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# From Cultural Traditions to National Trends: The Transition of Domestic Mormon Architecture in Cache Valley, Utah, 1860--1915

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FROM CULTURAL TRADITIONS TO NATIONAL TRENDS:  
THE TRANSITION OF DOMESTIC MORMON  
ARCHITECTURE IN CACHE VALLEY, UTAH, 1860--1915

by

Jami J. Van Huss

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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2009

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## ABSTRACT

From Cultural Traditions to National Trends:  
The Transition of Domestic Mormon Architecture in Cache Valley, Utah, 1860--1915

by

Jami J. Van Huss, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2009

Major Professor: Dr. M. Lawrence Culver  
Department: History

As any architectural historian would argue, historic buildings are the most accessible, yet illusive documents of their founding culture, and as the relevant historiography argues, the early Mormon pioneer built environment in Utah is no exception. In fact, many Mormon architectural historians posit that due to the exclusivity and unusual circumstances of many Mormon settlements, their original structures have an exceptional ability to comment on the culture that erected them. The first permanent settlement in Cache Valley, Wellsville, provides a particularly lucrative opportunity to discover a great deal about the founding pioneers who established it due to the city's time and place within the context of Mormon colonization, the plethora of original domiciles that remain standing, and the wealth of genealogical documents that still exist in the community shedding light on the lives and skills of the community's original craftsmen. While the voices of vernacular builders are often lost, leaving only their structures to

testify of the culture, the incorporation of personal histories and interviews with descendents and acquaintances of three specific builders grants this argument a distinct foundation. This thesis explores the change in housing designs in Wellsville from vernacular styles to nationally popular housing patterns at the turn of the twentieth century by examining three specific structures. By contrasting a stone saltbox and clapboarded Georgian house, both built in the 1860s, with a bungalow built in 1914, and investigating the lives of their respective builders, I demonstrate how housing design practices mirror the social and political transition of the Mormon church during this period. At the same time that late-nineteenth century Mormons sought to change their image by emerging from isolation, gaining statehood, and assimilating into a more national identity, a modern housing movement proliferated throughout the western United States. By participating in this transition of domestic structures, the Mormons discarded the vernacular housing traditions brought by Mormonism's founding community of diverse converts from Europe and New England in favor of popular designs readily available in widely published plan books. Had the national transition in housing happened even a decade earlier, it is plausible that the still-insular and strictly traditional Mormon culture region would have resisted such a change. Thus the alteration in housing serves as evidence of the transition in Mormonism toward the national mainstream at the turn of the twentieth century. While a vast historiography concerning Mormon sacred structures exists, this thesis strengthens the discourse regarding the religion's understudied domestic built environment. Furthermore, by illustrating the important role that historic houses in Cache Valley play in both discovering and

remembering the foundation of this valley, I hope to foster the desire to both appreciate and preserve these structures as crucial pieces of cultural history.

(84 pages)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the first week of my graduate studies, I walked into Special Collections at the Merrill-Cazier library to find out what story about Cache Valley sat forgotten in the stacks, waiting to be told. I found University Archivist Bob Parson and told him that I really like old houses and wanted to write about something local, then asked what untapped resources lie in wait for me. His initial suggestion, a class paper for Dr. Michael Nicholls, and direction from Dr. Lawrence Culver and my committee members ultimately guided me to this final product.

Perhaps the most influential resource for this thesis came from countless little discussions with a variety of historians, both professional academics and local history buffs. I found that every conversation brought me closer to figuring out what I wanted to say, how I was going to say it, and what resources supported my claims. Living in the very community (not to mention one of the houses) I examine provided a uniquely serendipitous opportunity to learn about the men I have been researching since I had unprecedented access to both private family records and individuals who were personally acquainted with my subjects. I would like to particularly thank Wilma J. Hall and Betty R. Bankhead for their support and willingness to help. Furthermore, I commend their passion for and efforts to maintain local history.

I must also thank David Rich Lewis, Colleen O'Neill, Ona Siporin, and Carolyn Doyle at the *Western Historical Quarterly* for the finest intellectual experience of my life. The mentorship, concern, and ceaseless support for my academic success have been unsurpassed. The fellowship, itself, provided an unparalleled learning opportunity,

increasing my ease in the documentation of my own work, and granting me access to the comradery of many respected historians. I particularly appreciate the flexibility and time off that Ona afforded me to both finish my thesis and be able to fulfill my responsibilities as a mother.

This graduate degree is the accomplishment of many. I thank the *Western Historical Quarterly*, Charles and Betty Peterson, and the Cache Valley Historical Society for providing very appreciated funding to complete much of my research. My major advisor, Dr. Lawrence Culver, has been instrumental in the evolution of my arguments and points and I particularly appreciate his innovative and often unique perspective, which has infused this thesis with considerable interest and readability. I must also acknowledge his excellent abilities as a mentor, especially through his availability and approachableness. I also thank the other members of my committee for their mentorship and support. Specifically, I thank Dr. David Rich Lewis for his insights and encouragement. I thank Dr. Philip Barlow for teaching me to examine Mormon history critically, introducing me to new perspectives, and his sincere concern and attention to fostering the education of his students. I thank Dr. Lisa Gabbert for sharing her expertise on the world of folklore and vernacular studies and for validating my feelings in regard to the importance of material culture, oral history, and all things of the folk.

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## CHAPTER 1

### ARCHITECTURE AS CULTURAL EVIDENCE

In 1856, Peter Maughan and his small Mormon contingent established the first permanent settlement in Cache Valley, Utah, laying the foundation for a thriving community. Today, the various architectural styles of the area's historic houses stand as tangible examples of late-nineteenth-century Mormon culture. Primarily a community of converts from New England and Europe, the varying cultural heritage of its members influenced the design and style of their structures, allowing for vernacular traditions and social conditions to literally shape their buildings. In other words, the Mormons' original built environment in Cache Valley reflected the melting-pot of the newly settled society, since each part exhibited the distinct backgrounds of its inhabitants.

Architectural historians find appeal “in what architecture can reveal about a society,”<sup>1</sup> and Mormonism's early architecture divulges volumes. As membership expanded and customs changed, so did the built environment, demonstrating its intimate relationship to the various cultures and traditions that early Mormon culture consisted of. Specifically, with the great transition of the Utah Territory (towards the turn of the twentieth century), from a polygamous theocracy to the state of Utah, a patriotic democracy, the architecture of Cache Valley began to reflect the new “Americanization” of a once-insular society. Following this transition, the early-twentieth century saw nationally popular housing forms such as the bungalow proliferate throughout Cache

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Westwood, “Mormon Architectural Records,” in *Mormon Americana*, ed. David J. Whittaker (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1995), 337.

Valley, demonstrating the Mormons' assimilation into a more national identity, since their built environment mirrored the architectural trends prevalent throughout the rest of the country. Rather than showing resistance to outside influences, the previously isolated society now embraced the same domiciles popular throughout the country. An examination of three specific structures in Cache Valley's first settlement, Wellsville, and the influences of the cultural backgrounds of their builders, illustrates the transition of local vernacular design into the national architectural trends sweeping through the West. By showing that even the style of Cache Valley's domestic structures integrated into the national identity during this time, the houses are able to verify the momentous transition of the LDS Church and the state of Utah in the early twentieth century.

In order to do this, this chapter commences with an examination of the vital components of the relevant historiography and explores how the built environment is capable of reflecting culture. Chapter 2 discusses the great transition of Mormonism at the turn of the twentieth century, looking specifically at what precipitated the change and the new identity Mormons desired. Additionally, an explanation of the significance of Wellsville's settlement, demonstrates its exclusively Mormon origin and important position in the study of early Mormon domestic architectural history in Utah. Chapter 3 illustrates how the cultural and practical heritage of two specific people influenced the style of their Wellsville houses. An exhumation of the builders' geographical architectural context before arriving in Utah along with their prior building experiences exhibits that the cultural background of each is reflected in the design of a saltbox house built by Zial Riggs and Samuel Mitton's double-pile Georgian-style house, both built in the 1860s. The fourth chapter discusses the national transition into modern housing at the

beginning of the twentieth century, specifically through the introduction and proliferation of the bungalow. Accordingly, a discussion of John Gunnell and his bungalow examines the style, his exposure to popular design, and his ability to build a house congruent to the dominant national housing trend in 1914. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the comparisons of the vernacular designs of the 1860s pioneer structures to the early twentieth-century domiciles designed in accord with the prevalent national trend. Furthermore, an examination of the ability and importance of these structures to stand as tangible cultural artifacts concludes the thesis, describing how architecture is evidence of the Mormon transition into the national identity.

This thesis builds on this existing historiographical foundation concerning the cultural implications of nineteenth-century Mormon domestic architecture. While an impressive body of work has been done in regard to sacred Mormon edifices such as temples and tabernacles, very little literature focused specifically on domestic architecture of this period in Utah exists, with virtually nothing concerning the domiciles in Cache Valley.<sup>2</sup> While Thomas Carter, an expert on Utah's historic architecture, wrote his dissertation in 1984 on domestic structures, he focuses on Sanpete County in central Utah. The few additional articles examine stone houses throughout the Mormon culture region. The only piece that specifically addresses Cache Valley is Elaine Thatcher's

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<sup>2</sup> For a small sample, see the following examples in regard to just the temple and tabernacle in Logan: David S. Andrew and Laurel B. Blank, "Four Mormon Temples in Utah," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 30 (March 1971): 51-65; Leonard J. Arrington and Melvin A. Larkin, "The Logan Tabernacle and Temple," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41 (Summer 1973): 301--14; Laurel B. Andrew, *The Early Temples of the Mormons* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978); C. Mark Hamilton, "The Salt Lake Temple: A Symbolic Statement of Mormon Doctrine," in *The Mormon People: Their Character and Traditions*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 103-23; Nolan P. Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* (Providence, UT: Nolan Porter Olsen, 1978); Melvin A. Larkin, "The History of the L.D.S. Temple in Logan, UT," (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1954), Manuscript Collection 112, book 1, box 1, Merrill-Cazier Library Archives and Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan.

