Chapter 2 1892 - 1900

Brigham Young University - Founder’s Day - 1900
Introduction

Karl G. Maeser retired as principal of the Brigham Young Academy on January 4, 1892, the same day that the Studentbody marched from the Z.C.M.I. Warehouse to their new Academy Building one mile to the north. During the 17 years he directed the affairs of this school, the enrollment increased from 29 in 1875 (White and Blue, “Homes of the School,” N.L. Nelson, Vol. II No. 1, Provo, Utah: BYU Studentbody, 1907, pp. 405. BYU Archives), to 275 in 1892 (BYU Enrollment Resume, Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research, Sept. 1971. BYU Archives). They were now established in a building of their own, designed and built for educational purposes.

The following eight years, under the guidance of Benjamin Cluff, Jr., were years of continued growth. Several significant events took place during his term in office. Brigham Young’s heirs relinquished their authority to a new Board of Trustees, the L.D.S. Church assumed ownership of Brigham Young Academy, and the Academy became a University (J.M. Jensen, History of Brigham Young University, Unpublished Manuscript, 1942, pp. 98, 42, and 48. BYU Archives).

He served until April 17, 1900, when he left to lead an exploring expedition to Mexico and South America. George H. Brimhall became Acting President in his absence and continued on in this capacity until his return in 1902. Later President Cluff left the University; and on April 16, 1904, George H. Brimhall was officially appointed President of what was by that time the Brigham Young University (Newbern I. Butt and T. Earl Pardoe, Brigham Young Alumnus, “In This Brief Span,” 1965, Provo, Utah. BYU Archives).

Personnel

As in the past, a faculty member was usually made responsible for maintenance of the building. J.B. Keeler, a faculty member, was appointed custodian in 1894 (Faculty Minutes, September 6, 1894, p.101 BYU Archives). Janitors and firemen were hired to do the actual work of cleaning of rooms and firing the many coal stoves, under the supervision of the custodian. The Faculty Minutes of February 5, 1895, read, “Custodian reported that the fireman could not attend properly to the fire [needs] in the Academy and the Probert Hall at the same time. The Custodian was instructed to secure another fireman.”
Later that same year, “President Cluff reported relative to the Mechanical Department that Mr. Higgs had been engaged as assistant fireman and assistant in the Mechanical Department” (Faculty Minutes, October 8, 1895).

Apparently, Brother Keeler did not continue for very many years as custodian. The faculty Minutes of October 18, 1898, page 15 state that Brother L. E. Eggertsen was released as custodian and Brother Brigham T. Higgs was approved as custodian and head janitor.

Besides having a knowledge of boilers, Brother Higgs was a master mechanic and an excellent carpenter and finisher of fine wood, having learned his skill from his father, Thomas, who was Brigham Young’s private carpenter. He spent his spare time doing repair jobs and cabinet work for the school. His ability was soon recognized and he was asked to assist in teaching woodwork along with his other duties (Emma Higgs Wakefield, Life Sketch of Brigham Thomas Higgs).

B.T. Higgs had an interest in young men and did all he could to help them develop mechanical skills by employing them to do repair and construction work for the Academy (Karl A. Miller, Carpenter under B.T. Higgs). At this time, all the crafts were under his direct supervision making it unnecessary to establish individual shops for each craft (Faculty Minutes #7, Aug. 1898- June 1902, p. 15. BYU Archives).
Campus

In 1892 the campus of the Brigham Young Academy consisted of one city block with one building on it and few, if any, trees. An entry in the Faculty Minutes of February 18, 1896, reads, “It was decided to have the students gravel the sidewalks and renovate the building on February 29.” On March 5, 1896, a statement is made in the Minutes as follows: “It was decided to finish the work of graveling the sidewalks.” Trees were to be planted along the sidewalks and on the campus east of the building, and soil was to be hauled west of the building so that lawn could be planted (Faculty Minutes, April 21, 1896, BYU Archives). Again on April 28, 1896, it was reported that 146 trees were planted and several loads of soil had been hauled. It was reported in the April 19, 1898, Faculty Minutes that 34 trees were planted on Arbor Day. Planks were used for walks leading from the building to the southwest and to the southeast in 1898 (Faculty Minutes November 22, 1898, p. 22, BYU Archives).

Buildings

Probert Building

Enrollment at the Brigham Young Academy continued to increase making classroom space a constant problem. The Probert Building, located on the northwest corner of Fifth North and University Avenue, was used for classroom and laboratory purposes for a number of years. Faculty Minutes tell the story:

More room was necessary and it was reported to “secure the Probert Building” to add to the space necessary for the students (Faculty Minutes, January 10, 1895, p. 111, BYU Archives).

