

A GREAT BLOSSOMING

A History of the Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in OKLAHOMA

3rd Edition

Compiled and Written by Hal Pierce

Anyone with historical information about the rise of the Church is invited to share that information by sending it to this website and it will be added. Thanks.

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Editions

The 2nd edition includes nine extra pages of the early Church History in Oklahoma, and an additional Branch called Leader. Also, a 1918 Church Conference in Oklahoma City under the direction of President Samuel O. Bennion was added.

The 3rd edition added a history of Lyman Wight's influence on the Church in Oklahoma.

Church Genesis Commentary

I have been blessed to have closely observed the beginnings of the Gospel in three areas. About 1950 I was in northeast Kansas City Missouri when a small Branch was formed there.

In September 1955 I was in Fayetteville Arkansas to see the beginnings of the Church there as a small group was organized into a Branch with Al Davis as the Branch President. They met in the Blue Room of the old Student Union building.

Later I was the Branch President in Fayetteville when land for a new building was purchased on Zion Road. The name Zion came from a small Zion Baptist Church that was at the end of the dirt road. Property the Branch owned in Bentonville and Springdale was then sold.

In early 1969 I was called as a Counselor to President Earl Carson when the new Ft. Smith Arkansas District was formed prior to it becoming a Stake.

Then in February 1971 I was in Edmond Oklahoma to see the start of the Edmond Branch. From there I was aware of much of the progress of the Church in all of Oklahoma.

In May 1988 I moved to Norman and became intimately familiar with the Norman people and its history.

It has been a thrill to observe this great growth of the Church and spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "Insofar as the people of this Church is concerned, without a knowledge of (the roots of this work) and faith in the validity of those roots, we don't have anything."

Hal Pierce

DEFINITIONS AND INTRODUCTION

This history is intended to be a short summary of activities involved in bringing the Church into existence in all of Oklahoma except the panhandle area, which was almost never in the same Church Missions as the larger part. It is not possible to reconstruct all the many events that have occurred or name all the people involved.

Definitions/Notes

Church – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Early – Dates generally from the 1840s to about 1980 with some obvious exceptions after 1980.

Note 1: It is assumed that the reader is aware of the common acronyms and terms used in Church vernacular.

Note 2: Many times spouse names are given in parenthesis with a husband or wife.

Note 3: A more thorough explanation of Church changes, events, and sacrifices are given with the Norman history and is not repeated with each individual Church unit.

Sources

Sources include the “Church Almanac”; “Spencer W. Kimball”, by Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Bookcraft 1979; “Elva Jacobson accumulated minutes,”; “A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Eastern Oklahoma,” by, Bingham, Blamires, Laster and Read; “Autobiography of James Alfred Cullimore,” 1982; “Polygamy on the Pedernales” by Melvin C. Johnson, Utah State University Press 2006; BYU Thesis, “The Indian Territory Mission”, by Wesley R. Law, 1959; “History of Mormonism” by the Mormon History Association; Wikipedia; Church Archives; “A Book Of Mormons”, by Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, Signature Books 1982; “Life of Archibald Gardner” by Delila Gardner Hughes, page 133, Alpine Publishing, October 1939; and various individual histories of some locations.

Introduction

The efforts of Church Archives missionaries in Salt Lake City such as Elder Donald W. Quass, Elder Clemence Parkin, Sister Marilyn Orme and Elder Curtis Allen and Sister Elaine F. Allen were extremely helpful to this writing.

During 1997, Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie organized a committee for the purpose of researching and writing the history of the Church in Norman as well as the early history of the Church in Oklahoma. It is because of his, and the committee's efforts that much of the Norman history has been available for this writing. Their activity was the stimulus for the creation of this history. Appreciation is given to Elder Gillespie for his insights and suggestions.

The history of the Edmond Branch that I wrote in 1980 was expanded and the Norman history collected by Marge and Leroy Land was used in the writing.

The inspiration and direction of Norman Stake President Robert C. Keyes is greatly appreciated as he encouraged me to include the history of all of Oklahoma.

I express much gratitude to my wonderful wife Gwen for her support, patience and love while my mind was buried for many days in this work.

I alone am responsible for any errors, opinions or negligence.

Individuals and families who may have written histories of the central Oklahoma area may include Dean Anderson (Margarette), F. Conover Jacobson (Elva) and William Waldrop (Barbara), but I do not have access to these possible writings. Florence Killcrease of Ada has published a history of the Church in that area and I have a portion of it.

Many people have developed their histories to the "box stage" but did not go beyond that because of other demands for their time.

During early 1980 I began looking, as the Oklahoma City Physical Facilities Director, for the property that the Yukon Ward building and Temple now sits on. While spending many months looking around Yukon, the land in Surrey Hills was recommended to me by Ronald Phelps (Vickie) whose family were the only members living in the Surrey Hills area at that time. I had also asked Don Gilbert (Wanda) to help me look for this property.

During 1986 as Physical Facilities Director in the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake I took Stake President Rodger Duncan (Rean) to a property that was for sale southeast of the Quail Springs Mall and recommended purchase of the property for a future Church site. However, shortly afterwards property was purchased in Guthrie and a building was started there. I believe my action in taking him to the original site triggered his action in Guthrie but he never explained it.

This decision to place a building in Guthrie has required sacrifice on the part of some Edmond members who were asked to drive to Guthrie for meetings. Even now (2007) some members who live immediately north of the downtown area of Edmond are assigned to a Guthrie Ward and the Stillwater Stake.

During the early 1980s Rodger Duncan served on a committee that recommended to Church leaders that the statement “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” be added to the cover of the Book of Mormon.

Thousands of people have come and gone while contributing to the Church since the Branches first came into existence and it is not possible to name them all or their sacrifices and work. However the Lord knows their names, and their efforts on His behalf, and they will be rewarded by Him.

Now that Stakes, Church buildings, a Bishop’s Storehouse, two Mission Headquarters, strong Institute and Seminary capabilities and a Temple are in Oklahoma it is difficult to fully appreciate what brought them into existence.

It truly is a miracle that God would give His children agency, leave them subject to the buffetings of Satan, give them the challenges and adversities of taming and propagating the world around them and still get results as has been seen here. The Holy Ghost was certainly at work.

The first counsel the Lord gave the Saints in His appearance on the American Continent was that “there shall be no disputations among you”, (3 Nephi 11:22). In some cases this advice from Him was not heeded in some of the Church units in Oklahoma and divisions occurred that stymied the growth of the unit for a time.

He also warned, “as soon as (almost all men) get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion”, (D&C 121:39). Priesthood leaders needed to always be conscious of this warning from the Lord and quickly repent if they found they weren’t following the Spirit as directed.

The Priesthood leader’s missions to raise the buildings and establish the Church was much like Nehemiah’s task in getting the ancient Jews to build the walls around Jerusalem after their return from Babylon.

Local leaders knew it was the will of God and they knew that if the Saints were unified new buildings would bring security, a spiritual uplift and a sense of belonging in the community including baptisms of non-members. How to unify them was the task here.

As important as the buildings were, they were not the Church. The leaders also had to fill the role of an Ezra, which required them to convert members to a higher law and maintain and strengthen their spirituality. This, when most leaders were themselves, only slightly schooled in these things.

However, the Lord in His wisdom provided effective leaders as needed to bring this work to the blossoming stage. The quality of leadership helps determine the faithfulness, growth and direction of the Church now as much as it did in ancient times. Fruition remains in the future.

A commitment to require the sacrifice of members and themselves on the part of the leaders was a key to their success.

Each of the members had their adversities. But all were strengthened for eternal purposes by experiences, which were uniquely designed for them.

Some have seemingly lost their way but we must leave that determination to a loving Father-In-Heaven.

Many previous non-members have been brought to a knowledge and joy of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ by the Church in Oklahoma.

Knowing efforts in establishing the Church in the individual locations was of infinite value, we many times had an intensely possessive attitude towards our portion of the work. Most Church units felt theirs was on the cutting edge of the work in Oklahoma.

By retaining a memory of those who have pioneered the progress of the Church in the past, we can develop a kinship with them that will help all remember we can also be pioneers in our day. We, as well, can add to the organization that is available to us and build for future generations.

Hal Pierce

EARLY OKLAHOMA CHURCH HISTORY

The first Mormon group in Indian Territory of what would become Oklahoma would have been the approximately 150 people led by **Apostle Lyman Wight** during 1845 as they journeyed to Texas. This group rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and the Apostles at Nauvoo in favor of what they thought, was the will of Joseph Smith to go to Texas.

The Wight group had left the Black River area of Wisconsin in the spring on flatboats, traveled for a time on the Black and Mississippi Rivers beginning 28 March 1845 to near Davenport, and then went overland from southern Iowa to Texas. They crossed into Texas during early November and wintered in Grayson County south of present day Lake Texoma before moving on in 1846 to a place just north of Austin.

Travel for this group included some death and much suffering. However, they were committed to obey Apostle Wight's every instruction. Polygamy was practiced by them.

Brigham Young sent **Samuel Bent** from Nauvoo to meet the group in Iowa in an attempt to divert them to Nauvoo to join the saints without success.

Wight was aware of **Joseph Smith** sending an emissary, **Lucien Woodworth**, to Sam Houston during March 1844 to investigate the possibility of purchasing territory in the Republic of Texas to create a nation in southwest Texas as a buffer between Texas and Mexico. Joseph was an advocate of Texas coming into the United States.

Wight and Bishop **George Miller** were instructed to prepare to lead a group of Church members to Texas from the Wisconsin Pine area by Joseph Smith prior to Joseph's death in June 1844. This move would be done after the negotiations with Texas, was complete. Also, Wight was instructed by the Quorum of Twelve Apostles in August 1844, after Joseph's death, to prepare his group in Wisconsin to move to Texas the following year. **Brigham Young** made it clear however that only the Wisconsin group was instructed to do so.

The Pinery group in Wisconsin had been disbanded after Joseph's death but were instructed to return and left Nauvoo during September 1844 for Wisconsin.

Later that year these instructions were rescinded but there is confusion as to whether Wight received word of the change from the Quorum of Twelve or ignored them as he lead approximately 150 people from Wisconsin to Texas. On

at least two different occasions a person representing the Church went to Texas and informed him he should end the Texas mission and move to Utah.

William Clayton accused Lyman Wight of encouraging the burning of the lumber at Nauvoo to be used in building the Temple. Wight felt the Temple completion was unnecessary after Joseph's death. This required Church leaders to establish protective guards around the Temple and the lumber.

Lyman Wight was older than Brigham, was an Apostle, a member of the Council of Fifty, had received his Second Anointing, and considered himself duly authorized to follow through with Joseph's instructions even after Joseph's death.

The Council of Fifty was a group of leaders, including 3 non-members, created by Joseph on 11 March 1844 to find a solution to where the saints might settle and be out of the jurisdiction of the United States government that had neglected its responsibility to protect the Saints. The 3 non-members were **Mareus Eaton, Uriah Brown** and **Edward Bonny**. Joseph was insistent that all good peoples and all religious groups should be part of Zion or the Kingdom of God wherever they settled.

Lyman Wight was likely one of the first proponents of this group and may have felt his opinion about where the Saints would settle should be paramount after Joseph's death. Places considered were Texas, California, Wisconsin, Oregon and the Rocky Mountains. Initially the group had 54 members.

Brigham taught that a man such as Lyman Wight had authority to build up a kingdom unto himself, but the leadership of the Church rested with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles as Joseph had instructed prior to his death.

Safety for the Church and its leaders in avoiding Texas became a key concern for the Twelve. Of course revelation from the Lord to Brigham and the Twelve was an overriding factor. Lyman Wight's almost continuous estrangement from Nauvoo and Church leadership likely played a part in his decision to go to Texas. Problems that developed with the Wight group in Texas such as Comanche Indian raids, Civil War disagreements, extreme weather, conflicts with locals and some with the U.S. Military are all issues that proved Brigham to be right in moving the Saints to Utah.

Two additional Apostles: **John E. Page** and **William Smith** also refused to follow Brigham and the majority of the Twelve. Ironically, these three Apostles, including Wight, were the only Apostles serving in the Council of Fifty.

Lyman Wight in Texas and William Smith in Kentucky at that time developed a close alliance for a short time that helped promote the patrilineal form of succession of Church leadership that the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to believe.

William Smith felt he should have been the true successor to his brother Joseph by lineal descent and the only brother of Joseph still living and didn't

appear threatened by young Joseph III who was still only 17 years old at the time, who had been born 6 November 1832. Wight seemed happy to promote anything that denigrated Brigham Young's leadership.

A great hypocrisy of this alliance was exposed when they exclaimed to the world that Brigham Young was teaching a principle of polygamy, unlike them. In fact, both men had practiced and promoted polygamy.

The inevitable schism in this alliance occurred shortly after it began but the theory of patrilineal succession continued until the late 20th century when no male heir arose to take his father's place as President of the RLDS Church. About this time the importance of the Book of Mormon was downgraded, women were given the Priesthood (1984) and the Church built a temple and dedicated it to the pursuit of world peace while emphasizing world peace as an important motto. The verbal promotion of world peace versus the actions generated by priesthood authority and the influence of the Holy Ghost seems to be the resultant effect of losing both. During 2001 the RLDS Church was renamed the Community of Christ.

Lyman Wight's grandson, **Heman C. Smith**, and great-grandson, **Heman Hale Smith**, became Historians for the RLDS Church. Both defended Joseph Smith III's assertion that his father, Joseph Smith Jr., had not begun teaching the principle of polygamy but that Brigham Young had initiated it. During their tenures as historians some very important documents such as marriage records and journals that would have contradicted their stance seemed to be conveniently lost.

Declining Priesthood instructions to go west with the Saints in 1847 Bishop **George Miller** traveled from Winter Quarters Nebraska into Indian Territory with Church members **Joseph Kilding** (Lucy Matilda Johnson), **Richard Hewitt**, their families and others including women and children. They intended to eventually go to Texas to see Brother Miller's son and perhaps stay. Most had familial ties to the Wight group. **John F. Miller**, George Miller's son, was with Wight in Texas and was married to Lyman Wight's daughter, Rosina.

They first traveled to an area just north of Kansas City Missouri called Platteville looking for work but discovered that Church member **Alpheus Cutler** had already taken the work. Then learning that workers were needed in the Cherokee Nation they decided to go to that location. They arrived in Tahlequah, which was the capital of the Cherokee Nation, on 9 July 1847.

After obtaining work Bishop Miller began teaching the restored gospel in his home at first and then in the Tahlequah courthouse.

Antagonism quickly followed with other religion's missionaries and Bishop Miller was forced to leave on 16 December 1847 and continue to Texas. Some stayed in the area to finish the work that was started. It is said that 3 brick houses built by Mormons are still in Tahlequah. After a very difficult trip with problems

of diseased animals they were met on 30 January 1848 by Lyman Wight and his wife, Harriet.

After agreements were reached on their living by the rules of the community they joined the Wight group at Zodiac which was the second settlement established by this group in Texas and was a short distance east of Fredericksburg, Texas. Miller later denied having agreed to the arrangement.

Bishop Miller was a prominent leader of the Church in Nauvoo under Joseph Smith but would not follow Brigham Young's leadership after Joseph's death. Miller originally chose not to join Lyman Wight, probably because of disagreements he had with Wight that once brought them to a fistfight in Nauvoo.

Bishop Miller and Apostle Wight were strong men accustomed to taking the lead and getting things done. Bishop Miller did not stay in Texas, partly because he could not abide the communal rules in the Wight society and partly because he was not accepted by the group, including members of his own family. Miller left the Wight group during the summer of 1848 and attempted to farm near Austin but was invited back into the group during February 1849.

He left for good a few months later and joined the **James J. Strang** group in Michigan during September 1850. Bishop George Miller died during 1856 in Illinois while on his way to California.

Miller was very effective in establishing roads and bridges as the pioneers traveled from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters Nebraska. However, once his group settled at Winter Quarters they kept themselves somewhat isolated from Brigham Young and most of the other pioneers. Bishop Miller's estranged wife, Sarah, died during 1848 in Texas.

Additional LDS Splinter Groups

Joseph Smith's death in June 1844 created a need for a new Church leader. Brigham Young led the main body of Church members and a majority of the Apostles to what became Utah. The diaspora from Nauvoo created "would be" leaders such as **Sidney Rigdon** in Pennsylvania, **Lyman Wight** in Texas, **James J. Strang** in Wisconsin and later in Michigan, **William Smith** in Illinois and Kentucky, **Alpheus Cutler** in Iowa, and **Joseph Smith III** in Illinois who later moved to Iowa and Missouri. Additional splinter groups of the LDS Church were led by **Granville Hedrick**, **Jason Briggs**, **Zenos Gurley** and **William Bickerton**.

One thing all those who did not go to Utah apparently had in common was a desire to avoid the long and difficult trip that involved burying family members, the sacrifices necessary to create a civilized society in a wilderness and the missionary services required after being settled. Some were even willing to declare Joseph Smith a fallen prophet to justify their decision although history shows there have been very few, if any, fallen prophets. Those who labeled Joseph

Smith a fallen prophet did it so flippantly that they were seemingly unaware of the consequences to themselves and to their future generations. To call Joseph Smith a fallen prophet would imply God was negligent in calling someone who would fail at such an important task as opening the last dispensation and restoring the gospel prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. There was a great need for the influence of the Holy Ghost at this time because faith was severely tested.

- 1.) **James J. Strang** had been baptized in Nauvoo by Joseph Smith on 25 February 1844, ordained an Elder and instructed to create a Stake of the Church in Voree Wisconsin located near present day Burlington in extreme southeastern Wisconsin. After Joseph's death in June 1844 he claimed to be Joseph's successor and continued leading his group in Voree until 1848 when he re-established the group on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan. James J. Strang produced a letter supposedly written and signed by Joseph Smith designating him as Joseph's successor after his death. Brigham Young ignored James J. Strang and his letter. James J. Strang was shot by dissidents of his group on 16 June 1856 and died 9 July 1856. At one time it was said he had as many as 12,000 followers. Some small remnants of this group still exist today (2008).
- 2.) **Alpheus Cutler** was the original leader of the Wisconsin Pineries project intended to supply wood during the construction boom in Nauvoo Illinois. He failed to recognize the leadership of Brigham Young and follow him to Utah. His group first settled in the area of Fremont County Iowa during 1852. Some of his followers then joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when it was organized 6 April 1860 in Amboy Illinois. Cutler's plans to move his followers to Minnesota were derailed during 1864 when Cutler died. However his counselor Chauncey Whiting and Cutler's wife led a portion of the group to Otter Tail County in west central Minnesota during 1865. Some others of their group arrived the next year. This group believed in the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon but did not accept polygamy. By 1900 it had essentially disappeared. Cutler's wife was, **Luana Beebe**, the original wife of Porter Rockwell who had four children by Porter before leaving him while living in Nauvoo. During 1892 she moved to Juab County Utah.
- 3.) **Joseph Smith III** was born 6 November 1832 and died during 1914 while living in Independence Missouri. An initial meeting of those promoting Joseph III as the Church President was held during June 1852 but 19 years old Joseph refused to lead the group at that time. However during 1859 he accepted his calling as Prophet and President and the group that would later become the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of

- Latter-day Saints was formed on 6 April 1860 at Amboy Illinois. During 1882 Church headquarters was moved to Lamoni Iowa. Joseph III moved to Independence during 1904 but it was after his death that Church headquarters was officially moved to Independence, Jackson County Missouri during 1920. A major attempt was made by Joseph Smith III to obtain the New Jerusalem Temple Lot in Independence for the RLDS Church during the early 1890s. The RLDS group had obtained a quit claim for the entire 63 acres of land from Maria Louise Johnson who was **Oliver Cowdery**'s daughter. They also felt that they would be recognized in any legal proceeding as the true successors to the original Church and filed for a legal hearing to justify their claims in August 1891 to take the property from a group that had obtained it earlier led by **Granville Hedrick**. Their legal attempt was denied by the courts.
- 4.) **William Smith** was born 13 March 1811 and died 13 November 1893 in Osterdock, Clayton County, Iowa. He had served the Church as an Apostle while his brother Joseph was alive but was disfellowshipped on 6 October 1845 and excommunicated on 19 October 1845. During 1845 he declared Brigham to be a Pontius Pilate and himself as Church President. William also accused Brigham of poisoning his brother Samuel so it would be easier for Brigham to proclaim himself Church President. He called for a gathering of the Saints at Lee County Illinois where the RLDS Church would be founded on 6 April 1860. However during 1860 he wrote to Brigham Young and proposed coming to Utah and joining the Saints there. Shortly he became caught up in the Civil War and seemingly lost interest in going to Utah. His warming up to Brigham may have been a result of his not being called into a leadership position in the RLDS Church. He joined the RLDS Church during 1878.
- 5.) **Sidney Rigdon (Phebe Brooks)** was born 19 February 1793 in St. Clair Township, Allegheny Co., Pennsylvania and died in Friendship, Allegany Co., New York on 14 July 1876. At Joseph's death he proclaimed that no one could take Joseph's place as President and that he should become "Protector" or "Guardian" of the Church. He was supported in his stand by Nauvoo Stake President **William Marks**. Also, Apostle William E. McLellin followed him for a short time. Sidney Rigdon had been Joseph's first Counselor at the time of Joseph's death but was essentially uninvolved in Church leadership. After his proposal was not accepted by the membership of the Church he left Nauvoo "for his safety" and was excommunicated by the Church on 8 September 1844. He went back to Pittsburgh Pennsylvania where he had been living and reorganized the First Presidency and Apostles of the Church among his followers during

April 1845. By 1847 most of his followers had deserted him likely because he seemed mentally unbalanced. As this group dissolved one of his followers named **William Bickerton** reorganized the Church into what became known as the Bickertonite group of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sidney Rigdon moved to Friendship New York and later started “The Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion” after communicating with former James J. Strang followers and had spokesman Stephen Post read his messages to his followers but the Church soon dissolved after his death.

- 6.) **Granville Hedrick** was baptized during 1843 and became Presiding Elder of the Branch at Crow Creek Illinois in April 1857. On 18 July 1863 under the direction of disaffected Apostle **John E. Page** he became leader of 4 Branches in Woodford County Illinois northeast of Peoria. John E. Page ordained him a Prophet, Seer and Revelator and joined the group himself. Thus they became known as the Hedrickites. The name of the Church was “The Church of Christ” and they consider themselves a continuation of the original restoration from 1830. Granville Hedrick declared Joseph Smith a fallen prophet and claimed revelation from God during 1864 to lead his group to Independence Missouri to reclaim the Temple Lot. There was also influence exerted by **David Whitmer’s** claim that Joseph was a fallen prophet. Approximately 60 members of the group arrived in Independence in 1867 and by 1877 had purchased 8 lots which included the northeast cornerstone of the Temple that was laid by Joseph Smith. In 1891-1894 they successfully defended their title to the property in a civil suit brought by the RLDS Church. During 1929 an attempt was made to construct the Temple but it was abandoned because of economic constraints. They now consider themselves custodians of the property awaiting instruction from God. Since its inception this group has had approximately 4 splinter groups break from it.
- 7.) **William Bickerton** took the lead of the Rigdon group as Sidney Rigdon relinquished it. Bickerton established a Branch of the Church during May 1851 at West Elizabeth Pennsylvania south of Pittsburgh. At a conference on 9 July 1861 twelve members were called as Apostles of the Church. The Church was incorporated during June 1865 as the “Church of Jesus Christ of Green Oak Pennsylvania.” It is now incorporated in all of Pennsylvania as the “Church of Christ.” Membership today (2008) is claimed to be 12,136 with nearly 3,000 living in the United States. There is a publishing house in Bridgewater Michigan that publishes copies of the Book of Mormon. The Church accepts the Book of Mormon and Bible as scripture but does not accept

the Doctrine and Covenants or the Pearl of Great Price. There is no paid ministry. Joseph Smith is not thought to be the choice seer predicted to come in the Book of Mormon but that seer is thought to likely be a person of Native American heritage that will come later. The Church does not accept plural marriage, plural Gods or baptism of the dead. Deaconesses (women) in the Church may prepare the Sacrament and revelation may be received by any individual member. They believe Sidney Rigdon was the rightful heir to leadership of the Church and Restoration after Joseph Smith's death. The glaring irony of this organization is their basing their existence and priesthood authority on a man (Sidney Rigdon) whom they would not follow.

- 8.) **Jason Briggs** founded Branches of the Church in Eastern Wisconsin at Beloit and Waukesha. He initially followed James J. Strang but during the 1850s established his "New Organization" Church.
- 9.) **Zenos Gurley** did not follow the Saints to Utah and in 1850 established a church he called the Yellowstone Branch in Lafayette County Wisconsin.

William E. McLellin was an original apostle that did not maintain a testimony and was buried in Independence after his death on 24 April 1883. He spent many years defending his position in leaving the church. Brigham Young wrote to him and encouraged him to repent and return but to no avail. He stated it was not possible to return because he no longer believed in the restored gospel.

At a Conference in Salt Lake City on 8 April 1855 **Henry W. Miller** (Mary Elmira Pond), **Robert Petty**, **Washington N. Cook**, **John A. Richards** and **William A. Richey** were called to Indian Territory as missionaries. They were charged with teaching the Delaware Indians of eastern Kansas and the Cherokee Indians in what would become northeastern Oklahoma, if possible.

Elder Miller had been appointed President of the missionary group. Elder **Orson Spencer** (Catherine Curtis, Martha Knight) was now Supervisor of the Church in the Mississippi Valley area having replaced Elder Erastus Snow in that position. Elder Spencer resided in St. Louis and his companion was Elder **James McGaw** when he visited Oklahoma to examine the missionary potential. Elder Spencer's daughter, Aurelia S. Rogers, became the first General Primary President of the Church.