1983 master's thesis concerning the valley's folk furniture.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, no one has contrasted the building styles of the two time periods. Most importantly, while Mormon architectural historians have acknowledged the idea, the argument that the twentieth-century social and political transition of Utah is reflected in its domestic architecture has not been the primary focus of study. The vast majority of the historiography dealing with Mormon architecture emerged in the 1970s during a period of acute awareness regarding historical preservation, resulting from various urban renewal projects taking place nationally. Thus, a heightened scholarly interest in the pioneer-era Mormon built environment (primarily of sacred structures) ensued to aid in an understanding and appreciation that would secure its preservation. The trend, however, did not last since *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning* (published in 1995) is the only existing contemporary piece of substance.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the existing historiography heavily references one another, further displaying a lack of sufficient scholarship. Thus, with the exception of a few solid pieces, the study of Mormon domestic architecture has not been adequately assembled or interpreted.<sup>5</sup> In 1996 Carter stated, "considering the significant impact the Latter-day Saints have had and continue to have on the American cultural landscape, it is surprising that so little has been written on their buildings."<sup>6</sup>

Currently, the most substantial study of nineteenth-century domestic Mormon architecture is a chapter in Hamilton's book; however, historian Roger D. Launius states

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Carter, "Building Zion: Folk Architecture in the Mormon Settlements of Utah's Sanpete Valley, 1849--1890" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1984) and Elaine Thatcher, "Nineteenth Century Cache Valley Folk Furniture: A Study of Form and Function" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> C. Mark Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Westwood, "Mormon Architectural Records," 337 and "In this issue," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1975): 207.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carter, review of *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning*, by C. Mark Hamilton, in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55 (June 1996): 204.

in a book review that “the serious analysis of Mormon architecture still awaits its historian.”<sup>7</sup>

This study is important because cultural historians value the study of the social conditions that produced historic structures because they are able to use such information regarding domiciles as evidence of human behavior. Therefore, in regard to the historiography surrounding nineteenth-century Mormon architecture, many authors frame their argument in a historical context of Mormonism, since their arguments regarding structures are founded in the practice and progression of the Mormon religion. Bruce L. Campbell and Eugene E. Campbell commence their chapter in *Utah's History*, entitled “Early Cultural and Intellectual Development,” by stating that “the cooperative, community-oriented Mormon colonization of Utah led to an urban development atypical of the American frontier.”<sup>8</sup> Generally, during the westward expansion of nineteenth-century America, settlements sprang up independently; each homestead stood alone, surrounded by fields and pastures. However, Mormons settled neatly grouped together due to their communal culture, laboring and producing for the common good: “While pioneers in other regions scattered out across the land, Mormons gathered together in small agricultural towns with farmers commuting daily to surrounding fields. Such a nucleated design consciously expressed their communitarian ideals.”<sup>9</sup> Campbell and Campbell suggest that even their built environment symbolized a character of single-mindedness. Initially, pure necessity determined the aesthetic and form of structures

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<sup>7</sup> Roger D. Launius, review of *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning*, by C. Mark Hamilton, in *Pacific Historical Review* 66 (May 1997): 269.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce L. Campbell and Eugene E. Campbell, “Early Cultural and Intellectual Development,” in *Utah's History*, ed. Richard D. Poll (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989), 295.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Carter, “Studies in Vernacular Architecture,” in *Folklore in Utah: A History and Guide to Resources*, ed. David Stanley (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004), 179.

reflecting immediate needs and availability of material. To begin with, wagon boxes, dugouts, and tents served as shelter while the pioneers commenced construction of more permanent adobe structures. Although timber was accessible, it found greater usefulness as fencing, furniture, roof timbers, and fuel, so the abundant resources of clay proved most desirable for home construction. Then, as the settlements stabilized and the economy grew, they permitted the emergence of a more sophisticated living standard and architectural styles. Campbell and Campbell explain that “Mormon colonization was instrumental in creating an environment in which architecture . . . could find early expression.”<sup>10</sup> Determined to withstand the same forcible removal from their homes they experienced in the Midwest, Mormons took construction quality very seriously, building edifices to endure and provide safe haven.

In his article, “Architecture on the Frontier: The Mormon Experiment,” Robert Winter agrees that the communal nature of Mormons shaped their frontier communities and perpetuated economic prosperity. Additionally, he argues that the Mormons took cues from their eastern homelands in establishing the geometric nature of their city planning, since they “always measured themselves against eastern architectural standards.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Winter acknowledges the influence of Freemasonry on Mormon architecture and city planning. In the late 1820s, William Morgan exposed sacred Masonic secrets and Winter posits that they made an impression on church president, Joseph Smith. Seeing a desirable ready-made structure, Smith employed the Masonic form in designing his new religion. Accordingly, with the first Mormon settlements in Ohio and Illinois, and continuing with the settlement of the Mormon

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<sup>10</sup> Campbell and Campbell, “Early Cultural and Intellectual Development,” 295.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Winter, “Architecture on the Frontier: The Mormon Experiment,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43 (February 1974): 51.

culture region in Utah, Winter argues that the Mormon preoccupation with measure and order perpetrated “cultural robbery”<sup>12</sup> of Freemasonry. Establishing each city on a gridiron, regardless of natural barriers or contours, the Mormons implemented strict geometric patterns. The Mormons were so obsessed with polar alignment, that when they settled Nauvoo, they completely abolished the previously surveyed plan for the town of Commerce---which was oriented to the Mississippi River---and established a new grid in accordance to the four points of the compass. Maintaining this design form, Brigham Young established Salt Lake City and its many satellite communities along the same strict geometric pattern, creating a discernible city planning style throughout Utah Territory.<sup>13</sup>

While still insisting that Mormon architecture “reflects a significant continuity with eastern culture, Winter concludes that, “architectural historians have clearly not paid enough attention to the West. Neither have historians of the West spent much time on architectural history.”<sup>14</sup> This is a pity since, as Allen D. Roberts argues in “Religious Architecture of the LDS Church: Influences and Changes since 1847,” the Mormons produced a “fascinating variety of historic religious architecture.”<sup>15</sup> To explore the progression in style of Mormon domestic architecture, Roberts first looks at the craftsmen, builders, and designers. He states that as early missionaries proselytized, Mormon church authorities instructed them to seek out men skilled in different trades and encourage them to bring their tools, talents, and blueprints with them upon conversion.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>13</sup> While many U.S. settlements adopted a compass-oriented grid pattern, *every* Mormon settlement did regardless of obstacles and topography.

<sup>14</sup> Winter, “Architecture on the Frontier,” 60.

<sup>15</sup> Allen D. Roberts, “Religious Architecture of the LDS Church: Influences and Changes since 1847,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1975): 302.

Once settled in Salt Lake City, church leadership organized colonizing parties consisting of men capable in various skills, so they could establish a network of self-sufficient, viable new settlements. As communities sprang-up strategically throughout the Great Basin, the residential landscape of each varied significantly, reflecting the availability of materials, climate, and craftsmen's skills and cultural identities.<sup>16</sup>

The arrival of the railroad in 1869 marked an incredible transition for the territory. With the immediate influx of technology, greater selection of materials, differences in non-Mormon lifestyles, and exposure to style and design, Mormon architecture began to change. For example, Gothic Revivalism in particular quickly spread with the availability of "Gothic windows and sashes and other materials that could be more easily imported than locally manufactured."<sup>17</sup> The first four temples in Utah all contain Gothic elements as do many domestic structures of the late-nineteenth century.

In "The Architectural History of Utah," Peter L. Goss concurs with Roberts, acknowledging the great effect the arrival of the railroad had on Mormon architecture. He explains that "the arrival of the railroad in 1869 ended a twenty-year period of isolation for Utah and ultimately affected the development of architecture within the state."<sup>18</sup> Goss founds his argument in enumerating the different styles of vernacular architecture present before the pounding of the golden spike, demonstrating how each settlement reflected the nationality of its colonizers. For instance, stonemasons from Wales settled in Willard and the existing structures stand in contrast to the homes the Swedes and Danes built in Manti. However, once the railroad allowed for immediate access to Eastern materials and design, the architecture throughout the territory began to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 306--7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>18</sup> Peter L. Goss, "The Architectural History of Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1975): 216.

reflect national trends. Goss goes into great detail giving examples of various structures exhibiting such styles as Federal, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Second Empire, and Queen Anne.

Written largely as a call to recognize, appreciate, and preserve the wealth of Mormon architecture in Utah, Goss concludes by tying the built environment to the culture. He states that the “resourcefulness and industry of the Utah pioneer” is portrayed by the strong vernacular tradition of the first permanent structures. Furthermore, “despite the state’s early isolation, a true skill [was] displayed in Utah’s adaptations of national styles to fit regional needs and conditions.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, despite outside influences, the architecture of the Mormons is distinct since it reflects the various cultures of its builders.

In his article, “Stone Houses of Northern Utah,” Austin E. Fife argues that since the adobe, stone, and timber that the initial Mormon houses were constructed of came from the earth, the architectural creations do not “stand out upon the landscape like tumors,” but reflect culture, showing “man at one with his environment rather than in arrogant conflict.”<sup>20</sup> Describing the homes as “art of the folk,” Fife notes that these craftsmen built without the benefit of tangible plans or specifications. “The designs of the houses were carried very largely in the minds of these master craftsmen, and the floor plans and facades that resulted therefrom derived from the willful use of certain design alternatives learned by heart . . . These houses were built for the folk by builders whose know-how, though well developed, was built into their minds by seeing, talking, and doing---not by reading or studying blueprints.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>20</sup> Austin E. Fife, “Stone Houses of Northern Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 40 (Winter 1972): 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8.

The interdependent relationship between domestic structures and people is commonly recognized as a key element of deciphering culture. For example, in his discussion of New England townhouses, Bernard L. Herman states that houses are “artifacts that contained and defined the enactment of everyday relationships . . . [existing as] symbolic representations of self and community.”<sup>22</sup> Looking specifically at Mormon architecture in *Nineteenth Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning*, C. Mark Hamilton similarly explores the relationship between Mormon domiciles and their residents. Hamilton begins with a chapter putting Mormonism into historical context and continues with perhaps the most comprehensive look yet at Mormon architecture of the early nineteenth-century. Exemplifying how the built environment reflects Mormon culture, Hamilton devotes each chapter to a different type of Mormon edifice. After an interesting discussion on city planning, he proceeds through temples, tabernacles, meeting houses, associated buildings (relief society halls and tithing offices), domestic architecture, and peripheral buildings (academies, cultural halls, and government buildings). Hamilton’s chapter on domestic architecture focuses on the ability of structures to exhibit qualities of a family-centered culture since Mormonism incorporates a religious element into the history of its homes as the primary setting for religious cultivation. He then goes into great depth explaining the actual design and styles of the early vernacular dwellings built by the pioneers, looking at how the culture---frontier life, material availability, craftsmen, and polygamy---directly affected the structures. Hamilton draws his examples specifically from numerous people and their dwellings. Of particular interest is his demonstration that as the community prospered the architecture

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard L. Herman, *Townhouse: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780--1830* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 2.

became more sophisticated, exemplifying the Mormons' intentions for permanent residence in the Great Basin. Like Goss and Roberts, Hamilton examines the intricacy of styles that influenced early Mormon architecture and the new influences, such as Gothic Revival, that came with the railroad and end of territorial isolationism. Hamilton concludes this chapter by affirming that this "architectural mainstreaming . . . marked the beginning of the end of nineteenth-century Mormonism and the beginning of a new era for the church and its architecture."<sup>23</sup>

Just as Mormonism transitioned from a polygamous theocracy to an American democracy with the turn of the twentieth century, Paul L. Anderson argues that the architecture also changed. In "The Early Twentieth Century Temples," Anderson illustrates the growing sophistication of Mormon temple architecture as the members began "to see themselves as part of the larger American society."<sup>24</sup> Since Mormon domestic architecture began to imitate national trends, demonstrating gains in confidence of image and national assimilation, Mormon culture demanded an architecture that would reflect this new image. While Anderson concentrates on temple architecture, he successfully demonstrates how the transition of the LDS Church into modern American society was marked by a change in architecture. Anderson concludes with accolades for an "architecture comparable with the best buildings of their time anywhere . . . [that gave] expression to their faith."<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the historiography concerning sacred Mormon architecture of the nineteenth century, there is mention of a discernable "Mormon style," which transitioned

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<sup>23</sup> Hamilton, *Nineteenth-Century Mormon Architecture and City Planning*, 117.

