter-day Sentinel, 23 June 1984.

After one stake conference, President Seminario found one of his stake members, an older sister, standing on the corner. When he asked her what she was doing still there, she told him that she had come to the conference on the bus, that this had required several hours and numerous transfers, and now she could not remember how to get back home.[44] This sister's faithfulness in coming to stake conference regardless of the inconvenience is typical of that seen throughout the Spanish-speaking population in the Church, and it has helped the Hispanics average over 60 percent attendance at Sacrament Meeting before the stake was created and over 65 percent following its creation.[45] These figures stand in stark contrast to the surrounding wards and stakes, where the average is around 40 percent.

Since its organization, the Huntington Park West Stake has averaged over half of the region's baptisms--enough to create a ward a year. Many of these new converts, however, move out of the stake following their baptism. Nevertheless, the stake has a fine record of retaining its converts in the Church, largely through the dedication of such men as Luis Arteaga, the Los Angeles Sixth Ward mission leader who has visited as many as thirty new families each month.[46] Such fellowshipping efforts are essential to the

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[44]Seminario, Oral History, p. 14.

[45]Ibid., p. 23.

[46]Duke, "History of the Los Angeles 6th Ward."

vitality of the Church, and here the Hispanics take a back seat to no one.

The accomplishments of the Spanish Saints are truly amazing when the challenges they have had to overcome are considered. At the same time, major problems and challenges remain, some of which are unique to the stake. The greatest of these is its poor economic situation. When the Huntington Park West Stake was created, a majority of the poorest Saints from the Huntington Park, Inglewood, Los Angeles, and Santa Monica Stakes were brought together into one stake. Consequently, the four stakes from which it drew provided the new stake with a sizeable financial base from which to operate. However, this base will not be sufficient for all the expenses and the Hispanic Saints eventually must find a way to make their stake fully self-sufficient.[47]

The idea of organizing a Spanish stake was, of course, controversial, but everything that has happened so far suggests not only that it will work, but also that it was the desirable thing to do. Hispanics still need patience as they strive to reach their full potential, but the vision of President Kimball is beginning to be fulfilled. With the continued patience and understanding efforts of Hispanic and Anglo alike, that vision will be

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[47]President Seminario feels that the stake's greatest long-range need is for the members to obtain college educations so that they can become self sufficient. Seminario, Oral History, p. 25.

realized. Already prophecy is being fulfilled in a grand and humbling way.

Chapter 13

MICROCOSM OF A WORLDWIDE CHURCH

At a regional meeting held a week after the rededication of the Wilshire Ward chapel, President Rodney H. Brady announced that he had accepted the position of President of Weber State College in Ogden, Utah. On 30 July 1978, William W. Tanner was set apart by Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve as the eleventh president of the stake.

President Tanner retained Robert H. Millard and Stephen Eldredge as counsellors. When President Eldredge moved from the stake, however, Royal Peterson was called to take his place, and when President Peterson died of cancer, Lynn O. Poulson was called into the stake presidency. Later, Howard B. Anderson replaced President Millard.

President Tanner, a native of Salt Lake City, was the grandson of Henry S. Tanner, the mission president who established the Los Angeles Branch. From 1956-58 he served a mission in the southern Atlantic states, where his grandfather and brother had previously filled missions. Following his mission, he graduated from the University of

Utah and entered the USC dental school, where his brother was on the faculty. In August 1959, shortly before moving to Los Angeles, he married Elizabeth Findlay in the Salt Lake Temple.

Following William's graduation from dental school the Tanners decided they wanted to live in the Santa Monica Stake. They soon discovered, however, that the apartment they had rented was two blocks within the boundary of the Westwood Second Ward, so they remained members of the Los Angeles Stake.[1]

When L. Tom Perry spoke at the stake conference where President Tanner was sustained, he summed up the situation in the stake very well by saying that it represented a microcosm of the world, since the nations of the world were found within its boundaries. He further stated that stake members had the responsibility to take the gospel to those people, so that they could then take it to their homelands.[2]

By the 1980s the diversity within the Los Angeles Stake indeed made it a microcosm of a worldwide Church. Within the Hollywood Ward, for example, at least twenty-seven languages were spoken. Often, the first impression one received of the stake was its international flavor. When the primary children sang "I am a Child of God" at

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[1]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 12-13.

[2]Tanner, "Conversation."

stake conference, for example, they presented a rainbow of the colors of people and seemed to represent all races and nationalities. This variety gave the true meaning to the song, which was co-authored by Mildred T. Pettit, a one-time member of the stake.

Today, not only in the stake where Mildred Pettit once lived but throughout the world, children of different races and national origins sing that song together, reinforcing its truth that all are God's children. Such an attitude did not come easily in Los Angeles, but in the two decades before 1987 the stake watched prejudices melt away as people of various races and nationalities were brought together and learned to know and love each other in spite of differences.[3]

Stake leaders under President Tanner continued to strive to develop a sense of pride in the makeup of the stake and to teach the value of all people, regardless of skin color. They were concerned that the gospel remain relevant in the lives of members by having the stake serve the people who lived within its boundaries rather than being concerned with the way the stake used to be. Following this leadership, the members took increasing pride in their stake, recognizing that its ethnic diversity made it unique among stakes in the Church. They were willing to allow the stake to be different rather than trying to make everyone

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[3]Tanner, Oral History, p. 113-116.

the same. The challenge, they recognized, was to become unified in action and faith, not dress and language.[4]

Because of these efforts, most of the minorities were made to feel that they were loved, wanted, accepted and important to the success of the stake. It was clear that any criticism of a minority would not have a sympathetic reception among stake leaders. If tensions arose, stake leaders tried to respond quickly by expressing love and support. The minority groups, because of their enthusiasm, became the life-blood of the stake.[5]

The changing nature of the stake, however, created some significant challenges. It became difficult, for example, not only to keep positions filled, but to keep them filled with experienced Church members. One of the things stake leaders had to learn was to do away with the classical image of a leader in the Church: older, married, financially secure, and steeped in the LDS tradition.[6]

In April 1979 the new Institute of Religion building adjacent to USC was dedicated by Elder Paul H. Dunn. Prior to the beginning of actual construction, ironically, President Kimball had received the revelation on priesthood, and the Church was in a position to sign the non-discrimination clause and thereby retain the old Institute building,

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[4]Tanner, "Conversation."