“It was decided to change recitation rooms for Physical Culture, the class to go to the Probert Hall” (Faculty Minutes, November 26, 1895, BYU Archives).

Mention is made of this building in the White and Blue 12 years later in 1907. The announcement was made that art, designing, pen and ink drawing, watercolor and oil painting were conducted there, and that the Millinery Department also had a room in Probert Building, also referred to as the “Manual Arts Building” (White and Blue, November 5, 1907, pp. 42-43).
When the Missionary and Prepartory Departments were discontinued in 1908, part of the building they had been meeting in later called the Arts Building located on the northwest corner of the Lower Campus block, was remodeled for the Art Department, which was then housed in the Probert Building. Professor Eastmond reported the move of the Art Department from the Probert Building to the Arts Building in the *White and Blue*, February 12, 1908, page 147.

The Brigham Young University did not own the Probert Building during the first few years they used it. According to records in the Utah County Recorder’s Office, the Brigham Young University purchased it October 1, 1907, and then sold it five years later on September 7, 1912. Since that time it went through several hands and several uses from restaurant to dairy. Finally, in 1966, it was remodeled into a retail outlet for Harmon’s Kentucky Fried Chicken.
Central (Eldridge) Building - 1896

In the Faculty Meeting of May 21, 1896, it was reported that space in the Academy Building was so limited that it would be necessary to move the Primary School to the “new Central Building by the Post Offices” (*Faculty Minutes #6, President’s Report, May 21, 1896, p. 163. BYU Archives*). Two years later in another President’s Report, “Practically, we are denied the privileges of the general library since being located in the Central Building” (*Faculty Minutes #6, p. 218. BYU Archives*). It appears to have been used for at least four years, or to 1900 (*Faculty Minutes #7, p. 51 BYU Archives*).

According to Sterling Taylor, a life-long resident of Provo, the Central Building was located on the southeast corner of First North and University Avenue (Interview with Sterling Taylor by Karl Miller, October 12, 1973, Provo, Utah).

Margaret P. Maw, a teacher at the time in the Central Building, tells of going to the upper floors of this building for classwork (*Memoirs of Margaret P. Maw*, October 28, 1955, BYU Archives).

Looking southeast from 1st North on University Avenue. Central Building on the corner in the center of the photograph.

Looking north from Center Street up Academy Avenue, later called University Avenue. Central building on center-right of picture. The bank building on the left of the picture was owned by A. O. Smoot, and housed the Academy for a short time after the Lewis Building fire in 1884. The tower was added sometime after the fire and before this picture was taken.

*Buildings 1892 - 1900*
The Provo Meetinghouse is seen on the extreme left, with the Provo Tabernacle next to it in the center of the picture.

The Provo Tabernacle, originally called the Utah Stake Tabernacle, is located on the west side of University Avenue between Center Street and First South. It was built by the Saints of Utah Valley at a time when money was difficult to obtain. Fifteen years, from 1883 to 1898, were required for its construction, largely because of financial limitations.

This building figures prominently in Brigham Young University history. The following quotations, by permission, from an excellent history of this building titled “Tale of Two Tabernacles” by N. LaVerl Christensen, summarizes some of the important BYU functions and incidents that took place there.
Provo Tabernacle

Provo Tabernacle, construction completed in 1898. The center tower was removed in 1917

Interior of the Provo Tabernacle as it would have been set up for a lyceum such as a string quartet.

Church events – mostly stake conferences – have dominated the Tabernacle use, of course. Brigham Young University commencement exercises were held in the edifice from 1900 to 1940, according to research by Newbern I. Butt of the BYU library staff. For a long time exercises began at the Education building and students marched to the Tabernacle in procession.

From 1900 to 1945 the Tabernacle was used for lyceums and musical programs of wide appeal. A few of the artists and programs featured during those years: Violinist Fritz Kreisler, Pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff, Baritone Paul Robeson, Soprano Bidu Sayao, the Minneapolis Symphony (1918), Metropolitan Quartet (1916), Christmas Oratorio (1921), vocalist Emma Lucy Gates (1923), the Bach Festival (1934), and Religious Pageants (1935).

An anecdote concerning the famous Rachmaninoff’s Tabernacle appearance is frequently told. He was here during the era of the old Salt Lake & Utah Railroad. Playing one of his own concertos with much gusto before an enraptured audience, the great one suddenly heard the rumble of the approaching electric train. He ceased playing in the middle of a “rest,” held

Buildings 1892 - 1900
31
hands in midair in a long pause until the noisy car had passed, then crashed down on the next note and continued his performance.

The United States Navy Band played a few concerts in the Tabernacle under Provo Chamber of Commerce sponsorship. The Chamber also sponsored the BYU Military Band led by the late Robert Sauer a number of times, always being sure to include on the program the maestro’s own “Springtime in the Rockies” by request.