<sup>24</sup> Paul L. Anderson, "The Early Twentieth Century Temples," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Spring 1981): 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

along with the growth and development of the early LDS Church. As the Mormons moved west, building temples in Kirtland, Ohio; Nauvoo, Illinois; and Salt Lake City, Utah, the design of the temple---both the exterior and interior---evolved with the sophistication of Mormon theology. Juxtaposing different architectural styles and borrowing many elements of religious iconography, the nineteenth-century Mormon temples displayed a distinctly Mormon image. However, this same trend is not apparent in domestic architecture since, as a community of converts from a plethora of national backgrounds, the only thing all Mormons had in common was their religion. While it could be argued that the dominant religious domestic practice of the day, polygamy, created an opportunity for domiciles to reflect a unified form, “plural marriage produced no special ‘polygamy’ style,”<sup>26</sup> nor did any other cultural trend. Instead, nineteenth-century Mormon houses simply reflect the heritage and cultural traditions of their individual builders, exhibiting a variety of vernacular styles.

Since the publically acknowledged lifespan of polygamy was less than forty years, specific designs for multifamily households failed to progress beyond an experimental stage and become entrenched in the architectural vocabulary. As Mormon historian Jessie Embry argues, “since polygamy was practiced for such a short time [living patterns] varied from family to family, making it impossible to describe the typical Mormon polygamous family.” This also accurately conveys the situation of polygamy’s built environment.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, since the Mormon Church never issued specific design directives for either monogamous or polygamous structures, individual families were allowed to employ their cultural backgrounds and architectural terms of the

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<sup>26</sup> Campbell and Campbell, “Early Cultural and Intellectual Development,” 296.

<sup>27</sup> Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Living the Principle* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), xvi.

day in order to construct domiciles that addressed their specific needs and desires, which inherently created a diverse architecture. In fact, when economically feasible, most households preferred to house each family in a completely separate structure. However, the houses of polygamous families do play an important role in conveying the story of Mormon polygamy since, as argued by Thomas Carter, by examining “their basic style and size, their placement in the community, and how they formally organized and defined the use of family space, the houses offer a view into the social world of early Mormonism that can only enhance more traditional historical investigations.”<sup>28</sup>

While some houses were specifically designed and built to house many families, this practice was not common, occurring only in rare instances and among the wealthiest Mormons. (And even then, this practice would likely have ended when the federal government began actively prosecuting polygamists in the late-nineteenth century.) Generally, if preference or economics caused polygamous families to live in one house, then they adapted existing traditional single-family housing forms to meet their needs. According to Carter: “While all common nineteenth-century housing types were used, the most easily converted was the standard double-cell house---a house with two evenly sized rooms and two front doors.” This design was popular because its symmetrical double-door front projected neoclassical images of propriety and was commonly found throughout the United States, both in the east and west as a desirable single-family structure. Polygamous families found that with a few simple alterations, it served well as a multi-family dwelling, giving each wife a separate space by constructing a partition through the middle of the equally proportioned house. Richard Francaviglia agrees,

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carter, “Living the Principle: Mormon Polygamous Housing in Nineteenth-Century Utah,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 35 (Winter 2000): 223--6, quote on 224.

stating, “the early Mormons may have found this house useful for polygamy, since it was symmetrical and sometimes divided into two equal halves, each having a front door.”<sup>29</sup> While this is the most popular (and notorious) traditional housing form adapted by polygamous families, several other styles were also used. Carter explains that “most polygamous houses display[ed] an owner’s concern for privacy. This is one of the reasons that having separate houses for each family was so desirable . . . discrete spaces were the preferred design.”<sup>30</sup> Additionally, when such neat planning was not possible, polygamous families generally constructed additions incrementally to satisfy the demands of privacy and growing families. In other cases involving larger polygamous households, a combination of single and multi-family dwellings were employed.<sup>31</sup> Thus, while polygamous families did alter traditional housing forms to suit their unique needs, a specifically stylized architectural form did not emerge as an independently identifiable entity. If anything, the familiar architecture of nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy forged “a solid visual bond between Mormons and their monogamous neighbors in the East.”<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, the design of nineteenth-century Mormon domestic structures exhibits various vernacular styles as “homes in many Mormon communities are true folk architecture.”<sup>33</sup> Since vernacular structures are constructed according to the traditional customs of their builders, without the assistance of professional architects, vernacular craftsmen “create[d] buildings that [were] functional, affordable, and conform[ed] to . . .

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<sup>29</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia, “Mormon Central-Hall Houses in the American West,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61 (March 1971): 65.

<sup>30</sup> Carter, “Living the Principle,” 243.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 227--9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>33</sup> Francaviglia, “Mormon Central-Hall Houses in the American West,” 68.

their time and place.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, since the vernacular aesthetic expresses the heritage, environment, and financial resources of its procurers, along with the readily available materials, the early pioneer structures of Cache Valley express “identifiable patterns of national, ethnic, and especially regional character. By studying how these characteristics evolve through time [one] can make generalizations about the community’s developing interactions with the world at large.”<sup>35</sup> Scholars across disciplines acknowledge the intimate connection between people and place, or the human landscape, and specifically use vernacular architecture as a guide to human values and experiences, since this type of architectural study examines the common buildings of common people. Given Utah’s distinct settlement history in the West, it exists as a rich resource for vernacular studies.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Carter, “Traditional Design in an Industrial Age: Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Victorian Utah,” *Journal of American Folklore* 104 (Autumn 1991): 420.

<sup>35</sup> Alan Axelrod and Harry Oster, with Walton Rawls, *Penguin Dictionary of American Folklore* (New York: Penguin Reference, 2000), 487.

<sup>36</sup> Carter, “Studies in Vernacular Architecture,” 178.

## CHAPTER 2

### TRANSITIONS OF IMAGE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

Mormonism experienced a great transition at the turn of the twentieth century, as it consciously abandoned the isolationist trajectory established by Brigham Young. An examination of what precipitated the desire for both change and a new Americanized identity is essential to understanding the significant shifts in Mormon culture. Furthermore, what the culture's built environment expresses in regard to the community, Cache Valley's first settlement of Wellsville provides a particularly interesting case because its exclusively Mormon origin grants it a significant position in the study of early Mormon domestic architectural history in Utah. Thus the following examinations of both the transition in Mormonism and the significance of place are crucial to understanding how the change in architecture of specific structures is also a commentary on the community that erected them.

Persecuted, feared, and practicing polygamy, the Mormons were forced from their homes in the Midwest and followed Brigham Young across the plains to Salt Lake City in the 1840s and 1850s. There the new settlers established a community based on cooperation and millennialism. Desiring to build a perfect city under a theocratic government, the Mormon pioneers fled the jurisdiction of the United States federal government in search of a place where they could practice their infant religion in peace and without interference. Initially settling what is now Salt Lake City, Young sent colonizing parties throughout the region to establish a religious kingdom. In the Great

Basin, “Mormon towns stood like islands in an ocean of mountains and desert, but they were far from isolated. Rather, they existed as links in a chain of settlements radiating out in all directions from the parent colony at Salt Lake City.”<sup>37</sup>

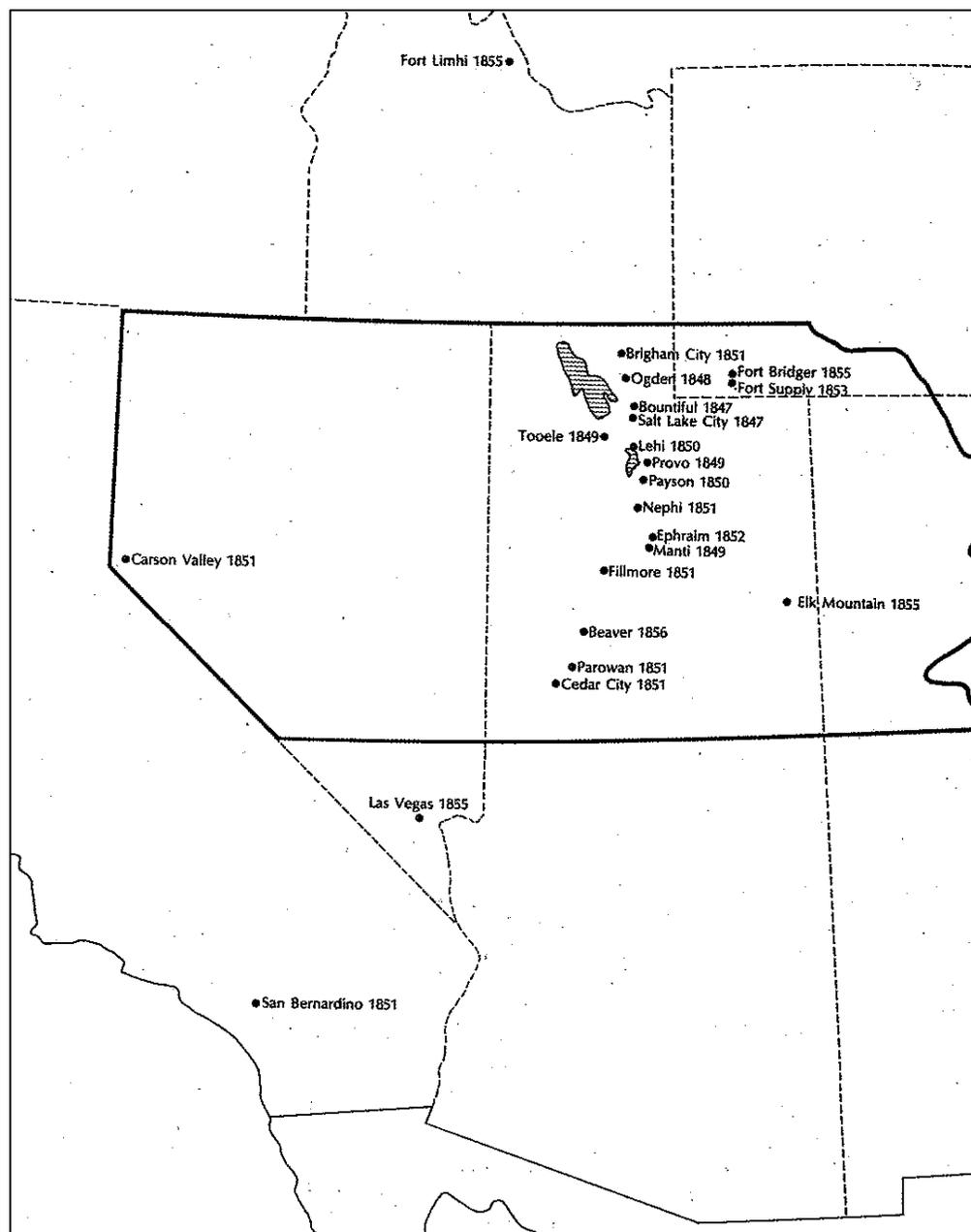


Figure 1: Map of Mormon Colonization to 1857. Richard D. Poll, ed., *Utah's History* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989), 730.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 180. See also Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830--1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958).