The missionaries left Salt Lake City on 7 May 1855 and arrived at a place about 25 miles south of Ft. Leavenworth Kansas at the Kaw River where they left Washington N. Cook and John A. Richards on 26 June 1855. These two Elders

were left to ascertain the attitude of the Delaware Indians living in that area to their receiving the gospel.

Elders Miller, Petty and Richey arrived at the residence of Capt. **Jacob Croft** on the Grand River in the Cherokee Nation on 4 July 1855.

A group from Texas, repentant off-shoots from the Lyman Wight apostate group, led by Jacob Croft on their way to Utah decided to settle in Indian Territory and build a gristmill. The group was influenced by negative stories of Utah they heard from others from the east who had been followers of James J. Strang.

A natural question arises as how the missionaries knew of the Jacob Croft group and where they were located. Henry W. Miller was born on 1 May 1807 in Greene County New York, converted to the Church and lived in Illinois. In Illinois Miller had owned a sawmill and was called by Joseph Smith to go to the Black River area of Wisconsin to aid the effort to harvest lumber and bring it to Nauvoo for the construction boom occurring there.

The Wisconsin effort had been supervised by Apostle Lyman Wight, Bishop George Miller and others. Most of Wight's followers, who later went to Texas, were part of that lumber operation. Croft was a convert from Houston Texas and likely communicated the desires of the group to go to Utah as the Wight group began breaking apart. Also directions would have come from Elder Spencer.

Later Croft's Spavinaw Creek Mill became Mission headquarters after he met with the missionaries from Utah. This also became the location of the first Branch in Oklahoma named the Cherokee Branch, which was organized on 17 July 1855. **William Slade** was called as the President of the Branch. There was a strong spirit felt that day by those who were present.

Jacob Croft eventually led 56 members to the Salt Lake Valley during 1856 after being taught by the missionary group. The converted apostates were baptized and confirmed after conversions.

At this time the missionaries were well received and by 8 August 1855 they had baptized 23 people including one Cherokee. They were welcome to preach at other Church's meetings.

On 15 August Elders Cook and Richards arrived at the Croft home and said they did not have opportunity to preach to the Delaware Indians.

On 20 August 1855 Orson Spencer and James McGaw arrived at Croft's place from Mormon Grove in Kansas near Atchison.

Sunday, 26 August 1855 Elders Miller, Spencer and McGaw spent the night with William P. Ross, a Cherokee Chief, who said he had a copy of the Book of Mormon and promised to read it. He was a baptized member of the Methodist Church.

Elder Miller recommended to Elder Spencer that missionaries be sent from St. Louis to the Indian Territory Mission.

The St. Louis Stake was originally organized on 4 November 1854 with **Milo Andrus** as the Stake President. Orson Spencer served as Stake President for a time but died on 15 October 1855 from malaria, which may have been contracted by his visit to Oklahoma.

On 6 September 1855 Elder Miller's horse fell with Elder Miller cutting his face severely which required stitching. Elder Petty had been sick at the Croft home for several weeks by this time.

On 19 September 1855 Elder Miller blessed the child of Mr. Burton, and it was healed of a serious sickness.

At a Missionary Conference in St. Louis on 6 October 1855 four Elders (**James Case, William Bricker, George Higginson and Heinrich Eyring**) were called to serve in Indian Territory.

On 14 October Elder Miller went to hear Mr. Mack (a Moravian Preacher) speak on a promise to expose the Mormons, but he failed to deliver and most stayed to listen to Elder Miller speak. The next day Elder Miller became very sick with ague and was severely sick for several weeks. Ague is a sickness usually associated with malaria that causes fever and chills.

In October Elders **James Case** and **William O. Flavell** from Keokuk Iowa were appointed to work in the southern portions of the Cherokee Nation. Elder **George W. Crouch** a schoolmaster who had married a Cherokee woman had good success working in that area. William O. Flavell came as far as Springfield Missouri, changed his mind, and returned to Keokuk Iowa.

A **Brother Kiney** from St. Louis accompanied the missionaries to their assignment and then returned to St. Louis.

Also Elders William Bricker, Heinrich Eyring, and George Higginson were appointed to labor in the Cherokee Nation under President Miller. These Elders came from serving in the St. Louis Missouri Mission at the request of President Miller to their Mission President, **James H. Hart (Emily)**, through Elder Spencer. They arrived on 10 November 1855.

At this time the Elders were given their assignments with Elders Washington N. Cook and George Higginson going to the Choctaw Nation, which was south of the Cherokee and Creek areas.

The weather was extremely cold during the early months of 1856, and the missionaries suffered a good deal for lack of food and clothing. They were obliged to work for their food and clothing. In the spring Elder Eyring baptized a Creek town Chief, and his baptism brought others to baptism.

Elder Miller remained sick throughout the months of January through April with chills and fever.

On 1 February 1856 Elder Robert C. Petty died after being sick many months with what was likely malaria. A great pall fell over the Saints of the

community as Elder Petty was buried in the **Joseph M. Einche** family burial cemetery.

The Princess Creek Branch in the Creek Nation was organized in 1856, by Elder James Case. However it lasted only a few years.

The Creek Nation was between the Cherokees to the north and the Choctaws to the south but did not extend to the Arkansas boundary as did the Cherokee and Choctaw nations. The Cherokee Nation extended much further west than the other nations, which gave the Cherokees a great deal of grazing land for their cattle.

A report in 1860 from Heinrich Eyring to **Wilford Woodruff** stated the first Branch President of the Princess Creek Branch resigned, the second President died, the third apostatized and the fourth resigned. In 1860 they had one teacher and only met occasionally.

Elder Richards and Bricker stopped at the home of the Cherokee family of **William and Mary Burgess** and administered to **Mary** who was not expected to live and she soon regained her health. She and most of her family were later baptized.

During April 1856 Elder Eyring labored near 14-mile creek in the Cherokee Nation, baptizing 6 people with one, **Archibald MacDonald** being ordained an Elder. A Branch at Prior Creek was organized.

Elder Eyring baptized a man who was said to be 145 years old in the Cherokee Nation.

In May 1856 an arrest warrant was issued for Elder Miller, but the Sheriff, a nephew of the Chief **William P. Ross**, refused to honor the order. There was never any specific charge although he was later told that someone objected to being encouraged to gather to Zion. Elder Miller was to have been taken to a jail in Van Buren Arkansas. Van Buren is near the area where **Parley P. Pratt** would be killed during May 1857. The Sheriff told Elder Miller that he would inform him if it became necessary for him to leave the area for his safety.

On 23 May 1856 **Benjamin F. Clapp** was leading a small Company of Saints from Texas to the Salt Lake Valley and stopped to see Elder Miller. Some of the Indian Territory Saints were now gathering at a camp ground in preparation for migrating to Utah.

On 27 May 1856 Elder Miller became sick with Bilious Colic and was nursed for several days by Elder John A. Richards.

On 26 June 56 Saints left for Utah from Indian Territory and were led by Jacob Croft who was appointed to his position by Elder Miller. Elder Miller accompanied the migrating group to Kansas City before leaving them. They had apparently gone northeast from their starting point to obtain river travel to Atchison Kansas and perhaps get supplies. Lost cattle during the trip to Kansas City, was a continuing problem. The cattle would have likely been sold at the

Kansas City market for funds for the trip. Atchison Kansas, a short distance south of Omaha, had become a starting point for many pioneer groups.

The former Patriarch of the Wight group, **Pierce Hawley**, refused to join the group to Utah although many of his family members did go to Utah and were later settled in Pine Valley northwest of St. George. Pierce Hawley remained bitter at Brigham Young for “stealing” the Wisconsin group’s property which primarily was a covered boat, the “Maid of Iowa” that could have been used to travel from Wisconsin to Texas. Those who went to Utah were tithed and baptized upon arrival.

In Kansas City Elder Miller obtained a letter from President James H. Hart of the St. Louis Mission requesting that he visit St. Louis.

Elder Miller boarded a Steamer for St. Louis and while waiting to depart another steamer came by with **Almon W. Babbitt** on board, and they spoke for only a few moments in passing. He had been elected a delegate to Congress from Utah but not permitted to take his seat. Babbitt would be killed by Indians in Nebraska during September 1856 while attempting to return to Salt Lake City. He had been advised by Porter Rockwell and others to not make the trip at that time because of a war with the Indians.

In St. Louis Elder Miller met with Apostle **Erastus Snow** and President Hart. He was given \$200 tithing money and \$23 from the Branch, which allowed him to purchase clothing for his missionaries.

On 17 September Elder Miller became intensely ill with ague and a few days later Elder Case became very sick and feeble. All the Elders in the Mission were sick to some degree at this time.

During September 1856 Elder Bricker was given permission to travel to St. Louis to visit his wife and never returned. Afterwards he denied the faith.

About this time Elder Eyring converted **Jack Randall**, a Creek town Chief, and his wife Rhoda was also baptized.

In October a Conference was held among the missionaries as Elder Miller and Elder Case were preparing to return to Utah. Elder Miller nominated Elder Washington N. Cook to take his place as Mission President. At this time the most interest in the gospel was exhibited by the Creek Indians with less interest on the part of the Cherokees and Choctaws.

Elders Cook and Higginson had now left the Choctaw Nation without any baptisms for their efforts.

Also, at this time there were 96 members of the Church in the Mission and two Branches at Prior Creek in the Cherokee Nation and Princess Creek in the Creek Nation.

During October the Chief of the Cherokee Nation ordered all missionaries to leave their area. All but **William Richey** left and went to the Creek Nation, but

Brother Richey remained while not attempting to gain converts. Elder Richey was an older Elder who had an infirmity and was not bothered by the Tribe officials as he remained and administered to the Cherokees.

Elders Miller and Case arrived at Council Bluffs Iowa on 26 November 1856 where they spent the winter.

On 6 April 1857 Elder Parley P. Pratt attended a Conference held in the Creek Nation.

During the summer of 1857 Elder Higginson left for Utah to visit Parley P. Pratt's family at Elder Pratt's request.

During the summer of 1857 the missionaries were restricted in their work in the Creek Nation primarily because of the objections of a Presbyterian Minister, **Reverend Loughridge** and the United States Indian Agent ordered them out.

The remaining Elders returned to the Cherokee Nation and were not molested in their work.

Elder Eyring only was permitted to remain with the Creeks if he were employed by a native, which he was.

President Washington N. Cook died 4 September 1858 of consumption (tuberculosis) after a short but severe illness. Elder Eyring became the Mission President.

This was a time of Reaffirmation in the Church and all Saints were required to renew their baptismal covenants as instructed by Church President Brigham Young.

During 1858 and 1859 a majority of the remaining Lyman Wight followers in Texas relocated to Indian Territory for a time, including Lyman Wight's first wife. She had a letter from Sidney Rigdon criticizing the Church leadership in Utah, which prophesied only evil would come of them.

Lyman Wight had died in Texas northwest of San Antonio on 31 March 1858 while attempting to lead the remainder of his group to be united with the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that would be founded in Amboy, Illinois on April 6, 1860 and later headquartered in Lamoni Iowa (1882) and Independence Missouri (1920) with Joseph Smith III as its President.

Complicating Wight's health problems was his apparent addiction to both alcohol and opium. Opium was an accepted drug and was taken for health problems at that time but was as expensive as gold. He was buried at Zodiac Texas.

Some of Lyman Wight's group went to California, some stayed in Texas and some went to Utah but a majority joined the RLDS Church movement. During the late 1890s the oldest son of Lyman Wight, **Orange Lysander Wight**, moved into the home of his daughter, Harriet Wight Earl in Pine Valley Utah and rejoined the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was likely a development Lyman could never have accepted while on this earth.

President Eyring preached to these people, Wight's followers, without success. A Strangite missionary named **Jacob Prindle** had actively recruited the former Wight group members in Indian Territory.

During 1859 after having resumed work in the Creek Nation, President Eyring organized the Nephi Branch there and also organized the Lehi Branch in the Cherokee Nation. The Lehi Branch was dissolved when its leader migrated to Utah.

On 6 October 1859 there were 43 members in the Cherokee Nation and 48 members in the Creek Nation. Most members at this time were careless and indifferent to the gospel. Future missionary prospects were not promising.

At the end of 1859 the Cherokee authorities ordered all missionaries off the reservation except Elder Richards who was married to a Cherokee woman. President **Brigham Young** encouraged missionaries marrying the natives.

The Creek Nation issued a similar order during the early part of 1860.

Johnston's Army

Indian agents soon expelled all Mormons who were not natives because of the Johnston Army trouble in Utah during 1857 that had been precipitated by false information given a gullible United States President, **James Buchanan**. President Buchanan believed that the Mormons were in rebellion against the United States and might be forming an alliance with Mexico.

The Johnston army invasion resulted in a great blessing for the Saints because of its affect on the building of the temple. **Archibald Gardner's** biography states that after the army left and the foundation stones of the temple were uncovered, cracks in the stones were discovered which required a different approach to the construction. Without the invasion and the cessation of construction at that time a very large disaster might have occurred.

According to the biography, Brigham Young had set down at the construction site and stated he would not leave until the Lord gave him a revelation of how to handle the problem of foundation cracking. Archibald Gardner appeared and told President Young that the problem was a result of mortar being used between stones that did not properly fit together. The solution would be to tear out all the original foundation and replace it with stones that were cut to match perfectly without the necessity of the weaker mortar.

Brigham Young stated that Brother Gardner's advice was his revelation and he instructed builders to proceed in that way. Enormous effort was required to replace the foundation but that was done and the building stands today as a testimony of that solution.

Johnston's army was so called, because it was led by U.S. General **Albert Johnston**. Johnston later went to California and was encouraged by some to help lead and create a Pacific Nation. However, when the Civil War started he was anxious to get into the fight on the confederate side partly because of his disdain of General **Ulysses S. Grant**. He was killed at the battle of Shiloh on 6 April 1862.

Johnston's campaign in Utah was to put down the supposed rebellion against the United States government by the Mormons. He died on the 32nd anniversary of the founding of the Church while he himself was in rebellion against the United States government.

The Indian Territory Mission was discontinued 23 May 1860 and on that date Elders Eyring and Richey left for Utah and arrived on 29 August. Only Elder John A. Richards remained in the Cherokee Nation because of his marriage but he did no proselytizing. Elder Eyring and Elder Richey had both married Indian women but Elder Eyring separated from his wife and Elder Richey's wife died.

President Eyring hoped spontaneous fruit would eventually spring from the efforts and suffering of the missionary's work which left two of them dead at this point. Heinrich Eyring who was an immigrant from Germany and lived in St. Louis met a Swiss immigrant named **Maria Bommeli** in the pioneer company on its way to Utah and she would become his wife.

Local members in Indian Territory were scattered by the Civil War during the early 1860s. For years there had been a feud between the elected chief of the Cherokees John Ross and an assumed chief named Stand Watie. The feud originally resulted from Watie's agreeing to move to Indian Territory with his family and followers and John Ross' attempt to negotiate with the U. S. government to remain in the east. This difficulty came to a head during the Civil War between the States of the Union. Watie became a Confederate General by the end of the war and surrendered about 3 months after Robert E. Lee surrendered.

A Second Effort

Robert Lake presented himself as a Kiowa Indian to President Brigham Young in early 1877. He stated that his tribal leaders had asked that missionaries be sent to teach the tribe about the Book of Mormon.

Matthew W. Dalton and **John Hubbard** were called to accompany Robert Lake to Indian Territory and reopen the Mission. The group arrived at Vinita in the Cherokee Nation during March 1877, and found John A. Richards anxious to help.

The Indians in an apparent test of the sincerity of the Elders took up a collection of money and offered it to them. The Indians were surprised when it was refused and it so angered Robert Lake that they did not take the money and

divide it with him, that he deserted the mission. Robert Lake's claim to be a Kiowa Indian was later proven false.

While teaching among the Pottawatomie tribe, the Elders encountered **Anthony Navarre** who had previously gone to Utah and been baptized. Brother Navarre had accomplished much good among his tribe while teaching school.

Elder Hubbard for a time separated himself from Elder Dalton, which brought a letter from Brigham Young asking him to explain his reasons for the separation. He quickly rejoined his companion.

Elder Hubbard died just 5 months into his mission from an Epileptic seizure, and the Mission was again closed on 12 September 1877. Brother Navarre returned to his tribe and Elder Dalton returned to Utah by traveling 130 miles to the nearest railroad.

A letter from President Young to the Cherokee Chief, **Charles Thompson**, and Chief Thompson's response made it evident that the missionaries would not have much success among the Indians.

Of all the Church's attempts to teach the Indians, the best success did occur in the civilized tribes of the Oklahoma area at that time. This likely was a direct result of their settled, agricultural and individual style of existence as opposed to the nomadic and clannish lifestyle of many other tribes.

The civilized tribes included the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole peoples.

At this time there were 20 Indian Nations in the Oklahoma area with nearly 80,000 people. Many had been deported from the southeastern United States in "The Trail of Tears" to give more room in the east to whites and avoid the conflicts of the past. This forced migration occurred during the winter of 1838/1839.

By the mid-1880s there were only a relatively small percentage of full-blooded Indians in the northeastern Oklahoma area as many had crossbred with whites and Negroes.

During the spring of 1883 President **John Taylor** charged Apostle **George Teasdale** and Matthew Dalton with reopening the Indian Mission and they left Ogden on 16 April 1883. They arrived at Ft. Gibson and met with **Dennis Wolf Bushyhead** who was the head Chief of the Cherokees.

On 20 April 1883 **Matthew W. Dalton** and Elder of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reorganized the Indian Territory Mission with Brother Dalton as its leader. Tracts in the Cherokee language were written by Elder Teasdale and used in missionary activity by the aid of an Indian interpreter named Eubanks. Two of those tracts were named "The Restoration of the Gospel" and "What is the Gospel."

The missionaries later went to Tahlequah and explained their desires to the Cherokee Assembly but were not well received. A Methodist Minister suggested

that the Elders be driven from the area but they said they had broken no law and had no intention of leaving. Their firm stand seemed to please the Cherokees.

Soon the two missionaries met **William and Ann Hendricks**. Mr. Hendricks was part Cherokee Indian and owned a store at Manard. The Hendricks couple was very kind to the missionaries and offered them a place to stay. Ann Hendricks was baptized and 5 years later her husband joined the Church. Manard was a community about 7 miles east of Ft. Gibson.

During the latter part of 1883 Elder Teasdale was called back to Salt Lake City with Joseph Felt being sent to replace him.

Elder Dalton had a dream that the missionaries should cross the Arkansas River and teach on the other side. As a result they went to Briartown and met **Seborn Mabry** who was white and his wife Mary who was Cherokee Indian. Both joined the Church and Brother Mabry was ordained an Elder.

The two missionaries had a good deal of success for the 7 months they were together including the baptizing of some Indians. However they left for Utah in April 1884.

Within two weeks of Elders Dalton and Felt leaving the area two additional Elders were called to Indian Territory. They were Elders **Israel Bale** and **Frank Teasdale**, a son of Elder George Teasdale. These two Elders had good success but were limited by sickness after both contracted malaria.

Elders Bale and Teasdale had succeeded in baptizing 7 people and blessing 2 children in 6 months of time on their missions. However, they returned to Utah in September 1884 discouraged and sick.

On January 31, 1885 **Andrew Kimball** (father of Spencer W. Kimball) and **James G. West** arrived by train in Vinita from Salt Lake City.

During the spring of 1885 the missionaries worked near Muskogee while mosquitoes, chiggers, fleas, and ticks ate their legs raw. They were wet much of the time from rain, wading swamps, creeks and rivers (sometimes frozen). Finding food and clean dry lodging was a constant worry and they generally earned their way with work if they could find it. And Andrew developed malaria in August.

However, Andrew felt that working with someone was as good a time as any to tell a person about the gospel.

Each day about noon, chills would shake Andrew's body and by about 2:00 pm he would have a high fever and headache.

Andrew Kimball and **James West** received a wire in September 1885 telling them they could consider themselves released due to illness and were free to return home. James West left immediately, but Andrew Kimball stayed.

Andrew wired back to Salt Lake City saying "I have the Priesthood with me. I will get well and prefer to stay."

During the latter part of 1885 two additional missionaries were assigned to the mission. They were **Ammon Green**, and **Ammon Allen**. **David Shoud** came soon thereafter.

Elders Shoud and Allen were assigned to go east and President Kimball and Elder Green went south and west to proselyte.

Later Elders assigned to work in the mission included **D. B. Broadhead**, **F. M. Anderson**, **John J. Hill** and **Jed W. Ashton**. An Indian agent who was also a Methodist Minister restricted their access in the mission field.

In April 1887 **Andrew Kimball** became the President of the Indian Territory Mission with John A. Richards assisting him. President Kimball was then free to return home and even be employed but was still in charge of the Mission. His first visit home to Utah was after being absent for two and one half years. President Kimball made 4 additional visits back to the Mission during his 10 years as President and while he was living in Salt Lake City and serving in many demanding Church positions and looking after his family.

His first visit back to the Mission came after more than 4 years absence during 1891 and he brought former missionary **Matthew Dalton** with him as his companion. They traveled by train and stage to Manard where he and other missionaries had previously built a cabin on land donated by William H. and Ann Hendricks and where the Hendricks family lived. Manard is a community about 7 miles east of Ft. Gibson. During his absence he was active in selecting and assigning missionaries in the mission and establishing rules of dress and conduct.

As Mission President, Elder Kimball had very strict dress standards for the missionaries who served under him and insisted that each act as a gentleman.

They were required to come into the mission field with white celluloid bosoms, collars and cuffs, wide necktie, and full weight, black Prince Albert suits. One missionary arrived with a cutaway coat and explained that Elder **B. H. Roberts** had approved his clothing. He was informed that Elder Roberts didn't run the mission, and he promptly ordered his Prince Albert suit.

A spring 1891 report to Church Headquarters by President Kimball stated that there were six missionaries working in the mission.

Also at this time the missionaries were permitted to expand their efforts into the Chickasaw tribe. A **Mr. Harris** who was a Chickasaw member and former Governor of the tribe was instrumental in helping the missionaries obtain this approval.

During 1892 the first Church meetinghouse in Oklahoma was a log structure in Manard on land donated by William H. Hendrix in the Cherokee Nation. It was completed during 1893 and the cost was approximately \$400. The meetinghouse was dedicated in October 1893 by Presiding Elder **H. M. Rawlins**.

The new Church building was immediately used as a school for children without cost to Indian children although white children were charged a fee for the teaching. **Elder Nichols** served as the teacher.

Also during 1892 the Seminole Tribe became the last of the civilized tribes to receive the missionaries.

And during 1892 the missionaries began teaching the Osage tribe but with great difficulty because there were few interpreters and the missionaries didn't understand the Osage language. The Osage peoples did not understand English.

An October 1893 report by President Kimball indicated that the majority of baptisms were coming from the white population who were mainly from the states of New Hampshire, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas and Missouri.

The Church's second meetinghouse was built in Massey at a cost of \$277.05 in the Choctaw Nation. It was dedicated on 30 September 1894 by Elder **Ephraim Jeppson** and was located near McAlester in what is now Pittsburg County.

During 1894 at one time there were as many as 27 missionaries in the Indian Territory Mission.

A Branch called the Leader Branch was established during 1894 among the Chickasaws with 10 members and **E. L. Causey** was the Branch President. **J. H. Miller**, an Indian and ordained Priest assisted President Causey.

During 1895 the states of Kansas and Arkansas were added to the mission. **Elders Coolbear and Davis** were sent to Kansas to serve and went to St. John where there was a Branch in existence at that time.

In October 1896 a reunion of missionaries from the Indian Territory mission was held in Salt Lake City and the names of 107 Elders were read who either had or were serving in the mission.

President Kimball went to St. John Kansas during September 1895 to dedicate a new chapel which would become Mission headquarters. The location of St. John for the chapel was the result of a former member of the Bickertonite Church (**Mr. Glasscock**) giving land to the LDS Church for the chapel. The Bickertonite group, which was originally followers of Sidney Rigdon in Pennsylvania, had been created by William Bickerton and they had located a mission in St. John to be near the Indians or Lamanites expecting to teach and baptize them. LDS missionaries from the Northern States Mission had good success working with the Bickertonite group in Kansas. For some however, the issues of authority and polygamy, was preventing them from joining the Church.

Elder Edward Stevenson of the Quorum of the Seventy attended the dedication as well as President Kimball, his wife Ollie and two of his five children, Clare and 6 month old Spencer who would later become Prophet and President.

During early 1897 the states of Arkansas and Texas were added to the Indian Territory mission with headquarters at Manard in Oklahoma.

During January 1897 after a visit to northeastern Arkansas President Kimball went by train to the Massey chapel and then to Choctaw near Oklahoma City to hold a conference with the Elders in the area. He stated there was not a good spirit there until he called the elders to repentance and then an excellent spirit was manifested as they all agreed to repent.

When Andrew Kimball's missionary service ended in March 1897 he had 61 missionaries serving under him although for a time earlier he was the only missionary serving. He served 12 years as a missionary and President before being replaced by Elder **William T. Jack**. President Jack was recommended to the position by President Kimball.

On 22 April 1889, at noon, the first land run on Indian lands of Indian Territory occurred and covered what was called the Unassigned Lands in the central part of what would become Oklahoma. A second and smaller run occurred on 22 September 1891 in what is now primarily Lincoln and Pottawatomie Counties. The Cherokee Outlet Run occurred on 16 September 1893 and resulted from the Cherokee sale of land back to the U. S. government. The runs at that time did not seriously affect the area in the east where the missionaries were working.

The early runs for land broke multiple Treaties with the Indian Nations by the United States government, but the Federal government's position was that the agreements had already been broken by the Indians, when they supported the Southern States rebellion during the Civil War. Cherokee Chief **Stand Watie** became an effective guerrilla leader for the Confederacy.