Experiences in this memorable old building range from the sublime to the ridiculous. J.J. Keeler, University organist since 1935 and grandson of Joseph B. Keeler, relates the following story told to him by A.B. Simmons, a Tabernacle custodian. After an organ concert by John J. McClellan, who was at the time the Salt Lake Tabernacle organist, a woman expressed to Brother Simmons how pleased she was with the way the organist played the bells of the organ. Actually there were no bells or chimes on that organ at the time, (about 1922). What she heard was the bell on the Orem interurban railroad. When the train went past the Tabernacle, Brother McClellan did not stop playing. The train bell only added to the beauty of the music for some people.

The Provo Tabernacle was used frequently by the Brigham Young University up until the completion of the Joseph Smith Building in 1941 (Inventory of Buildings, Space Utilization Office, BYU) which has an auditorium in it.

Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young Academy

A military post was established in 1872 at the mouth of Beaver Canyon in southwestern Utah about halfway between Fillmore and Cedar City. It was first called “Post of Beaver,” but was changed May 12, 1873, to Fort Cameron (Utah Historical Quarterly, Fall 1964, Vol. 32 Number 4, “The Utah Military Frontier, 1872-1912, Fort Cameron, Thornbough and Dudresue,” by Thomas G. Alexander and Leonard J. Arrington, pp. 333-334). It consisted of over 20 well-constructed stone buildings surrounding a ten acre drill ground. An additional 240 acres of adjacent farm land was included in this military site (The Murdock Academy Circular and Announcements for 14th Academic Year, 1911-12, published by the Murdock Academy, Beaver City, Utah, p.11). In 1883 the enlisted men and officers were moved to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City. John R. Murdock, President of the Beaver Stake, and Philo T. Farnsworth, former bishop of the Beaver Ward, purchased the land and buildings for $15,000 and held it for the L.D.S. Church (Utah Historical Quarterly, Fall 1964, Vol. 32 Number 4, “The Utah Military Frontier, 1872-1912, Fort Cameron, Thornbough and Dudresue,” by Thomas G. Alexander and Leonard J. Arrington, p. 338).

In 1898 Fort Cameron was converted into a branch of the Brigham Young Academy of Provo (Utah Historical Quarterly, Fall 1964, Vol. 32 Number 4, “The Utah Military Frontier, 1872-1912, Fort Cameron, Thornbough and Dudresue,”

Buildings 1892 - 1900

32
by Thomas G. Alexander and Leonard J. Arrington, p. 338). It was agreed that the people of Beaver would contribute $1,200 and the people of Provo would contribute $1,000 annually for ten years toward the support of this school. After that time the Church would take it over (White and Blue, an address by R. Maeser, October 1907, pp. 188-191. BYU Archives).

In 1908, the Church assumed full control of the school and it was renamed the Murdock Academy. This, of course, was the end of the history of the Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young Academy. The school continued on; and in 1922 when Utah State Legislature required each county to maintain tuition-free high schools, the L.D.S. Church discontinued the Academy (Utah Historical Quarterly, Fall 1964, Vol. 32 Number 4, “The Utah Military Frontier, 1872-1912, Fort Cameron, Thornbough and Dudresue,” by Thomas G. Alexander and Leonard J. Arrington, p. 339)
The College Building as seen from the corner of Fifth North and First East looking northwest. The Academy or High School Building is seen on the left side of the picture, and the Training Building, which was built in 1902, is seen on the right.
As the importance of education increased, emphasis was placed on a four-year college term leading to a degree. Enrollments increased and the need for another building became urgent. The Church was unable to respond financially when asked by President Cluff for funds to construct an additional building. Reed Smoot, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, took the matter into his own hands and offered to secure a contribution of $1,000 from each of ten individuals. The final cost of the building was in excess of the estimated $10,000, but Reed Smoot made up the difference by increasing his donation to cover the cost. Each of the following individuals contributed $1,000: Wilford Woodruff, George Q. Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Reed Smoot, Jesse Knight, Charles Edwin Loose, Alfred William McCune, Amanda Inez Knight, Stephen L. Chipman, and Jesse William Knight (J. M. Jensen, History of Brigham Young University, Unpublished Manuscript, 1942, pp. 104-105. BYU Archives).

The Alumni Association and the faculty donated the tablet armchairs and settees. Faculty members were asked to use part of their vacation to interest people in education and to aid in raising money for the equipment of the new building (Faculty Minutes #6. Jan. 1892- May 1898, pp. 247 and 256. BYU Archives). On May 26, 1898, President Joseph F. Smith dedicated this structure which was located east of the Academy (Education) Building. It has been known as the College Building over the years. The large room on the upper floor, referred to as College Hall, was remodeled several times in subsequent years to adapt it for dramatic performances as well. The east portion of this room was not a stage originally, but a raised platform for faculty and speakers. North of this raised platform were seats for the choir (Banyan, 1911, p. 168. BYU Student body publication. BYU Archives). College Hall had been constructed with a flat floor, making visibility very poor from most parts of the room. Increased activities and plays that were staged there demanded better site lines.