Only one year after the Mormons' arrival, Utah legally became part of the United States when the nation signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with Mexico in 1848. Once again subject to the control and dictations of the federal government, Mormons soon found their world view challenged, as they faced the consequences of several anti-bigamy laws. A succession of proposed bills---the Wade Bill (1866), Cragin Bill (1867), and Cullom Bill (1870)---intended to enforce the initial Anti-Bigamy Law of 1862. Each dictated harsher restrictions to make life very tough for those practicing polygamy. For instance, the Cullom Bill sought to abolish Utah election laws, cancel all Utah land laws, fine a man \$5000 for living with more than one wife (or cohabitating), and authorize the president to send the federal army to Utah for purposes of law enforcement. It did not take long for the Mormons to grow tired of what they perceived as congressional harassment and charged that the Anti-Bigamy Act was unconstitutional since polygamy was a religious practice and Mormons, as U. S. citizens, had the first amendment right to freedom of religion. In 1879, the case went to the Supreme Court in *Reynolds v. US* and the watershed ruling set a very clear precedent. Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite determined that while the government cannot interfere with the freedom of mere religious belief and opinion, it had a duty to prohibit religious practices considered unlawful, citing human sacrifices as an example. Thus, since the federal government had resolved that the practice of polygamy was illegal, no American citizen had the right to participate in the institution. Compounding the profound blow to the freedom of Mormons to practice their religious belief of plural marriage, Congress passed the Edmunds Act of 1882, which stripped polygamists of their right to vote, hold public office, or sit on a jury,

ultimately forcing many leaders and prominent community members underground to avoid prosecution.<sup>38</sup>

In 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act proved to be the final assault on the polygamous community since it dictated school regulations (specifically opposing the use of the *Book of Mormon* as a central text), “dissolved the Mormon church’s corporation, provided for the seizure of church property, ended the Perpetual Emigration Fund,” and required Utah to issue civil, rather than religious, marriage licenses. The act also specifically outlawed “unlawful cohabitation” of men who lived with more than one woman, whether married or not. While Mormon leaders cried foul, pointing out that the act was not enforced in regard to cases of prostitution or adultery, the act effectively deprived plural wives of all property rights. Enforced both by U. S. marshals in Utah and the courts, the act very effectively disenfranchised Mormons who practiced polygamy, stripping them of most constitutional rights.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, following several failed applications for statehood, Congress again denied Utah’s petition from the 1887 constitutional convention, calling first for the abolition of polygamy along with the separation of church and state. Left with no other option, in 1890, church President Wilford Woodruff issued what is known as the Manifesto, announcing the church’s semi-annual general conference that the Mormon membership was to obey the laws of the land and discontinue the practice of polygamy (although it is noteworthy that he never actually condemned its practice). Mormonism’s abandonment of polygamy was just one aspect of many political, social, and economic changes in Utah during this time.

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<sup>38</sup> See Richard D. Poll, ed., *Utah’s History* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Laura E. Woodworth-Ney, *Women in the American West* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 156--7.

Obviously, late-nineteenth century Utah was a place of great change. The federal government effectively thwarted the initial efforts of the Mormons to establish an independent religious community in the Great Basin, “incensed by the group’s separatism and continued insistence on plural marriage.” Although the official abandonment of polygamy in 1890 paved the way for statehood in 1896, it left the Mormon kingdom shaken. Historian Richard Bushman explains: “Ecclesiastical authority lay weakened, and the cooperative impulses, both economic and social, that once fueled the church’s progress were increasingly channeled into private enterprise.” Although Mormons faced great uncertainty, the changes of the late-nineteenth century brought increased prosperity. While Salt Lake City was no longer the “orderly religious community its founders had envisioned,” by the 1880s, it grew rapidly as a downtown business district, standing as the commercial center of the economically and industrially expanding Great Basin region. While Salt Lake City’s population also doubled in the 1880s (and grew sixfold by 1920), “rural Utah was also affected by these changes.”<sup>40</sup>

Mormon country also experienced a dramatic infiltration by non-Mormons during the late-nineteenth century. Following the completion of the railroad in 1869, many miners, soldiers, bankers, and merchants arrived and settled. Consequently, this proliferation of diverse people proved to be a driving force in causing the economy to standardize and integrate into the national market. These “outsiders” also brought their cultures, traditions, forms of entertainment, and skills to the area. Accordingly, banks, theaters, social clubs, and other enterprises grew and influenced the once-isolated society. As Utah began to integrate economically and politically, Mormons became keenly aware

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<sup>40</sup> Carter, “Traditional Design in and Industrial Age,” 420 and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 104.

that they also needed to transition socially and resolved to commence assimilation into the national culture. Now a generation removed from Brigham Young and his communitarian ideals, young Mormons desired to leave economic cooperation, polygamy, and other isolationist curiosities behind, and sought a new identity. Bushman elaborates: “Mormons hungered for acceptance by the larger American society. Anxious to be relieved of the infamy that burdened the church through the nineteenth century . . . Mormons emphasized their patriotism . . . [and] in some ways, Mormons became super-Americans.”<sup>41</sup>

In *Mormonism in Transition*, historian Thomas G. Alexander describes the Mormon desire to change since “the previous paradigm necessitated the integration of religion, politics, society, and the economy into a single non-pluralistic community and adopted polygamy as a means of solving the traditional problem of the marriage relationship.” He argues that since this way of life was unacceptable to the consciousness of Victorian America, and so “the Mormons began groping for a new paradigm that would save essential characteristics of their religious tradition, provide sufficient political stability to preserve the interests of the church, and allow them to live in peace with other Americans.”<sup>42</sup> As explained by folklorist Austin Fife, because this desire for a transition in Mormonism evolved from all-encompassing and significant circumstances, it resulted in a logical, if not dramatic action that changed the entire culture: “A mass of people does not suddenly begin to seek cultural autonomy without cause. The longing of social groups for acceptance by the broader mass seems just as real as that of the individual for acceptance in his own milieu . . . [T]he causes for Mormon cultural autonomy are to be

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<sup>41</sup> Bushman, *Mormonism*, 104.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890--1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 14.

sought not in some inherent abnormality of the group, but in the convergence of a body of singular economic and cultural forces upon a group of people whose reaction to these forces was normal---that is to say, human.”<sup>43</sup> As a result of the Mormon commitment to a total image reconfiguration (and most importantly the discontinuation of polygamy), on 4 January 1896, the federal government officially granted Utah statehood and it finally achieved recognition as one of the United States.

The end of polygamy and “the achievement of Utah statehood in 1896 altered profoundly the relationship between Mormonism and the rest of the United States. For the first time, Mormons could aspire to national respectability.” While suspicion continued to exist, the image of Mormon culture became more sympathetic since the practice of plural marriage crumbled as an “insurmountable barrier” to national acceptance. This new freedom allowed the Mormon church to cultivate a new image exhibiting a community of loyal citizens, industrious workers, and happy families, which contrasted with the nineteenth-century perspective that viewed “Mormons as seditious fanatics, theocrats, and polygamists.” Furthermore, the church established the Bureau of Information in 1902, which grew into an elaborate public affairs program, telling the world not only about Mormon belief, but about the Mormon people themselves, since it drew attention to Mormon culture and society, rather than emphasizing doctrine.<sup>44</sup>

So what did Utah really look like at the turn of the twentieth century? People traveled by horseback and buggies, and most farmed. The towns were tightly knit and most were very excited about gaining statehood and commencing the integration into the nation. Extensive capital went into the construction of such infrastructure as dams and

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<sup>43</sup> Austin E. Fife, “Folk Belief and Mormon Cultural Autonomy,” *Journal of American Folklore* 61 (January-March 1948): 21.

<sup>44</sup> Bushman, *Mormonism*, 103.

irrigation, and for the many non-Mormons held political offices. There was a huge boom in public education and school construction occurred at a dramatic rate. Industry expanded with the establishment of flour mills, woolen mills, sugar beet factories, sawmills, and smelters. Accordingly, previously rural areas, such as Ogden, Provo, and Logan, had grown in population dramatically and became well-developed agriculturally and industrially.<sup>45</sup> Brigham Young had intended initially for the network of colonies in the Great Basin that radiated out from Salt Lake City to stand as a Mormon kingdom capable of self-sufficiency by taking advantage of the different climate and lands of the region. No longer isolated and with the initial breadth of Young's territory dramatically reduced, the established pattern of settlements proved instrumental both in sustaining growth and providing commentary on its Mormon founders.

Unusual in the United States, the nature of Utah's settlement lent itself to a built environment able to comment on the society that established it. Young sent colonizing parties throughout the region to claim land, develop agriculture and industry, and secure his theocratic dominion. For instance, Young established St. George in the sun of arid Southern Utah to grow cotton, while the arable mountain valleys of the north served as fertile grazing lands for cattle and growing grains and vegetables. Often referred to as "the great colonizer," Young had specific intentions to establish a strong, defensible kingdom, and set about his agenda very precisely and methodically. In 1889, Edward Tullidge commented on his observations concerning Young's activities, explaining that, "these bands of colonists were placed under able and experienced captains, whom . . . Brigham Young deemed the most fitting men of all the community to be the founders of

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<sup>45</sup> All information regarding the transition of Utah came from Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* and Floyd A. O'Neil, "Utah History" (class notes, History 4660, University of Utah, Fall 2000).

cities and the formulators of our local social governments in the first stages of settling.” Furthermore, he notes that the settlements “grew up rather in the organic form of colonies and family groups of settlements than as cities or towns or villages in the ordinary sense, and the government was semi-patriarchal and communistic.”<sup>46</sup>

Cache Valley provides a particularly interesting opportunity to learn about its settlers due to its proximity, yet seclusion from the rest of the most populated region of Utah, the Wasatch Front. Geographically protected, the communities in Cache Valley continue to communicate specific cultural narratives; from the settlement of each to the homogenization and nationalization of the area. Since Mormon pioneers exclusively established and nurtured Cache Valley’s first permanent settlement, Wellsville, the city hosts a wealth of early Mormon domestic structures and a city model to examine in order to learn about early Mormon society. Furthermore, the story of its settlement is crucial to understanding its ability to be the setting for the vernacular domiciles that comment specifically on the different nationalities of its founding Mormon culture. As one historian explains: “Vernacular builders thought in another way, and evidence of this vernacular mode has permeated American architecture since the seventeenth century [since] the vernacular process was an additive one, in which the whole was literally the sum of its accumulated parts.”<sup>47</sup>

During Brigham Young’s initial colonizing activities in Utah Territory, he considered Cache Valley unpromising due to reports of early autumn and late spring frosts and the severe winters of its climate and potential Indian hostilities. However, aware of its rich grasslands and abundant supply of water, Young sent Peter Maughan,

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<sup>46</sup> Edward W. Tullidge, *Tullidges Histories of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1889), 2:413.