Monies were supposedly paid to the Indians for their lands, but little if any money filtered down to the individual Indian. Corrupt Indian agents and others left little for the individual.

Later as the Oklahoma State and County governments came into existence many Indians lost their lands because of a lack of cash to pay taxes and because of a need for cash which enticed them to sell their lands.

After completing his mission Elder Kimball was called as a Stake President in southeastern Arizona and moved to Thatcher Arizona, which was near the future home of **Edward Eyring** (Pima Arizona). Andrew's son **Spencer W. Kimball** married **Camilla Eyring** who was a daughter of Edward Eyring and a sister of the eminent scientist Henry Eyring. She was also a granddaughter of the original Heinrich Eyring who had served as a faithful missionary in Oklahoma.

On 29 March 1898 the Indian Territory Mission's name was changed to the Southwestern States Mission by the General Authorities of the Church. At the time of the name change there were 7 conferences in the mission. They were the Kansas Conference headed by **James L. Nielson**, the Oklahoma Conference headed by **William T. Harper**, The Cherokee Conference headed by **Joseph J. Richardson**, the East Arkansas Conference headed by **John H. Peterson**, the

West Arkansas Conference headed by **Frank L. Copenig**, the Lone Star Conference headed by **Hyrum Andrus** and the North Texas Conference headed by **Joseph Coulam**.

Now the Southwestern States Mission was huge. It included the States of Kansas, Arkansas, and Texas as well as the Indian Territory that would become Oklahoma. The Mission was headquartered at St. John Kansas and covered an area of 351,000 square miles with a population of over 6 million people. President Jack moved the mission from Manard to St. John immediately after arriving in the mission.

The first sister missionaries began serving in the mission beginning 15 April 1898. The First Presidency of the Church had approved the calling of Sister Missionaries on 11 March 1898. Sister **Belle Taylor Copenig** who was the wife of the Chief Clerk in the mission office, Elder Frank L. Copenig, became the first sister missionary.

Sister Copenig served with Sister **Ida M. Breckenridge** and they were very successful going tracting from house to house, passing out tracts and holding gospel discussions in the area of St. John Kansas. Sister Copenig was originally from Juab Utah and returned home on 25 January 1899.

On 20 January 1899 a monthly paper called "Truth's Reflex" began publishing under the direction of President Jack. Subscription price was 25 cents per year and was published monthly.

On Saturday and Sunday 25/26 February 1899 an Oklahoma Conference was held in the Buckhead District. President William T. Jack and President Lawrence Blackett of the District were present. **Alfred Hogensen** and **Alfred Dixon** who served as traveling Elders were also present.

In April 1900 President Jack was replaced by **James G. Duffin**.

During October 1900 the States of Missouri and Louisiana were taken from the Northern States Mission and added to the Southwestern States Mission. Then on 26 December 1900 the Mission headquarters was moved from St. John Kansas to Kansas City Missouri at 140 Locust Street. The Church had now returned to Jackson County Missouri from which it was driven out in 1833.

Possibly at this time small parts of Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois were added to the Mission.

President Duffin recommended to the First Presidency of the Church that members no longer be encouraged to migrate to the Stakes in the west or assemble in local colonies, as had previously been the case. This idea was quickly approved by the First Presidency with the new policy beginning in late 1901.

On 4 April 1904 the future Oklahoma area became part of the Central States Mission, as the name was changed from the Southwestern States Mission while still located in Kansas City Missouri.

Also during April 1904 President Duffin purchased for the Church a property in Independence from **Maggie S. Swope** that included part of a property that had been purchased by Presiding Bishop **Edward Partridge** during 1831 and lost in the expulsion from Jackson County during 1833.

In October 1906 **Samuel O. Bennion** became the Mission President. He would serve in that position until April 1933 at which time he was called to the First Quorum of the Seventy. However, he continued to lead the Mission until 1935.

The Central States Mission headquarters was moved to Independence Missouri in March 1907.

Oklahoma became a State on 16 November 1907.

A new Chapel was constructed in Independence and was dedicated on 22 November 1914 and a Mission home was built in Independence during 1917. Also, Zion's Printing and Publishing Company owned by the Church was incorporated in Missouri during 1907 and later began publishing missionary tracts and copies of the Book of Mormon in large numbers from Independence.

Oklahoma became part of the South Central States Mission headquartered in Tulsa when it was organized on 4 August 1969. This Mission was renamed the Oklahoma Tulsa Mission on 20 June 1974.

The Oklahoma Oklahoma City Mission was created 1 July 1990.

Early Branches

Early Oklahoma Branches of the Church and their creation dates are listed below:

*Ada – Created 17 August 1958 with **Norwood Duff** as Branch President.

*Anadarko – Created 16 August 1954 with **David H. Dunn** as Branch President.

*Altus – Created 30 November 1958 with **Milton J. Hintze** as Branch President. This was a Service man's Branch. Altus received full Branch status in January 1961.

*Alva – Began as a Sacrament meeting in the spring of 1960. A Dependent Branch on Enid was organized 17 November 1968 with **Hubert L. Ward** from Enid as Branch President. Alva became an Independent Branch on 9 September 1973 with **Ray Barber** as Branch President.

*Ardmore – Created 15 August 1954. Branch President was **Armine J. Maxwell**.

*Bartlesville – Created 20 July 1935 with **Samuel G. Goodwin** as Branch President.

*Blackwell – Organized 1 February 1942 under the direction of Mission President **John F. Bowman**. Grover Edgar became Branch President.

*Bristow – Organized as an Independent Branch from the Sapulpa Branch on 13 January 1980.

- *Broken Arrow – Created as a Ward from the Tulsa 4th Ward in August 1977.
- *Burneyville – Organized 30 September 1939 under the direction of Mission President **Elias Woodruff**. **Stephen Ladner** became the Branch President. This was likely associated with a District headquartered in Texas.
- *Cardin – Organized 11 September 1923 with **J. H. Herndon** as President. This would have been a continuation of the Commerce Branch.
- *Cherokee – Created 16/17 July 1855 by missionaries including Henry Miller in the Cherokee Nation. William Slade was the Branch President.
- *Chickasha – Organized December 1961 as an Independent Branch with **Harold L. Dowdle** as Branch President.
- *Claremore – Began as a Dependent Branch on Tulsa 2nd Ward 25 September 1977. **Richard Lee** was President. Claremore became an Independent Branch February 1979 with **Bruce Malfatt** as President.
- *Cleveland – Created October 1975. **Michael L. Southward** was President.
- *Commerce – Organized 22 November 1921 with **Addison Inman** as President.
- *Cushing – Created 11 September 1960. Branch President was **Ray Wilson**.
- *DeNoya – Existed between the 1920s to early 1940s in Osage County. **Albert Scott** was Branch President.
- *Duncan – Created 19 September 1942. Mission President John F. Bowman was likely in attendance at a conference. **L. L. Stephens** was named the Branch President.
- *Edmond – Created 14 February 1971 with **Russell D. Wright** as Branch President.
- *Elk City/Clinton – Created 27 May 1956 **Walter Slater** was appointed the Branch President. (In April 1960, it became the Clinton Branch).
- *Enid – Created 15 August 1954 with **H. L. Ward** as Branch President. This was a second organization after it being organized originally on 10 April 1938 and apparently lying dormant for several years.
- *Eufaula – Organized 16 March 1947 with **Roy Barber** as Branch President.
- *Gore – Created 7 November 1911 with 113 members. This Branch was to be known as the Copple Branch and had **John E. Stephenson** as President and **David Copple** as a Counselor.
- *Grove – Created December 1979 as a division of the Commerce Branch.
- *Henryetta – Created 15 December 1957. **David Crockett Lamb** became Branch President.
- *Lawton/ Ft. Sill – Created 25 May 1956. The new Branch had 200 servicemen and their families with **John W. Clifford** chosen as the Branch President.
- *Leader – Established in the Chickasaw Nation during 1894 with Elder **E. L. Causey** as Branch President.

- *Lehi – Elder **Heinrich Eyring** organized the Lehi Branch during 1859 in the Cherokee Nation but it was soon dissolved because its leader migrated to Utah.
- *Manard – Created in early 1890s by Mission President **Andrew Kimball** in the Cherokee Nation.
- *Marlow – Organized 7 May 1908 with **A. L. Beeler** as Branch President. On 11 June 1913 this Branch was renamed the Sharon Branch under the direction of Mission President **Samuel O. Bennion** and **S. M. E. Fain** became the Branch President.
- *Massey – Created in early 1890s by Mission President **Andrew Kimball** in the Choctaw Nation.
- *McAlester – Created 23 March 1952 with **William Wilder** called as Branch President under the direction of the Mission President **Orville Ellsworth**.
- *Miami – Organized on 2 August 1941 under the direction of **John F. Bowman** with **J. H. Herndon** as Branch President. This was the 3rd organization of a Branch in this area.
- *Midwest City – Created 15 August 1954 with **John M. Bunker** as Branch President.
- *Muskogee – Created 16 March 1958 with **Calvin B. Asay** as Branch President.
- *Nephi – Organized by Elder **Heinrich Eyring** during 1859 in the Creek Nation possibly as a replacement of the Princess Creek Branch.
- *Norman – Created 15 March 1959 with **Ronald D. Hales** as Branch President.
- *Oak – Created 7 November 1911 with **Thomas E. Scott** as Branch President.
- *Oklahoma City Branch – Created December 1931 with **Elder Lartz** as Branch President.
- *Okmulgee – Organized 23 August 1931 by Mission President Samuel O. Bennion with **Parley P. Reed** as Branch President.
- *Ponca City – Created 14 November 1954 with **Roy Edgar** as Branch President.
- *Princess Creek – Organized during 1856 by Elder **James Case** in the Creek Nation.
- *Prior Creek – Organized during the Summer 1856 in the Cherokee Nation by Elder **Heinrich Eyring** but dissolved soon afterwards when the members moved away.
- *Pryor – Organized as an Independent Branch on 22 June 1975 with **Samuel J. Hughes** as Branch President.
- Sapulpa – **Jack Richardson** was sustained as the Independent Branch's first President on 1 January 1978.
- *Seminole – A Church organization was known to exist here as early as the 1950s but the history is not known except as is written in the Shawnee Branch history.
- *Shawnee – Created 15 August 1954 at a Conference of the West Oklahoma District. **P. L. Newmeyer** was named Branch President.

*South Oklahoma City – Created 5 May 1957. **Dean Symons Anderson** was Branch President.

*Stillwater – Organized 13 September 1936 with **John Whipple** as Branch President.

*Tahlequah – On 9 March 1969 Tahlequah became an Independent Branch with **Henry W. Farmer** as Branch President.

*Talihina Branch – Dependent Branch on the McAlester Branch was formed in 1965 with **Walter R. Peterson** as President. About 1969 it became part of the Central States Mission.

*Tulsa – Created 1 January 1933. Elder **Gene R. Gierisch** was Branch President.

*Tulsa North Branch – Created 17 May 1957 with **Wilford O. Scott** as President.

*Wagoner – Organized as a Branch on 23 September 1979 with **John Chapo** as Branch President.

*Woodward – On 3 March 1968 Woodward became a Dependent Branch on the Enid Branch. On 9 September 1973 it became an Independent Branch with **Link Alley** as the first Branch President.

A multitude of locations have experienced an organization of Church meetings for a time, sometimes Sacrament meetings and sometimes Church Auxiliaries, that were later disbanded. Examples of these include: Boswell, Buckhead, El Reno, Elk City, Canton, Kingfisher, Hennessey, Hominy, Lans Bois, Marshall, McNally Flats, Fairview, Seiling, Vian, and Crescent. There were many more. Hopefully the day will come when all communities of Oklahoma will have a Church unit of their own.

Also, many Church units have been established since 1980 that are not included in this history.

At times Oklahoma Church members have crossed State borders to attend Church in other States. For example during 1969 the **Tucker family** living in Colcord Oklahoma became leaders of a new Sunday School group in Gentry Arkansas when it started.

Members of Ponca City and Blackwell were for a time part of the Wichita Kansas Stake and the Gore Oklahoma Church has been part of the Ft. Smith Arkansas Stake. Also along the south border of Oklahoma, members have frequently become part of Branches in Texas.

During the difficult decades of the 1930s and 1940s all peoples from Oklahoma experienced the Great Depression and the Dustbowl. Many, including Church members, migrated to California and other states which restricted growth in Oklahoma.

World War II was generally a plus for church members in Oklahoma as it brought in many strong members to serve in the military installations in the state. These came as military personnel, their families and as military contractors.

Note: Following are histories of various early units for which records are available. The Norman Church history is shown first because it contains many representative events, changes, and sacrifices that occurred during the time of a great blossoming of the Church in Oklahoma during the late 1960s through the early 1980s. Many of these things apply to all Church units as well but will not be repeated in the other unit histories.

NORMAN

Early Norman Priesthood Leadership Chronology

James A. Cullimore who had moved into the area in 1937 was the Oklahoma City Branch President from 1937 until 4 November 1951. Later Branch Presidents included De Mar J. McKinnon (Bernece), Carl Brown and Don Epperson.

12 February 1937 – The West Oklahoma District was formed. Gillman Housley was the first District President of the West Oklahoma District.

From April 1951 to 4 November 1951 - Don Ashdown served as District President.

James A. Cullimore became the District President beginning 4 November 1951 and became the first Oklahoma Stake President on 23 October 1960.

William L. Waldrop became the Oklahoma Stake President in December 1960 as James A. Cullimore was called to be a Mission President to England.

George F. Marin, served as Presiding Elder in Norman from November 1952 to December 1955. Norman members were still part of the Oklahoma City Branch during this time and until 5 May 1957.

Norman members became part of the South Oklahoma City Branch from 5 May 1957 to 15 March 1959. Dean Symons Anderson was Branch President.

Ronald Douglas Hales, First Norman Branch President from 15 March 1959 to 9 October 1960.

Lloyd Edwin Trimble, Branch President from 9 October 1960 to 26 February 1961.

Dennis W. Trent, Branch President from 26 February 1961 to 25 March 1962.

James Mack Harris, Branch President from 25 March 1962 to 5 April 1964.

Lawrence D. Ortolani, Branch President from 5 April 1964 to 11 July 1965.

Ronald Wayne Smith, Branch President from 11 July 1965 to 21 August 1966.

H. Aldridge Gillespie, Branch President from 21 August 1966 to 2 April 1967.

H. Aldridge Gillespie, First Norman Ward Bishop from 2 April 1967 to 20 October 1968.

H. Aldridge Gillespie, Oklahoma Stake President (later renamed the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake) from 20 October 1968 to 18 October 1970.

H. Aldridge Gillespie, First Stake President of the South Oklahoma Stake (later renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake) from 18 October 1970 to 31 October 1976.

James Fife, Bishop from 20 October 1968 to April 1970.

Kenneth Earl Bushey, Bishop from April 1970 to 23 May 1971.

John Clifford, Bishop from 23 May 1971 to 1974.

John Clifford, Stake President from 31 October 1976 to 8 November 1980.

Ferrell Lazenby, Bishop from 1974 to 31 October 1976.

James Fife, Bishop from 3 November 1976 to 22 April 1979.

Ferrell Lazenby, Stake President from 8 November 1980 to June 1988.

Warren Ellis, Bishop from 22 April 1979 to 12 April 1981.

Warren Ellis, retained as Bishop of the Norman 1st Ward at the creation of the Norman 2nd Ward on 12 April 1981.

Don Murnan, Bishop of the Norman 2nd Ward from 12 April 1981 to May 1983.

Larry K. Michaelsen, Called as Bishop of Norman 1st Ward on 13 November 1982.

Robert F. Creson - Called as Bishop of Norman 2nd Ward in May 1983.

Monte Deere - Called as Bishop of Norman 1st Ward during 1985.

Michael W. Myers - Called as Bishop of Norman 2nd Ward during May 1986.

Kent Richardson (Barbara) - Called as Bishop of Norman 2nd Ward 20 January 1991.

Charles Wiggins (Barbara) - Called as Bishop of Norman 1st Ward about 1992.

Chronology of Church Organizations

Oklahoma City Branch - Created December 1931

West Oklahoma District of the Central States Mission - Created 12 February 1937.

Norman Sunday School – Created October 1952, dissolved 5 May 1957 (Suspended from December 1955 to February 1956)

South Oklahoma City Branch (Originally called the Capitol Hill Branch) – Created 5 May 1957

Norman Branch – Created 15 March 1959

Norman Ward – Created 2 April 1967

Oklahoma Stake (later renamed the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake) – Created 23 October 1960

Oklahoma South Stake (later renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake) – Created 18 October 1970

Oklahoma South Stake renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake – 14 January 1974

Lawton Oklahoma Stake – Created 31 October 1976

Norman 2nd Ward - Created 12 April 1981

Oklahoma City Oklahoma South Stake – Created 13 November 1982

Noble Ward - Created 13 November 1982

Blanchard Branch – Created January 1987

Norman Church Meeting Places

*K.P. Hall on north Broadway Street in Oklahoma City (1925) and other Oklahoma City Branch meeting places.

*Church Building at 540 N.W. 44th at Lee Street in north Oklahoma City – This Church constructed building was completed in November 1950.

*First Presbyterian Church in Norman located at the corner of White and University Streets – Sunday School and Sacrament Meetings at times.

*South Oklahoma City Branch Building at 5305 S. Pennsylvania Street (A white frame house).

*Lockett Hotel Building Basement – At Main and University Streets.

*Brandenburg Home – Former Fraternity House at the corner of Boyd and Monnett Streets.

*North Base Military Building – Sacrament Meetings only.

*Church of Christ Building – SE Corner of Tonhawa and Crawford.

*Oklahoma Stake Center building - Dedicated 3 April 1966 and located at 5020 NW 63rd Street in Oklahoma City.

*Norman Stake Center – Highway 9 and Imhoff Road, Moved here in February 1976.

*Institute Building on Campus – Lindsey and Elm Streets in a converted home purchased during 1970/1971. New building was constructed in 2003.

*Dallas Temple – Dedicated 24 October 1984.

*Noble Building – Noble Ward moved here in December 1987.

*Oklahoma City Temple – Dedicated 30 July 2000.

The Early Norman Church

During 1925 a Sunday School was organized in the K.P. Hall on North Broadway Street of Oklahoma City, and Norman members if any, would have been a part of that Sunday School.

In 1931 Norman members became part of the new Oklahoma City Branch of the Central States Mission. An earlier attempt to organize a Branch in Oklahoma City had failed because of the Depression. Members were required to move to find employment.

James A. Cullimore (Grace) moved into the area in 1937 and served as the Oklahoma City Branch President from 1937 until 4 November 1951. Succeeding Branch Presidents included De Mar J. McKinnon (Bernece), Carl Brown (Betty) and Don Epperson.

Gillman Housley (Maye) became the first District President of the Western Oklahoma District on 12 February 1937 and was replaced by Don Ashdown during April 1951 and who served until 4 November 1951.

Norman members were part of the Oklahoma City Branch and the Western Oklahoma District of the Central States Mission.

James A. Cullimore became the District President on 4 November 1951.

An article in the Norman Transcript newspaper dated 14 September 1952 stated that Elders Blaine Moore and Phil Hansen, both from Utah, were holding meetings in the Presbyterian Church. Elder Edwin Bolton replaced Elder Hansen later as he was transferred to Clinton.

In September 1952 the active membership was around 30 members but the missionaries had located other members in the area that needed activation.

For a time Norman members drove to the Oklahoma City Branch building at 540 N.W. 44th at Lee Street for Priesthood and Sunday School meetings and then either stayed in the city, as best they could, for the evening Sacrament meetings or drove back to Norman and missed Sacrament meetings. To resolve this problem a meeting place was found for the Sacrament meetings in Norman.

A Chaplain for the military refused to allow the Church to meet in the old military barracks.

However, the Presbyterians were very kind to the Church efforts and asked only \$10 per month for using a large upstairs room.

There were four prominent and active families in the area in 1952 that included Paul and Bonnie Cox, George and Margaret Marin, Dr. Reed and Kathryn Powell and Dr. Cluff and Moyra Hopla. There were a few LDS students at the University and some active military assigned to Norman.

George F. Marin was called as a Presiding Elder of the group by District President James A. Cullimore.

Sacrament meetings and Sunday School were then held in the Presbyterian building until 3 April 1954 when the group rented a space in the Lockett Hotel.

On 10 May 1954 President Alvin R. Dyer (May) of the Central States Mission traveled the area of Norman with Elder Jack Taylor, surveying it for

potential missionary efforts. They picked up Elder Moyes and Elder Olsen who were in Norman and made suggestions for missionary tracting of the city.

The Marin family moved from the area in December 1955. At this time most meetings returned to the Oklahoma City Branch for a short two months. The Relief Society group continued to meet in Norman.

Beginning in February 1956 Sunday School was begun again in Norman and met in the basement of the Lockett Hotel. This building became known later as the Mid-Town Plaza. This Norman Sunday School was an official part of the Oklahoma City Branch.

Some youth meetings such as Primary, MIA and Scouting were held in the Oklahoma City building, which involved a good deal of driving. However, many auxiliary meetings were likely held in homes in Norman, but few records of that are currently known.

On 5 May 1957 President Dyer dissolved the Norman Sunday School and encouraged members to attend the new Oklahoma City South Branch for purposes of strengthening and stabilizing the Branch, which was organized on that date.

The last meeting in the Lockett Hotel before joining the Oklahoma City South Branch was held 26 May 1957.

From that time until the Norman Branch was organized all meetings were held under authority of the South Oklahoma City Branch. A significant amount of driving was again required although now they were driving to south Oklahoma City rather than north Oklahoma City.

While Norman members attended the Oklahoma City Branches it was necessary for the Priesthood to carpool to the Branch for the 9:00 am Priesthood meetings and the women and children to carpool later to the 10:30 am Sunday School except when Sunday School was held in Norman. In that case the Priesthood would return to Norman.

Families would go later to the Sacrament meetings held in the evenings. At times these Sacrament meetings were held in Oklahoma City and at other times they were held in Norman.

Branch Organized

At a district meeting held in a school in Midwest City, the Norman Branch was organized on Sunday 15 March 1959 as part of the Western Oklahoma District of the Central States Mission. It was formed from the South Oklahoma City Branch.

At this time Samuel R. Carpenter was the Mission President headquartered at Independence Missouri while James A. Cullimore served as the District President of the Western Oklahoma District. President Cullimore resided in Oklahoma City.

The new Branch area included all of Cleveland and McClain Counties, and the first meeting in Norman as a new Branch occurred 5 April 1959. There likely were members living outside these County boundaries who considered themselves part of the Norman Branch, but President Cullimore defined the boundaries as these two Counties.

The Branch Presidency called included Ronald Douglas Hales (Lorraine) as President, Lloyd E. Trimble (Barbara) as 1st Counselor and Melvin C. Radichel (Donna) as 2nd counselor. Irvan Wesley Choate (Fleeta) served as Branch Clerk. Bonnie Cox served as the Relief Society President with Barbara H. Trimble serving as the first Primary President.

Sister Lorraine Hales was called to serve as Statistical Clerk for the Branch on 25 October 1959.

In June 1960 Ronald Hales graduated from the University and moved to Utah soon afterwards.

Lloyd Edwin Trimble (Barbara) became Branch President on 9 October 1960 with Melvin Radichel as 1st Counselor and Bennie McNeil Unsell (Terri) becoming 2nd Counselor a short time later. When both counselors moved to Oklahoma City that year, H. Carlton Marlow (Beth) and Dennis W. Trent (Joyce) were called to serve as his counselors.

The Trimble family moved from Norman during 1966.

The Norman Branch became a part of the new Oklahoma Stake formed on the 23 Oct 1960. The new Stake was organized by Elder Mark E. Peterson with Alma Sonne an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve assisting.

On 26 February 1961 Dennis W. Trent was sustained as Branch President and served until 25 March 1962. H. Carleton Marlow became his 1st Counselor and Richard Eugene White became his 2nd Counselor, sustained 16 April 1961. On 23 July 1961 Everett C. (EC) Stangle (Gloria) replaced Brother Marlow as 1st Counselor.

On 18 June 1961 Elder Spencer W. Kimball presided at the Oklahoma Stake Conference.

During the early years of the Branch the Priesthood Quorums functioned as part of the South Oklahoma City Branch. After his release as Branch President Dennis W. Trent served in the Elder's Quorum Presidency, which was headquartered in South Oklahoma City.

Dennis and Joyce Trent moved from Oklahoma in July 1964.

25 March 1962 a new Branch President, James Mack Harris (Sandy), was set apart with E. C. Stangle and Dale Newbold (Barbara) as Counselors. The Newbolds moved from the area in January 1964.

President Harris remembers an experience of being called to the bus station one night by a man who was stranded and without money. When asked by President Harris what Priesthood he held, he declared he was an Eighty.

On 10 June 1962 Elder Gordon B. Hinckley presided at an Oklahoma Stake Conference.

On Fast Sunday 2 September 1962 the Branch began meeting in the Brandenburg Home near the OU Campus at 1008 Monnett Street.

On 26 May 1963 Dale Newbold became 1st Counselor with Lawrence D. Ortolani (Meridel) becoming 2nd Counselor to President Harris.

On 1 December 1963 the Branch received a deed to property it intended to become the site of a new Church building. The site purchased was on the north side of Boyd Street between Wylie Street and Berry Road immediately east of where the Nazarene Church is today (2006). It contained 2.7 acres.

This property was purchased from Mr. Dee Farley for \$20,463.50.

The Boyd property was used for fundraising by growing corn and okra that was sold to local markets and the Oklahoma City Farmers Market.