A sloping floor was designed in 1930 by architect Joseph Nelson. The hallway outside College hall had three steps going into Room D. The floor was raised to this level, the floor sloped down to the stage in the auditorium. It was at this time the stage itself was enlarged, new electrical equipment was added, and Celetex was put on the ceiling. This construction was done under the direction of B.T. Higgs, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, assisted by William H. Snell and students, Lynn Wakefield, Nephi Christensen, and Roland Olson (Lynn Wakefield).

Some time after 1919 when T. Earl Pardoe became head of the Dramatic Arts Department, the stage was enlarged and the choir seats removed. Later on, the stage was enlarged again and the sides were used for “props” storage. This made the entire east portion of College Hall available for Drama production, eliminating the necessity of using the

Buildings 1892 - 1900
35
Columbia Theater in Provo for drama productions (Kathryn B. Pardoe, Dramatic Arts, BYU, interview by Karl A. Miller, Provo Utah).

A projection box was made for stage lighting effects. It was in front of the stage and could be lowered from the attic down through the ceiling of College Hall. It was large enough for a man to sit and operate the lights for the stage. A much larger projection booth was made later in the west hall above the College Hall doors. It was used for projection of Motion Pictures as well as lighting effect for the stage (Karl A. Miller, Building and Grounds, BYU).

A new ventilation system was added to the building. The lower floor ceiling was lowered and the space used as an air plenum. No air ducts were made to the band room because of noise. Two large air plenums were run from the fan room to the west end of College Hall so that during assemblies, all the air from the fan could be diverted in that direction. A large fan was put in the northwest room with outside louvers for fresh air and large radiators for heating.

The College Building had been constructed without restroom facilities. No space seemed to be available with the building. An outside location for a building addition was suggested to President F. S. Harris by Karl A. Miller. Two lavatories with cloak rooms were built, the women’s on the south and the men’s on the north. A supply room was made under each restroom, making these rooms the same level as the second floor (Constructed by Karl A. Miller, under direction of B.T. Higgs, Superintendent Buildings and Grounds).

The Bookstore or student supply once occupied the northwest rooms of the lower floor.

During the summer of 1934, a used pipe organ was installed in College Hall. The organ had been purchased from the Crest (Uinta) Theater in Provo by Professor J. M. Jensen, grandfather or J. J. Keeler, University Organist (The Y News, Vol. 14, 1934-35. Sept. 1935, p.1).
Utilities

The Academy Building on Fifth North and University Avenue had some electric lights. However, there couldn’t have been very many as we read in the Faculty Minutes of March 9, 1892.

Brother Isgreen, custodian, reported that the bill, submitted by the electric light company, was incorrect as all the light that the Academy could possibly have used, counting the hours, would have cost only $5.80 for February, whereas the bill submitted was $19.75. The bill was referred back to Brother Isgreen for investigation (Faculty Minutes #6, Jan. 1892- May 1898, p. 10, BYU archives).

As a matter of interest, the electric bill for Brigham Young University for the month of February 1973 was $59,276 (Physical Plant Department Electric shop).

An article in the White and Blue December 15, 1899, gives more evidence that electric lights were not in all rooms.

The professor and students of Chemistry are very much in need of electric lights. Now that days are short, and often cloudy, it is inconvenient to work after 4 o’clock. If electric lights were placed in the laboratory, it would aid greatly in the experimental work. A few days ago, Professor Brown was performing a very difficult experiment and in order to complete it he had to resort to a tallow candle for light! We hope this matter will be at once taken in hand (White and Blue, Vol. 3 No. 3, Provo, Utah: BYU Studentbody, 1899, p. 51. BYU Archives).

In a Faculty Meeting April 2, 1895, Professor Cluff reported that Room “C” of the Academy Building had been furnished with a stove, electric lights, etc.

An article in the White and Blue, November 15, 1898, page 9, refers to room lighting with a bit of humor. It was the Founder’s Day Ball when the lights were blinked to warn the students that it was nearing 12 p.m. and time to go home. They delayed to the last minute, then rushed to the cloak room for wraps about the same time the lights went out. This dance was very likely held in College Hall before the seats had been permanently installed.

The Academy Building had no bell in the belfry for the first few years. The Faculty Minutes of September 10, 1895, gives a good description of how the class change problem was solved during that time. “Classes were to dismiss at the first ring of the triangle, but students could return to work five minutes after the ringing of the second triangle if the teacher was not present.”