<sup>47</sup> Dell Upton, “Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 (Summer-Autumn 1984): 140.

who had previously proved to be an experienced and capable leader, with a party of men to find a suitable location for a northern settlement in 1856. The men reached the valley during the summer, and upon entering found grasses that were excellent both for grazing and harvesting for winter stock feed. They toured the valley immediately to determine the most favorable location for a settlement. Maughan selected the south part of the valley partly due to the existence of several large springs in the area.<sup>48</sup> Peter Maughan related these events in his journal:

On the 21st of July, 1856, I was sent by President Brigham Young to pick out a location in Cache Valley for settlement. Brothers Z. Riggs, G. W. Bryan, Wm. Maughan, J. Tate, M. Morgan and myself started and made choice of the south end of the valley for our location. In September I left Tooele County with my family, in company with G. W. Bryan, Z. Riggs, John Maughan, Wm. Maughan, F. Gunnell, D. Thompson and their families and landed safe in Cache Valley the 15th day of September 1856. We spent two days looking round about the valley, then went to work cutting hay, building houses, yards, etc.<sup>49</sup>

Twenty-five people constituted the initial group of settlers, including the families of Peter, John, and William H. Maughan, Zial Riggs, Francis W. Gunnell, George W. Bryan, and O. D. Thompson. They made their encampment next to a stream by removing the wagon boxes from their wheels and eleven days later, the season's first snow fell. In response to the early winter weather, the settlers quickly commenced work on cabins and some were able to move into their crude shelters by November. Simple, one-room domiciles, generally sixteen-foot square, the pioneers built them from the two readily available forms of timber: birch and aspen, fitting the logs together roughly and chinking them with mud. Dirt floors rested under roofs of willow, grass, and dirt. Running north

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<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Darley, "The Colonization of Maughan's Fort (Now Wellsville, Utah)," in *Locality Histories, Chronicles of Courage*, vol. 6, 1995, p. 256.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Maughan, *Diary*, 21 July 1856, LDS Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

along Wellsville's present 200 East from Main to 200 North, two rows of cabins faced one other, situated about ten feet apart. Corrals held animals immediately behind the cabins, with haystacks standing right behind the stock enclosures. The settlers called their cluster of cabins Maughan's Fort, which they surrounded by a cooperative pole fence intended to serve as a protective barrier against possible Indian attacks. While the fort never had a proper wall around it as most other Mormon forts did, guards were generally on duty, especially during the night.<sup>50</sup>

Although the first winter at Maughan's Fort proved severe, the settlers tried to make the best of their circumstances. They slept atop bedding placed over grass or straw, which lay right on the dirt floor. They had rudimentary furniture and lit their cabins with a rag dipped in lard and placed in a tin plate of tallow (they considered candles a luxury). Winter precipitation caused the cabins to leak and they often dug a hole in the floor for the water to drain into and would later carry it outside with a cup.<sup>51</sup> "The settlers huddled inside their dwellings as winter's snow covered the land, but they still managed to entertain themselves. Community and church activities and house parties were thrown . . . . When spring finally arrived, the people's hope rose."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Darley, "The Colonization of Maughan's Fort," 257. See also Elaine Hunsaker Call, "Pioneers of Cache Valley," in *History of Cache County, Pioneer Pathways*, vol. 1, 1996, p. 243--4 and Ray Somers et al., *History of Cache Valley* (Logan, UT: Watkins Printing, 2004), 121.

<sup>51</sup> Darley, "The Colonization of Maughan's Fort," 258.

<sup>52</sup> Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 59.

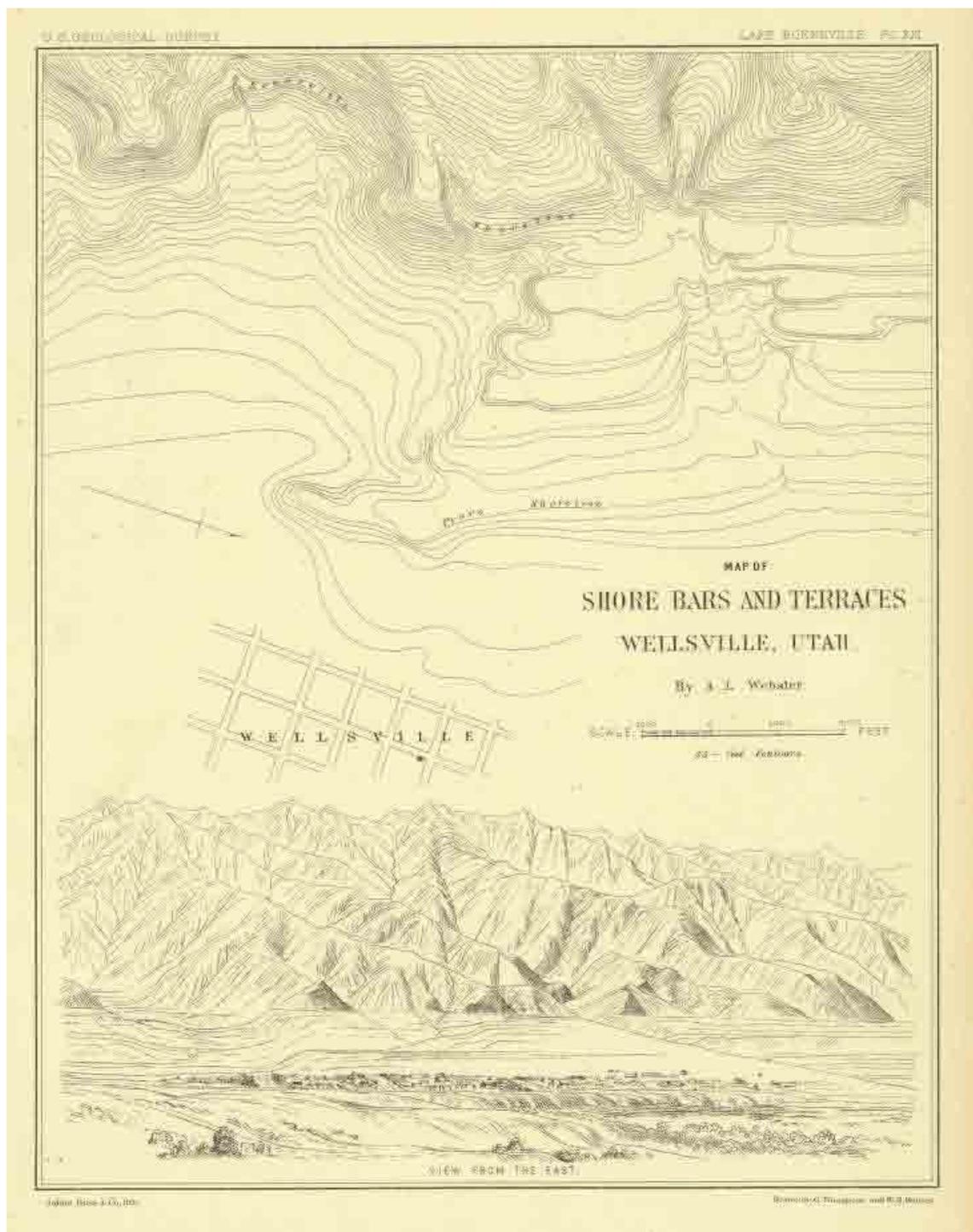


Figure 2: Map of Wellsville, ca. 1890. Available electronically from the Merrill-Cazier Library Archives and Special Collections, call # X2776 (51-1) H. Misc doc. 194 map 16.

Spring saw the arrival of several more families from the Tooele area and by 4 April 1857, there were over twenty families at the fort. By that summer, Maughan's Fort had grown to nearly one hundred people and the original cabins had been extended into an L-shape. Assigning land to the families, Peter Maughan allotted a single man five acres and a married man ten acres of irrigated land. Each family also received grassland or meadow in proportion to the size of its cattle herd. Once the ground thawed, the settlers built fences, plowed fields, and constructed dams and dug ditches for irrigation. "The oxen that had survived the winter were hitched to crude wooden plows . . . to pulverize the soil. The grain was sown by hand, and a brush drag was pulled over the ground to help cover the seed . . . Soon, rows of wheat, corn, oats, and potatoes could be seen covering the black loam."<sup>53</sup>

The year 1857 turned out to be an excellent growing season, so the settlement experienced an abundant harvest. Francis Wilson Gunnell, one of the original settlers at Maughan's fort wrote in his autobiography, "by the blessings of the Lord we raised a good crop after being predicted we could not raise crops on account of frosts. By being blessed with an abundant harvest we continued persevering doing the best we could in a new country."<sup>54</sup> Besides the obvious benefits of the plentiful harvest of 1857 to the settlers, it also proved that Cache Valley provided a viable climate for agriculture and alleviated all hesitation regarding its suitability as a northern settlement. The *Salt Lake City Deseret News* advertised the valley, publishing articles that described its excellence. Such advertisement reached the other settlements and instigated an influx of new settlers, which strengthened Maughan's Fort and led to the founding of other towns in Cache

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 121 and Darley, "The Colonization of Maughan's Fort," 258--9.

<sup>54</sup> Francis Wilson Gunnell, *Autobiography*, ca. 1860, MS 20459, LDS Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Valley.<sup>55</sup> As immigration continued, the fort's infrastructure and location served as a central "rendezvous for the increasing stream of settlers arriving in Cache Valley."<sup>56</sup>

Favorably located, the settlement flourished and within a few years the community consisted of, "a grist mill, saw mill, brickyard, dairies, a co-op, tannery, granaries, an ice house, and a slaughterhouse," surrounded by healthy crops growing in the fertile soil. Additionally, in 1857, Wellsville organized into School District Number 8 and community members erected a public building to be used both for schooling and church, with Francis W. Gunnell as the first teacher. Generally English, Welsh, or Scottish, the members of the community exhibited diversity in their skills and occupations.<sup>57</sup>

Despite all of their success, Brigham Young advised Peter Maughan and the settlers to prepare for evacuation of the valley on 8 October 1857. Now commonly referred to as the Utah War, U. S. President James Buchanan had dispatched an army of 3000 federal troops to install Alfred Cumming of Georgia as Young's replacement as governor of Utah Territory and to help Cumming enforce federal law. Perceiving this action as a threat, Young prepared for the worst and ordered most of the settlers in California, Nevada, and Idaho, as well as those in the outlying Utah areas to retreat closer to Salt Lake City for protection. Accordingly, on 10 March 1858, the settlers at Maughan's Fort commenced packing their wagons for the trip south.<sup>58</sup> A severe winter storm delayed them for over a week, but they finally left, taking their cattle and

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<sup>55</sup> Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> Call, "Pioneers of Cache Valley," 244.