In July 1965 the Branch sold \$260 of corn raised on the property, and on 27 June 1966 the Branch harvested 3 pickup loads of sweet corn and sold it at the Oklahoma City Farmers Market for \$0.50 per dozen or \$380. This was big money for the Branch. This project continued through 1968 and provided sacrifice, money and fellowship for the members.

New counselors to President Harris were installed on 8 December 1963 with Larry Ortolani becoming 1st Counselor and Billy E. Foreman (Faye) becoming 2nd Counselor.

President Harris was called to serve in the Oklahoma Stake High Council after his release as Branch President on 5 April 1964.

On that date Larry Ortolani was called as the Branch President with Ronald W. Smith (Karen) serving as his first Counselor. Sandy Harris was Relief Society President and Charcie Woodcock was Primary President at this time.

The Branch spent \$250 for a window air conditioner for the chapel, but it was so noisy it had to be turned off when someone was speaking. Also a crude public address system was tried but never worked well.

The commander of ROTC at the University donated about 100 arm type desk chairs for which the Branch was grateful. It was said the Primary children learned some new words from what was written on the desks.

At the end of the school year during 1965 both the Harris and Ortolani families were transferred out of Norman to San Antonio Texas.

After leaving Norman Sandy Harris and her mother were killed by a runaway crane while watching the construction of a Chapel in Tooele Utah. They

hurriedly threw the Harris children to safety just before they died and the children escaped injury.

Ronald W. Smith became Branch President on 11 July 1965 with Lloyd E. Trimble sustained as his 1st Counselor on 25 July 1965 and Peter R. Ashworth (Katherine) sustained as 2nd Counselor on 7 August 1965. On 20 February 1966 Brother Ashworth became 1st Counselor and H. Aldridge Gillespie (Virginia) became 2nd Counselor.

A record of a Norman Branch conference held 20 February 1966 showed Ronald W. Smith as Branch President with Counselors Peter R. Ashworth and H. Aldridge Gillespie. Branch Clerks were John F. Morehead and Billy A. Foreman. Relief Society President and Young Women President were Katherine Ashworth and Anita Freeze respectively.

On 21 August 1966 H. Aldridge Gillespie became the Branch President with Don Fortner (Myrtle) as 1st Counselor and Carl Oliver (Kristen) as 2nd Counselor sustained 28 August 1966. President Ronald Smith had moved to California.

On 2 April 1967, H. Aldridge Gillespie became Bishop of the new Ward with Carl Oliver as 1st Counselor and Don Fortner as 2nd Counselor.

Under Bishop Gillespie the first Temple Preparation class was held in 1967 with 6 couples attending. Four couples and their children were sealed in a Temple within 4 months time and one the next year.

Since Brother Ron Smith (who returned from California for this purpose) and Leon Davis (June) were pilots, a group of 17 people rented two 6 seat airplanes and flew to the St. George Temple during July with babies on parent's laps. No FAA rules were broken. The Davis' had joined the Church in 1966.

When H. Aldridge Gillespie was sustained as Stake President on 20 October 1968, James Fife replaced him as the Ward Bishop with T. (Ted) Edgar Lyon (Cheryl) as 1st Counselor and Kenneth Bushey as 2nd Counselor.

Baptisms of the Branch normally occurred in the Oklahoma City Branch building after its completion in November 1951. The Midwest City building was completed during the late 1950s and became the location of most baptisms for the Norman Saints.

Meeting Places

Beginning 5 November 1951 members from Norman attended meetings at 540 N.W. 44th at Lee Street in north Oklahoma City. On 5 May 1957 when the South Oklahoma City Branch was organized they attended in a white frame house at 5305 S. Pennsylvania Avenue in Oklahoma City.

The new Norman Branch in 1959 met originally in the basement of the Lockett Hotel. This location had been previously used by the Norman Sunday School. The meeting place was used as a bar during the week, and it was

necessary to clean out beer glasses and cigarette butts before meetings, and it was necessary to clean thoroughly before leaving the building. The location was rented from 3 April 1954 to 26 May 1957 for \$40 per month.

On at least one instance when the Branch came for meetings on Sunday morning the party was still in progress from the previous night. The owner quickly found the Branch another place for the members to meet that day.

Surnames of families that came into the Branch that met in the Lockett Hotel and earlier included: Adams, Anderson, Arnold, Atkins, Barth, Barnhill, Birchum, Booth, Bowling, Brown, Brownlee, Burgett, Burton, Choate, Clark, Coggins, Cortelyou, Cotterill, Cox, Engle, Erickson, Field, Gant, Hales, Harris, Henry, Heiskill, Hickman, Hintze, Hopla, Housley, Hudspeth, Hughes, Illum, Jump, King, Kinwal, Leavitt, Lorrigan, Lunsford, Madole, Marin, Marlow, May, McAdams, McCarty, Morris, Murphy, Newbold, Ortolani, Parsons, Payne, Phillips, Prairie, Radichel, Radke, Savage, Smith, Snodgrass, Stangle, Stanley, Starkey, Start, Stock, Stoddard, Taylor, Trent, Trimble, Tyre, Unsell, Walker, Webber, Wells, White, Whitney, Whitten, Wilford, Wiseley, Woodcock, and Woods.

The next meeting place was known as the Brandenburg home on the SW corner of Boyd and Monnett streets, and the Branch moved there in September 1962.

This building had a basement and a lot of room for the small Branch. Approximately half of the members who attended at this time were single.

For a time the local missionaries lived here, but some were frightened to stay in the large and creaky old building. One missionary would not go to the bathroom at night by himself and kept a baseball bat for protection.

A great deal of painting, cleaning and remodeling effort went into the use of this building and moving a piano upstairs for Junior Sunday School was a significant challenge.

Surnames of families who came into the Branch while meeting in the Brandenburg home included: Amadio, Ashworth, Ayedelotte, Bennett, Bealmear, Berensen, Berthrong, Black, Bybee, Callister, Cannon, Carrington, Christian, Chu Tien Hsung, Cossey, Davis, Dean, Dillman, Elison, Fife, Fleming, Foreman, Fortner, Freeman, Freeze, Garvin, Geyer, Gibbons, Gillespie, Green, Hackney, Hames, Hart, Haskins (later Denwalt), Hathcoat, Haws, Hays, Hill, Hogan, Hone, Horsley, Hoyt, Hubble, James, Jarman, Johannesson, Johnson, Kuehne, Land, Leonard, Littlecreek, Lyon, MacNiven, McCauley, McDanel, McFarland, Matthews, Meredith, Merrill, Minnick, Morehead, Moulton, Neill, Nigliazzo, Oliver, Pales, Pascoe, Patton, Paxman, Perry, Peterson, Pond, Rinaldi, Robertson, Sappington, Sewell, Shirley, Sides, Sneed, Sparkman, Stiles, Tarwater, Templer, Van Camp, Welker, Womack, Woolverton and Yates.

Although spacious and satisfactory initially for the Branch, the Brandenburg home became too small. After the Branch moved it was torn down for the construction of the OU Energy Center. The lawn of the Brandenburg home was used to park cars during football games and was a source of income for the Branch. 42 cars at \$2 each was big money for the Branch. Dollars raised went into the Budget and Building Funds.

For 3 months in early 1970 Priesthood and Sunday School meetings were held in the Brandenburg house while Sacrament meetings were held in the Assembly Hall of the University High School on the North Base location near the Norman airport. This was primarily because the area used for a chapel at Brandenburg became too small. Also the Brandenburg chapel was “L” shaped, and it was difficult for everyone to see the speakers.

The Teachers Quorum was responsible for transporting the sacrament trays back and forth each Sunday.

During September 1970 the Branch moved to an old Church of Christ building on the SE corner of Tonhawa and Crawford.

According to Bishop Fife the University had sent the Branch a letter indicating the use of the building on North Base by a church was defying the separation of Church and State policies. There had been a complaint from a citizen to the Legal Department at the University. The University was not charging the Branch rent.

This Church of Christ building needed a lot of repair work, but repairs were generally not made because it was thought the Branch would not be there long. The Branch was there until February 1976.

The building was a big headache for John and Shirley Perry who served as custodians.

The basement regularly flooded during hard rains and required pumping or bailing the water out. Some Bishopric and Priesthood meetings were spent bailing water for later meetings. Falling ceiling tiles were a continuing problem.

The New Stake Center Building

The lot the Branch owned on Boyd Street wasn't large enough to accommodate a Stake Center that was now needed. Upon recommendation of Stake President H. Aldridge Gillespie, Norman was designated as the Stake Center for the Oklahoma South Stake when it was organized during 1970. This Stake was subsequently renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake during 1974.

Four men including James Fife (Irene) and Leroy Land (Marge) were selected to serve on a building committee to pursue the land needed and construction of the new building.

In 1972 Coral Clifford, wife of the Bishop John Clifford, recommended a site she had seen at the corner of Highway 9 and Imhoff Road be purchased.

It was discovered that a member, Bill Sneed (Nancy), was an acquaintance of the property owner, S. Don Wilson. Brother Sneed facilitated meetings between President Gillespie, Bishop Clifford and the landowner to discuss the possibility of the Church buying the property, and an agreement was reached.

A purchase of 4.2 acres was negotiated to which was immediately added another 0.9 acres for a total of 5.1 acres which met Church headquarters requirements for sufficient room for a Stake Center. The 0.9 acres was never used.

Church policy at the time required that local groups pay 30% of the total cost of a building and must have a minimum of 15% on hand before construction could start. The remaining 15% had to be paid before dedication could take place.

The new Stake Center would have 25,000 square feet of floor space. Total building costs were estimated to be slightly under \$1.1 million.

The sale of the Boyd Street property helped with the funding as did monies that were beginning to flow from the Stadium cleaning project.

The Norman Ward's cost to begin construction would be slightly less than \$165,000.

The Ward believed they had their part on hand when the bids came in, but the lowest bid came in approximately \$100,000 higher than expected because of an extremely high inflation rate at the time. This required the Ward to raise another \$20,000 within 30 days before the bid expired. The small Ward raised approximately \$22,000 quickly allowing construction to start. All active Ward members had to dig deeply but responded well.

Nina Haskin's husband (a non-member) agreed to donate a significant amount of dirt moving preparation work. His son-in-law, Eddie Freeze (Anita), who was a Ward member and who was employed by him actually performed the work.

Ground was broken on a cold, windy April 28, 1973 with approximately 25 people present. Hymns were sung, and the site was dedicated by President Gillespie. Construction actually began in December 1974.

Bowers Building Company of Salt Lake City was used to construct the Stake building.

H. Aldridge Gillespie and John Clifford worked closely throughout construction and supervised it. John Clifford was responsible for the red carpet and red choir chairs chosen initially in the building. He said it matched the color of his military flag and patch.

James Fife chose the new organ and took some members to the Oklahoma City 2nd Ward for organ lessons. Nancy Sneed and her Relief Society Counselors selected the Relief Society room color décor. Coral Clifford, who replaced Nancy

Sneed, and Nina Denwalt (formerly Haskins) picked the dishes and flatware for the kitchen.

A special open house for members to see their new building was held on 13 February 1976 and the first meetings in the building were held on Sunday 29 February 1976.

Speakers at the first Sacrament meeting in the new building included Nina Denwalt, Leroy Land and John Clifford.

The building was dedicated by Elder Bruce R. McConkie at Stake Conference on 31 Oct 1976, who emphasized that the people of the Stake are also dedicated for the cause of the Gospel. Regional Representative Don Christiansen was in attendance.

This early dedication date implies that the Stake members (not just Norman people) were generous and quick to raise the needed costs of completion.

Prominent families in leadership positions at this time were: Gillespie, Lazenby, Michaelsen, Bushey, Clifford, Creson, Pales, Barcellos, Cox, Green, Seaberg, Coleman, Hill, Sneed, Myers, Woolums, Land, Burgett, Anderson, Kohler, Fife, and Swaim.

Kimberly Cox (Sean Wainner's wife) became one of the first persons baptized in the new building as her 8th birthday occurred on 23 April 1976. Doug Michaelsen was also baptized at this time.

Ward statistics for August 1976 showed a membership of 470, 6 baptisms for the year thus far, and 62% home teaching.

Much sacrifice was involved by the members who gave money and time to this important building project, and many blessings flowed from Heaven to those who gave this great sacrifice. Unity was improved.

The Church was now well established in the Norman community and those who follow can commit to sacrifice themselves to continue building the Church in the Norman area.

Open House

To show the new Stake Center building to the community and to expose non-members to the Church, a series of 8 open houses were held during February and March 1976. These were under the direction of Marge Land.

Brother Fife stated that he received revelation on how to proceed on the open houses while lying in bed and said it was to be an introduction of the Church to the community and not be a proselyting effort. The first open house was for civic leaders of the community and their families. Approximately 30-35 people came.

The second invitations went to the local ministry and 6 people came which included the Presbyterian Minister and a Reverend Feaver whose wife was a graduate student at the University under the direction of James Fife.

The remaining open houses had good attendance and many favorable comments. Approximately 485 people visited the Stake Center during these open houses. Guided tours of the building; a movie, Man's Search for Happiness; and refreshments were included.

The year 1976 was a very busy year for the Ward members as they organized many events to show off the new building to their neighbors in Norman. Marge Land was out front organizing most of the events with Priesthood guidance.

Becoming a Ward

The Norman Branch became a Ward on 2 April 1967 with H. Aldridge Gillespie's release as the last Branch President and his call as the first Ward Bishop. His counselors were Carl L. Oliver and Don Fortner. Later James Fife and Ted Lyon replaced Don Fortner and Carl Oliver as Counselors to Bishop Gillespie.

At the time of the Ward organization there were approximately 234 members.

Bishop Gillespie was ordained by Elder Spencer W. Kimball. He had previously been ordained a High Priest by Apostle Hugh B. Brown during October 1959. The boundaries of the new Ward were approximately all of Cleveland and McClain Counties.

Bishop Gillespie was released to become the Oklahoma City Stake President on 12 October 1968 and replaced as Bishop by James Fife. Bishop Fife's counselors were Ted Lyon and Kenneth E. Bushey (Barbara). Bro. Lyon was the son of well known doctrine teacher and author T. Edgar Lyon. Bishop Fife generally held his Bishopric meetings during the week at his home at 819 College.

During April 1970 and at a Stake Conference James Fife was released as Bishop and replaced with Kenneth Earl Bushey. Bishop Bushey's counselors were Calvin Woodcock (Charlcie) and Alton L. Van Ausdal. Clerks were Val G. Shirley (Bonnie), Duane Erickson (Not married) and Jim Pales (Corrine). Later D. V. Haws (Viola) served as one of the Counselors.

Elder Mark E. Petersen ordained the new Bishop. Bishop Bushey served slightly more than 1 year and it was during his time as Bishop that the Ward contracted to clean the University Stadium.

Bishop Bushey was replaced as Bishop, by John Clifford on 23 May 1971 with Leroy Land as 1st Counselor and Val Shirley as 2nd Counselor. Marc Haws (Karen), son of D. V. Doc Haws, also served later as a counselor to Bishop Clifford.

In 1974 Ferrell Lazenby (Marba) became Bishop replacing John Clifford who became a Counselor in the Stake Presidency. Bishop Lazenby's Counselors were James Fife and Larry Michaelsen (Christine). Kenneth E. Bushey and John Seaberg (Rhea) served later as Counselors.

On 3 November 1976 James Fife was called by John Clifford, with approval of Bruce R. McConkie, to serve as Bishop for a second time in Norman Ward. John Seaberg became one of his Counselors.

Ward membership numbers at the ends of 1977 and 1978 were 570 and 635 respectively. The Ward was fast approaching the time of being split into two Wards.

On 22 April 1979 Warren Ellis (Evelyn) was called as the Bishop to replace James Fife. Brother Fife was then called as a Counselor to Stake President John Clifford.

On 12 April 1981 Stake President Ferrell Lazenby presided over the division of the Norman Ward into the Norman 1st and 2nd Wards.

At the time of the Ward divisions Warren Ellis became Bishop of the 1st Ward, with John Harden and David Sorenson (Judy) as counselors. Other 1st Ward officers included Roger Dale Swaim (Ferne) as Mission Leader and Carl Nye (Louise) as Elder's Quorum President.

The new Bishop of the new 2nd Ward was Don Murnan (Linda) with Michael Harris (Joy) and Raymond Boyce (Ruth Ann) as counselors. Other officers in the 2nd Ward were John Drayton (Carol) – Executive Secretary, David Kerr - Ward Clerk, Robert Guthrie (Diane) – Historical Clerk, Bud Harnish (Eleanor) – High Priest Group Leader, George Harris (Linda) – Missionary Leader, and Michael Myers (Ann) – Elder's Quorum President. Membership in the Norman area at this time was approximately 800.

The Norman 1st Ward was reorganized on 13 November 1982 by Elder Mark E. Petersen with Larry K. Michaelsen called as Bishop, William H. Mattoon (Glenda) as 1st counselor and Roger Dale Swaim as 2nd counselor. Monte Deere (Gale) and James Verville (Jo Anne) also served as counselors to Bishop Michaelsen.

A new Noble Ward was created on 13 November 1982. Warren Ellis became the first Bishop of the Noble Ward with Carl P. Nye (Louise) as one Counselor. In December 1984 construction began on a new Noble Ward building and the Ward moved into the building in December 1987. Construction on the building was delayed because the contractor went bankrupt and had to be replaced.

The Norman 2nd Ward got a new Bishopric in May 1983, which consisted of Robert F. Creson (Carol) as Bishop with Counselors Griffith Sorensen (Margaret) and John Padilla. Later Michael Myers and Bill Lancaster (Cheryl) were called as counselors.

David Sorenson replaced Bishop Ellis in the Noble Ward about May 1983 with Counselors Carl Nye and Wayne Peacock. Later Ed Clark (Kay) and Mike Haws served as his Counselors.

The Sorensens moved to Idaho and Noble got another new Bishop on 19 May 1985 with Ronald M. Fishburn (Pat) as Bishop, and Larry H. Pittman (Linda) and Albert E. Dismukes (Wanda) as counselors.

During 1985 Monte Deere replaced Larry Michaelsen as Bishop of Norman 1st Ward. Gregg Clark (Christina) and David Tucker (Kara) were called to serve as his Counselors.

Michael W. Myers (Ann) became Bishop of Norman 2nd Ward during May 1986.

The Blanchard Branch was organized in January 1987 with Lyle Nelson (Gale) as the first Branch President.

Creating New Stakes

On 23 October 1960 the Oklahoma Stake (later called the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake) was created with James A. Cullimore as the first Stake President. The Norman Branch was part of this new Stake organization. H. Aldridge Gillespie became the Oklahoma Stake President replacing William Waldrop on 12 October 1968. His calling came from Elder Ezra Taft Benson. President Waldrop had been the second Oklahoma Stake President.

The Stake Center meeting location for this Oklahoma Stake was at the Oklahoma City 1st Ward building at 44th and Lee Streets in Oklahoma City until the new Oklahoma Stake building was completed on 3 April 1966. This building was located at 5020 NW 63rd Street in Oklahoma City. Norman members donated many hours of labor to the construction of this building.

On 18 October 1970 a new Oklahoma South Stake was organized from the Oklahoma Stake with H. Aldridge Gillespie as the first Stake President. This Conference was presided over by Elder Thomas S. Monson. President Gillespie's counselors in the new Stake were Harry Gibbons (Marjorie) and Blythe Crowe (Millie), a member of the Midwest City Ward. Later John Clifford (Coral) served as a counselor.

Wiley Callister (Joyce) became the Oklahoma Stake President.

Just prior to division of the Stake many of the High Priests and their wives in the Stake participated in a General Conference and Temple excursion trip by two busses to Manti and Salt Lake City. The busses departed from the Oklahoma Stake Center.

Stake offices and meetings of the new South Oklahoma Stake were in the Midwest City building until the new Stake Center was built in Norman.

The Stake was renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake on 14 January 1974.

On 31 October 1976 the Lawton Oklahoma Stake was formed and took much of the original Norman Oklahoma Stake in the formation.

On this date H. Aldridge Gillespie was released and John Clifford became Stake President. Ferrell Lazenby became one of his counselors.

Ferrell C. Lazenby became Stake President at John Clifford's release on 8 November 1980 (Elder David B. Haight was the Presiding Authority) and James Fife, Fred Paulson, John J. Seaberg, Craig Jenson (Sherelyn), and H. Jerrell Chesney (Peggy) were counselors who served with him during his Presidency.

Then on 14 November 1982 the Oklahoma City Oklahoma South Stake was organized by Elder Mark E. Petersen and again took many of the Norman Oklahoma Stake units with it.

H. Jerrell Chesney was the next Stake President to the Norman Oklahoma Stake beginning June 1988. Counselors included Monte Deere (Gale), James H. Kitchens (Rosemary) and Michael W. Myers (Ann) during his Presidency.

Relief Society

On 16 November 1952 a Norman Relief Society group was formed with Kathryn Powell as President, Margaret C. Marin as 1st Counselor and Helen Inez Birchum as 2nd Counselor. Nancy C. Hintze served as the Secretary.

Teachers in this Relief Society group included Edna Wilford, Evelyn Snodgrass, Margaret Marin and Nancy Brownlee. On 7 December 1952 a fireside was held at the Powell home in which Doctor Henry Eyring spoke.

The earliest Relief Society group normally met in the home of Kathryn Powell and sometimes combined meetings with the Oklahoma City auxiliary.

Sister Powell was replaced as the Relief Society President effective 31 December 1955 with Moyra Hopla as President, Bonnie Cox as 1st Counselor and Edna Willford as 2nd Counselor.

In November 1958 while Norman was still part of the South Oklahoma City Branch, Annette Murphy was called as President of the Home Relief Society. Also at this same time a home Primary group was created in Norman.

The Relief Society was quite active during the early years. Early Presidents in the Norman Church were Kathryn Powell, Moyra Hopla, Annette Murphy, Bonnie Cox, Sandy Harris (called in 1964), June Davis, Marge Gibbons (served in the late 1960s with Charlcie Woodcock and Viola Haws as counselors), Shawn Pascoe, Luann Hart, Virginia Gillespie, Nancy Sneed, Irene Fife, and Coral Clifford.

June Davis was called as Relief Society President on 11 September 1966 with Marjorie Gibbons and Virginia Gillespie as Counselors.

One of their special service projects in the late 1960s included caring for a family of Christian Jews who were at the University working on a degree. The

father was from Jordan and the mother from Jerusalem. Their names were Nabil and Aydda Hadadin, and their daughter was dying of leukemia. The Relief Society cared for their two small boys for many weeks while the parents concentrated on caring for the daughter and their schooling.

In November 1976 the Relief Society President was Evelyn Ellis who had replaced Coral Clifford. Sister Ellis's Counselors were Patricia Carter and Marba Lazenby with Carolyn Deason (Dennis) as secretary. Sister Elizabeth Schellman (Mark) also served as a counselor for a time.

It was necessary to hold 3 sessions per week for the Relief Society sisters at this time. Regular meetings were held during the week with 2 sessions held on Sundays.

One session on Sunday was for the outlying sisters who came in when their husbands attended Priesthood meetings, and the other session was held with lessons adapted to young adults. Sisters Winnie Atchley and Joan Marsh were called to oversee the Sunday meetings.

Sister Dorothy MacNiven (Hugh, non-member) gave the Cultural Refinement lessons during Sunday meetings.

During 1979 Evelyn Ellis was replaced as Relief Society President by Carol Creson.

Much community service was given by this group and sometimes it was with the aid of the Priesthood and the Youth programs. Some examples: Helping to move and paint local homeless shelters including homes for unwed mothers, knitting caps and booties for newborn babies, quilting, cleaning and repairing dilapidated homes, collecting used furniture, making curtains, and caring for small children and older people when family members were incapacitated.

Another project involved making pajamas for children. The material was picked up in Salt Lake City at conference time, finished and returned to Salt Lake City at the next conference.

Also, the Relief Society was ready with meals for families who had experienced deaths, new babies, hospital stays and dressing of the dead sisters when necessary prior to burial. They were always ready to give comfort to those who were bereaved.

Learning crafts, food storage techniques, family health and preparedness, care of children, home care, furniture refinishing, sewing, embroidery, literature, wall papering and first aid in the homes are examples of subjects taught in their classes.

They also learned how to change a flat tire, how to check oil and water levels and read dials for possible engine trouble in cars.

Primary

In October 1931 the General Board of the Primary organization initiated a program to take the Primary programs to the Mission field areas where the Church was not strong. It was intended to give Primary age children 4-14 (4-12 for boys) years of age the same opportunities in lessons, music, play and activities enjoyed by those centrally located in Utah.

This program involved creating three formats for Primary, which included Home, Neighborhood and Regular Primary. Lessons and instructions would come from the Children's Friend magazine.

In November 1951 when the new Oklahoma City building was completed at 44th and Lee Streets, the Primary President was Marie Housley (Leland J.).

A Neighborhood Primary group was formed in Norman during November 1958 with Barbara Trimble as President before the Branch was organized. However it was called Home Primary by the local unit. They met in the homes of members and avoided the long drive to South Oklahoma City.

Some very dedicated sisters served the Norman Branch Primary program while experiencing changing meeting times and places.

Early Presidents of the Primary organization included Barbara H. Trimble, Bonnie M. Cox, Barbara Lois Sperry Newbold, and Charlcie Woodcock, who was called in January 1964 with counselors Meridel Ortolani and Barbara Trimble.

The original Norman Branch Primary meetings were held in member's homes during the week. About June 1960 Primary began holding meetings on Friday evenings in the basement of the Lockett Hotel. This became possible because the University had stopped using that space.

As the Branch began a young man, John Choate, was taking piano lessons. He recorded two Primary songs on a tape recorder and those for a time were the only songs sung in Primary.

