

A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Cedar City



EARLY CHURCH HISTORY A short time after reaching Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1847, Brigham Young began sending out colonization parties in every direction. In late 1849, Apostle Parley P. Pratt confirmed the existence of rich veins of iron ore in the Cedar valley. In 1851, Apostle George A. Smith led a group of settlers south, hoping to mine the ore and end the dependence on eastern iron products. The hardworking pioneers built strong communities in both Parowan and Cedar City. In the 1850s, a southern Indian Mission was established in the area, and many Paiutes, the original occupants of the land, were baptized into the Church.

Early Church members met in two different log houses and then in Social Hall, which was built in 1861. The first meetinghouse to be built by the Church in Cedar City was the Cedar City Tabernacle. Though construction efforts began several years earlier, due to the labor needed to construct the St. George Temple, the tabernacle wasn't officially completed until 1885. The tabernacle remained in use for 47 years until 1932, when it was sold to make room for a new United States Post Office (the present-day city office). The funds from the sale of the tabernacle were used to build the historic Rock Church chapel, which still features

original iron and mosaics from its pioneer past and is a popular tourist destination today.

CHURCH GROWTH Only one small congregation existed in Cedar City until 1908, when the city's population neared 1,700. In 1948, as Cedar's population approached 6,000, the first permanent Cedar Stake was organized with 6,143 members and included additional surrounding areas (a stake is a geographical grouping of multiple congregations, comparable to a diocese). Since then, the population of Church membership in the area has steadily grown.

CHURCH AND THE COMMUNITY TODAY From the beginning, commitment to family, religion, the arts and education were an important part of the community. In 1897, the State Normal School (University of Utah) opened a branch in Cedar City. After many years as a four-year liberal arts college, the school became Southern Utah University in 1991.

With the arrival of a major rail line through town in 1923 and the designation of many national parks nearby, Cedar City also became known as the "gateway to the parks." It is also known as "Festival City, USA" and is a community dedicated to supporting cultural and art events. These educational and cultural opportunities continually bring



more people to Cedar City and the surrounding areas. The Church also continues to grow in the area. Church membership in Cedar City now numbers 21,481.

In the April 2013 general conference of the Church, President Thomas S. Monson

announced that a temple would be built in Cedar City. The Cedar City Utah Temple will serve members from 17 stakes in southern Utah and eastern Nevada. The new Cedar City Utah Temple will serve approximately 45,000 people living in the area.