<sup>57</sup> LaRayne B. Christensen, Wilma J. Hall, and Ruth H. Maughan, "Wellsville," in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Kent Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), 628. See also, Wellsville History Committee, *Windows of Wellsville* (Providence, UT: Watkins Printing, 1985).

<sup>58</sup> Darley, "The Colonization of Maughan's Fort," 259.

everything that fit in their wagons. Forced to leave about 1500 bushels of grain and larger furnishings and accoutrements, they tightly locked their cabins without knowing when or if they would return. When fears of an armed conflict between the federal troops and Mormons proved false, Young permitted the settlers to return the following autumn, but deferred official resettlement of Cache Valley until the spring of 1859. While some families chose to return immediately, they faced a harsh reality. Their store of grain was gone (presumably stolen by the local Indians) and the winter of 1858--1859 was especially harsh, forcing many to subsist on turnips. Hunting expeditions generally proved fruitful, but lack of ammunition posed unfortunate limitations.<sup>59</sup>

With the close of the Utah War in the spring of 1859, Mormon refugees returned to their homes throughout the Utah Territory. Already on the move, many looked for a more hospitable place to live and the northern settlements, including Cache Valley, were very desirable due mostly to their abundance of large house lots and fertile farmland. Attractive and affordable, the permanent settlement of Cache Valley began in earnest in the spring of 1859.<sup>60</sup> Now a sizable and important settlement, Young sent two Mormon apostles, Orson Hyde and Ezra T. Benson to Maughan's Fort on 13 November 1859. The men's mission was to conduct church business and officially change the town's name to Wellsville in honor of Daniel H. Wells, who served Young as second counselor in the LDS Church's leadership and was the former head of the Utah militia. Understandably at the onset of this massive colonization of Cache Valley, Wellsville stood substantially as *the* settlement. As the center of industry, women made butter, cheese, preserves, cured meat, and carded, spun, and made cloth. Half of the men remained at home alternating

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<sup>59</sup> Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 121.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

days in order to complete the homes while the other half worked in the fields. By 1860, the census counted 574 people in 99 households in Wellsville. As great numbers continued to immigrate to Cache Valley from the southern settlements and emigration from Europe reopened, other cities in the valley also experienced growth.<sup>61</sup>

When Charles W. Nibley arrived in Cache Valley as a boy on 11 September 1860, he recalled that “Wellsville was the oldest and largest town in the valley at that time. Logan had merely started with about half the number of houses that Wellsville had, and a little start was being made at Hyrum, Millville, Smithfield, Richmond, and Franklin, but Wellsville and Logan were the two prominent places.”<sup>62</sup> As immigration to Utah Territory continued to increase following the Utah War, Brigham Young gave special attention to Cache Valley. Aware of its fertile land, plentiful water, and harvesting capabilities, he viewed it as an ideal place for the masses of European immigrants to settle, stating that “no other valley in this territory is equal to Cache Valley . . . it is a perfect place to settle.”<sup>63</sup> The agricultural potential of Cache Valley granted it fame as a farming country. In his account, Tullidge noted that:

The soil is excellent and produces annually a quantity of grain, root crops and vegetables that will compare favorably with any other portion of Utah. The valley is watered by an extensive and costly irrigating system, although the streams give an abundance of water at all times . . . the mountains that surround the valley are on one side fine grazing land for the raising of horned stock and sheep; and on the other some magnificent stretches of first class timber, which keep a number of sawmills engaged.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Darley, “The Colonization of Maughan’s Fort,” 261; 1860 Census; Tullidge, *Tullidges Histories of Utah*, 2:416.

<sup>62</sup> Charles W. Nibley, “Reminiscences of Charles W. Nibley,” *Improvement Era* 37 (September 1934): 529.

<sup>63</sup> Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 61.

<sup>64</sup> Tullidge, *Tullidges Histories of Utah*, 2:347.

By the early 1860s, Cache Valley had become Utah's granary, with freight outfits trading for livestock, wheat, and perishable goods.<sup>65</sup> Charles Nibley recalled that Wellsville transformed from a primitive fort to a properly organized town in the summer of 1862:

Wellsville broke up its old fort life and the town was laid out in the wheat field where we owned five acres and we secured our city lot just one block west of where the old Wellsville meeting house now stands. We had no government titles to land in those days, indeed there were no U. S. surveys for seven or eight years after that, until the railroad got through, so that all we had really was a 'squatter's' right or claim. But those claims were all respected by everybody and were perfectly good. But we bought and sold and traded in, just as though we had good title.<sup>66</sup>

In 1863, James H. Martineau officially surveyed Wellsville, employing the common Mormon city-planning model of a grid. Orienting the streets to the four point of the compass, he divided the land into ten-acre blocks that were each divided into eight one and one-quarter acre lots. Then, on 19 January 1866, Wellsville was the first settlement in Cache Valley to be officially incorporated as a city, boasting a complete body of municipal officers and its first mayor, William H. Maughan. One of the principal landmarks in the valley's early history, Wellsville served as headquarters for all the early settlers upon entering Cache Valley.<sup>67</sup>

The rapid settlement and development experienced by Cache Valley, "in material, social, and educational directions [was] unrivalled in the history of the [Utah] Territory." By 1884, Cache Valley reigned second in population and wealth in the region, following only Salt Lake City. Furthermore, the community benefited from, "the influx of a hardy,

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<sup>65</sup> Charles S. Peterson, "The Valley of the Bear River and the Movement of Culture between Utah and Idaho," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 47 (Spring 1979): 199.

<sup>66</sup> Nibley, "Reminiscences of Charles W. Nibley," 602.

<sup>67</sup> Christensen, Hall, and Maughan, "Wellsville," 628 and Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 122.

determined and energetic class of people.”<sup>68</sup> Western historian, Charles S. Peterson called the growth in Cache Valley “the nearest thing to a land boom that early Utah history can boast.” Continuing to describe the nature of Cache Valley’s settlement, Peterson states:

Mormon settlers rushed into southern Cache Valley in the years after the Utah War. Land hunger notwithstanding, habit and the threat of Indians caused them to settle in a pattern entirely consistent with established Mormon procedure. Soon, villages laid out in the characteristic Mormon grid were located at the canyon openings along the south and east portions of the valley . . . Irrigated farms lay in small plots adjacent to each town, the habits of irrigation were instilled among the settlers, and canal systems were etched in the landscape.<sup>69</sup>

While the threats of starvation, Indians, thirst, and cold perpetuated the earnest industry of Wellsville pioneers, spiritual obligations also provided guidance and encouragement. In 1860, during a regional address, Brigham Young instructed: “There is a great work for the Saints to do. Progress, and improve upon and make beautiful everything around you. Cultivate the earth, and cultivate your minds. Build cities, adorn your habitations, make gardens, orchards, and vineyards, and render the earth so pleasant that when you look upon your labors you may do so with pleasure, and that angels may delight to come and visit your beautiful locations.”<sup>70</sup> In his history of Cache County, F. Ross Peterson surmised that Cache Valley “became a promised land for thousands of European emigrants and a quiet, beautiful home for many American-born pioneers.”<sup>71</sup> Calling Cache Valley “one of the most prosperous districts in Utah,” Tullidge wrote in 1889 that in addition to the agricultural resources, plentiful timber, various rock quarries,

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<sup>68</sup> 1884 Utah Gazetteer, 331--2, in author’s possession.

<sup>69</sup> Peterson, “The Valley of the Bear River and the Movement of Culture between Utah and Idaho,” 198.

<sup>70</sup> Brigham Young, “Remarks by President Brigham Young, June 12, 1860,” *Deseret News*, 8 August 1860, front page.

<sup>71</sup> F. Ross Peterson, *A History of Cache County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1997), 25.

and manufactures, “the go-ahead spirit of enterprise and thrift that characterizes the population of the country,” is the area’s greatest asset. He concluded that “Cache Valley was singularly fortunate in the class of men who founded its cities, and to this fact the county owes at once its reputation, affluence and social importance.”<sup>72</sup> Therefore, while the geography of Cache Valley provided a hearty foundation granting sure potential for a settlement to flourish, the need to survive induced the industriousness of Wellsville’s settlers. Additionally, in accord with Young’s intentional colonizing formation, there was someone skilled in nearly every necessary vocation, thus the labor of this plethora of people allowed for the establishment of a thriving community. Accordingly, an in-depth examination of the homes and contributions of the skilled and industrious element of Wellsville’s settlers demonstrates the relationship between people and their built environment.

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<sup>72</sup>Tullidge, *Tullidges Histories of Utah*, 2:346.

### CHAPTER 3

#### TWO MEN AND TWO HOUSES

Driving through Wellsville today, anyone who appreciates late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century domestic architecture will find delight with the town's present built environment. Block by block, one can identify several different popular house styles from the succession of design trends over time, amalgamated into the contemporary visual landscape. For instance, looking at the homes facing south along Main Street between 100 East and 200 East, one would notice a simple two-story hall-parlor structure built in 1909 next to an elegant Victorian built the same year, followed by a quaint brick English-Tudor style cottage built in 1942 and finally an unassuming horizontal ranch house built in 1961 on the corner (See Figure 3).<sup>73</sup> These four houses represent the distinctly different, yet very popular housing forms in Utah during their respective time periods. According to Utah architectural historians Thomas Carter and Peter Goss, the hall-parlor house is considered "the quintessential Utah house" from 1847 to 1910, while Victorians "became common everywhere in Utah after 1890." Furthermore, between the two world wars, Utah architecture reflected a revival of aesthetic features "associated with particular historic periods," thus, "period cottages populated the expanding" areas around Logan.<sup>74</sup> Finally, by the 1960s the ranch house proved a ubiquitously favored style found both speckled throughout neighborhoods and

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<sup>73</sup> All dates verified with the Cache County Assessor's Office, 175 North Main, Logan, Utah. The addresses are 143, 160, 163, and 195 East Main, respectively.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Carter and Peter Goss, *Utah's Historic Architecture, 1847--1940: A Guide* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1988), 14, 44, 57.

lining streets in newer subdivisions throughout the valley. Therefore, the series of houses on this one street represents the variety of popular architectural forms from throughout the twentieth century.



Figure 3: Four houses exhibiting different architectural styles facing south on Main Street between 100 and 200 East in Wellsville, Utah. Photo by author, 2009.

While this phenomenon exists throughout the gridded part of Wellsville (as opposed to the plentiful surrounding agricultural land), it is most obvious in the original downtown district, allowing one to easily envision Wellsville's built environment at different time periods. In other words, the houses stand as artifacts of the community and how it developed over time. Many of the original houses built by the first families to which Peter Maughan allotted land remain, allowing one to get a sense of what the town

looked like in the 1860s with the erection of the first permanent structures. Then, as the town grew and developed, houses slowly filled in the gaps, exhibiting the popular housing designs of their time, and permitting a contemporary observer to determine the appearance of the town during every general time period.