As did other Church locations the Primary held an annual Penny Parade Drive in which they had the children bring pennies once per year to donate to the Primary Children's hospital in Salt Lake City. Children of all nationalities or church affiliations were accepted at the hospital if they needed its services. In 1962 the Norman Primary contributed \$29.29 and in 1967 they contributed \$63.61.

In 1961 Leta Jo Cox became the first graduate of the Norman Branch Primary.

Youth

Few records of the activities of the Norman Youth programs are now available. However they were very active. Many youth from outlying wards flocked to the Norman Youth dances and many Norman Youths participated in the annual Regional Youth Conferences held sometimes in Norman, Edmond or Stillwater.

Norman was well known for its more strict dress codes at Youth dances. For example they required young men to wear ties at dances, and each Youth had to arrive with a Bishop approved dance card, which were generally not required at other nearby Stakes. However, if possible, they were quick to provide a tie for a young man and contact a Bishop/Branch President for approval.

Young women's dress codes were strict as well, but that was usually the case in other Stakes.

The Norman youth were heavily involved in sports and athletic programs both inside and outside the Church.

Lorraine Wight Hales was the first Young Women's President after the Branch was organized. She was replaced in that position by Barbara Jean Trimble on 5 June 1960 just before the Hales moved away. Lorraine Hales was a great-grand niece to Lyman Wight.

Gale Deere served as the Young Women's President during the early years in the new Stake Center.

Patriarchs

Church members living in outlying Mission Districts of the Church were able to obtain Patriarchal Blessings from the "Patriarch to the Church" in Salt Lake City until that function was discontinued in 1979. Where Stakes were organized, they went to their Stake Patriarch.

Prior to Norman becoming a part of the Oklahoma Stake in 1960 several members received their blessings from Patriarch Eldred G. Smith who was the "Patriarch to the Church" from April 1947 to October 1979.

During the period from 1960 to 1968 when the Oklahoma Stake included all of Oklahoma except the Tulsa area and the northeastern part of the State, Norman members received their blessings from Dean S. Anderson in South Oklahoma City.

William Waldrop was ordained a Patriarch upon his release as the Oklahoma Stake President in October 1968 and was available to the Norman members for blessings until about 1973.

Norman members could also receive their Patriarchal Blessings from Patriarch Milton J. Kinne in Lawton after his ordination on 18 Oct 1970 and until the ordination of Byron A. Wade (Emma) on 19 Aug 1973. Brother Wade lived in the Ada Branch.

On 31 October 1976 H. Aldridge Gillespie was released as the Stake President and was ordained a Patriarch and gave blessings until his call as a Regional Representative during April 1978. Following his release from this position he resumed his service as a Patriarch until called to be President of the Mexico Tampico Mission during 1997.

Patriarchs Byron A. Wade and H. Aldridge Gillespie functioned simultaneously for a time because of distances involved, President Gillespie's call as a Regional Representative and Patriarch Wade's health problems.

Byron A. Wade moved from the Stake during 1983 and his son Arnold Wade (Shirley) was ordained a Patriarch during 1985. However Arnold Wade moved to Utah not long after his ordination.

During 1997 Haskell Jack (Patsy) of Ardmore was ordained a Patriarch and has given blessings to the Norman Saints until the current date of 2006.

Stake High Council

Hundreds of good men have served on the Stake High Councils in the Oklahoma City and Norman Stakes over the years, during the start of the Church in these areas. It isn't possible to recognize all of them or their tireless service. Perhaps recognizing two of the most outstanding High Councilors will suffice.

Don Gilbert (Wanda) of the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake and Dale Swaim of the Norman Oklahoma Stake are examples of what a dedicated High Councilor can be.

Don Gilbert seemed to be the one in Oklahoma City who always got the difficult jobs and filled them with much patience and sacrifice of his time and resources. Dale Swaim did the same in Norman.

These men were assigned to serve as Branch President or in Branch Presidencies at times in the small and struggling Branches. They both filled the position of Physical Facilities Directors for their Stakes, which required long distances of travel.

They used their expertise in caring for the buildings of the Stakes and regularly traveled long distances on their speaking assignments while raising the spirits of members in the Wards and Branches who needed spiritual and practical counsel.

Another difficult High Council assignment was in regularly auditing the financial records of the Wards and Branches. This required traveling to the units and working with them to balance their financial records and making sure they agreed with the records at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. Charlie Coleman (Ann) performed these audits in the Norman Stake for over 15 consecutive years.

God and His angels will remember and bless all wonderful High Councilors for their unselfish service.

Cleaning the Stadium

For 20 years the Norman Wards held the contract to clean the Oklahoma University football stadium after games and some other activities and were able to

create a nice nest egg of money for building, budget and welfare purposes. Members spent a lot of cold dark nights, sometimes with snow, rain and lightning, doing this tedious and dirty work that brought a wonderful spirit of fellowship and unity to the Norman Ward(s).

Blake Hart, Glade Merrell and other graduate students were interested in finding a way to contribute to the Ward budget when they made the suggestion to start this project.

The Ward had considered trying to do this job earlier but was not able to enlist sufficient numbers or enthusiasm at the earlier dates.

It was begun when Bishop Bushey was the Bishop during 1970. The first cleaning was after the spring Varsity-Alumni game and the Branch earned \$300, which they used to purchase annual Ward supplies.

The original amount paid per season was \$1000, which increased in time to \$2000 as a result of the negotiations of James Fife and the University. During 1977 the Church earned \$3000 per cleaning, after each game, and in 1978 they earned \$3300 per cleaning of the stadium. Inflation during the 1970s was running rampant and at the suggestion of John Seaberg a 5-year contract was negotiated with a 10% increase each year throughout the life of the contract.

The University tried using their own custodial staff for a time and another Church group for one scrimmage game to see if someone else could do it and were not satisfied with the result so the Norman Mormons got the job back.

In 1990, the last year of cleaning, the Ward was paid \$6,600 per cleaning job. Monte Deere, James Fife, and Larry Michaelsen had been assigned by the Stake leaders to go to the University Athletic Director, Ken Farris, and ask for \$7500 per cleaning, which resulted in a marked increase. They had done research on the amount other Universities were paying for the work but they settled for less than the \$7500 figure.

Seating had increased in the stadium over the 20 years from 62,000 to 75,000.

One of the active members of the cleaning crew was Monte Deere who as quarterback of the Oklahoma Sooners football team in 1962 set a single game passing record of 246 yards playing against the University of Colorado. This record was still standing in 1977 as Bro. Deere passed around brooms for cleaning the stadium.

Several newspaper articles over the years lauded the Church's efforts in doing this work and gave it some wonderful and free publicity. Some non-members were also actively involved in the Stadium cleaning in support of the Church members.

Cleaning was supervised the first two years by James Fife and then Robert Creson put his military experience to work and organized and supervised the work

for many years. Brother Gillespie began overseeing the cleanup from about 1987 to the end.

The cleaning tools were provided by the University and trucking of trash to the dump was accomplished at times by both member and University trucks. Flat tires on trucks were common because of the sharp objects encountered.

Baby sitters were provided for those with small children, and if the work approached midnight on Saturday it was left unfinished until Monday evening.

At the direction of the First Presidency, local fund raising projects and events for budget and building funds were discontinued during 1990. A concurrent change in the local Wards/Branches/Stakes brought about funding from the general tithing accounts of the Church with them being administered by the Presiding Bishopric of the Church.

After the Church gave up the contract Brother Gillespie continued to supervise the project for 5 years as an independent contractor. He used many Latter-day Saints in the cleanup. When the Gillespies were called on their Mission, the contract was taken up by Lyle Nelson of the Blanchard Branch.

Family of the Year Program

Preceding the start of the Family of the Year programs, Marge Land organized a Family Enrichment Seminar in the Stake Center for the 3rd and 4th of March 1976. Lucille B. Johnson a Family Relations Counselor and Professional Sociologist was the guest speaker. It was well attended.

Beginning in 1979 and through 1993 the Norman Wards conducted a family of the year program each year to honor some of the best families living in Norman. It was held in the month of November on the week before Thanksgiving, and the winning family got a plaque, presented by the Norman City Mayor, a professional photograph of their family, their picture and story in the Norman Transcript newspaper and a ride in the Norman Christmas parade.

This program usually filled the chapel in the Stake Center with mostly non-members from Norman. Member families were excluded from the competition.

A United States Presidential declaration had declared Thanksgiving week as National Family Week, and the Oklahoma Governor had declared November as Family Unity Month. One year United States Senator Don Nichols spoke at the activity

Families were nominated by Church members from those who were active in the community and a church. They had to exhibit high moral standards and have a loving and sharing relationship in the home. These families were interviewed and selected by a committee of Church members.

Marge Land directed the program with her very able assistant Tom Price (Jo), a lot of footwork by her husband and many others who offered their services.

Jim Verville became the regular emcee for the program during its last years. This activity seemed to help the Church stay in the forefront of the community, which created a great deal of good will between members and non-members.

The Family of the Year program was initially promoted throughout the Church because of its success in some locations. However it was discontinued at most locations possibly because they didn't have the dedication of such people as Marge and Leroy Land and Tom Price to continue the program.

It was stopped in Norman by the Stake President because of a complaint from a member who said it interfered with Monday Family Home Evening time. No other day of the week could be arranged to fit the community and Church availability.

Family Home Evening

The Church began emphasizing Family Home Evenings in the early 1900s. Monday nights has been designated as Family Home Evening within the entire Church since the 1960s. This is a time when no Church activities are authorized, and the Church buildings are to be closed. Families are encouraged to spend time together sharing spiritual discussions, developing talents, increasing love for family members and playing together.

In 1980 the Church worldwide changed its meeting format to a block schedule of three hours on Sundays. At this time Church leaders encouraged families to retain, as much as possible, Sunday evenings as a family night as well.

The Church's emphasis on the importance of families has truly paid large dividends for the Church and its people.

There have been many large and successful families over the years that have produced outstanding children to carry on the work of the gospel. This certainly has been true in Norman.

Family History

The Church recognizes the importance of tying all of God's earthly children together in an eternal bond and that one cannot be saved without the other. Therefore ordinances are just as important and required for those who have lived before our time as they are for those who are on earth.

During February 1976 in the old Church of Christ building, a new library was begun in conjunction with the Ward Library. Coral Clifford became the first Ward Family History Librarian.

A large and active Family History or Genealogical Library, as it was called then, was established in the new Stake Center when it opened during 1976, which brought in many non-members to do their research with the help of capable

librarians. Dorothy MacNiven replaced Sister Clifford and oversaw that important work and dedicated many years of service as the head librarian.

One Librarian, Rebecca Gragg Black, met her husband, Kenneth Ihde there and helped convert him to the Church. The Library was a show place when the Stake or Wards held open house and invited non-members to visit.

About 1991 Hal Pierce installed the first computers into the library, and the work was greatly enhanced by this technology. Computers were needed to rapidly access the International Genealogical Index (IGI) and the Ancestral File records that the Church had put on Compact Disks.

During November 2000 Hal Pierce arranged for two BYU researchers to come to Norman and Edmond to take DNA (DeoxyriboNucleic Acid) samples of approximately 100 volunteers at each location. This was their first sampling outside the Mountain West and California areas. The researchers spent three nights in the Pierce home.

Jackie Passey coordinated the donations in the Edmond area.

The purpose of this study was to begin accumulating data, which would allow the tracking of the flow of peoples in their migrations throughout world history.

This sampling has now (2006) expanded worldwide and National Geographic magazine has begun printing data related to these research activities, and some families have begun tracking their ancestors by use of DNA analysis.

There are confirmed evidences of family ties now being established that could not have occurred without DNA analyses (See October 14, 2006 issue of the Church News).

As of this writing the Church is in the process of digitizing all its massive stored data in the Granite Mountain Vaults in Salt Lake City for purposes of making the data available over the Internet and into homes.

Librarians who deserve recognition for their dedicated service must include Dorothy MacNiven, Gale Nelson, Glenda Mattoon, Virginia Gillespie, Diana McDanel (Mike), Loretta Sewell (Sonny), Mary Butts (Jerry) and Irene Fife. They and many others have felt the spirit of Elijah and have given extensive service to this work.

Also, many non-members have dedicated themselves to this work and will be rewarded in eternity for their sacrifices in its behalf. Many names prepared by non-members have found their way to the temple ordinances required for salvation (Malachi 4:5-6).

Church Institute and Seminary

In the mid 1960s the Church assigned a Church Education System (CES) Director, Raymond Callister (Jenny), to work in the area with the Indian peoples,

primarily in Anadarko and to initiate the CES activity in the Oklahoma Stake. They lived in Norman and taught Institute lessons to students at the University of Oklahoma.

The Callisters moved from Norman in the summer of 1967.

Over the next several years Institute Classes for students at the University of Oklahoma were taught by H. Aldridge Gillespie, Don Fortner and Blake Hart. Don Fortner became the Norman area's first Seminary teacher.

In 1970 Ferrell Lazenby came to Norman as the Institute/Seminary (CES) Director. At this time the High School age youth began attending Seminary each school day morning from 7:00am to 8:00am in the old Church of Christ building.

During the 1971/1972 school years 4 properties adjacent to each other, were purchased to create an Institute of Religion near the University Campus. A good deal of inspiration and insight were necessary to obtain these properties at the time.

One house at Elm and Lindsey Streets became the Institute building. Another property purchased was a home at College and Lindsey Streets with a 2-car garage behind it and an apartment above the garage. Houses to the north of these two properties were also purchased.

For a while the excess properties were rented to students and missionaries. Eventually the garage property burned and the adjacent homes on College and Elm Streets were torn down to make room for parking and a new modern Institute building, built during 2003.

During September 1975 a Student Branch was formed with James Fife as Branch President and Counselors Dennis Deason (Carolyn) and Nathan Meehan. James Fife was released as a Counselor to Bishop Ferrell Lazenby at this time. Ronald Phelps (Vickie) served as the Executive Secretary, Lana Green as the Relief Society President and Rick Green as Sunday School teacher. Average attendance for the Branch was between 50 and 60 persons.

They met initially in the Institute building but when the new Stake Center was completed the next year they met in it. The Branch leaders took the offices of the south wing of the building.

Those invited to attend the Branch were all single LDS members at the University, married students with no children or children too young for the Primary program. Of course all interested non-members of similar status were invited to attend.

The Priesthood leaders decided the Ward and Branch needed each other's strengths and the Branch was dissolved in late 1976. Later, the Student Branch was begun, again with meetings held at the old Institute building.

Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching

Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching could be a very difficult task as the boundaries of the original Norman Ward included Lexington, Purcell, Pauls Valley, Blanchard, Newcastle and most of Moore. It was not uncommon to travel 100+ miles to do the assigned teaching.

Welfare Activity

The Church has always considered sacrifice to be an important tenet of the Gospel and believes that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has the power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation”. (Joseph Smith, “Lectures on Faith.”)

A continual challenge in the Church as it matures will be maintaining opportunities for sacrifice, which brings faith, which brings knowledge and salvation.

Wherever the Church exists in the world there will be priesthood leaders to see after the needs of the poor of the Kingdom and in emergencies reach out to help others.

The primary focus of the Welfare Program is to help the members learn to care for themselves in all ways through hard work, education, living the commandments, family stability and sharing through donations and work to provide for the poor among them, that they might become a Zion society.

During the 1970s seven abused children from one family in Nebraska were taken by Norman Church families to try to give the children a good family life.

A recent (2006) example of service given to the community in Norman is annual participation in the “Christmas in April” program where a Church unit volunteers with community participants to restore houses of those who need help. This work has been very satisfying to members who have been involved and much appreciated by those who received the service.

Stake Welfare Ranch

Shortly after the Norman Stake (then called The Oklahoma South Stake) was created, it leased 600 acres of land near Bowlegs, Oklahoma for a Stake Welfare Ranch. Earl and Goldie West from the Ada Branch who had moved from Arizona initially oversaw this operation.

Arnold and Shirley Wade soon took over management of the ranching operations and lived on the property.

Cattle were raised on the land and during 1971, 2700 acres were purchased by the Stake as a Welfare Ranch. This land was located 16 miles north of Ada Oklahoma and 6 miles east of Konawa. The purchase price was \$80 per acre or a total of \$216,000 and the Stake’s share of the cost was 60% or about \$130,000.

This amount was reduced by donated equipment valued at about \$60,000 leaving the Stake required to pay \$70,000 from member donations.

The other 40% of the property cost was paid by the General Church Welfare Department.

As was frequently the case in those days of high local participation, many miracles combined to make it possible to buy the land.

Acreage cleared for pasture in the 5+ years the Stake owned the property was about 1500. Also, wells were dug, with Sonny Sewell involved in many ways to help with finding water and other ranching activities.

Eight miles of fencing and several barns were added. Stake members provided the labor with much of it coming from single young men stationed at the Ft. Sill military base near Lawton. Most considered it a great pleasure and privilege to work on the project.

There were two houses on the property as well as several ponds. The Wade family truck was the one used initially in the operation.

Other equipment obtained for the operation included 2 tractors and a baler. A $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck was donated to the ranch. Various members brought their trucks and trailers as needed to bring in the hay crop.

Brother Elmer Petty from Duncan, who had a large truck and other equipment, was instrumental in helping haul the large pieces of equipment for needed repairs. He also used his heavy equipment such as a bulldozer for large earth, tree and brush moving work. Brother Petty was responsible for machinery and transportation needs for the ranch.

Grass hay was grown to feed the animals during winter months with some cubed hay being purchased for feed.

At the height of the ranching operation there were approximately 100 mother cows on the property. Also feeder calves were purchased, fed out and sold each year depending on the availability of feed.

While living there the Wade family purchased 120 acres across the road from the Stake property.

The Stake's Scout Troops, Young Men's and Young Women's groups used the available Stake properties for campouts.

Brother Wade speaks of many blessings encountered in the work on the Ranch. On one occasion while harvesting hay a hard rain was noticed in the road in front of the property but none that got on the haying operation.

President Gillespie remembers when he and several other brethren came in contact with poison ivy while clearing and burning brush one July Saturday. In his case, he and his family left the following Monday for annual training at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. The second day at the Scout Ranch he

broke a small finger, which had to be put in a cast in spite of the finger being covered with poison ivy. Needless to say it was a painful experience.

One brother from Lawton was bitten by a rattlesnake but didn't notice it until he got home and realized he had a swollen and discolored area on his leg. When he went to a doctor, he was told if he wasn't dead by that time he needn't worry about it.

The property was sold in 1976 for \$250 per acre or a total of \$675,000, which gave a profit of \$460,000

Funds derived from the sale of the property were made available to the Ward/Branch units and 10 smaller supervised projects were purchased for operations at those levels. The amount of local labor then increased with the greatly reduced travel requirement.

Ward Welfare Farm

The Stake Ranch was sold as the Church moved toward smaller scale projects at the local levels. The Norman Ward received \$44,125 in cash and equipment worth about \$155 from the sale for purchase of a new project.

Norman Ward purchased land near the South Canadian river south of Norman on Jenkins Avenue for purposes of raising alfalfa hay and produced a large crop the first year, which was destroyed by lightning after harvest.

Afterwards they produced vegetables such as beans, potatoes, tomatoes and sweet corn to meet the Storehouse cannery allotment with any excess going to the families that helped raise it for their personal use.

The farming operation was set up by Ron Meikle and his wife Mavis who had moved from Idaho with extensive farming experience. They lived in a trailer on the property with their children for about 3 Years. They had able assistance from Walter Tanner (Roberta) who was skilled at growing things in Oklahoma's difficult climate.

Brother Meikle obtained some equipment critical for the operation from Idaho that was given to the Norman Ward because it had become obsolete in Idaho. These included a cultivator, planter and potato digger. A bean harvester was obtained from the Denver area that was effective in harvesting one type bean called an "Eagle," and this type bean was grown for a time.

In order to irrigate the crops three wells were dug and incorporated into a sprinkler system for purposes of watering. Brother Meikle designed and obtained the piping and pumping needed for the irrigation.

The Meikle family moved because the road into the property was not graveled and because of a heavy Oklahoma red mud problem. Also a creek bed had to be crossed to get to the trailer house. Later a low water crossing was built using rocks laid across the creek bed to permit vehicles to cross it more easily.

The Jerry Butts (Marcella) family then lived on the property, as many people were involved in managing it including Walter Tanner, Bobby Avance (Gerri) and David Shumway (Mocella). David Shumway served as the High Council Representative over the farm operation. Bobby Avance was always a workhorse for the Oklahoma City and Norman Stakes wherever he lived. He served as the secretary for H. Aldridge Gillespie during Elder Gillespie's service as a Regional Representative. Brother Avance died at an early age in 1990.

Any Norman or Noble Ward family who so desired could have their own individual garden spot on the property.

In 1985 the Norman and Noble Wards produced 6000 pounds of potatoes, 4500 pounds of corn, 3500 pounds of green beans and 250 pounds of tomatoes on the land with 1065 hours of donated labor.

This type Welfare Project was encouraged and supported for many years by General Church Headquarters but was then stopped.

The Ward farming operation was ended about 1989 by decision of Church headquarters. The Church began consolidating to more efficient production units with fulltime managers and full compliance with ever changing governmental requirements for food production and marketing operations.

Members have always been encouraged to fast for two meals each month and donate a generous offering to the Fast Offering Fund, which is used for those who are in need. They are encouraged to support the Bishop's Storehouse activity when called upon and to offer labor in support of needy members and the community at large. Stakes and Wards actively seek out opportunities to be of service to others.

Bishops Storehouse and Cannery

The Bishop's Storehouse and Cannery was located within the Norman Stake boundary about 1 mile south of Will Rogers airport in Oklahoma City.

Through the efforts of Elder Gillespie, Regional Representative, and John Clifford, Stake President, the Welfare Department of the Church agreed to this location to serve all of Oklahoma and small parts of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Texas.

Elder Gillespie and President Clifford saw this as another opportunity for service and to better encourage welfare principles among the members.

Ground was broken for the construction in February 1979 with Stake President John Clifford as the local official assigned to oversee the Storehouse. Cost of the facility was approximately \$430,000.

Dale Swaim of Norman was the initial manager of the Storehouse and Harold Young (Ina) replaced him after 2 years.

Members provided the labor to both grow some of the vegetables and then to can (wet pack) these commodities to fill an allotment from Church Headquarters. Canned goods were then transferred between Storehouses to meet their needs. Food and other commodities became part of the Church's Welfare Plan to supply members who were temporarily in need.

Stakes and Wards as groups used the canning facilities to can for their own use while reimbursing the Cannery's costs of operation. It was common for groups to take advantage of the Cannery's abilities to obtain bulk pricing and to dry pack various commodities but these were not items that were normally stored at the Cannery.

Before the storehouse came into existence the Norman Church found places to buy things such as wheat, dried milk and honey in bulk quantities and parceled them out to Church members at cost. Many times members would drive long distances to get these commodities. Nancy Sneed and others took the lead in this activity for the Norman area.

Storage containers, preservation and storage techniques were very important, and the Cannery employee's technical skills were put to good use in the canning process.

At times when there was a local disaster, such as a devastating tornado, these food and commodities were distributed to those impacted by the event in the community for their relief and without cost to them.

In the late 1990s it became necessary to end the wet pack operations at the Bishop's Storehouse because of changing State and City ordinances and legal requirements.

Also the public health laws changed and made it impossible to continue the operation as it had functioned in the past.

A Special Service Project

While Don Murnan was Bishop of the Norman 2nd Ward during 1982 a project was begun and completed to remodel the home of a new member family. The Relief Society sisters brought attention to the less than desirable living conditions the mother of the family was to return to from the hospital and that the house they were in was just not adequate for her care and recovery. This family had few resources.

Problems with the house included rat and roach infestation, a very large hole in the kitchen floor, no closets which meant clothes were thrown on the floor, there was a chicken coop in one child's bedroom, a hog had been cut up on the kitchen table and it was soaked with blood, plaster was falling from the walls, no screens on the windows, no air conditioning and an attic fan did not work. The house

foundation was deteriorating, the kitchen oven did not work and a rat's nest was in it.

A Priesthood council was held to determine what could be done and who would donate labor, money and furniture. Nearly \$20,000 was raised to begin the project and it was estimated that approximately \$50,000 was eventually spent repairing the home. The money came from donations of members and some non-members. No Church Welfare or Fast Offering funds were used.

While repairs were being made the family lived with Ward members or at times returned and lived in parts of the house. This was a burden for the family, but they readily cooperated. The project was intended to take 2 weeks to a month but took approximately 8 months to finish. As work proceeded new problems were discovered.

Repairs to the home included replacing floor beams and the kitchen floor, all new kitchen cabinets and appliances, adding screens to windows, fumigating the house for rodents and insects, moving animals outside of the home, replacing electrical wiring for the entire house, replacing the attic fan, building closets, repairing and installing heating and air conditioning units, installing a new washer and dryer for clothes, washing and ironing all clothes, building a wood burning fireplace, installing new or donated furniture, moving walls to make the interior more livable, cleaning and painting interior and exterior walls, installing wall to wall carpeting where desired, repairing plastered walls if possible or replacing them with sheetrock and building a complete new bathroom.

Approximately 100 people were involved in the work and an open house was held at the finish to show it off to the family, the workers and those who provided funds. The project epitomized what the Church is about in building member unity, teaching sacrifice, love for one another and giving Christ like service.

This project was one more example of the unity found in the Norman Ward and their willingness to sacrifice for one another. An Ensign article titled "Be Ye One" (June 2004) written by Elder Gillespie used this project as an example of how to build unity in a Ward. The article stated that "Unity in a Ward is not just a desirable state; it is a commandment of God."

Bishop Murnan called the project a labor of love and said that the open house seemed as a Temple open house because of the pride involved in the accomplishments. The Lord would say that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

Stake and Ward Cultural/Social Activities

During the summer of 1967 the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed in Tulsa.