[5]Ibid.

[6]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 143-144.

but by that time the process was too far along. The change, nevertheless, may have been for the best, for with the continuing expansion of the university, the institute would have been an uncomfortable little oasis in the middle of the large campus.[7]

With the continued growth of the Church it became ever more complicated to have representatives from around the world gather at the semi-annual General Conferences in Salt Lake City. Church leaders, therefore, began a series of area conferences, where Church leaders went to various parts of the world to meet with the Saints. Initially they were held only outside North America, with the first one in Manchester, England, in 1971, but beginning in 1979 they were also held in the United States. Rapidly improving technology, however, soon resulted in the increased use of satellite broadcasts, and these provided greater access to General Conference. Area conferences were discontinued, therefore, by 1981.

In May 1980 an area conference was held at the Rose Bowl in Los Angeles. This was the largest gathering of Mormons in history as over 30,000 attended the Saturday women's session and the 100,000 seat Rose Bowl was filled to near capacity for the Sunday sessions.[8] In addition, a four

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[7]Ibid., p. 29.

[8]Los Angeles Herald Examiner, 18 May 1980.

thousand voice choir provided the music on Sunday. The conference was translated into seven languages.

In his keynote address, President Kimball not only charged leaders and members to reach out and lift the minorities, but he also stressed the importance of missionary work. This included not only preparing every young man for a mission and praying that the Lord would touch the hearts of the leaders of nations so that missionaries might be allowed to enter, but also carrying the gospel message to the people of California:

> There is a great possibility that we, the members of the Church, may not have been doing our total duty. To some extent we have been bypassing our neighbors. . . . The Lord has said that when you have been warned, warn your neighbor. Now that comes as a command to you and me. It is not left to our discretion or to our pleasure or to our convenience. Every man and women should return home from this conference with the determination that they will take the gospel to their relatives and their friends.[a]

Immediately following the conference, the wards and stakes throughout the Los Angeles Region took President Kimball's message to heart and held informal open houses in their chapels to introduce non-Mormons to the Church's family oriented way of life. Films, exhibits and talks highlighted such things as athletics, cultural arts,

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[a]President Spencer W. Kimball, Address to the Southern California Area Conference, 18 May 1980, as cited in Ferren L. Christensen to Stake Presidents in the Los Angeles and Ventura Regions, 10 June 1980, p. 3, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

genealogy, welfare services, missionary work, youth and Church educational programs.

Even prior to the area conference, the changing makeup of Los Angeles gave missionary work an added importance. Because so many Saints had moved out and so few had moved in, great emphasis was placed upon missionary work. For the seven years prior to the creation of the Huntington Park West Stake, the Los Angeles California Stake led the Los Angeles California Mission in baptisms. After the creation of the Spanish-speaking stake, however, the Los Angeles Stake became consistently the second highest baptizing stake in the area.

Much of the missionary success was due to the leadership of Michael Grilikhes, stake mission president.[10] Through his efforts the Saints were motivated to move forward with missionary efforts. When Roy Richardson was bishop of the Wilshire Ward, for example, he had a goal of twenty stake missionaries, and one year there were over seventy baptisms in the ward. To help missionary work move forward in the UCLA Ward, a Book of Mormon project was begun.[11]

Because of the affluent nature of some areas in the western portion of the stake, such as Beverly Hills, Westwood, Bel Air, and Cheviot Hills, many people there were

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[10]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 128-129.

[11]Ibid., pp. 130-131.

satisfied with their position in life and saw no need for a change, especially regarding religion. As a consequence, the results from regular missionary work, such as tracting, were not highly successful in these areas. A major missionary effort was made, therefore, among the part-member families and this became an effective program. In the Westwood wards, for example, both first counsellors--John B. Cahoon and David L. Scoll--originally came from part-member families.[12]

While the stake worked to bring new members into the gospel, it also worked to ensure unity among the stake family, something that was becoming more difficult to maintain as the stake became a mini United Nations. Unfortunately, people from different cultures were not only the victims of prejudice from Anglo-Americans, but also often had biases against each other. Just as Brigham Young struggled in the early days of the Church to unify English, Danish, and Swedish converts in Utah, so also Los Angeles stake leaders worked to unify the Spanish-speaking, Orientals, and Anglos. Their philosophy was that if you get to know someone, you learn to love him. If there were problems with prejudice, they felt, it was a matter of getting to know one another.[12]

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[12]Ibid., p. 134.

[12]Ibid., p. 57.

To accomplish this, the stake adopted several "low-risk activities." One was a series of "International Food Fairs," which were actually an extension of the Spanish fiestas and focused attention on the fact that there were many cultures represented in the stake. These were initially started by the stake Young Women's Presidency under the direction of Louise LaCount, and the first one was held 14 May 1981.[14] They brought together people from every culture and allowed them to demonstrate special things about their culture. In addition to the food fairs, Wilshire Ward sponsored an "All Nations Night" which continued the tradition of native costumes and unique and exotic cuisine.

