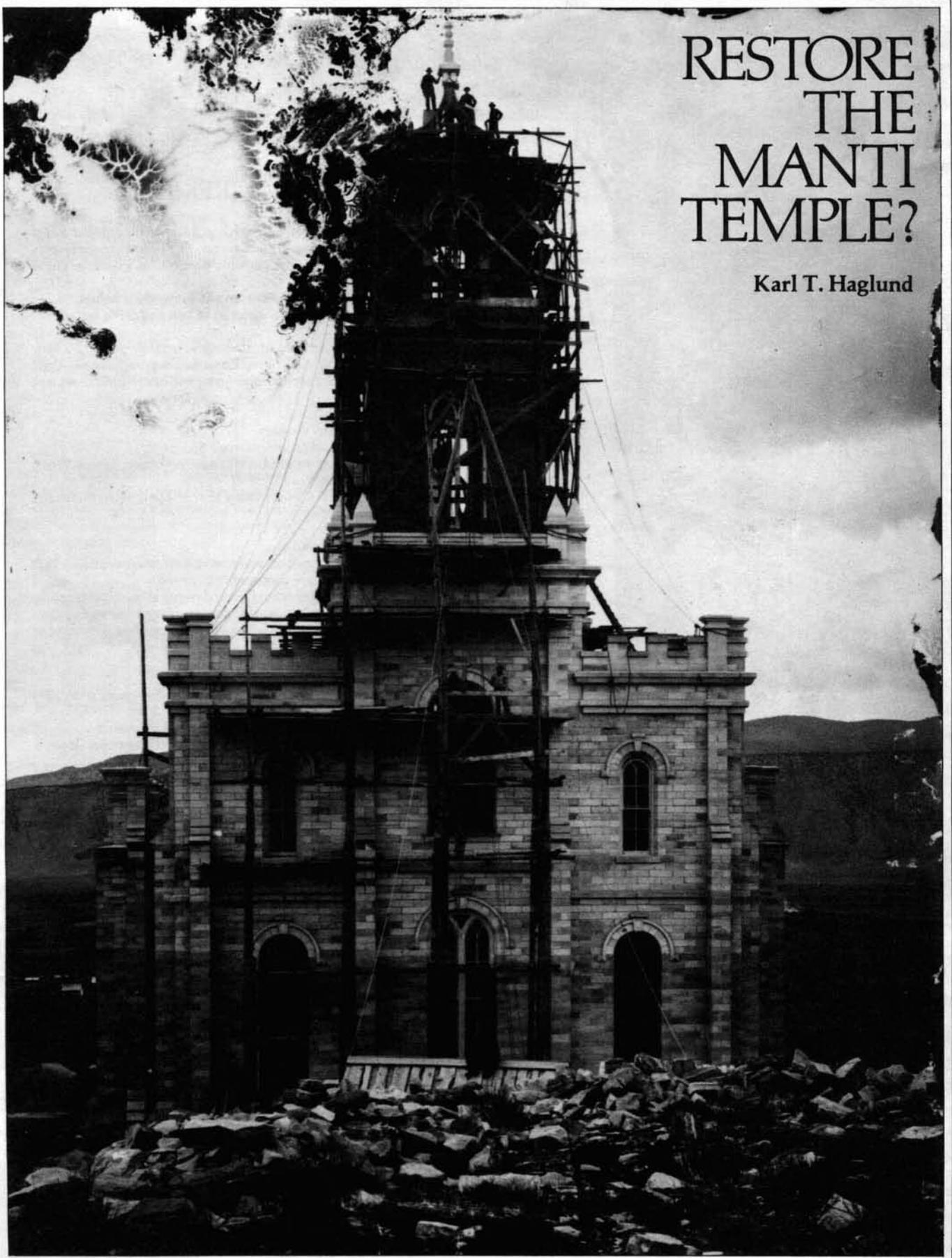


# RESTORE THE MANTI TEMPLE?

Karl T. Haglund



*Manti Temple under construction, 1886*

When the First Presidency of the church announced in 1975 that the Bountiful Tabernacle would be preserved, they said:

We feel . . . that because of its deep attachment to our sacred pioneer heritage, the Bountiful Tabernacle is the legacy and responsibility also of others beyond the Bountiful Utah Stake. It is a cherished treasure of the entire church.