Numerous Ward and Stake activities were held to bind members together, develop talents and draw out in-actives and non-members to help them better understand the gospel principles. Some of the early activities were Branch building fund suppers to raise money for buying a lot and building a chapel.

D. V. "Doc" Haws, organized a lot of volleyball games with watermelon busts on Wednesdays and Saturdays, which were enjoyed by the members. These were held on the grounds of the Memorial Hospital where Dr. Haws was employed as well as at Andrews Park.

There was a Luau held at the Calvin and Charlcie Woodcock farm on SE 72nd Street just south of Highway 9 and one held at Andrews Park near downtown Norman. The one at Andrews Park included the Norman Mayor and approximately 250 non-members.

Later there were picnics and campouts at the Stake Ranch and Stake Farm. Harry Gibbons became popular for his very good homemade root beer at activities.

There was an Interfaith Organ Recital held in the new Stake Center 28 March 1976.

April 15, 16 and 17, 1976 a production of an Easter play called *The Vigil* was performed with many actors and staff at the Stake Center.

Also on June 11, 1976 during the bicentennial year celebration for the United States a lavish production was performed in the Noble Center on the University Campus. This production was named *What is an American* and was produced with 200 performers in costume and approximately 2000 people in attendance.

Nearby Stakes were invited participants as well and Wards from as far away as Stillwater and Lawton participated.

James Fife was on a Sabbatical from his work at the University and had sufficient time and talent to oversee these productions.

The sisters of Relief Society hosted a breakfast for President Banowski of the University of Oklahoma. Also the Ward and the Sisters of Relief Society hosted an Inter-Faith Luncheon in which State Supreme Court Justice Alma Wilson spoke.

Sister Gwinn Norman (Fred) arranged for the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra to play at the Stake Center with many non-members participating. Dale Swaim unbolted the theatre style choir seats behind the podium and removed them. Leroy Land brought in workers who put down a level floor for portable seating and made an area just big enough for the musicians. It was said that the musicians were very protective of their space but it was a big success.

A successful program that was begun while Brother Fife was Bishop for the second time was the Friday night movies held in the Stake Cultural Hall once per month. Feature movies in 16-millimeter format were rented from a company in

Dallas. Admission to movies was 6 cookies per person and a social gathering took place afterwards.

Dale Swaim was quite popular for his efforts in providing wonderful barbequed meat at many activities, some of which he organized.

On 24 March 1978 (Good Friday) there was a large Church Regional Pageant at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. Dignitaries included Elder Ezra Taft Benson, George and Lenore Romney (Corporation President, Governor, and Presidential Candidate), Gifford Nielsen (football quarterback), Johnny Whitaker (actor), and Don Lind (astronaut). A Lamanite group from the Norman and Lawton Stakes sang "I am a Child of God" and a 120 voice choir from Tulsa sang "The Master's Touch" that was directed by Maria Epperson.

On 31 May 1980 the BYU performing group called the Young Ambassadors performed at the Lloyd Noble Center on Campus with many people coming from various parts of the regional area to attend. They also presented a Stake Fireside on Sunday 1 June 1980 in the Norman Stake Center.

Missionaries Serving in Norman

Fulltime missionaries who served in Norman during the 1952-1954 time period included Elders Hansen, Moyes, Bolton, Moore, Olson and Taylor.

For a time in 1958 Elders Odell Rice and Theron Godfrey served as missionaries in Norman. Also in October 1958 Elder Richard Aries was in Norman.

In November 1958 Elders Victor Kent and Gerald West were transferred to Norman. For a time in December 1958 and January 1959 Elders Carl Farnsworth and Lloyd Spencer served in Norman.

When the Norman Ward was created in June 1967 there were four full time missionaries serving in the new Ward. They were Elders Wiseman, Patterson, Lewis and Helm.

Names of some other full time missionaries who served the early Church in Norman were Elders Kerr, Byron West, Ernest Moyes, Lawrence Olsen, Harold Workman, Leo Grant, David Brown, Lee Bell, Kenneth Searcy, David Hill, Anderson, Tubbs, Bonham, Goldhardt and Leland Gentry.

Norman Missionary Efforts

William Wesley Choate (Beth) became the first full time missionary sent out from the Norman Church in May 1960. His farewell program was held in the South Oklahoma City Branch on 29 May 1960. He served in the Brazilian Mission.

Another missionary, Marc Haws, from Norman was called just prior to his parent's move to Norman and he served in the Andes Mission.

A Ward Conference report on 11 February 1968 shows David Sparkman serving in Germany and David Stiles serving in the Northwestern States.

The Norman Church group was always looking for opportunities to share the gospel with anyone who would listen. During the first year of Bishop Fife's second term as Bishop (1977) approximately 45 converts were baptized into the Church. A new family that moved from Spanish Fork Utah during November 1978, the Bert and Alene Lamb family, was especially active in sharing the gospel with their friends and neighbors. Brother Lamb was an ordained Seventy.

In 1981 the Norman Ward had 18 full time missionaries serving in various parts of the world. Areas where missionaries were located at this time included: Taiwan, Costa Rica, Italy, England, Ecuador, Germany, Guatemala, Chile, Canada and the United States. Shortly other countries served by Norman Church missionaries included Peru, Austria and South Africa.

Surnames of missionaries serving in 1981 included: Chambers, Coleman, Fallon, Fife, Fox, Gillespie, James, Lamb, Lazenby, Marsh, McKenzie, Norman, Perry, Ramos, Sherwood, and Thompson. Brett Fishburn and Doni Imhoff served their missions near this time. A short time later young men from the Seaberg, Deere and Robertson families served missions.

Those serving in the military about this time included Paul Cox, Jr., Mark Holmes, Gary Graff and Charles Baisey. These young men likely did their part in sharing the Gospel wherever they were assigned.

Indian Chiefs Baptized

When President Gillespie became the Oklahoma Stake President in October 1968 he initiated a plan to take the Gospel to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma.

President Gillespie said he asked Elder Spencer W. Kimball in a personal conversation for suggestions on how best to approach the Indians with the Gospel. Elder Kimball recommended working with the Tribal Chiefs.

Meetings with the Indian Chiefs and other leaders were established once per month in Watonga Oklahoma. Forty-three tribes were represented, and they were willing participants. The Stake leaders generally provided meat for meals at the meetings while the Indians brought fry bread and other foods.

An Indian Church member from Anadarko, Brother Chebahtah, was instrumental in bearing testimony of the truthfulness to what was said.

The meeting of 22 November 1969 had 70 in attendance, and on 6 December 1969 there were 60 people in attendance.

Attempts were made in working with the Indians to raise their standard of life by helping them achieve a higher level of education, avoid alcohol problems, obtain health care, obtain adequate employment, teach them the Gospel including

their history from the Book of Mormon, bring them to baptism and introduce them to the Church standards and lifestyle.

Harry Gibbons who was a member of the Stake Presidency had access to an airplane that was frequently used to fly the Stake Presidency to the Watonga meetings each month. Stake Presidency members included President Gillespie, Leland J. Housley (Marie), Harry Gibbons and Arnold Wade (Shirley) who was Stake Clerk.

A successful event on 28 March 1970 saw 12 Indian Chiefs baptized in the Oklahoma Stake Center with Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles present as well as Elder Bruce R. McConkie who served as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve at that time. Indian peoples who attended spent the night with local members.

The creation of the Oklahoma South Stake in October 1970 created a “disconnect” in the activity of working with the Indian Tribes because Watonga was then in the Oklahoma Stake with a different Stake Presidency. President Gillespie became President of the new Oklahoma South Stake.

During 1976 Arnold Wade was called to work directly with the American Indian peoples of the area as an Institute and Seminary Director with Melvin Longhorn (Evelyn) assisting. Brother and Sister Longhorn lived in the Oklahoma City 3rd Ward, and they were employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Oklahoma City and had extensive contact with Indian leaders.

A significant result of this work was when Brother Wade was able to obtain the Pottawatomie Tribe’s genealogical records and present 12,000 names to the Utah Genealogical Society. Sonny Sewell (Loretta) of Norman who was part Mississippi Choctaw Indian as well as Brother and Sister Longhorn helped Brother Wade obtain this record. Brother Sewell was President of the Pottawatomie Historical Society at that time and Shirley Wade was Secretary.

The Pottawatomie records were presented to Church President Spencer W. Kimball, in Salt Lake City on 13 November 1979 by Arnold and Shirley Wade and their son Barry Wade. Also present were Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder George B. Lee of the Seventy. This presentation was included in an article in a Church News publication at that time.

Another important part of Brother Wade’s work resulted when Church member E. K. Markham came from Salt Lake City and spent about a month visiting Indian Tribes of the Oklahoma area to determine how it would be possible to record and recover Indian genealogical records. Brother Markham later published a book detailing the results of his findings.

Many records had been lost in fires, and the Indian peoples were happy to have them recorded by the Church for posterity, and that was done.

Brother Wade served to oversee areas such as Ft. Smith Arkansas, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Lawton, which included Wichita Falls Texas.

Scouting

The Church's initial Scouting Charter request in Central Oklahoma was made on January 22, 1952 in the Oklahoma City Branch. It was troop 85, and as the troops grew within the Church locally for a time an attempt was made to keep the "85" number in the new troop numbers, such as 185, 285, 385, etc.

Bill Choate from Norman was a charter member of this group. Initially the Court of Honor was held monthly with great ceremony and there was an overnight campout once per month. The original campouts included leaving on Saturday morning and returning Sunday evening, which had to be modified to avoid breaking the Sabbath. Summer Camps were held in very remote and primitive locations.

Two boys from the troop went to the 1953 National Jamboree. Boats were built in the Scout room, and some of the boys raised pigeons as an activity.

Bill Choate states that the original troop flag that he made is still in his possession.

A Scout room was part of the old Church of Christ building where members met just prior to moving to the Stake Center.

The Eagle Scout plaque in the Norman Stake Center shows 15 scouts achieving Eagle rank before 1980 with the first one being Andro (Kim) Haws in 1967. Bill Choate got his award in Oklahoma City but lived in Norman.

Vester Adams (Laura), a non-member, served for a time as assistant Scoutmaster.

Early Cub Scouting was sponsored by the Parent Teacher Association in the schools.

The Norman Ward had two Cub Scouts at the time they moved into their new Stake Center. They were David Swaim and Eric Lehenbauer.

Ward and Stake Athletics

The Norman Church developed very successful athletic programs for the youth as membership increased. A former professional coach, John Seaberg, was effective in developing the programs at both the Ward and Stake levels. Bill Sexton (Jo Ann) and others also coached at times.

On 11 April 1964 the Branch became basketball team champions of the Oklahoma Stake with a win over Midwest City by a score of 55 to 27.

Temple Excursions

Although a temple was not readily available it was possible to organize bus tours to the Manti temple, which was the assigned temple for members in Oklahoma during the 1960s and 1970s. Starting in 1969 a bus would normally leave from the South Oklahoma City Ward building two times a year, usually in conjunction with General Conference on a Monday.

Later the busses would leave from Norman for the Norman Stake membership. It would travel 20 to 22 hours continually and arrive in Manti in the afternoon. The bus group would attend 1 or 2 Temple sessions that evening and 1 or 2 sessions the next day.

President Gillespie, who was familiar with the Manti area, would arrange for 1 to 5 busses as needed.

The group would then go to Salt Lake City on Friday, so Stake and Ward leaders could attend the Friday session of Conference. There were Welfare Relief Society and MIA sessions of Conference during this time. All members would try to attend the Saturday sessions of Conference and a Temple session in the Salt Lake City Temple.

The men and boys would attend the Saturday evening session of the Priesthood portion of Conference. Normally the members would attend the Sunday morning session and leave for the long drive back, arriving in Oklahoma on Monday morning.

These bus excursions ended in 1978.

During 1983 ground was broken in Dallas Texas for a new Temple, which was much closer to Norman and made it possible for many more members to enjoy the blessings of the Temple ordinances.

Approximately 88,000 people toured the Dallas Temple prior to its dedication with about 40% of those being non-members. There were several who asked for baptism including a family across the street from the Temple.

The Dallas Temple was dedicated by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley on 24 October 1984.

Elders Bruce R. McConkie, Neal A. Maxwell and Robert D. Hales toured the Oklahoma area Stakes after the Dallas Temple dedication and gave valuable instructions on Gospel principles.

On 30 July 2000 the Oklahoma City Temple was dedicated by President James E. Faust. President Gordon B. Hinckley was unable to attend because of sickness and President Thomas S. Monson was attending his grandson's mission return report at a Sacrament Meeting in Salt Lake City.

Solemn Assembly

The first ever Solemn Assembly for Oklahoma was held in Tulsa on Friday 16 April 1976. General Authorities in attendance included; President Spencer W.

Kimball, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, and Elders Mark E. Petersen, and John H. Vandenburg.

The meeting lasted for three and one half hours and many sensitive subjects were discussed to help local leaders have a better understanding of the functioning of the Church.

Those attending were taught a standard of how the Saints should speak and conduct themselves in many aspects of the Gospel. Members sometimes develop their own procedural standards of conduct and speech, which do not subscribe to the accepted Gospel methods as taught by the Prophets.

Priesthood leaders were cautioned to use these standards in their own conduct and speech but not teach them as Church policy.

Area Conferences

Occasionally, Area Conferences were organized by Church Headquarters, in which multiple Stakes were invited to attend. Such was the case on 28 October 1984 in which 9 Stakes were invited to attend a Conference at the University's Lloyd Noble arena. General Authorities attending this Conference included Elder Bruce R. McConkie, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, and Elder Robert D. Hales. Also, Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie, a Regional Representative of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was present. The Authorities were accompanied by their wives who also spoke at the Conference.

Reserve Officer Training Corps

During 1969 Leroy and Marge Land moved to Norman for the purpose of commanding the ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps, program at the University of Oklahoma. Brother Land was a Colonel in the army and very experienced. During his time the University ROTC program experienced the upheaval that was encountered at most universities with these programs during this time.

There was much anti-Vietnam War protesting with threats of physical violence and at times, actual violence. Some Universities were closed for a time because of the violence. Brother Land treated the protestors with kindness and offered them refreshments when possible, which generally calmed them. It still was a most difficult time for the program.

Food for Friends

The "Food for Friends," program was initiated in Norman by the Salvation Army in January 1983 and Marge Land served as one of the early board members. For many years the Norman Wards would provide food for this program. Mostly

each Ward would take enough hot food and desserts to feed about 120 indigent people at the noontime meal once per month.

The program provided one hot meal each day, Monday through Friday when possible with sufficient food and volunteers. Other churches and service groups in the community participated as well.

Average numbers of people served during 1997 was 110. It was a joyous experience to see how most of the people appreciated this service, especially the small children. The Relief Society groups organized the effort, but many Ward members were involved. Clean up afterwards was part of the service.

The Cleveland County Health Department held a class and provided a booklet for training of food servers who would then be authorized with a Food Servers Card.

Politicians

In spite of the demands of the Church some found time and opportunity to serve the public domain in political offices.

James Arrington (Vanetta Berry) was an Oklahoma Political force for many years and was heavily encouraged at one time to run for the position of Governor of Oklahoma although he declined to run.

Brother Arrington served as a Legislator in the Oklahoma State House of Representatives, Chairman of the State Democratic Party, and as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Ernest Istook (Judy Bills) held the positions of a State Legislator and United States Congressional Representative. He served in the U.S. Congress from January 1993 to January 2007. He also was the Republican nominee for Governor of Oklahoma during 2006 although he lost the election to a popular incumbent Governor.

Thad Balkman (Amy) served part of the Norman area as a State Representative for several years.

Equal Rights Amendment

During the 1970s a national issue was raised by many who thought women were experiencing discrimination in the United States and Congress was called upon to pass an amendment to the Constitution to correct the problem, which they did.

As two thirds of all the States had to accept or ratify the Congressional action, the Church and its members were actively involved to defeat the ratification process that very nearly passed before the time limit ran out. Church President and Prophet Spencer W. Kimball spoke publicly against the amendment.

Oklahoma was one of three States that were considered borderline on the issue and great efforts were made to persuade Oklahoma people one way or the other.

Two couples in the Norman Stake took lead roles in helping to defeat the ratification. They were Leroy and Marge Land and Will and Glenda Mattoon. These two couples once flew the Mattoon's private plane to Washington D. C. to deliver objections to Senator Henry Bellmon from Oklahoma.

The amendment would make all things equal for men and women in the United States while ignoring their innate differences. Wages, educational opportunities, sports, military service and even use of public restrooms would have been altered. While many of these things were for the public good, many were not. For example, making women eligible for the draft into military service and the placing of them in the front lines of wars would have been very disruptive to the family units.

Unfortunately a member of the Church in Virginia named Sonya Johnson was the most public voice in favor of the amendment. She even used her newly found publicity as a springboard to run for President of the United States.

As Oklahoma was a State that did not ratify the amendment Sonya Johnson came to Oklahoma in an attempt to sway Legislator's votes here.

Sonya Johnson was excommunicated by her local Bishop in Virginia, Steve Wilcox, who was the son of G. Neil and Afton Wilcox, who lived in the Edmond Branch. She was excommunicated for speaking against Church authority and not for speaking her mind on the issue.

The amendment was very narrowly defeated and was put to rest for the time.

General Conference Broadcasts

Twice each year the entire Church holds a General Conference, which is broadcast from Salt Lake City. Obtaining the broadcasts has been a challenge for outlying places such as the Norman area.

During most of the 1960s and 1970s the Conferences could be heard on a direct wire broadcast over telephone wires to designated Church buildings.

Then in August 1981 the Church established a send/receive television satellite dish capability in City Creek Canyon Utah, purchased a channel on a space satellite and broadcast the program to buildings by television. It was the first such station in the Mountain West area. This allowed members to see and hear the broadcasts of Conference live for the first time in many parts of the world.

The Church was obligated to make their satellite capabilities available to anyone on a first come basis but the Church knew when and what it wanted and Conference broadcasts have always been available since that time.

Now (2006) with high speed Internet in many parts of the world and with high definition and digital television available, it is possible to receive live broadcasts into homes in Norman. The signal is received on the Internet and can be cabled to a digital television where Conference can be observed just as anyone living in Salt Lake City would see it in homes. These digital broadcasts are currently only available in the English language.

Also a home can receive the BYU television channel, which has the Conference Broadcasts, through a satellite dish for homes if there are no obstructions from large trees or buildings. Modern technology continues to expand the reach of the Church in the world.

For those without this technology the satellite broadcasts to selected buildings are still available as of this writing.

Talents Used By the General Church

James A. Cullimore of Oklahoma City served as a Mission President to England and became an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on 6 April 1966 (later the 1st Quorum of Seventy). In this position he served on the General Church Welfare Committee. Elder Cullimore died on 14 June 1986.

John Clifford moved to Salt Lake City Utah where he served as Director of the Church Service Missionary Program. Later he was called as President of the Taiwan Temple.

Bert Lamb served as a Counselor to the Tulsa Mission President during 1980 and 1981.

In the early 1980s Monte Deere served as a Counselor to the Tulsa Mission President for about 2 ½ years.

James Fife served as the President of the France Paris Mission during 1984 through 1987.

Ted Lyon later served as a Mission President and President of the Missionary Training Center in Chile.

H. Jerrell Chesney and his wife Peggy (converts to the Church) gave many years of intense service to the Church. He became the first Oklahoma City Temple President in July 2000. They lived in the Shawnee Ward.

H. Aldridge Gillespie would go on to serve the Church as a Regional Representative, Patriarch, President of the Mexico Tampico Mission, General Authority in the Second Quorum of Seventy and serves currently (2006) as the Oklahoma City Temple President. As a General Authority he served in the South America North Area, the North America South Area and Assistant Executive Director of the Temple Department at Church Headquarters in Salt Lake City Utah.

Many people from the Norman area have served missions for the Church in various and remote places of the world, and many have gone on to serve in leadership roles in other places.

Obviously the talents honed by members of the Norman area were put to good use by the General Church in other locations.

Church Correlation

During the late 1970s a program was instituted in the General Church that was called Church Correlation. It was suggested by President Harold B. Lee and directed by Apostle Neal A. Maxwell. The primary goal was to both harmonize and simplify all Church activities. To help members understand the idea of correlation Elder Maxwell told a humorous story he partly made up.

He said that during the invasion of Johnston's army in the Utah War that Porter Rockwell and Lot Smith were assigned to harass the army before it came into the Salt Lake Valley.

Lot Smith was assigned to go into the army's camp at night and remove the cotter pins from the wagon wheels, and Porter Rockwell was to drive off all their horses. All went well until Lot Smith was ready to leave and realized that Porter had driven off his horse as well. On the long walk back to Salt Lake City Lot Smith decided that what the Church needed was Church Correlation.

The correlation was also intended to find out what was really happening in the Church through some very intense statistical analyses. For example, what effect does faithful parentage have on youth in going on missions and being married in a Temple. What are the effects of Home Teaching, Visiting Teaching, etc., etc.

The program would also have all lesson materials coordinated between classes within the Church and Church magazines simplified and coordinated. The Church's missionary efforts were greatly enhanced by knowledge derived from the studies.

The Church's 3-hour block meeting schedule came out of this effort and influenced the decision to have Wards and Branches share buildings for meetings. President N. Eldon Tanner was the primary voice in promoting the shared usage of buildings. Literally billions of dollars have been saved over the years because of member's willingness to accept this counsel.

Before the 3-hour block, meeting schedule began on 2 March 1980 there was a Junior Sunday School program held during the Adult Sunday School time to teach children of Primary age.

The Norman Church and all others would have the responsibility of accepting and adapting these principles where applicable.

Starting in January 1990, the church instituted a financial plan, which

provided an annual budget funded by the church, which relieved the burden of local members paying the annual budget. This was a significant happening for the church and its members.

New Scriptures

An important change for the Church's scriptures occurred in 1979 when the Church issued a new LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible. It included a new appendix, topical guide, bible dictionary, referencing to the Joseph Smith Translation and other scriptures, maps and a gazetteer.

This was followed during 1981 with a new edition of the Triple Combination Scriptures that had updated chapter headings, footnote capability and an index.

Also the 137th and 138th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants were added. The 138th Section deals with the redemption of the dead as revealed to Joseph F. Smith and had previously been added to the Pearl of Great Price at General Conference on 3 April 1976.

In the late 1960s a professor from Brigham Young University named Robert J. Matthews lived among the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints leadership in Independence Missouri for the express purpose of examining the Joseph Smith Translations to see if they had in anyway been altered. He determined that they had not been changed, and they became available for usage by the general membership.

Joseph Smith had gone through the entire Bible and had made changes or added notes of correction as inspired. Because of his being constantly hounded by enemies it was impossible for him to give this project the attention it deserved. In some cases he lined out sentences and replaced them but in other instances he wrote words or comments in the margins, which left room for interpretations.

Joseph "finished" the translation on 2 July 1833. He originally started his translation in Genesis during June 1830 but then went to the New Testament, finished it and returned to the Old Testament.

The Joseph Smith Translations were not in the hands of the Church because Joseph's wife Emma would not turn them over to Brigham Young when Joseph died and they ended up in the hands of Joseph's sons who led the Reorganized movement.

Pictures (Not included in this history)

A picture of the Branch members taken on Easter Sunday 1968 on the steps of the Carson Engineering Building on the University Campus includes the following members:

Twila Myers, Calvin Woodcock, Pam Woodcock

Mary Murdock, Bob Woods, Charlcie Woodcock
 Kristen Oliver, Carl Oliver, 3 Oliver children
 Corinne Pales, Lois Robertson, Glade Merrill
 Blake Hart, Luann Hart, Hart children
 Clarice Gillespie, Laura Adams, John Adams
 Lyon daughter, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Virginia Gillespie, Janet Cox, Linda Cox
 , Darryl Haskins
 Diana Haskins, Vickie Haskins, Barbara Freeman
 Bill Sneed, Nancy Sneed, Vester Adams, Jr.
 Joyce Woods, Laurie Dillman, Sister Dillman
 3 Dillman children , Frank Aydelotte, Sister Aydelotte
 Val Shirley, Bonnie Shirley, 2 Shirley children
 “Doc” D. V. Haws, Dawn Haws, David Haws
 Viola Haws, Ralph Pascoe, Eddie Freeze
 Haws child, Aydelotte child, Nona Whitten
 Michael Fife, Mauricette Fife, Leslie Fife
 Jacqueline Fife, 2 Missionaries, Richard Gillespie
 Verna Rinaldi, 4 Rinaldi children, Curtis Freeze
 Kent Freeze, Brent Freeze, James Gillespie
 Virgil Haws, Ruth Wells, Cheryl Lyon, Tommy Lyon

Another picture of members was taken in a City Park during the spring of 1973. Those who weren't in the first picture includes:
 Bushey, Lazenby, Allen, Scott, Tullis, Brown
 Philpin, Robertson, Mabry, Hettinger, Dotter, Clifford
 Prescott, Hadkins, Swaim, Miller, Hackney, Pales
 Groves, Myers, Coleman, Childers, Smith, Thompson
 Seaberg, Perry, Sullivan, Marvel, Johnson, Humphreys, Petree , Loch, Anderson,
 Kimbrell, Deere, Creson, Davis, Kratz, Fanning, Rump , Sewell, Lehenbauer,
 Four Missionaries: Elders Anderson, Bonham, Tubbs, and Goldhardt.

ADA

The first meeting in Ada was held in January 1956 at the home of Kenneth E. Campbell at 516 E. 14th Street, with the West Oklahoma District Presidency led by James A. Cullimore present. Elders Lynn Budge and John Yardley were also present.

A Sunday School was established to be dependent on the Shawnee Branch and continued to meet at the above address until June 1956 when meetings were moved to the VFW Hall.