At Christmas time, the stake primary sponsored an international Christmas party at the Wilshire Ward chapel where the different nationalities decorated Christmas trees in the traditional manner of their country. In addition, a variety of holiday foods from the different nations were served and examples of Christmas as celebrated in the many countries were represented. The first was held at the stake center in December 1980 and all those who came were asked also to donate a wrapped present for the needy.

Another event that helped unify the various ethnic groups was the stake priesthood dinner meeting. In 1951 President Russon introduced this tradition in hopes of

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[14]Richard Romney, "A Feast for All the World," New Era 11 (November 1981): 22-27.

increasing attendance at the monthly priesthood meetings which each of the stakes were required to hold.[15] The dinners proved so successful that they were continued until President Carmack was installed, at which time Elder Howard W. Hunter suggested that they might have outlived that purpose.[16] Under President Tanner, however, they were reinstated as opportunities for stake members to get together for brotherhood.[17] By that time the Church had changed its priesthood meeting schedule so that these stake meetings were held only twice a year on Saturday night. As the dinners were re-inaugurated, responsibility for them was rotated among the wards. When the Koreans had the responsibility, the stake ate Korean food; when the Hollywood Ward had its turn, it often prepared Armenian food; the Chinese Branch served Chinese food. These dinners provided marvelous opportunities for priesthood members to get to know one another better, and afterward they all moved from the cultural hall into chapel for priesthood meeting.

One man who provided tremendous help to the stake in its work among the minorities was President Britton McConkie of the California Los Angeles Mission, who had a great vision of what could be done. Missionary work among the English-speaking people was not going too well anyway, so

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[15]Church News, 3 January 1951.

[16]Carmack, Oral History, p. 11.

[17]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 154-155.

when he took over the mission in 1978 he decided to focus his attention on the minorities. He believed that one of his special missions was to strengthen existing minority units and establish new minority ones in Los Angeles.[18] He worked diligently to carry forward that work.

Following the revelation on the priesthood, missionary work among members of the black community increased, and there was a rapid growth of black members of the Church. President McConkie, therefore, was anxious to have a branch of the Church established in the Watts area, the center of the black community in Los Angeles, just as branches had been established for other minority groups. He felt that blacks would gain a great deal of strength from such an organization and thus lay the groundwork for continuing the great strides being made in their community.[19] Eventually, the Southwest Branch of the Huntington Park Stake, was established.

When the Southwest Branch was initially organized, black members from throughout Los Angeles were invited to attend in order to give it sufficient strength. President Tanner and his counsellors recognized that such a branch was necessary in the Watts area, but they also felt that the strength provided by black members was greatly needed in the Los Angles stake. They felt that as the complexion of the

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[18]Ibid., p. 40.

[19]Ibid., p. 111.

community changed, the complexion of the ward should also change. Because there were no cultural or language barriers that would prevent blacks from functioning in traditional wards, stake leaders felt that they should attend the wards in whose boundaries they lived, and receive leadership training in an established ward rather than being placed by themselves to learn how the Church was run.[20]

Nevertheless, the Southwest Branch was organized but, unfortunately, wise and proper procedures were not always followed in recruiting possible members. As a result, some black Saints in the Los Angeles Stake became disenchanted with the Church, interpreting the invitation to attend this branch as an attempt to segregate them out.[21] In spite of such problems, however, the Southwest Branch proved a blessing to the blacks in the Watts area, and in the Los Angeles Stake the Wilshire Ward in particular soon began to enjoy the blessings of its growing black membership.

Another ethnic group to be incorporated into the Los Angeles Stake was the Chinese, though the branch actually had its beginnings in 1978 in the Elysian Park Ward of the Glendale Stake.[22] A member of that ward, David Honey, had

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[20]Ibid., pp. 112-114.

[21]Ibid., p. 112.

[22]Ted Ong, "History of the Los Angeles Fifth Branch," Los Angeles Stake Collection.

recently returned from a mission to Hong Kong and had come to live in Chinatown, and was one of the few non-Asians to be fully accepted into that community. There were several Chinese families in the Elysian Park Ward, and Honey took the initiative to organize a family home evening group for the Chinese-speaking membership of the ward. The lessons were taught in Chinese with each member taking a turn. Shortly thereafter, permission was given to start a Chinese Sunday School class in the ward.[23]

President McConkie had served as the Church's legal council in Asia, where he developed a great love for the Asian people, and he had a special desire to strengthen the work among them in Los Angeles. Under his direction, Cantonese-speaking and Mandarin-speaking missionaries were transferred from Hong Kong and Taiwan to labor in Los Angeles.[24] The success and personality of the Chinese group during these early times was usually directly related to the missionaries, for they often represented half of the priesthood.

By 1979 the heart of the group had moved from Elysian Park Ward to Huntington Park Ward. Under the direction of President McConkie, and with the approval of President R. Don Smith of the Huntington Park California Stake, a Chinese group was organized in February 1979. The

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[23]Ibid.

[24]Tanner, Oral History, p. 40.

Chinese retained membership in their home wards, but could attend meetings with the group.[25] The first meeting was held on 19 February 1979, with Elder Kent Flake, a full-time missionary, serving as presiding elder.

Following its organization, the group struggled to maintain its existence for it had little local leadership and the missionaries were unable to give the necessary time and still do the required missionary work. In addition, meeting in Huntington Park had proven less than ideal. Realizing the importance of helping to improve the situation for the Chinese Saints, however, the Los Angeles California Stake gave its assistance. Among other things, the stake provided a more central location for investigators and members, and the group moved into the annex of the Wilshire Ward. Shortly after that, on 3 August 1980, the Los Angeles Fifth Branch, the first independent Chinese branch in southern California, was organized. Branch boundaries included the confines of the California Los Angeles Mission and drew membership from the San Fernando Valley on the North to Orange County on the South.[26] Fifty-one people attended the organizational meeting, held under the direction of President William W. Tanner. Ted Hi Ong, an American-born Oriental who was serving as a counsellor to Wilshire Ward Bishop Roy Richardson, was sustained as branch

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[25]Ong, "History of the Los Angeles Fifth Branch."