We express both gratitude and commendation to many, many people both within and without the church who have volunteered to contribute time, funds and energy in an effort to preserve this edifice.<sup>1</sup>

The Bountiful Tabernacle was one of several restoration projects undertaken by the Church during the last twenty years. Others included the Beehive and Lion Houses and the old Council Hall in Salt Lake City, the Provo Tabernacle, and a number of historic building restorations and recreations in Nauvoo.

Attitudes toward old Church buildings, though, are not simple. During those same years, the Ogden and Coalville Tabernacles were demolished, and numerous ward buildings throughout Utah and Idaho came down. The St. George, Mesa, Hawaii, and Logan temples were substantially altered and remodeled.

In an unpublished paper presented at the Brigham Young University Law School in 1976, Craig Call concluded that "the frustration of many concerned with preservation comes with the uncertainty prompted by the seeming contradictions between varying church actions. A general policy . . . covering a specified group of buildings determined by consultation with historical groups, would eliminate much of the misunderstanding and apprehension."<sup>2</sup>

Although such a policy has not been announced, the proposed remodeling of the Manti Temple represents a unique opportunity for the Church to restore one of its most significant landmarks. For a relatively modest expenditure, the few required changes could be made and the temple could be restored, rather than drastically remodeled, as a reaffirmation of the faith of its builders.

During the last four years, the Church has undertaken major repairs or remodeling of the St. George, Mesa, Hawaii, and Logan temples. The most recent project was the construction of "a new building inside the old one"<sup>3</sup> at the Logan Temple, at a cost of about eight million dollars. (For comparison, the Provo and Ogden temples, built in 1972, cost \$4,000,000 each; the new Jordan River Temple, three years of inflation after the Logan remodeling, is estimated to cost about fourteen million.) Each of the remodeled temples has been adapted for the use of the filmed presentation of the endowment ceremony.

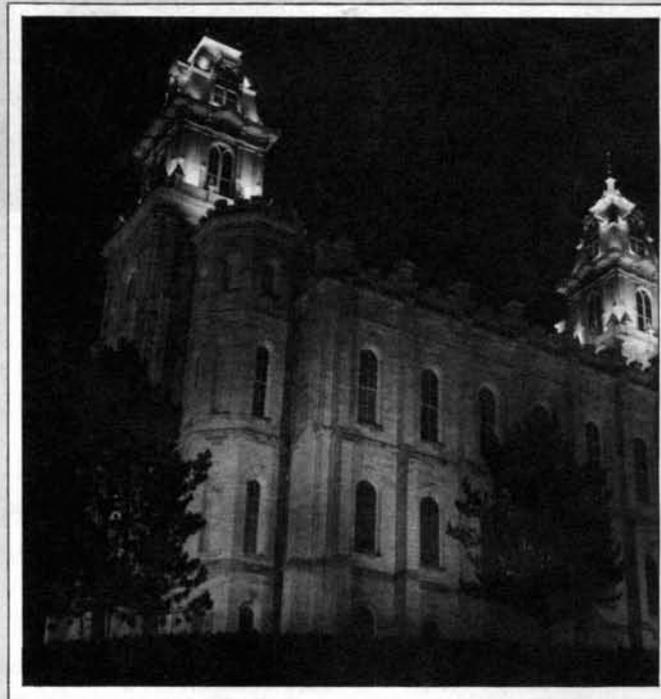
Original plans indicated that the Manti Temple would also be renovated to accommodate the filmed endowment ceremony. It was recently announced that the live endowment presentation would be retained and that the original endowment and sealing rooms would not be altered. Some unspecified functional changes, including an elevator and new sealing rooms, may be made.