A significant baptism was held 27 May 1956 at the Oklahoma City Chapel during which 5 people from Ada were baptized as a result of the efforts of Elders Budge, Yardley and Walter E. Kelly. Billie Killcrease and his wife Florence Alma Killcrease, Willard Harold Monroe Bowers and his wife Sallie Melville Bowers and Donald Reese were baptized. Sister Killcrease and Brother Bowers were brother and sister.

Early members included the Kenneth Floyd and Beverly Jane Campbell family, Rufus and Nadine Sweeney family, Willard and Sallie Jane Bowers family, Billie and Florence Killcrease family, Edna Williams, Josephine Williams Troxell and children, Bertha McNeal and her mother Sister Glazebrook, Robert Stanley and Doris Short family, a young boy named Glenn Nickells, Maggie Williams, Inez Ballard, Mary Fowler, Bertie Ballard, Gloria Portillo, Robertson family, Sharp family, Eldrie O'Bryant and son, Bill Willis family, Carmalita Redelk, and the Don Reese family. Soon the family of Howard Norwood and Hazel Duff moved to Ada from McAlester with children Vickey and Michael.

Other early missionaries to Ada included Elders Williams, Whitting, Sanders, Livingston, Padburry, Bowen, Wight, Fuhriman and Despain.

For a short time members were dependent on the Shawnee Branch and attended Church in Shawnee with some meetings being held in the Campbell home, the Edna Williams home and the VFW Hall. During attendance in Shawnee the group met above a business in an old building in downtown Shawnee.

On 17 August 1958 Mission President Samuel R. Carpenter created the Ada Branch with the following officers: President, H. Norwood Duff; 1st Counselor, Willard Bowers; 2nd Counselor, Rufus Sweeney; Sunday School Superintendent, Kenneth Campbell; Chorister, Edna Williams; Organist, Florence Killcrease; Priesthood Group Leader, Norwood Duff; Relief Society President, Melba Nadine Sweeney; Primary President, Jane Campbell; and Genealogy Chairman, Hazel Lee Duff. A local history gives the organization date as 16 November 1958.

At the time of the Branch organization approximately 30 to 40 people were attending Sacrament meetings. The VFW Hall was a very comfortable place to meet but it was necessary to carry all supplies to and from the building before and after each meeting.

In a short time the Branch was able to obtain a lot for their new building. A Church building was purchased during 1970 at 401 West 7th and Cherry Streets.

Ada Branch Presidents

Howard Norwood Duff, from 17 August to March 1961
Kenneth Floyd Campbell, from March 1961 to July 1964
George A. Standefird, July 1964 to December 1965
Bruce William Maxwell, December 1965 to July 1969

Willard Harold Monroe Bowers, Jul 1969 to June 1971

Earl R. West

Arnold Lee Wade

Byron Wade

William H. Engemann

Calvin Warren Woodcock

Josiah Bush

Arnold Lee Wade

Ford Reeder

For additional information on the Ada Branch history refer to the Ada Church history written by Florence A. Killcrease. A copy is in the Ada Branch Library.

ALTUS

In July 1954 Lieutenant Milton J. Hintze was transferred to the Air Force base in Altus and began looking for other Church members in the area. With that stimulus a Sacrament Meeting was begun in the home of Brother and Sister Larry Wiemer with six people present at the first meeting.

By 1955 there were approximately 20 people attending the meetings and a Relief Society group was formed in February.

Missionaries came to Altus about this time to contact Mr. and Mrs. Stoltenberg from Lone Wolf, who had requested baptism through the Mission headquarters. Elders Morgan and Cluff then labored in Altus for about 6 months.

Also in February 1955 the group received permission to hold meetings in the newly completed Base Chapel. Most attending were young couples. Shortly a Home Sunday School was begun. Roland Quinn was head of this group.

During 1957 permission was received to hold Sunday School at a building on the military base. By now there were more children in the group than adults.

In 1957 Elders Floyd Larsen and Gary Miles labored as missionaries for about 6 months and in 1958 Elders Nef and Somerfield served in Altus.

During 1958 a Primary organization was formed and met in members homes.

Other member surnames during the 1950s included Reid, Chidester and Heley. For a time those service men who paid tithing would mail it back to their home Ward.

On 30 November 1958 a Service Men's branch was formed with Milton J. Hintze as Branch President, David L. Ohsiek as 1st Counselor and Lynn C. Sleight as 2nd Counselor. Milton H. Page was Branch Clerk.

1960 brought participation in a District and Mission Youth Conference. The Altus branch was awarded first place in the Sacred Song competition and received second place in the Original Song competition.

Altus became an Independent Branch in January 1961, not just a Service Man's Branch, shortly after the West Oklahoma District became a Stake.

ALVA

Thanks to Bonnie Haas

Alva is in a very isolated wheat growing area of northwestern Oklahoma.

Four girls of one family joined the Church in Waynoka during the 1920s when Elders walked to their farmhouse and taught them. They were Mildred Wells, Ruth and Ruby Wells (Twins) and Florence Wells. Later an older sister who didn't live in the area (Myrtle) and a younger sister (Adeline) joined the Church. They became the nucleus of the Church in Alva.

These sisters had no contact with the Church for many years until after they had married and had children.

Bonnie Sprague Haas who was a Church member from Wyoming married Chris Haas, a farmer, and moved to Cherokee during 1959. She wrote to Oklahoma A&M College (OSU) inquiring about where the nearest Church group was located. A Brother Montgomery answered her letter and informed her that the closest Church group to her was in Enid.

Chris and Bonnie Haas attended Church in Enid until Sacrament meetings were begun by missionaries, Elders Joe Dilsworth and Bryan Stevens, in Alva during the spring of 1960. Meetings were in the Longfellow school. Sister Haas was a talented pianist and organist. They were organized as a dependent group on the Enid Branch.

Most of the new congregation was the Wells sisters and their children.

Mildred Wells Parker organized the first Sunday School and was the first Superintendent. Sister Parker found a small building on Santa Fe Street owned by her daughter Glenda Davidson, paid the rent for it and made sure it was cleaned from top to bottom. Her sisters Ruby Wells Wimmer, Ruth Wells Rose and Adeline Wells Varner were also involved in this project as well as some investigators.

The missionaries lived in the building and their belongings were put away during meetings.

A convert, Deanna Duncan, estranged herself from her husband's family by joining the Church.

During the summer of 1961 the group meeting place was moved to the community of Ashley between Alva and Cherokee. This was a house rented from Nell Palmer King south of Highway 64 across from the Ashley grain elevator. This was a large and very clean house that was well heated and Sister Parker found an air conditioner for it.

An active family of Golden and Joan Arrington moved to the area during the early 1960s as Brother Arrington took a position to teach music at the Northwest Oklahoma College. They moved from Moscow Idaho. This gave the group their first permanent Priesthood holder and he was very talented musically and well based in the Gospel. Sister Arrington had been raised in Canada.

Prior to this time the group had to rely on the missionaries and Priesthood sent from Enid for ordinances to be performed.

The Relief Society was a very active group and a bake sale brought them \$100. They held bazaars, rummage sales and other special activities. All these sisters were very close and worked very hard to bring about the growth of the group.

Traditions later developed include giving a quilt to each Relief Society President and serving meals at the College/University homecomings.

The Stake Center at this time was in Oklahoma City but there was no Stake building so a school in Edmond was frequently used for Stake Conference meetings.

There were strong anti-Mormon feelings among the community and among some of the husbands of the sisters who were members. The feeling was that if they were ignored they would soon go away.

After a time the group decided they didn't want the 7 miles drive to meetings in Ashley and a duplex on 4th Street in Alva was rented for meetings. Because of a lack of funds Sister Parker paid many of the bills for the first few years. The neighborhood was unfriendly and poorly maintained. The yard next door had abandoned cars and someone stole the front step of the duplex.

Missionaries lived in the building when they were in town and blankets were used to divide classrooms during meetings. Some of the converts moved away and yet stayed strong in the Gospel. A Sister Ellen Kirby had moved to Cherokee from Monticello Utah. Meetings maintained a strong spirit.

The Alva Saints were thrilled to get a large and nice new meeting place at 519 3rd Street on 30 December 1964. They were able to get a small refrigerator but never had enough money for a cooking stove. The Arrington family had now moved away and they were again without local Priesthood.

Bonnie Haas became the first Primary President in Alva with Counselors Ruby Wimmer and Mildred Parker. The children of two non-member families joined the group, the Young and Thrash children. They met at 9:00 am each

Saturday morning with much driving to pick up students. Little help was available for the group that was so isolated from Stake leaders by distance.

Money for hymnbooks and manuals weren't available unless donated, usually by Sister Parker. Things became easier when Sister Parker realized she could order them directly from Salt Lake City without going through the Stake ordering process.

Families who came to Alva at this time included Bob and Joyce Beagley, Frank and Billie Shipley, Byron McKitrick family, Mary Schneider, Don Diel family and the Everett Rose family. Some converts stayed but many moved away.

Hubert L. Ward became the first Dependent Branch President in Alva on 17 November 1968. His Counselors were Loren E. Butler and Omer R. Parker and all were from Enid.

On 10 January 1971 Michael Scott became Branch President after having moved to Alva as he was a student at the College and his wife was an excellent musician. Michael Scott later moved to Kansas City to attend medical school and Jay McAllister became Branch President. He and his wife Charlene had 3 boys.

The Priesthood developed money-raising projects, which was helpful for budget requirements and a potential building fund.

D'Estang Dobbins joined the Church and was active in the Priesthood. Others who came into the Branch were Brother Singh from India, Frank Cunningham family, and Mike and Sheryl Duggins.

A very active MIA group was formed with Jonna Varner Cunningham as President and later Charlene McAllister was President. They were involved in road shows, youth conferences, dances and camps.

Ray and LeAnna Barber moved to Alva as he was a manager of the J. C. Penney store. They had 5 children and he replaced Jay McAllister as Branch President when Brother McAllister was transferred to Germany.

Elder Mark and Sister Bernice Laney of Murray Utah served as the first couple missionaries to Alva. This couple converted Mike and Karen Dardari. Brother Dardari was of Iranian descent. Also, Mike and Linda Worley were converted and Mary Jones and her 4 sons were reactivated.

President Barber began a Sunday Seminary for students of all ages.

A great loss for the group was when Sister Mary Schneider passed away.

Then the Dan Anderson family moved to Alva, which was a blessing for the Branch.

On 9 September 1973 at the Enid Ward Conference the Alva Branch became and Independent Branch.

With the Barbers moving to Utah Everett Rose who had been converted in Shawnee became Branch President. He purchased an old Pentecostal Holiness

Church building and arranged for it to be remodeled for the use of the Church while he rented it to the Church. Members helped with the remodeling.

Carolyn Diel was serving as Branch Relief Society President at this time and the Relief Society made new curtains and drapes for the building. The new building was clean, spacious and well decorated.

The Branch moved into the building on a stormy October day in 1977. At the first Sacrament Meeting Susan Haas Poston sang, "Bless this House" and brought tears to many present. A new piano, borrowed from the Beagley family had been installed.

The Bob Snearly family moved in from Colorado. Carolyn Diel was serving as Branch Relief Society President at this time.

At the next Branch Conference the Branch got to show off the building to Stake President Kenneth Hutto and other Stake leaders who were much impressed.

Eighty people were served lunch by the Relief Society on the day of the first Branch Conference in the new building.

Sister Bonnie Haas was now called as Relief Society President. The Branch had for many years visited Sister Margaret Baker who lived in Freedom which was 70 miles away and she was obligated to care for an elderly lady and not able to attend. However at this time she began to attend the Branch meetings, which thrilled everyone.

For years Sister Parker was first to bear testimony in the Fast and Testimony meetings and this became a tradition to wait on her before anyone else arose.

A new Missionary couple arrived from Blanding Utah. They were Glen and Eva Shumway. Don Diel became the Branch President after the Rose family moved back to Shawnee. The Dan Anderson family and Byron McKittrick family moved about the same time.

Bob and Edith Cordell moved to Alva with their 3 children. Bob and the children were active members while Edith was a non-member who frequently attended Church. They left the area after about 3 years.

Sandra Van Horn was a handicapped student at the University from Ada and a new convert. Her example left an enduring influence on the Branch.

Other new members of the Branch included Larry Sternberger living in Hartner Kansas, Carol Camp and her daughter Melissa, Sister Neena Steuben and Sister Mickey Tibbetts Brown. These last two were single mothers who attended with their children.

The Mike and Kathi Sudholt family moved from Sullivan Missouri to Alva with 4 children. Mike taught the Gospel Doctrine class and Kathi Sudholt became Primary President. There were 3 deaths in Sister Parker's family and the Steuben family lost a 3-month old son to death.

Toni Shipley married a non-member, Brian Land.

The first temple marriage of a member of the Alva Branch came in the Jordan River Temple when Susan Haas married David B. Poston.

At the beginning of 1983 Don Diel was Branch President with Counselors Mike Sudholt and Bob Snearly. Lee Kearnes (Cheri) was Sunday School Superintendent, Bonnie Haas was Relief Society President with Counselors Kathi Sudholt, and Carolyn Diel. Billie Shipley was Secretary, and Gailanne Snearly was Primary President.

On 14 June 1981 Alva became part of the newly organized Stillwater Stake.

On 20 October 1996 Chris Haas, the husband of Bonnie Haas, who had supported her for so many years in her activities of building the Alva Church, was baptized. He was soon put to work as the Branch Clerk.

1998 was a good year for Alva as they got a new building on 26 April. Twelve members of the community visited during the open house of the new building.

Ernest Passey (M. Darlene) from Enid served as Branch President when Alva got its own building during 1998. Later Branch Presidents have been James Petree and Lee Cox.

ANADARKO

The Anadarko Saints were first organized into a Sunday School with six members in 1947.

Anadarko became a Branch of the Church 16 August 1954 with David H. Dunn as Branch President.

A good many missionaries were sent to the area by Mission President Alvin R. Dyer to work with the Indian population and many were baptized.

The Branch was reorganized in March 1956 with Douglas E. Traywick as President and Counselors Norman G. Holmes and James Watkins. James Tustison was called as Branch Clerk.

With encouragement from Mission President Alvin R. Dyer and District President James A. Cullimore a building program was quickly started. Construction on a new building began during November 1958 with Hans C. Jensen serving as building supervisor.

The new chapel was placed on 10 acres of Indian land after four years of negotiations and much prayer and fasting by the members.

The building was completed in November 1959 and meetings began there during January 1960. It was intended that the building would serve as a missionary center to the Indian population.

Two missionaries, Elder and Sister Willard Longhurst were stationed at the building for a time to promote the building as a visitor's center for the Indians and to answer any questions and to teach the gospel if possible.

In addition to regular meetings held in the Anadarko Chapel, meetings of Priesthood, Sunday School and Sacrament were held for a time at the Riverside Indian School to serve those students.

During 1960 there was a membership of 126 of which about 70% was American Indian.

ARDMORE

The first known meeting of the Church in Ardmore was a Sunday School meeting in the home of non-members Mr. and Mrs. John W. Henry. This occurred during 1942. Sister Henry was baptized 14 May 1942 and Brother Henry was baptized 2 June 1942.

Members of this Sunday School included Augustine LaFountain (male), Grace Irwin, and John Whitehead other than the Henry couple.

A nearby airbase opened as a training facility for the military and that brought an influx of members into the area. The base closing after the war in 1945 resulted in the discontinuing of the Sunday School for a time.

Shortly Elder Knaphus and his wife moved to the area and the Sunday School was resumed at the Henry home. After only about a month the Knaphus family moved to Enid but two Elders were sent into the area by the Central States Mission. Then after about 3 months the Sunday School was moved to the home of Brother and Sister Lloyd Petty.

In 1947 Brothers Camille Jack and John Henry were in the Sunday School Superintendency with the Elders teaching. Thirteen year old Dorothy Petty was teaching the children's class.

Later Brother Armine J. Maxwell became Sunday School Superintendent with Brother John Henry and Brother Jack as Counselors.

In the spring of 1949 meetings were moved to the Maxwell home and often the Maxwell family was the only ones in attendance. During August 1950 meetings were moved to the American Legion building at 3rd Street and North Washington. The Church of Christ group had just given up the space, which made it available.

On 16 August 1954 Mission President Alvin R. Dyer came to Ardmore and organized a Branch. Branch President was Armine J. Maxwell with Camille Jack and Philip Grindstaff as Counselors. On 27 August 1954 a lot was purchased for a building site at Wolverton and Mulberry Streets, N.W.

During 1955 there were 14 baptisms with 8 being adults. Several projects were used to raise building funds including a "Fun and Frolic" outing on the 4th of July at Lake Murray and serving lunches during the November Church Conference in Oklahoma City. The Priesthood had a project of painting a house and one of putting asbestos siding on a house.

The building projects had developed unity within the Branch and improved Sacrament meeting attendance to an average of 35 with attendance at Sunday School even larger. All auxiliaries were organized and doing well.

The year 1956 saw Lt. Maurice Lee, a nephew of Apostle Harold B. Lee, leave the area and the arrival of Lt. Jerald Clyde who had served a mission to Canada. Both were excellent workers and teachers.

A crew from Bremer Construction in Houston arrived to begin construction of a new building on 3 July 1956. District President James A. Cullimore brought a crew from other Branches in the area on 4 July 1956 to help the unloading of the prefabricated materials from a railcar and to begin the construction process. It was said that this type building had never been erected in Oklahoma before this time.

A watermelon bust was held at Whittington Park by the Branch during the evening of 3 July. The unloading took all day on 4 July.

The majority of the building construction effort was provided by talented tradesmen and laborers, from throughout the District. Many times the Sisters provided noon meals.

The first meetings were held in the new building on 5 August 1956 although it was not yet complete.

The building was dedicated by Apostle George Q. Morris on 18 September 1956. Mission President Alvin R. Dyer and District President James A. Cullimore were present.

Even though the building was not totally finished it was still dedicated. For example the air conditioning units were not installed until the fall of 1956 and the opera chairs were not installed until the spring of 1957. Drapes were purchased and installed in the Chapel and Bishop's office in November 1957.

Billy Mack Vawter (Dorothy) was sustained as Statistical Clerk on 14 February 1957 but soon moved to Oklahoma City and was replaced by Sterling Kendall in July 1957.

During September Howard Smith Clark was sustained to fill the position of 2nd Counselor in the Branch Presidency to replace Glen A. Holmes who was moving. Brother Clark moved and was released in January 1958.

Brother Elvie Leon Reedy moved into the Branch and became 2nd Counselor in the Presidency in the fall of 1957. Brother Sterling Kendall was transferred to France and released in February 1958.

During late 1958 the Air Force base in Ardmore was closed requiring the release of Stanley Latimer as a Clerk and the sustaining of Sister Laura Church as Statistical Clerk.

The Street was paved in front of the Church building during the spring of 1958.

In the fall of 1959 the building received a brick veneer.

In the spring of 1960 the Branch purchased two lots on the immediate West side of their building for \$500 from J. B. Ponder.

The organizing of the Oklahoma Stake in October 1960 prompted the call of Milo Odell Hobbs as 2nd Counselor in the Branch Presidency.

Through the generosity of the Relief Society a Baldwin 51 organ was purchased on 20 November 1960.

BARTLESVILLE

A Sunday School was begun at Bartlesville in 1924 with Clarence A. Livingston as Superintendent. The first meeting place was in the Livingston home at 1007 South Hickory and met later in Carpenter's Hall.

Samuel G. Goodwin became the first Branch President on 20 July 1935. His counselors were Robert H. Foster and Enoch J. Pierce. The new Branch met in the Goodwin home at 1131 South Maple.

Robert H. Foster became the Branch President in 1938 and served until 1942. His counselors were Enoch J. Pierce and Harry B. Cole. Harry B. Cole served as Branch President for a few months before moving and a missionary named Elder Leavett served as President for a short time.

Brother Foster was called as Branch President a second time and served until 1945. Brother Cole returned to the area and was recalled as Branch President with the Branch meeting in the Spiritualist Church. Glen Peterson, Harold C. Taylor, Robert N. Sears, and John W. Foster served as counselors at times.

The Branch began holding ice cream socials and pie suppers to raise money for a building program about 1948.

Robert N. Sears became the Branch President on 1 October 1950 and in June 1951 the Branch moved to the Neekamp Funeral chapel and remained there until July 1953.

During 1955 the Pryor/Adair Sunday School group became dependent on Bartlesville for leadership. At this time William R. Oxford was Branch President with Isaac D. Smith and Charley Littlefield as Counselors.

On 31 August 1958 Bartlesville's combined membership with the Hominy and Pryor dependent groups was 272 members.

New Building

A building committee was organized comprised of Robert N. Sears, Harry B. Cole, John W. Foster, Glen T. Patterson, Veigh J. Nielsen, Fred Schaefer, William L. Ruggles, and Newell J. White.

Newspaper articles estimated the cost of the new building to be \$50,000 in one article and \$100,000 in another article.

Construction began in July 1953 and at this time the Branch began meeting in the basement of the Phillips Apartment Hotel. Members donated over 11,000 hours of labor to the building construction.

On 12 October 1953 a party was held in the building prior to the roof installation for Laretta J. Cole's 86th birthday.

Members began meeting in the new building on Mother's Day on 9 May 1954. Completion of the building construction didn't occur until August 1954.

The building was dedicated on Sunday 10 October 1954 by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. He was assisted by President Alvin R. Dyer of the Central States Mission.

After the completion of the new building membership grew quickly and it was necessary to call a new building committee comprised of Alma J. Hintze, Floyd C. Moulton and Arlo J. Moffat.

This committee recommended that the chapel seating be doubled and that a new classroom wing be added.

Construction began on this new phase of the building on 7 August 1962. Robert A. Harding was the construction supervisor.

Over 12 inches of rain fell during September while the foundation, footings and outside walls were under construction. Local funds were exhausted and it was necessary to obtain a working capital loan from Church headquarters of \$7,300 to continue construction and prevent interruption. Much local labor was used in the construction.

The first meeting in this new addition was held on 3 March 1963. The new building was dedicated on 28 April 1963 and all debts were paid in full. President Henry D. Moyle of the First Presidency of the Church dedicated the new building.

New Leadership

President Sears was released on 6 November 1955. Counselors who had served with him were Edward E. Burgoyne, John W. Foster, Glen T. Patterson, Collier L. Allen and Veigh J. Nielsen.

At this time Veigh J. Nielsen was called as the Branch President with Mike M. Vaclaw, William L. Ruggles, and Duane Christiansen serving as his counselors until his release on 6 January 1957.

Harvey W. Thompson then became the Branch President on 6 January 1957 with William L. Ruggles, Duane Christiansen, Irvin C. Dickerson and Keith W. Calderwood serving with him as Counselors until his release on 17 August 1958.

Keith W. Calderwood then served as the Branch President until July 1959 and Irvin C. Dickerson, Thomas A. Durm and Walter Bowen serving with him as Counselors.

During July 1959 Glen T. Patterson became the last Branch President before the creation of the Bartlesville Ward at the time of the creation of the Tulsa Stake on 1 May 1960. His counselors while serving as Branch President were Irvin C. Dickerson, Walter F. Bowen and George L. Smith.

Brother Patterson became the first Bishop of the new Bartlesville Ward with Brothers Dickerson and Smith serving as his Counselors.

On 30 July 1961 Theo J. Green was sustained as Bishop with Arlo J. Moffat and Alma J. Hintze as Counselors.

Additional Names of Members

Billy G. Hendrix, Christine E. Stewart, Mina C. Moore, Eugene L. Ker, Harold W. Draney, Janet Nielsen, Harrison F. Temple, Richard F. Dickerson
Betty Ker, Katherine G. Vaclaw, Donald Jones, Richard Hawkins, June Jones

BLACKWELL

The Blackwell Branch was originally part of the Oklahoma City District and was organized 1 February 1942 under the direction of Mission President John F. Bowman. Grover Edgar became the Branch President with Clarence Levingston as Counselor.

A Church building was constructed at a cost of \$23, 874 and dedicated on 8 November 1951. At the time of the dedication the Branch Presidency included Jack Ferguson, Branch President, George Attebery as Counselor and Edward Attebery as Branch Clerk. There were 55 members at the time.

On 1 September 1975 the Blackwell Branch, which was now part of the Wichita Kansas Stake became part of the Ponca City Ward because of diminished membership.

Then on 12 September 1976 a Dependent Branch was created with Roy Nelson Brazell as Branch President and Samuel Omar McCrory and John E. Hoogendoorn becoming Counselors.

On 30 April 1978 Blackwell and Ponca City became part of the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake when the Tulsa Stake was divided into the Tulsa Oklahoma and Tulsa Oklahoma East Stakes.

On 12 August 1979 an Independent Branch was again formed with Terry Ricketts as Branch President with Charles McBroom and Kevin Moore as Counselors. John Hoogendoorn became Elder's Quorum President, Pat Scott, Relief Society President, Mary Scott, Primary President, Ruby Ricketts, Young Women President and Charles Scott, Sunday School President.

Early members in Blackwell included Samuel and Mildred McCrory who worked many years for the success of the Church in the Blackwell area. Other members included the Henry Allen family.

BRISTOW

The Bristow Branch was formed on 13 January 1980 from the Sapulpa Branch.

BURNEYVILLE

Little is currently known of this Branch that was formed very near the Oklahoma/Texas border west of Marietta Oklahoma. It was formed on 30 September 1939 under the direction of Central States Mission President Elias Woodruff. Stephen Ladner was the Branch President.

This Branch was likely part of a District of the Church that was headquartered in Texas.

CHEROKEE

On 17 July 1855 this was the first Branch of the Church organized in what would become Oklahoma, in the Cherokee Nation. It was soon dissolved as its members migrated to Utah the following year. William Slade served as the Branch President.

CHICKASHA

Thanks to Reba Shaw and Harold L. Dowdle

The Roberson family was members of the Church in Chickasha during the early 1950s.