[26]Ibid.

president with David Honey and Da Wei Zhang as counsellors. Mo Ping Mo was called as Relief Society President.

The branch faced some severe difficulties and challenges during the early years of its existence. Membership was very limited, as half those in attendance were investigators. Within its first six months two females and nine males, all single and mostly in their twenties, were baptized, but, unfortunately, most of the potential priesthood holders eventually went inactive.[27] On 31 December 1980, membership stood at twenty-five.

Through these difficult times, the branch maintained its progress largely because of the hard work and sacrifices of Ted and Amelia Ong and Anglo-Americans such as David Honey and James and Donna Jean Moore. The Moores had developed an initial interest in the Chinese branch because their son had served a mission to Taiwan. Because the Chinese lacked priesthood, James Moore helped them prepare the sacrament each Sunday following his regular meetings at the Wilshire Ward. He then approached the stake presidency stating that he and his wife had a great love for the Chinese and wondered if there was something they could do for them.[28] James was soon called to be branch clerk, even though he was also a member of the stake high council.

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Tanner, Oral History, p. 42; Hollywood Ward, Oral Histy, interview by Chad M. Orton, 1986, untranscribed, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

Donna Jean Moore was called to be the branch Primary President, and a successful primary program began. Although the active primary membership in the branch had been only four or five children, the ranks occasionally reached twenty-five or thirty as members brought their friends. It was at this primary, in fact, that many Asians were taught of Jesus Christ for the first time.

The Moores were a great strength to members of the branch, most of whom were comparatively young, as they provided counsel, stability, and the comfort of an older generation. They also brought the open, warm affection common among Americans to a culture noted for its discipline and where affection was shown through personal sacrifice rather than emotional attention.

By early 1982 the branch was still struggling, as attendance at sacrament meeting was often as low as thirteen or fifteen persons, including children, and thought was given to dissolving the organization. During the summer, however, a number of strong priesthood holders moved into the branch. As a result, the branch moved from having only two Melchizedek priesthood holders when organized to sufficient numbers for full priesthood leadership, including a full elders quorum presidency. The Relief Society also grew and had a strong membership and an excellent spirit. By the end of the year the Chinese branch was a viable unit as sacrament meeting attendance averaged forty people.

With the growing numbers of Hispanics using the Wilshire Ward chapel, however, it soon became apparent that the Chinese branch must again search for a permanent home, and Bishop Edward Nadle of the Hollywood Ward offered assistance.[29] As a result, the members of the Hollywood ward put that arms around their Chinese brothers and sisters, making them feel that they were part of the larger great work. Frequently, for example, they included the Chinese branch in their activities and invited the Chinese their meetings. In May 1982 the branch began meeting in the Hollywood chapel on Sunday morning, simultaneously with the Hollywood Ward, and this allowed for the children of the branch and the ward to meet together in primary and Sunday School classes. This arrangement was also more favorable for investigators and members alike and made it easier for those who had to use public transportation to come to meetings. In addition, the Chinese youth began to meet with the youth of Hollywood Ward for their various activities.[30]

There were few families in the Chinese branch, since most of the converts were single and only two families were baptized prior to 1984. Several marriages, however, resulted from the fact that young men and women became acquainted with each other at the branch.

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[29]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 42-43.

[30]Hollywood Ward, Oral History, untranscribed.

Traditional holidays, such as the Chinese New Year, continued to be celebrated in the Chinese branch, as well as new holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. The 24th of July, celebrated by the Mormons as Pioneer Day, took on great meaning for, like other minorities, many Chinese members could relate to the great trials and concerns of the Mormon pioneers.[31] Many of them, too, had left their homes, leaving behind all but what they could carry, not knowing exactly what lay ahead or when they would reach their destination.

What started out basically as a Chinese branch eventually become an Asian branch, responsible for the spiritual needs of Saints from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand, and the Philippines. Accommodating such a change in the face of the obvious language difficulties became a major challenge to the branch.

Shortly following the establishment of the Los Angeles Fifth Branch, two more Chinese branches were also created, though outside the boundaries of Los Angeles Stake. The one established in Long Beach has since become almost a Cambodian Branch. The Monterey Park Chinese branch continued to flourish and soon grew to the point that it was divided and a fourth branch, the Hacienda Heights Chinese Branch, was created.

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[31]Ong, "History of the Los Angeles Fifth Branch."

March 1981 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Los Angeles Temple. When the temple first opened, only four daily sessions were offered; by the mid 1980s it offered at least twenty. It was not unusual during the evenings and on Saturdays for all the parking on the temple grounds to be filled and members desiring to attend the temple having to park outside the complex.

Over the years the temple had, indeed, blessed and enriched the lives of the members of the Los Angeles Stake. They were able frequently to attend the temple to perform baptisms, endowments, and sealings for themselves and for the dead. By the mid 1980s, most active members of the stake married in the temple. In addition, stake members volunteered their time to work in the genealogical library and spent countless hours extracting names from microfilm records.

During June 1983, several changes took place in the makeup of the Los Angles Stake. In addition to the creation of the Los Angeles Sixth Ward, the Korean Branch was split for the second time, with the new branch becoming part of the Chatsworth California Stake in the San Fernando Valley. The branch had been divided previously, when membership reached about 150, and the second branch became part of the Torrance Stake, though later it was transferred to the Cerritos Stake. This initial division was undertaken without the knowledge of President Tanner and in so doing

reduced the critical mass, and hence the strength, of the branch in Los Angles and slowed its growth rate.[32] The Chatsworth Branch grew at a faster rate because many Koreans saw better opportunities for integrating into America and helping their children become Americanized by moving into the valley. By 1987 the number of Koreans in the three branches had grown to around 250 members, who frequently came together for social activities, and the Koreans had proposed that a district type organization be established for them in preparation for a Korean stake.