As elsewhere in the West, Utah (and Wellsville specifically) experienced a dramatic transition in domestic architecture from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. The original nineteenth-century permanent structures exhibited vernacular styles, each expressing something about the cultural heritage, skills, availability of materials, and tastes of its builders. Then, as the modern housing movement spread throughout the entire western United States, Mormons (who actively sought out ways to demonstrate national assimilation), became infected and builders abandoned traditional forms in favor of popular designs readily available in the plan books obtainable at any local hardware store. While this transition from vernacular to nationally popular housing styles is not unique to Utah or Mormon culture, the point is that like Utah's western neighbors the change occurred. Had the modern housing movement transpired a couple of decades previously, it is likely that as a consciously insular community, the small Mormon settlements of the Great Basin (such as Wellsville) would have not been chosen to embrace the national housing transition. Instead, as a people of strict tradition they would have continued to employ the familiar housing designs of their heritage. Therefore, the fact that Mormon builders did abandon vernacular styles in favor of the new modern domestic forms, stands as a witness of the transition of Mormonism at the turn of the twentieth century. The following examination of two vernacular Wellsville dwellings built in the 1860s (to be contrasted with a bungalow built in 1914) illustrates

the validity of this architectural change because, as historian Kate Carter states, one of the most important factors in regard to these pioneer homes was, “the builders themselves who fashioned . . . homes that have endured.”<sup>75</sup> An investigation of the builders’ geographical architectural context before arriving in Utah, the development of their skills and characters, and their prior building experiences demonstrates how the cultural background of each is reflected in the design of both a saltbox house built by Zial Riggs on the northeast corner of 100 South and 100 East and Samuel Crowther Mitton’s double-pile Georgian-style house at 242 East Main Street.

Azias “Zial” Litchfield Riggs was the eldest son of Amasa and Marvilla Riggs, born on 4 November 1824 in the village of Chester, Hampden County, Massachusetts. Emigrating from Lancaster, England in the 1630s, the Riggs family fought in the Revolutionary War, farmed successfully, and were reported to be “brave and hearty people.” Zial, spent his childhood clearing land of brush, trees, and rocks, planting crops and pastures, working in the fields, and participating in the building of various structures on their farm. As the landscape consisted of rolling rocky hills, Zial became an accomplished stonemason and constructed many stone edifices in his lifetime. His great-granddaughter, Sylvia Riggs Johnson, wrote that her predecessors, “built their homes, barns and sheds, and fences with the many rocks and stones they gathered from the land.” Furthermore, not only did the Riggs family pass along the skills of stonemasonry, but were quite accomplished at it, building quality structures. Johnson elaborated that in Massachusetts, “the winters were long and severe most of the time. They had to have good shelters for their livestock, and snug warm homes for themselves.” Throughout his

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<sup>75</sup> Kate B. Carter, “Pioneer Homes and Houses,” *Daughter of the Utah Pioneers Historical Pamphlet*, October 1940, p. 8.

childhood and adolescent years, it is recorded that Zial provided considerable help to his father by being dependable, accepting responsibility, and always working hard to help his family, friends, and neighbors.<sup>76</sup>

As a young man, Zial converted to Mormonism and soon met his future wife, Emeline Eunice Knox, also a young convert to the new religion. They married on 24 May 1846, and by September of 1851 had welcomed three children to their family. At about this time, the lure of the West had taken hold of the young couple and they resolved to join the mass migration of Saints (as members of the LDS Church call themselves) to Utah Territory. They immediately began to ask questions and seek advice in order to commence their preparations. For nearly a year, they grew, dried, and smoked food, made soap, clothing, and quilts, gathered utensils, cast iron pans, tools, munitions, and tack, and assembled and branded a respectable herd of livestock. Along with several neighbors, they formed a small company and left Massachusetts in the spring of 1852. They reached Council Bluffs, Iowa by early June and soon set out across the Great Plains. Zial's innate know-how proved invaluable as he continually helped with the inevitable breakdowns since, along with his talents in stonemasonry, he was also an accomplished blacksmith. Betty Riggs Bankhead, Zial's granddaughter, remarked: "Grandpa could do anything and was very good at it. If anyone was self-sufficient, it was him."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sylvia Riggs Johnson, "Life Story of My Great Grandfather," 1960, pp.1--2, this is a personal history kept by Zial's descendents and graciously shared with me by Betty Riggs Bankhead, one of Zial's granddaughters who lives in Providence, Utah. See also, Wellsville History Committee, *Windows of Wellsville*, 662.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, "Life Story of My Great Grandfather," 3--8 and Betty Riggs Bankhead, interview, 25 February 2009, Providence, Utah, in author's possession.

Well-prepared, Zial, Emeline, and their three children crossed the plains with two wagons, a freighter, and a light spring wagon full of provisions, arriving safely and without terrible hardship the first week of October. They initially settled in Tooele, Utah, but the colony suffered greatly from unfavorable farming conditions so when Brigham Young asked Peter Maughan (the leader of the Tooele settlement) to explore the possibility of a northern settlement in Cache Valley, Riggs accompanied him. From their initial findings, Young deduced the viability of a settlement and determined that Maughan should lead a small contingent, including the Riggs family, to settle in Cache Valley in 1857. Soon after arrival, the onset of early winter weather forced the settlers to immediately construct cabins. However the Riggs family, Zial, Emeline, and their three children, chose to live in a hillside dugout nearby. Within weeks of their arrival, a fourth child joined their family. Mary Ann Weston Maughan recounted the birth of Emma Knox Riggs on 10 October 1856 in her journal: “I waited on Sister Riggs. She delivered a daughter, the second child to be born in the camp.” (Maughan’s own daughter, born only days after arrival was the first baby.)<sup>78</sup>

Eager to establish his long-dreamed-of farm, Riggs chose a nice farm site and began to plow fields as soon as spring arrived. Reading from Riggs’s personal history allows one to get a sense of both his support and zeal for the new settlement and his personality. In regard to the first spring (1857) Riggs reports:

When spring come we got ready for farmin. We plowed up quite a chunk of ground and sowed some wheat and oats. It came up fine; that is the wheat did. The oats wa’nt much account and it growed splendid until it was headin out, and then it froze so blamed hard, that the wheat darn near rattled like dry sticks as it stood in the field. It sure looked like it was all day for the wheat, but old Peter Maughan wouldn’t give up. Says he, “Maybe it’ll come out alright, you never can tell what’ll happen,” and by jings! If it didn’t. You think I’m stretchin it, but I

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Call, “Pioneers of Cache Valley,” 243.

ain't, not a bit. The wheat came out of the kinks and we got a good crop. We felt so darned good over it that we didn't know how to tell it, and I guess we'd tried rasin' wheat on an ice berg after that if we had been asked to.<sup>79</sup>

Following the short evacuation of Cache Valley the next year due to the perceived threat of Johnston's Army, the Riggs family returned to Maughan's Fort permanently. Zial built a three room cabin with a sod roof and split log flooring for his family and helped with most of the other construction projects in the community. While serving in many capacities as a skilled and capable man, Riggs also found success in farming.

Participating in the communal lifestyle of the "United Order," Riggs gave everything he grew and produced to the central church authority, which then redistributed the goods throughout the community according to the size and needs of each family. However, within a few years many failed to do their fair share of the work, profiting from the labor of others and causing great discontent, so the community abandoned the practice. While LDS Church leadership still expected ten percent of one's increase to be tithed to the church, it did supply fruit trees, berry bushes, and seed at a minimal cost. Thus, along with the family's fields, they planted an orchard and garden, which each produced nicely for the family. As Riggs's great-granddaughter explains: "Zial and his family worked hard. His crops were good. His livestock multiplied, so did his family."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Wellsville History Committee, *Windows of Wellsville*, 173.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, "Life Story of My Great Grandfather," 19--20.



Figure 4: Zial Riggs house, built ca. 1861. Picture by author 2008.

According to the family's success, they began to plan a larger and better house to be made with rock and located in the center of town, facing west on the northeast corner of 100 South and 100 East (see Figure 4). Already well-versed in building (this was the fourth of six homes he built in Utah alone<sup>81</sup>), Riggs chose to build in stone, his preferred medium, a style which proliferated the Massachusetts countryside where he initially learned the trade. Furthermore, throughout the Mormon culture region "stone masonry

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<sup>81</sup> Zial Riggs built a cabin during their time in Tooele, the original dugout near Maughan's Fort, the cabin in Maughan's Fort, the stone saltbox in Wellsville, and two houses on the farm (the first burned down). See Johnson, "Life Story of My Great Grandfather."

gained considerable impetus, especially during the 1860s.”<sup>82</sup> Riggs’s history provides the following blueprint of his saltbox:

Zial and Emeline drew up the plan of their new house and soon began building. A huge pile of suitable building rocks had been gathered and stacked near the site. The front of the house would face west to the street . . . the house would be two stories high. There would be six rooms, a parlor, bedroom in the front and a large kitchen with a pantry in the back on the first floor. Up stairs would be three bedrooms. The walls and ceiling were plastered and a nice plank floor was laid. Glass was used for the windows, which would have a wide 14 inch window sills [sic] as the walls were that thick. The room had real shingles. This house, like everything Zial did was well-built and sturdy. It was built about 1860 and has been in use as a dwelling place ever since . . . it is still a good looking house, standing firm, and sturdy as the day it was built.<sup>83</sup>

However, regardless of these details, the interior bears little significance on categorizing this New England colonial house form that was never very popular in Utah. Architects refer to the style as a “saltbox,” because it is defined principally by its unbroken roof shape, rather than its interior plan. Exhibiting a two-story front section with a one-story extension to the rear, a long, sloping roof contains the entire house, so this continuous exterior roof line grants the house its distinct style. Congruent to the saltboxes of Massachusetts, the house’s short roof pitch is on the side that faces the street, with the long roof in the back, remaining “true to vernacular design. [In fact,] the roof shape of the saltbox is so strong that it tends to make the house look like a container, with the roof simulating a lid.”<sup>84</sup>

Not only did the saltbox originate in New England and become the dominant colonial architectural style in the area where Riggs was born and raised, it is one of the

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<sup>82</sup> Leon Sydney Pitman, “A Survey of Nineteenth-Century Folk Housing in the Mormon Culture Region,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1973), 90.

<sup>83</sup> Johnson, “Life Story of My Great Grandfather,” 20.