The Manti Temple is a unique opportunity for the following reasons. First, the restoration of the Manti

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Temple would be relatively inexpensive—much less costly, for example, than the reconstruction of the Logan Temple. The changes made to the Manti Temple have been few, and there are a number of areas in the building which are now under-utilized. Even the annex to the temple, although added to sometime after the turn of the century, retains much of the original structure. The famous spiral staircase, now blocked off by the arrangement of the first floor, could be made functional again by a relatively simple change in the floor plan.

Second, because of the very slow population growth in central Utah, there is not the need for greatly expanded facilities in Manti that there was with other temples. (It has been suggested that new sealing rooms be built in an exterior addition to Manti. The reason the old sealing rooms are often busy in Manti, though, is because they are so exquisitely crafted—many members who normally go to Provo for their regular temple work choose to drive the extra distance to Manti for marriages and other special sealing sessions. Building new sealing rooms would not reduce the number of people who want to be married in the old sealing rooms.) Most of the growth of the Church in the Manti Temple district is in Denver, which suggests that money which might earlier have been assigned for remodeling Manti could go instead for a temple in Denver or another, more central location.



Manti Temple Today

Finally, the Manti Temple is perhaps second only to the Salt Lake Temple in historic and architectural significance.<sup>4</sup> While several of the other temples have been altered at various times, the Manti Temple is virtually unchanged since its dedication.

What would be involved in a temple restoration? The crucial decision is determining the architectural attitude toward the building. Restoring a building should mean that the contemporary design methods and tastes are set aside, so that the philosophy and style of the original builders can be followed. It seems clear that the builders of the early



Manti Temple, 1888

Utah temples intended that the temple grounds, as well as the building itself, be set apart as sacred space. The half dozen parking spaces and the asphalt on the east side of the Manti Temple annex could be replaced with appropriate landscaping to reemphasize the sacred character of the grounds. (Wouldn't our pioneer ancestors be disappointed to see us parking right next to the temple because we didn't want to walk a few extra steps? Providing ready access for those who genuinely need it does not mean that the rest of us couldn't walk from nearby parking lots.) *There should be a clear separation of the temple from the world, visually as well as spiritually.*

Restoration would also mean a "minimalist" approach to functional changes (which is more economical as well as architecturally more pleasing). If an elevator, for example, is to be added, it would be determined that the addition to the building be as small as possible—instead of deciding that since an elevator addition is necessary anyway, the addition might as well include stairs and hallways.

Can the restoration of the Manti Temple be justified? Economic considerations alone would suggest that an extensive remodeling is unnecessary.

More important, the beauty and historical integrity of the Manti Temple place it with only a handful of Church buildings. It is a unique witness to the faith of its builders in the efficacy of the temple. Those who go there cannot be unmoved by the enormous devotion that is reflected in the

craftsmanship of the building. The architecture of the Manti Temple is not more important than the temple work done there—but the beauty of the building serves to uplift and magnify the spirit of the temple endowment.

At the dedication of an addition to the Bountiful Tabernacle in 1957, President David O. McKay spoke of the power in maintaining ties to our past:

This house becomes more than just a house of worship. It is a monument, a link in the golden chain uniting the present with the past. It is only a means to an end, and that end is the development of character, . . . instilling testimonies of God's existence. . . .<sup>5</sup>

#### Notes

1. *Deseret News*, March 14, 1975.
2. Craig M. Call, "Architectural Treasure or Sacred Cow: Historic Preservation and the Mormon Church," unpublished paper, Brigham Young University Law School, April 8, 1976, pp. 33-34. Call's paper presents evidence and conclusions which contradict the arguments developed by Mark Leone in "Why the Coalville Tabernacle had to be Razed," *Dialogue* 7:2 (Summer 1973), 30-39.
3. *Church News*, March 24, 1979.
4. The Alberta Temple, the landmark of early twentieth century Church architecture, is considered by architectural historians to be as historically and architecturally significant as the Manti Temple, although it is unfamiliar to most Church members.
5. Quoted in Call, p. 13.