Meanwhile, there were certain practices among the Koreans, stemming from the patriarchal aspects of their culture, that conflicted with Church practice and needed to be addressed. The Korean Branch presidency, for example, began to conduct Relief Society meetings so the sisters would see that the priesthood holders were in charge, even though it was Church policy that the women themselves should take charge of their own meetings. The problem was overcome with patience, teaching correct principles, and then leaving them alone, but it represented the complications that might arise because of differing cultural perspectives.[33]

Another manifestation of the same cultural difference came when the stake began to emphasize the "pursuit

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[32]Minority Unit Report of the Los Angeles Second Branch, Los Angeles Stake Collection.

[33]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 53-54, 58-59.

of excellence" program. Each ward was to report to the stake Relief Society how many sisters were involved, and what they had accomplished, but it was then learned that the Korean sisters were not able to report their achievements this way since Korean culture would not let them report to anyone but their husbands.[34] As stake Relief Society president Ella Farnsworth and her counsellors came to understand the problem, they looked for ways to solve it. On 13 April 1985 the Stake Relief Society sponsored a cultural evening at which the handicraft of the sisters in the Korean Branch were displayed. Of the thirty-seven sisters in the branch, thirty-five completed the pursuit of excellence program and displayed their work without having to report.

Another major challenge to the Los Angeles Stake was that of meeting the needs of the youth. One youth program for which it was well known was scouting. In 1963, for example, Wilshire Ward was chosen as the best scout troop in the Church and President John M. Russon was awarded the Silver Beaver award, one of the highest awards given by the Boy Scouts in recognition of service to youth.

There was a period of time, however, when scouting did not enjoy such a high level of achievement in the Los Angeles California Stake, and considerable credit for the renewed emphasis goes to Walt Parker, an administrator in the Los Angeles school system and, in the late 1960s, the

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[34]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

non-LDS scout master of the Arlington Ward where his wife was a member. His scout troop was composed largely of young men who were wards of the court and, as part of their penalties, were required to participate. In spite of this, he had a marvelous troop, while the others in the stake clearly left something to be desired. Parker was not reluctant to let stake leaders know his feelings concerning scouting and it problems in the stake.[38]

As a result, members of the stake presidency carefully examined the scouting program and the needs of the youth and decided they were going to make the program work. They determined that the greatest work they could do was in the area of preventing the youth from becoming inactive and building future leaders. They resolved to put a high priority on the youth program, particularly scouting, and place quality people in these programs. As a result, several prominent leaders were released to work in scouting. Lynn Poulson was a member of the Westwood Second Ward bishopric when he was released to be that ward's scout-master. Paul Weenick and C. Burton Stohl were released from the high council. Tom Anderson, who had become an Eagle scout as a youth in the Wilshire Ward, was put on the high council with the responsibility of overseeing the youth programs.[39] In addition, the youth programs also had two

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[38]Tanner, Oral History, p. 17.

[39]Ibid., p. 21.

strong advocates in the stake presidency in William W. Tanner and Rodney H. Brady. Both men were avid scouters, received the Silver Beaver Award, and served at the local, regional, and national levels of the Boy Scouts in addition to their duties in the stake presidency. The search for quality leaders interested in the youth often led stake leaders outside Church membership to find quality men, such as Walt Parker.

As the stake was revitalizing its scouting program, the Church was running into problems concerning its affiliation with scouting. In November 1972, as part of a major correlation program, the First Presidency combined the Mutual Improvement Association and Aaronic Priesthood programs, and placed scouting directly under the supervision of the Church's Presiding Bishop. Following this, the Presiding Bishopric announced that in each ward the deacons quorum president should be the senior patrol leader in scouting and the deacons quorum advisor should be the scout master.

As a result of these changes, a suit was brought against the Church stating that the new practice was discriminatory for blacks would be precluded from being senior patrol leaders in LDS unit because they could not hold the priesthood and, therefore, could not be deacons quorum presidents. The suit argued that it was against scouting policy to determine leadership positions on the

basis of religion and brought into question the Church's continued relationship with the Boy Scouts. Scout officials worked with Church leaders to see if the matter could be resolved, and Church leaders searched for minority members in leadership positions in Church units in order to support their argument that the change was a suggestion, not policy. When President Tanner learned of the suit, he informed the Brethren in Salt Lake City of how scouting was run in his stake, information that eventually proved vital to the Church's position.[37]

Because of the limited number of youth in the stake, stake leaders had gone outside stake membership to keep scouting functioning. If there were only two or three ward members of scouting age, the stake reached out into the community and brought non-LDS boys into the program. In doing this, it developed strong troops that met the needs of the youth both inside and outside the Church. In the Wilshire Ward in the summer of 1986, for example, only three of a troop of thirty-two scouts were Church members. Significantly, the troops of Los Angeles Stake were themselves microcosms of the world, with blacks, Koreans, Chinese, Armenians, Caucasians, and Hispanics all enjoying the benefits of Church-sponsored scouting activity.[38]

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[37]Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[38]Ibid., pp. 109-111.

Because of the diverse nature of the stake's scouting program, stake leaders felt that while making a deacon's quorum president also senior patrol leader would work well in areas where Mormons were a majority, that policy would not work in their stake because of the large numbers of non-Mormons. Consequently, they chose the senior patrol leader by looking for the best leader in their troops, regardless of his religious affiliation. At the time of the law suit, the Wilshire Ward had a troop composed largely of minorities, and blacks were serving in leadership positions, including that of senior patrol leader.[39] Partially as a result of this information, the law suit was dropped and the Church continued to be the largest sponsor of scouting in the United States.