<sup>84</sup> Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design 1870--1940*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1985), 40--1.

primary house designs that “went west with New Englanders,” showing the affinity between the West and New England folk house forms.<sup>85</sup> In Massachusetts, the architecture “is distinctive for its simplicity and economy, both of plan and construction,” lending itself to be distinguished as a vernacular style.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, few chose to build a stone house due to the complexity of stonemasonry. Generally requiring skills acquired through an apprenticeship, many of Utah’s early stonemasons “were more or less self taught through their years of experience.”<sup>87</sup> Therefore, as Riggs cultivated his building skills as a young man, he became acquainted both with stonemasonry and the saltbox style of domestic architectural design. As a resourceful, hard-working man with significant building experience, the influence of the residential landscape of his youth coupled with his craftsman capabilities granted Riggs the ability to construct a home reflective of his New English heritage.<sup>88</sup>

A few years later in 1865, Samuel Crowther Mitton built a home on Wellsville’s Main Street that differed from Riggs’s in style, since it reflected his own English culture. Born in Halifax, Yorkshire, England on 27 May 1836 to William and Hannah Crowther Mitton, Samuel’s family joined the LDS Church during his childhood.<sup>89</sup> All accounts of Mitton’s life testify to not only his carpentry, cabinetmaking, and musical skills, but to his adaptability, work ethic, and determination, demonstrating a lifetime of labor, improvisation, and perseverance. Thrust into a role of great responsibility at a young age, Samuel Crowther Mitton worked very hard to earn everything he attained in life, pushing

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<sup>85</sup> Pitman, “A Survey of Nineteenth-Century Folk Housing in the Mormon Culture Region,” 207.

<sup>86</sup> Russell F. Whitehead, *Good Houses: Typical Historic Architectural Styles For Modern Wood-Built Homes* (Saint Paul: Weyerhaeuser Forest Products, 1922), 29.

<sup>87</sup> Pitman, “A Survey of Nineteenth-Century Folk Housing in the Mormon Culture Region,” 91.

<sup>88</sup> Carter and Goss, *Utah’s Historic Architecture*, 31.

<sup>89</sup> Victor LeRoy Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, p. 2, M270.1 M685L, LDS Church History Library and Archives, Salt Lake City.

himself along from a meager existence in a small English village to playing an important and respected role in Wellsville. According to one Mormon historian, British converts to Mormonism came “mostly from the poorer classes who were worst hit by the European economic and social changes, migrat[ing] by the thousands to the arduous endeavor of building a Zion.”<sup>90</sup> This was to be Samuel’s lot.

Upon the Mitton family’s conversion to Mormonism, the missionaries encouraged Samuel’s father to travel to America where his work would earn the necessary funds to pay for passage to Utah much faster than in Middlestown, where they lived at the time. Mr. Mitton followed this advice, but failed to meet his objective when, on 27 September 1849, he died in Moose, Illinois, leaving his oldest sons, John and Samuel, the obligation of presiding over the family’s needs. The youngest Mitton son, William Crowther, recounted that “the family all got to work,” in order to earn enough money to send John and Samuel “over to America to get work and earn the money to bring the rest of the family over,” since his mother was especially “anxious to get to Utah.”<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, at the age of eighteen Samuel sailed to America with his older brother John, who promptly abandoned Samuel once they reached New York. Left as the sole provider for his widowed mother and five siblings back in England, Samuel traveled to Cincinnati where he found work at a machine shop, earning enough money for his family’s passage to America within eighteen months.<sup>92</sup>

The Mittons arrived in Boston in 1853 after an arduous voyage on a ship with 1600 other Mormon converts headed to Utah. Upon arrival in the United States, Hannah

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<sup>90</sup> Alan H. Grey, “Mormon Settlement in Its Global Context,” in *The Mormon Role in the Settlement of the West*, ed. Richard H. Jackson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 83.

<sup>91</sup> William C. Mitton, “A Sketch of My Life,” in *Utah Pioneer Biographies*, compiled by the Genealogical Society (Salt Lake City, 1947), 20:52.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, and Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 2.

sent a letter to Samuel and he arranged for the family's trip to Cincinnati. There, they worked for five years until, in 1858, they had secured the means to continue west, moving to St. Louis, Missouri where Samuel again found work to finance his family's westward migration. In the spring of 1859, the Mittons sailed up the Missouri River and a week later arrived in Florence where the Saints were gathering and preparing for the trek across the plains to Utah. Nearly six weeks later, the Mittons commenced their five month journey to Salt Lake City. In William's account of the crossing he explains that "there were seventy-five wagons in our train and all were poor, and had to be repaired quite often." By now, a man of great skill, capability, and experience, Samuel proved invaluable in keeping the wagon train moving along and in good spirits, despite the hardships of the voyage. William noted: "It surely was a hard journey. Some would murmur, and worry saying if they had known what a trial it was they would not have undertaken it but we traveled on and on . . . it was a very hot summer and many of the company died through the hardships." However, William also mentions the campfire singing and moonlit dances the family participated in to lift their spirits.<sup>93</sup>

In early October 1859, the family arrived in Salt Lake City and camped on the public square. In the spring of 1860, the Mittons (along with William Haslam, who soon after married one of Samuel's sisters) traveled for one week to reach Maughan's Fort. Noting the primitive conditions they encountered, William described the "twenty-four small long houses" as being "very crude, having no doors or windows or floors, and a dirt roof." Samuel built the family their own little cabin and in order to keep dry during storms, they fastened their wagon cover to the ceiling. The rudimentary situation of the family was quite harsh, requiring a specific type of person to not only persevere, but find

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<sup>93</sup> Mitton, "A Sketch of My Life," 54--7.

success. As Daniel Walters, another member of the community wrote: “nobody knows what hardship People have to go through only those that have had to do it.”<sup>94</sup>

While the family suffered (as many of their fellow fort dwellers did) from poverty and difficult conditions, the skills and determination of Samuel quickly allowed the family to gain comfort and prestige in the community. Shortly after the family’s arrival, Samuel met Mary Ann Bailey and on 25 December 1861, bishop William P. Maughan conducted their marriage ceremony in Wellsville.<sup>95</sup> The couple had five children; two of whom died as infants and a girl who was not Samuel’s daughter, but raised as such. Although Samuel had faced a life of hardships and demanding work, he was known in the community as “the epitome of kindness almost to the point of indulgence whenever his children were concerned.”<sup>96</sup> Professionally, Samuel Crowther Mitton, was a cabinet maker and carpenter, but was also highly skilled in making furniture, fashioning household conveniences such as butter boxes, and repairing tools, wagons, and practically anything made of wood. He built (or helped with the construction of) many of the houses in Wellsville, and taught his only son, Samuel Bailey Mitton, from a very early age the trade of cabinetmaking and carpentry. As told in a biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton, he “was carefully trained as a craftsman in carpentry and cabinet-making by his father. As a lad he worked at his side on projects as they developed.”<sup>97</sup>

As practicing Latter-day Saints, Samuel and Mary Ann were anxious for their family to travel to the Endowment House in Salt Lake City and be sealed (the Mormon religious ceremony that they believe binds a family together for all eternity). In

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<sup>94</sup> Joel E. Ricks, ed., *The History of a Valley: Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho* (Logan, UT: Cache Valley Centennial Commission, 1956), 38.

<sup>95</sup> Mitton, “A Sketch of My Life,” 58 and Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 35.

preparation for the trip, Samuel Crowther labored for several months, making butter boxes and special cabinets in order to attain the necessary funding for the trip, including the purchase of a pair of mules and a wagon. The family spent the first night in Ogden and reached Salt Lake City by the second evening. The next day, they participated in the religious ordinance and that evening attended the Salt Lake Theatre.<sup>98</sup> While Mitton was well-known for his remarkable skills as a carpenter and cabinetmaker he was also very talented musically. In 1860, he was a member of one of the first brass bands in the county and, as Charles Nibley recounted in 1915, during his second winter in Cache Valley (1861--1862), Mitton, along with three other men “organized a little theatrical company.” Nibley notes that as his family was still living in their dugout home, the productions were an enjoyable “step in the direction of culture,” also mentioning that Mitton lent him a book of Shakespeare’s plays.<sup>99</sup> Like his father, Samuel Bailey was also naturally musically inclined, and Samuel Crowther worked hard to provide opportunities for his son to develop his talents. For instance, during the entire summer of 1877, Samuel made butter boxes to earn the money necessary to purchase an organ from Daniel F. Beatty of Washington, New Jersey. He then taught his son the fundamentals of music as he could read music and play several instruments.<sup>100</sup> Samuel Bailey wrote in his journal: “there weren’t any music teachers in the valley at this time and my father copied, by hand, from old music books which he owned, which books contained four staves, for treble, alto, tenor, bass, all separate. He wrote two staves, one for treble and alto for the right hand and one for tenor and bass for the left hand. Thus I had a score I

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>99</sup> Somers, *History of Cache Valley*, 122 and Nibley, “Reminiscences of Charles W. Nibley,” (October 1934): 601.

<sup>100</sup> Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 67.

could play.”<sup>101</sup> In 1865, Samuel Crowther built a grand home in Wellsville with a small balcony above the front door, providing an ideal setting for social and musical gatherings, which benefitted the entire community (See Figure 5).<sup>102</sup>



Figure 5: Samuel Crowther Mitton and family in front of their home ca. 1890. Victor Le Roy Lindblad, *Biography of Samuel Bailey Mitton*, photo insert between pages 6 and 7.

A large home by the day’s standards, it faces north at 242 East Main Street.

Mitton’s home is a style known as “double pile” because it is two rooms deep.

Architectural historians recognize it as a “regional modification of the Georgian detached house, a type having two rooms on either side of a long central passage.” Under a hipped-roof and a second story, the main floor contains a long central passage that originally divided it into two rooms, with the west one partitioned. A rear addition was

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>102</sup> Wellsville History Committee, *Windows of Wellsville*, 620.

added in the twentieth century so the central passage no longer runs through the entire house. According to Utah architectural historians Thomas Carter and Peter Goss, Mitton's "clapboarded box-frame house is unusual in Utah, where different types of masonry construction dominated building."<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, they assert that the true Georgian form was not employed in Utah at all, accentuating the point that Mitton drew from his background and previous building experience to construct his home since the "Georgian style was . . . distinctly English." In fact, Georgian styles were so assimilated into the English architectural vernacular in the nineteenth century that they became essential components of the training of every craftsman, designer, builder, carpenter, and mason.<sup>104</sup>

In England, the Georgian period began in 1702 and flourished until 1830. Georgian architecture reflects both the climate and landscape of England since wood was "the traditional building material" and the northern climate dictated that the roofs be steeply pitched, with the eaves generally having little overhang. Externally, the houses are simply rectangular blocks, with geometry determining their basic proportions, and exhibiting minimal ornamentation. A common urban house design that developed in eighteenth-century England, it became very popular as a rural house plan and continued to be built into the twentieth century to the extent that "the Georgian plan and its derivatives were the most widely employed vernacular forms."<sup>105</sup> Easily the dominant architectural style of Mitton's childhood, it is natural that its image juxtaposed onto his

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<sup>103</sup> Carter and Goss, *Utah's Historic Architecture*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> Ralph W. Hammett, *Architecture in the United States: A Survey of Architectural Styles Since 1776* (New York: Wiley, 1976), 3 and *Georgian Architecture*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian\\_architecture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_architecture) (accessed 16 April 2008).

<sup>105</sup> Whitehead, *Good Houses*, 27, 35; Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture 1607--1976* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 4, 54; Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism," 131, quote on 133.















