Several young men joined the Church as a result of their scouting experiences, and so also did several non-member scoutmasters, including Walt Parker, Glen Johnson, Thor Dockwiler, and John Stockman.[40] The latter eventually became bishop of the Wilshire Ward. Thus, as stake members served the Los Angeles community through scouting, they also served the Church both through convert baptisms and through the skills the young men acquired as scouts. For stake leaders, the emphasis on improved scouting also had other

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[39]Ibid., p. 110.

[40]Ibid.

measurable effects as almost every LDS Eagle Scout eventually filled a mission.

Fathers and sons outings also played a prominent role in the stake activities for youth, and the young men, whether members or non-members of the Church, who had no fathers were often taken to these outings by stake members who volunteered to be their fathers for those occasions. At the 1986 outing at least twenty non-LDS youth, who were part of LDS scout troops, and their fathers, attended.[41]

The young women's program also received considerable attention, though many in the stake felt that this was not always the case. As with the young men, there were great concerns about raising young women in an urban environment. When Frances W. Richardson first moved into the stake, she was called as Young Women's President in the Hollywood Ward. Raised in suburban California where there were many teenagers, highly active families, and the Church functioned much as it did in Utah, she was not prepared to deal with inner city youth who came from broken homes or part member families, who were exposed to the world in some of its worst forms, and were often headed for serious trouble. Many of them had no parents at all and other had parents who simply did not support the efforts of leaders. Ward leaders tried everything they could think of, but in spite of their best

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[41]Ibid., p. 111.

efforts and the hours they spent, they tasted failure more often than not.[42]

To help bring the girls of the stake together so they could get to know each other, and also to show them that stake leaders were interested in them, two stake-wide slumber parties were held in 1982. In July 1985 the young women of the stake attended a camp at Big Bear, much like boy scout camp, which featured whitewater running, boating, water-skiing, swimming, wind-surfing, and other activities designed for good, wholesome fun.

The stake young women's presidency also developed an award designed to encourage personal achievement among the girls of the stake. It captured the ideals of the boy scout merit badge and rank advancement as the young women set goals they wanted to achieve in seven areas and were rewarded for their accomplishments.[43]

The Los Angles stake suffered, in comparison with other stakes in the area, from a shortage of youth. Because of this, it became a leader in bringing together the youth of all stakes in the region for youth conferences, dances, and special youth outings so that they would have a larger LDS group to associate with.

During these years the Relief Society of the Los Angeles Stake also developed new programs for the benefit of

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[42]Richardson, Questionnaire.

[43]Tanner, Oral History, p. 75.

the adult sisters. On 12 October 1985, for example, it hosted a "Voyage of Discovery," which consisted of a lovely program and dinner. The purpose of the event was to show off the talents of women in the stake and to honor those who had achieved through music, poetry, and other artistic activities. It had the effect not only of honoring the women who had worked in the Pursuit of Excellence program during the year, but also bringing considerable of talent out of the closet.[44]

Not only did the Relief Society try to honor their own, but the priesthood holders of the stake also tried to honor them. When the Church instituted a general women's meeting prior to its annual General Conference, members of the stake presidency decided that they wanted full participation on the part of the sisters and also to make it a special event. Like General Conference and other special Church meetings, the women's conference was televised via satellite from Salt Lake City, and picked up by satellite dishes installed at stake centers around the world where the women of the Church were invited to participate. Borrowing from the success of the stake priesthood dinners, therefore, the stake presidency began having a beautiful banquet for the sisters in the stake at each of these meetings. The only responsibility the sisters had was to determine the number who would attend and then show up for a fine dinner

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[44]Wallace, Oral History, untranscribed.

which featured flowers on the tables that they could take home.[45]

Stake leaders felt that these dinners helped stake members feel good about the stake and also helped the stake's sisters have a more positive attitude towards the priesthood leaders. Often the perception of the priesthood was one of a willingness to delegate assignments to the Relief Society, but through these dinners stake leaders tried to change that perception to one of a group of brethren willing also to serve.

As the Los Angeles California Stake began its sixtieth year in 1987, it was apparent that it was a microcosm of a world wide Church in ways other than its racial diversity. Within its boundaries were some of the greatest evils on the earth, and in great abundance. Also within its boundaries, however, was one of the holiest places on earth: the House of the Lord, showing that even amidst great wickedness there can also be great righteousness. The temple symbolized the fact that holy places can be found wherever the Saints of God are, regardless of surrounding evils. A common theme in the stake was that if members would live within the Lord's bounds, Satan could have no influence over them.[46]

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[45]Tanner, Oral History, pp. 155-157.

[46]Ibid., pp. 104-105.

Another way in which the stake became a microcosm was in the effort of the Saints to build up Zion where they reside. For there to be Zion in Los Angeles, the Saints must stay and stand strong in that area. It was not an easy place to live, but the members felt a commitment to helping the Church remain strong in the area, as well as a commitment to the community. The well being of Los Angeles, they felt, was directly related to the Church remaining strong as a bulwark against evil.[47] When the Saints first came they were told that they must be the leaven in the bread. Through the activities of the Los Angeles California Stake they were indeed a leaven. While the Church in Los Angles was quite different in many ways from the Church found on the east bench of Salt Lake City, it was meeting the needs of a wide variety of people in a large metropolitan, cosmopolitan area.

Stake members were doing the best they could with what they had and were not trying to create the traditional stake, realizing that their environment necessitated a certain uniqueness. Indeed, the stake survived and grew because it did whatever was necessary, including becoming a stake of specialties. Because of the conditions of the inner city, for example, it was difficult and often dangerous to do visiting teaching and home teaching. Some members lived in areas where it was not safe for two women to go out

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[47]Ibid.

after dark. Many of the sisters in the Wilshire Ward were elderly and not able to get out because of age and lack of transportation. To overcome this problem, the ward developed a system of telephone networking to replace the standard visiting teachers. Under this system the sisters were each assigned to call other sisters each month, to see how they were doing and to make sure that their needs were taken care of. While not the traditional approach, the percentage of sisters contacted each month usually exceeded 90 percent.[48]

Between 1950 and 1987 there was an average 2.4 percent annual decrease of membership in the Los Angeles Basin. While the Los Angeles Stake did not escape this trend, after 1970 it was reversed largely because of the growth of minorities and the changing nature of the inner city. In 1982 only the Wilshire Ward and the minority wards and branches showed growth or maintained population, yet the stake was growing. Membership at the end of the year stood at 4372, a nearly 25 percent increase over the figures for ten years earlier when membership barely exceeded 3300. Projections in 1982 of future growth estimated membership living within stake boundaries would reach five thousand at the end of 1987, but that figure was exceeded a year earlier

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[48]Notes of a conversation with Lois Boswell, 1986, Los Angeles Stake Materials.

than expected.[48] Although actual stake membership was just over 3300 on 31 December 1986, the members of the three Spanish Wards who were living within the stake boundaries but assigned to the Huntington Park West Stake brought the total Church population to over five thousand. The total membership within stake boundaries had almost reached the level of the early 1950s, before white flight took its toll, although the ethnic mix was considerably different. This unprecedented growth led to preparations for building a new chapel for the first time since the dedication of the Westwood Ward chapel nearly one-quarter of a century earlier. It was anticipated that, when completed, this chapel would be used by the Huntington Park West Stake and a steadily growing Spanish membership. Not only did the Spanish membership grow, so also did Los Angeles Stake population, increasing by over two hundred in the two-and-one-half years between the creation of the Huntington Park West Stake and the end of 1986. Activity of stake membership as measured by sacrament meeting attendance also rose to over 40 percent, up from the 37 percent average recorded after the Spanish had been divided from the stake.

It is difficult to anticipate what the Los Angeles California Stake will be like ten, twenty-five, or fifty years down the road. When the stake was organized sixty

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[48]Los Angeles Stake Five Year Plan, 1982, p. 1, Los Angeles Stake Collection, LDS Church Archives.

years ago, no one envisioned the diversity that characterizes it today. It is not unlikely that other groups will join with the Saints living in the area, making the stake even more of a microcosm of the world. As in the past and the present, those strong in testimony and leadership ability will still be desperately needed for the Church to remain strong in the area, as will those who can provide strong financial support. Although there has been a trickle of membership, particularly young Anglo families, moving into the stake over the last few years, it is far from a stream. Missionary work, therefore, must still be a major concern not only to increase numbers but also to fulfill the charge the Saints have been given to take the gospel to all people.

If the past is prologue, the Los Angeles California Stake will continue to be a vital force in the Los Angeles metropolitan area in meeting the needs of the Church and its members. If its leaders can learn from the past, be relevant to the present, and maintain a vision of the future, the stake will continue to weather the storms and grasp the opportunities that lie before it.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

On the day that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, a revelation was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith that "a record shall be kept among you." (D&C 21:1) Since that time, records have been kept by the various units throughout the Church. Until 1978 stake and mission minutes and selected ward minutes were to be sent into the Church's Historical Department where they were placed into one of several series for each unit. In addition, each unit was to send in a quarterly historical report which was placed in a series known as the "manuscript history" The manuscript histories of the California Mission prior to 1923 and the Hollywood/Los Angeles Stake have been the major source for gathering information, compiling a chronology, and understanding the important issues. The value of the "manuscript history" depends upon the clerk who kept it. Often the stake's "manuscript history" would give only a listing of officers or events, or would not have been sent. More frequently, however, it would not list subjects discussed in conferences, presidency and other meeting, but would include minutes as well as miscellaneous items such as

newspaper clippings. In addition, several of the stake's early publications were also sent to the Historical Department and are available on microfilm.

Beginning in 1978, as the Church continued its growth and the feasibility of storing all the records of the various units diminished, wards were no longer asked to send in reports, and only a year end report of the stake was to be sent in. However, not only was the quantity of stake records available after 1978 greatly diminished, but there was also a corresponding decrease in the quality of the record the stake was asked to keep.

In addition to stake records, events, dates, statistics, and names have been supplied by the Church owned Deseret News and Church News, and through member-operated LDS newspapers in southern California such as the California Intermountain News, News 'n' Nuggets, and Latter-day Sentinel. During the first thirty years of the stake's existence, the Deseret News, Church News, News 'n' Nuggets, and California Intermountain News, regularly carried articles on the stake, often in great detail. In the 1950's, for example, the California Intermountain News ran a bi-weekly column on happenings in the Los Angeles Stake. However, as the Church expanded both throughout California and the world, happenings in the stake are seldom mentioned in the Church owned newspapers, and the only southern California newspaper still in publication, Latter-day

Sentinel, must cover an increasing number of stakes in the Southland. Indexes are available for both the Deseret News and the Church News.

Church magazines and publications have also been an important source. Liahona: The Elders Journal, the official publication of the missions of the Church during the first quarter of this century, reported major events in the missions and featured a regular column on the California Mission. Frequently, the Saints in Los Angeles were the subject of General Conference talks, which addresses were then published in the annual Conference Report of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Prior to 1925 mission and stake presidents were often invited to report on happenings in their area. The Improvement Era, Ensign, and New Era have also run articles concerning the stake. The most helpful of these have been Gustive O. Larson, "The Los Angeles Stake of Zion," Improvement Era 26 (March 1923): 467-476, Adele Cannon Howell, "Forward Hollywood, Improvement Era 32 (July 1929): 751-755, Richard Romney, "A Feast for all the World," New Era 11 (November 1981): 22-27, and a series of articles in the Improvement Era concerning the Los Angeles Temple, which not only chronicled its construction and detailed its dedication, but also covered such diverse subjects as the history of the temple site. Except for the Liahona, indexes are available for these publications.

A wide variety of information has been furnished by present and past stake members. In anticipation of this history, the stake's history committee sent out questionnaries asking for stake members to write their memories. The replies came back in many forms, but are simply identified as "questionnaire" in the notes. Many stake members also sat for oral history interviews or provided other taped information. While most have not been transcribed, several of the interviews have been included as part of the James Moyle Oral History Program of the Church's Historical Department. Additionally, several stake members by assignment from the stake history committee wrote histories of various aspects of the stake. The most helpful of these were: Kathleen P. Allen, "The History of the Los Angeles First Ward"; A. Marden Duke, "History of the Los Angeles Spanish Branch," "History of the Los Angeles Third Ward," "History of the Los Angeles Fourth Branch and Ward," and "History of the Los Angeles Sixth Ward"; Michael Ensign Evans, "The Buildings of the Los Angeles Stake"; Erma Lunt, "The Southern California Group; and Ted Ong, "History of the Los Angeles Fifth Branch." A wide range of materials was also gathered from the files in the stake president's office and included correspondence of the stake presidency, statistical reports, and financial records.

Under agreement with the Family and Community History Center at Brigham Young University, information

supplied by stake members, whether written or oral, have been placed in the center. These materials have been noted as "Los Angeles Stake Materials." Stake records and selected materials generated by stake members have also been placed in the Church's Historical Department. These materials have been noted as "Los Angeles Stake Collection." At the time of publication these materials have not been placed in a depository, and, therefore, are designated only as being part of the "Los Angeles Stake Collection." Under arrangements with the Historical Department several of the oral histories have been or will become part of its James Moyle Oral History Program.

In addition to stake and mission records in the Historical Department, the Joseph E. Robinson and George W. McCune Collections were valuable sources of information concerning their administrations. The Journal History of The Church of Jesus Chrsit of Latter-day Saints, a daily history of the Church composed largely of newspaper clippings, has several refrences to the Church in Los Angeles. The John K. Edmunds Oral History was helpful in understanding the challenges associated with missionary work among the minorities.

While much has been published regarding the Church in the nineteenth century, little has been published concerning the Church in the twentieth century. The narrative literature dealing with the twentieth century

focuses largely on the Church in the intermountain area and only mentions Los Angeles and California in passing. However, four works have been helpful in placing the stake within the framework of events happening in the Church. Russell R. Rich, Ensign to the Nations: A History of the LDS Church from 1846 to 1972 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1972) was written as a college-level text, but focuses largely on the nineteenth-century Church in Utah. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986) is a scholarly one volume overview of the history of the Church from 1830 to 1976. An important aspect of this work is its extensive chapter bibliographies. Richard O. Cowan, The Church in the Twentieth Century (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985) is an indepth study of the administration of the contemporary Church. Thomas G. Alexander, Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) concentrates on trends, accomplishments, and problems in the Church and the social and intellectual life of Latter-day Saints during this pivitol period.

Two helpful overviews of the Church in California have been Eugene Campell, "A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1952) and Leo J. Muir, A Century of Mormon Activity in California, 2 vols.

(Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1951). Campell concentrates largely on the Church during the first ten years in California and presents the essential histories of the Brooklyn Saints, the Mormon Battalion, the Mormons and the Gold Rush, the San Bernardino Colony, and the establishment of the California Mission, but only briefly discusses the reestablishment of the California Mission and the expansion of the Church in the state. Muir focuses on the Church in southern California since the reestablishment of the California Mission. Volume One is largely a compilation listing officers and important dates of wards and stakes, miscellaneous events, and professional activities of selcted members through 1950. Volume Two is a collection of biographies of California Saints.

A number of miscellaneous works deal specifically with Los Angeles or the Hollywood/Los Angeles California Stake. Chapter 10 of Lucille C. Tate, LeGrand Richards: Beloved Apostle (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), gives valuable insights into the tenure of LeGrand Richards. An important source for the Church in Los Angeles in the 1930s is G. Byron Done, "The Participation of the Latter-day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1939), which is based largely upon surveys taken among stake members in 1937. The Board of Temple Architects is brieftly discussed in Paul L. Anderson, "Mormon Moderne: Latter-day Saint Architecture,

1925-1945" Journal of Mormon History 9 (1982): 70-84. A scholarly look at missionary endeavors among Jews in Los Angeles is chapters 4 and 6 of Arnold H. Green, "A Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts to the Jewish People" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967). An outstanding personal essay on the challenges facing stake members is Frances W. Richardson, "South of Olympic," Dialogue 15 (Winter 1982): 116-122.

SAINTS IN THE SECULAR CITY: A HISTORY OF THE LOS ANGELES STAKE

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ABSTRACT

Beginning in 1847 and continuing to the turn of the century, members of The Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) were encouraged to gather to Utah, where they formed communities seperated from the evils of the world around them. While Mormonism continues to be closely associated with Utah, in 1989 it is a world-wide church with nearly seven million members, most residing outside of Utah, and many of these in major urban areas. Nevertheless, few studies have been made of how the Church has developed outside of Utah.

When the Los Angeles Stake was organized in 1923, it was the first stake in a major urban area. In its sixty-year history the stake has flourished--although not necessarily in the traditional Utah sense--by adapting to its cosmopolitan setting. Because of its inner-city location the stake has been forced to the forefront of the changing nature of Mormonism in general and urban Mormonism in particular.

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