During 1959 Reba Shaw joined the Church in Chickasha while meetings were held in Anadarko. During this time a very active Primary group functioned in Chickasha.

After the organization of the Oklahoma Stake in October 1960 a Dependent Branch on Anadarko was created.

In December 1961 the Independent Branch was created with Harold L. Dowdle (Ruth) as President. Counselors were Horace (Robbie) Roberson (Ethelynn) and Carl Willoughby (Sylvia).

The Branch initially met in an old military barracks.

Bake sales and rummage sales were used as a means to raise money to buy land for a building. Reba Shaw laughs about the time a man approached the group at a rummage sale and asked what they would take for the entire lot of things for sale. After consultation the sisters concluded they would sell him everything for \$200 and he promised to go to the bank, get the money and return for the purchase. The sisters got excited about their sale but never saw the man again.

After sufficient money was raised for land Sister Shaw approached a couple she had known from childhood about selling the 3 ½ acres of land the Church is now on and they agreed. It is a beautiful spot overlooking a lake and a City park. The sellers were Charles and Marie Holder.

During 1968 the Dowdle family moved to Provo Utah where Brother Dowdle took a teaching assignment. The Chickasha Branch at this time had about 130 members.

The next Branch President was Alan Swenson.

Architect Afton Gille of Oklahoma City was used to draw the local drawings for the building and Carl Willoughby oversaw the construction. The first phase of the building was completed about 1970.

CLAREMORE

Over the years many missionaries have worked in the area of Claremore even before a Branch was formed. A missionary couple that came in the fall of 1976 named Elder Ralph and Naomi Astle will be remembered for their great work under very trying circumstances.

Under the tutelage of Bishop Charles R. Twiss of Tulsa 2nd Ward the Claremore area established a Dependent Sunday School on 18 August 1974. Fifty people including some visitors were present.

The first meeting was held in a converted stable at the Community Services building of the Claremore Junior College.

Shortly after the Dependent Sunday School was formed a Primary group was organized. This Primary met in the Community Services building of Claremore Community College with Mary Long as President. This Primary group grew quickly from 12 to 40 members and when they lost their meeting place the New Primary President Jeannie Phillips opened her home for the meetings. Jane Malfatt also served as President.

For a time Branch meetings were held in Loshbaugh Hall on campus with members traveling to Tulsa 2nd Ward for Sacrament meetings on Sunday evenings. Loshbaugh Hall had bunnies and hamsters running in their cages, which delighted and distracted the children.

Later a local school system allowed the group to rent a school building five miles southeast of Claremore. Soon 5 acres were purchased for a building site.

The Claremore Saints then felt very fortunate to be able to rent the Seventh Day Adventist Church for meetings.

The Relief Society was organized during March 1976. There were 19 members at the first meeting with Zandra Long as Secretary. During the spring of 1977 Diane Spalding served as President of the group and later Stephanie Brinton became President. For a time meetings were held in Sister Brinton's home. After the formation of the Dependent Branch Evelyn Toye became President and later it became Irene Greenmun.

The Relief Society participated in many fund raising activities including garage sales, bake sales, arts and crafts fairs and working concession stands at Skelly Stadium activities. They also made baby quilts for the many new babies that came into the Branch.

On 25 September 1977 under Bishop Shipp of Tulsa 2nd Ward, the Claremore group became a Dependent Branch.

Richard Lee became President of the group with Eric Anderson and Darrell Arrowood as Counselors and Bruce Malfatt as Clerk. During 1978 President Lee moved to Denver and Eric Anderson became President.

During February 1979 Claremore had sufficient Priesthood leadership to become an Independent Branch and the Tulsa 2nd Ward lost the 150 members that went with it. President Raleigh Huntsman of the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake and his Counselors were present. The new Branch Presidency included Bruce Malfatt as President with Counselors Herbert Brinton and Melvin Toye. James Askew became Branch Executive Secretary and Charles McKnight became Branch Clerk.

Other Branch officers included Steven Kohler, Max and Elma Crowson, Alden and Abbie Sellers, Jerry Davidson, Daryl Bailey, Betty Barnard and Debra Long.

CLEVELAND

During October 1975 a Dependent Branch was organized in Cleveland. It was dependent on the Tulsa 3rd Ward and included the area of Hominy that in 1955 had a Dependent Sunday School led by James Conner as Presiding Elder. That Sunday School had been dependent on the Bartlesville Ward.

There were about 25 active members of the new Branch and included long time members Ernest and Cecelia Manzer.

A missionary couple, Ted and Faye Proctor labored to build up the membership.

A member, John R. Drummond, living in Cleveland had been serving as Bishop of the Tulsa 3rd Ward although it was 37 miles distance one way. Others from Cleveland who had been serving the Ward at the time were Michael Southward, Vickie Southward, Patricia Drummond and Gretchen Choate.

Branch boundaries included the towns of Hominy, Avant, Wynona, Jennings, Terlton, Mannford, Prue and Cleveland.

Michael Southward became the first Branch President and the Branch established a welfare project of 10 beehives for assisting the needy of the area.

Ted L. Fast and John I. Choate initially became President Southward's Counselors but soon Bobby Stanfill replaced Ted L. Fast who became the Elders Quorum President.

Ace B. Mulliner became the Branch Clerk and was later replaced by Robert I. Shaftoe who served as Clerk and Executive Secretary.

Relief Society President was Blanche Humphreys with Counselors Victoria M. Southward, Patty Calderwood, Ellen Carter and Winnie Ella Fast who served at various times under President Humphreys. Winnie Fast served as Secretary.

Kerry D. Smith served as Sunday School President with Counselors Dale L. Carter, John D. Stanfill and Larry Lovett. Dale Carter later replaced Kerry D. Smith as President.

Early Presidents of the Young Women were Victoria M. Southward, Patricia M. Drummond and LaDean Shaftoe. Counselors were Blanche Humphreys and LaDean Shaftoe.

Early Young Men Presidents were Ted R. Fast and Robert L. Shaftoe with Counselor and Scout Leader Steve Thompson.

Primary President was Linda Mulliner with Patricia M. Drummond, Ellen F. Carter and Victoria M Southward as Counselors.

Seminary Teacher was Gretchen Choate.

During July 1977 Stake President Veigh J. Nielsen Called Richard Fisco (LaVerne) as Branch President.

Ray Blalock purchased and renovated a house that he rented to the Branch. Labor for the renovation was provided by the members and missionaries. The Branch moved into this facility at the northwest corner of Broadway and Ponca Streets on 18 February 1979.

By 1980 the Cleveland Branch was continuing to grow and a building site had been purchased for a new Church building.

COMMERCE

MIAMI

CARDIN

PICHER

Local historians say this Branch started in Picher during 1919 and that during 1920 the members met in Cardin in member's homes. This earlier date was likely a Sunday School group but it isn't known for sure.

The Commerce Branch probably came into existence on 22 November 1921 and is one of the oldest and most unique of the Church groups in Oklahoma. Addison Inman was its Branch President. The Church History Department records shows also that J. H. Herndon became Branch President of a new Cardin Branch on 11 September 1923 as well as the above information on the formation of the Commerce Branch. Also, Church History records show a Branch formed at Miami on 2 August 1941 with J. H. Herndon as Branch President. These all would have been the same Branch as they are in the same close proximity.

The Branch came about as a result of the lead mining activity in the area, which was the largest lead mining operation in the United States and perhaps the entire world.

The members met in "group meetings" prior to the Branch organization at the Odd Fellows Hall and in Cardin in member's homes. Addison Inman died in 1936 and after his death Joseph A. Herndon became the Branch President and they began meeting in Miami wherever they could find rented space. The Branch then became the Miami Branch.

During 1947 the Branch began meeting in the VFW Hall in Miami. Two missionaries in this area around 1952 were Layton Ott and Reid Williamson.

Edgar T. Moss was called as Branch President in 1962 and Joseph A. Herndon became his 1st Counselor. It was at this time that the Branch planned to construct a building for meetings at a cost of \$48,000. The Branch was required to pay 20% of the total with Church headquarters paying 80%. \$9600 was a large amount for the small Branch.

Ground was broken in Commerce for a new building during July 1963. Members of the Tulsa Stake traveled to Commerce on Saturdays to help with construction. The building was dedicated on 27 September 1964 by Tulsa Stake President William H. Day. The Branch was then renamed the Commerce Branch. There were 89 members of the Branch at that time.

On 23 February 1969 the Branch was transferred from the Tulsa Stake to the Ozark District of the Central States Mission. Then on 31 December 1972 it became part of the Springfield Missouri Stake.

On 28 August 1977 President Spencer W. Kimball created the Joplin Missouri Stake with the Miami Branch becoming part of it.

During December 1979 the Branch was divided to form the Grove Oklahoma Branch.

A listing of Branch Presidents who served the Miami Branch includes the name of Kelvyn H. Cullimore who was a son of James A. Cullimore.

Some Branch Presidents and their calling dates:

Addison Inman (1921) Joseph A. Herndon (1936)
Edgar T. Moss (1962) William W. Jordan (1964) George W. Hughes (1966)
Leon Akers Kelvyn H. Cullimore (1969 & 1973)
Byron S. Jones (1970) Ronald E. Rhode (1974)
Ronald W. Jones (1977) William A. Isakson (1978)
Jack H. White (1979)

Some members who were part of the Branch at the time of the Chapel dedication includes:

Edgar T. Moss Blanche M. Moss
Joseph A. Herndon Carl H. Bush Ethel Bush George W. Hughes Evelyn P.
Hughes Florence L. Glenn Naydeen E. Sandmire Louise F. Katner
Wilma N. Hall Heber J. Poe Lois L. Poe Mary J. Inman Flossie N.
Roberts Mary Ethel Bybee Verda V. McCloud Margarette M. Templin
Iva V. Simpson Thomas W. Springer Donald L. Voiles Lynn Voiles
Charles E. Wisheart Billie Wisheart Charles Bromley Florence Bromley

A non-member couple attended Church in the very early days of the Branch during the 1920s and 1930s by the name of Edward and Lula Pierce. Edward was

a miner and while living in the area the young couple lost 2 small children to influenza because of poor housing and lack of medical care.

They later moved back to their original home in Ozark Arkansas, joined the Church and had additional children. One of their added children was Hal Pierce, the author of this history.

Edward Pierce was instrumental in convincing a local farmer to sell the property that contained the gravesite of Parley P. Pratt to the Church after he had he refused to sell.

CUSHING

Thanks to Forrest S. Fuqua

The earliest Church activities in Cushing was a period from 1936 to 1941 when missionaries would come through Cushing and stay in the Fuqua home for a few days and would go to a street corner in downtown Cushing and hand out pamphlets and set up an evening meeting in a schoolhouse and show slides of the tabernacle and temple in Salt Lake City. The missionaries traveled without purse or scrip during this time of the Great Depression, which started in October 1929 and times were very hard. Their visits were few and far between.

The Fuqua family was the only known members of the Church in Cushing during this time and the missionaries performed their family baptisms in the Cimarron River.

Charles Scott Fuqua and his wife Florence Margaret Ward Fuqua were the nucleus of the Church in this area. Sister Florence Ward's parents had joined the Church through missionaries (probably in Iowa) and for a time had lived in Colonia Dublin Mexico at the request of Church leaders and then in Fruitland, New Mexico after being forced out of Mexico by President Benito Juarez about 1872. From New Mexico they moved to Oklahoma.

The earliest Church building in this area of Oklahoma was located at Stillwater and was built by the Thomas N. Berry family and was located at the corner of 6th and Duck Streets in Stillwater. It was a beautiful building for this time period with a buff brick exterior and the inside was well furnished and had a glassed in cry room for mothers where they could take babies and small children and still see the services and it had the only baptismal font in the area.

The Fuqua family attended services in Stillwater on rare occasions. Sacrament was served with small clear glasses filled with grape juice and a wafer for the bread.

(Note: The Church introduced paper sacrament cups around 1950 and plastic cups came during 1966).

The first known meetings held in Cushing were in August 1947 when the IOOF Lodge, which was located at 123 W. Broadway in the second story, was rented for a short time and Sunday School was conducted. The leadership came from the Mission and attendance was very small.

The first story of the building was a produce house which bought and sold chickens and produce from farmers of the area and with the stale smoke from the lodge meetings and odors from the produce house, the Church meetings were not held for long. Forest Fuqua was ordained a Priest by Elder LeRoy Nobel in this building in September of 1947. There were no other organized meetings in Cushing from 1947 to 1953.

The Cushing dependent branch was organized on the 8 August 1953 and met first in member's homes and later in a small 3-room house in the 800 block of S. Noble Street. The 3 rooms were straight in a row and this type house was commonly called a shotgun house. John K. Steed was called as the Presiding Elder of the Cushing Dependent Branch.

The early active members during the 1953 to 1956 time period were, the John and Lolita Steed family, Ray and Hazel Wilson family, Donna Marchant, Geneva Walker and family, Euphia Riley, Florence Fuqua and family, Forrest and Dorothy Fuqua family and David and Margaret Fuqua.

Other early long time members who came in the late 1950s and early 1960s were Patsy Neill and family, Edith Meredith and family, Virginia Collier and family, Lela Gosnell and family, Robert and Rena Duckworth family, Robert and Margie Tucker family, Wallace and Emily Jake, and the Fred and Hazel Porter family.

A short time later, the Robert and Betty Dennis family, Alfred and Carolyn Hubble family, and the Robert and Dorothy Crowder family came to the area. Until Virginia Collier and then later Dorothy Crowder arrived, both of whom played piano, hymns were sung by voice only. The first piano was an old upright but having piano music in the services was a most welcome addition.

In August 1956, the meeting place was moved to a sandstone building located at 401 N. Noble Street. It was a small building that had not been used for a time but was not in good condition. It had served as a grocery store and a place for students from the high school to buy soft drinks and candy. The building was cleaned and painted on the inside and since it had no interior walls, except for a small room in the southwest corner, wires were strung and cloth sheets were hung on the wires to make classrooms. Lynn Marchant, non-member husband of Donna Marchant, was a plumber and he installed a toilet in the center of the building in a small closet that was built for that purpose.

The members met in this building from the 19th of August 1956 to the 3rd of June 1962. John K. Steed moved from Cushing in August 1956 and on the 19th of

August 1956, Ray T. Wilson was called as Presiding Elder with Forrest Fuqua as 1st Counselor.

They served in their positions until 11 September 1960 when the Branch was organized with Ray Wilson as Branch President. Forrest Fuqua was 1st Counselor. At this time the total membership was 66 with 5 elders, 1 priest, 2 teachers and 2 deacons.

Shortly, on 23 October 1960, the Oklahoma Stake, which consisted of approximately the western 2/3rds of the State was organized by Apostle Mark E. Petersen and Elder Sterling W. Sill and the West Oklahoma District of the Central States Mission became the 305th Stake of the Church.

Alvin R. Dyer, a dynamic Church leader, was the Mission President for most of this time. He later became an Apostle and a member of the First Presidency of the Church. The first Stake Center was located at 44th and Lee in Oklahoma City and James A. Cullimore who was the West Oklahoma District President became the first Stake President. Many trips were made from Cushing to attend leadership meetings and conferences in that building.

On the 3 June 1962, the Cushing Church moved to the Highland school building in the 900 block of East Oak Street, leasing it from the Cushing School system for \$75.00 per month. It was a condemned building for school use but it was a step up for the members of the Church because it had lots of room and a nice auditorium in the basement floor.

It was a 3-story brick building and the church used the bottom two floors. The auditorium had a stage at the west end, which served as the stand for the pulpit and sacrament table, both of which were built by the carpenter at the oil refinery where Brother Fuqua was employed.

The old original sacrament table later came to serve as a stand for the copier in the library of Cushing's new building. The east end of the auditorium was closed in and became an office for the Branch Presidency. The remaining space was filled with folding chairs for the congregation.

The classrooms were huge rooms with large walk through coat closets. It was heated by a low pressure boiler which was fired each time heat was required in the entire building, otherwise small gas stoves were used in the auditorium and office for short term meetings.

There was also a large playground area around the building. This building was used from 3 June 1962 to 28 April 1974. During this time the Branch worked on a building fund to accumulate enough funds to build their own building. Most monies for the building fund were raised by members working various projects. After the Branch moved from this building, it was torn down and the area is now the Roy Kemp Park in the 900 block of east Oak Street.

The main source of income for the Cushing Branch building fund was from

working the Little League baseball concession stands, which were worked by the faithful members 4 to 5 nights per week during the summer months at three different parks for 10 years.

Other sources were, hauling hay, growing watermelons and cantaloupes on a 10 acre plot 11 miles west of Cushing and selling them, hawking concessions at the Oklahoma State football games, bean suppers, selling fireworks etc. The Branch had a cattle project after two cows were donated to the Church and calves were raised for a time. Also, the Branch had 4 lots with 2 houses located in the 1400 block of East Walnut donated to the Branch by the A. K. Ross family.

One house was torn down because it was in bad condition and the other was rented for a time and later sold with the lots. Many ways were found to raise money to help ease the financial burden on the members.

Also the Branch had assessments for the Stake building fund and the Welfare fund of the church to meet each year, as well as the monthly budget costs for the Branch. It was a difficult task but a way was always found to meet the obligations.

On 3 April 1966, a new Stake Center building was dedicated which was located at 5020 NW 63rd Street in Oklahoma City. Cushing Branch members volunteered many hours of labor to help build the new stake center. Many, many trips were made by Cushing leaders and members to this building to attend conferences and leadership meetings from 1966 to 1981.

A list of those who served as Stake President of the Oklahoma Stake and later the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake include James A. Cullimore, William L. Waldrop, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Wiley E. Callister and Kenneth R. Hutto. C. Jay Murray, Michael J. Applegate and Don R. Hansen have served as Stake Presidents of the Stillwater Stake.

In 1964, after looking at many locations, 2.76 acres of land was purchased at 1500 East Ninth and finally, after another 8 years, sufficient funds were on hand to start construction of a 1st phase building in 1972.

Afton Gille, a member of the Church in Oklahoma City was the architect. There was difficulty with the contractor staying on the job because his company was working on other jobs but finally the building was completed and the move was made with the first meeting being held in the new building on 28th April 1974.

It was a great and glorious day for the Cushing members after working so hard for so many years. It served the members well and in May 1985 construction was started on the 2nd phase building funded by the church with a small contribution from the local members. To be eligible for the 2nd Phase building, the Branch met the mandatory 100-member sacrament meeting attendance for 3 consecutive months. The 2nd Phase was completed in late December 1985 and the first meeting was held in the new chapel on 5 January 1986. It was an awesome

feeling to meet in such a large and beautiful chapel. It was even somewhat intimidating after having met in the small chapel area of the 1st phase building for over 11 years.

In the meantime, some significant happenings occurred. The “block meeting” schedule of 3 hours was instituted by the Church on 2 March 1980. This eliminated the morning and evening meetings on Sunday, which had long been a tradition in the Church.

The Cushing Branch became a part of the newly formed Stillwater Stake on 14th of June 1981 with C. Jay Murray as the first Stake President. Then the Cushing Branch became the Cushing Ward on the 28th of February 1982 with Robert Copeland (Sandra) being the first Bishop of the Cushing Ward.

Another significant happening was the institution of a Family History Center in the Cushing Ward, which was started in July 1992 with Dorothy L. Fuqua as the Director. It helped members and the general public to obtain information on their family histories.

Some other happenings, which have some significance for the youth in the years from 1966 to 1980, the Cushing Branch boys and girls church basketball teams participated in Church Stake basketball tournaments held in Oklahoma City. The boys were Stake Champions in 1966, 1968 and 1969 and at one time, the boys team and girls team, both, won Stake Championships 6 years in a row from 1975 through 1980, which was quite an accomplishment because Cushing was a small Branch and were defeating the larger Wards.

The boy’s team won 4 regional championships in 1968, 1969, 1977 and 1978 and played in Tulsa, Bartlesville, Wichita and Norman and made 2 trips to the Zone tournament in Kansas City in 1968 and 1969. Also they made a trip to St Louis in 1978. The girl’s team won 2 regional championships in 1975 and 1976.

Other youth activities in the Branch held over the years included annual stake wide “Gymkanas” for deacons, teachers and priests, held at various locations in the Stake commemorating the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood in which the boys won several awards. Activities also included annual Father and Son outings, girl’s camps, Youth Conferences and Seminary student trips to Church Historical sites.

Through these years an active Boy Scout Troop helped produce several Eagle Scouts. This was an enjoyable and exciting time for the youth, parents and the Branch.

When the Cushing Branch was formed in 1960, it was a large geographical area of approximately 1250 square miles, reaching from Pawnee to the North, Wellston and Chandler to the South, Ripley to the West and to Oilton in the East. It included the following towns: Agra, Carney, Chandler, Cushing, Davenport, Drumright, Glencoe, Hallett, Jennings, Kendrick, Oilton, Pawnee, Ripley, Stroud,

Tryon, Wellston and Yale.

For a time after the Branch was formed, Ray Wilson and Forest Fuqua home taught the entire branch. At that time it was called Branch Teaching and it was delivered from a prepared message published by the Church.

The boundaries of the Cushing Ward have changed very little from the time it was formed to the present.

The Dallas Temple was dedicated on 24 October 1984 and Cushing became part of that district until the Oklahoma City Temple was dedicated.

The dedication of the Oklahoma City Temple occurred on 30 July 2000 with the Stillwater Stake and the Cushing Ward as a part of that Temple District.

Many long trips were made individually and on busses by the Cushing members to the Arizona, Manti and Salt Lake City Temples for ordinances before the Temple in Dallas was constructed.

Following are statistics related to the Cushing history.

	Formation Dates
Cushing Dependent Branch	08 August 1953
Cushing Branch	11 September 1960
Oklahoma Stake	23 October 1960
Stillwater Stake	14 June 1981
Cushing Ward	28 February 1982
Dallas Temple	24 October 1984
Oklahoma City Temple	30 July 2000

Cushing Priesthood Leaders		
Name	Position	Dates of Service
John K. Steed	Presiding Elder	8 Aug 1953 to 19 Aug 1956
Ray T. Wilson	Presiding Elder	19 Aug 1956 to 11 Sep 1960
Ray T. Wilson	Branch President	11 Sep 1960 to 17 Jun 1962
Forrest S. Fuqua	Branch President	17 Jun 1962 to 19 Oct 1969
Robert G. Duckworth	Branch President	19 Oct 1969 to 9 Jan 1972
Forrest S. Fuqua	Branch President	9 Jan 1972 to 16 Jun 1974
Robert W. Dennis	Branch President	16 Jun 1974 to 16 Nov 1980

Robert D Copeland	Branch President	16 Nov 1980 to 28 Feb 1982
Robert D. Copeland	Bishop	28 Feb 1982 to 9 Nov 1986
James L. Casey	Bishop	9 Nov 1986 to 7 Jun 1987
Forrest S. Fuqua	Bishop	7 Jun 1987 to 4 Aug 1991
Rodney A. Queen	Bishop	4 Aug 1991 to 9 Jul 1995
Robert W. Dennis	Bishop	9 Jul 1995 to 31 Jan 1999
Shawn P. Hubble	Bishop	31 Jan 1999 to 6 July 2003
Eric P. Davis	Bishop	6 July 2003

Some Early Years Membership Numbers

Year	Members
1960 66	1966 108
1961 81	1967 118
1962 82	1968 117
1963 101	1969 104
1964 110	1970 103
1965 111	

Full Time Missionaries

Name	Date of Calling	Place
Colin B. Douglas	Aug 1964	Brazil
Ronald R. Carter	Oct 1967	East Central States
Richard B. Cartmell	Feb 1974	California
Michael V. Patrick	Jun 1976	Australia
John L. Conley	Jan 1977	New York
Karen L. Roper	Oct 1977	Taiwan
Barbara J. Collier	Dec 1978	California
Granvel Tomlin	Mar 1979	Idaho
Donna Telschow	Oct 1979	Utah
Jeffrey W. Fuqua	Mar 1982	Scotland/Ireland
Shawn P. Hubble	Jul 1982	California
Teal Colclasure	Aug 1983	Utah
Lance D. Ward	Jun 1984	California

Matthew W. Collier	Oct 1984	Puerto Rico
Chris A. Ward	Sep 1988	Pennsylvania
George L. Durfee	Oct 1988	New Zealand
Kenneth A. Queen	Mar 1990	California
Scott A. Linsenmeyer	Aug 1990	Hawaii
Gary W. Dennis	Dec 1994	Oregon
Jason J. Linsenmeyer	May 1995	Idaho
Kayle A. Queen	Nov 1995	California
Robert W. Dennis	Aug 1996	Scotland
Elvis A. Leeper	Jun 1997	California
Barry W. Copeland	Aug 1997	Utah
Jill I. Linsenmeyer	Jul 1998	Utah
Michael L. Dennis	Sep 2000	California
Alfred & Caroline Hubble	Jan 2005	Ukraine
Ryan P. Hubble	Nov 2005	Utah

From the years of 1964 to 2005, 27 young men and women and one couple have served full time missions in the United States and to many other parts of the world from the Cushing Branch/Ward.

Note: Justin R. Linsenmeyer served a mission in England out of the OSU Ward at Stillwater. (Sept 2000)

Socials

The Cushing Branch/Ward has been diligent in holding socials for the members throughout each year, especially at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Another one that all have enjoyed is the annual fish fry, which was started in 1971 and held in late May or early June.

DeNOYA

The DeNoya Branch existed from about 1928 to about 1946 in Osage County.

The Branch would have been organized by then Mission President Samuel O. Bennion and it was associated with oil field workers of the area.

Some family heads living in this Branch included Albert Tillman Scott who was Branch President, William Parley Scott, Hubert Taylor, James M. Pope (Ethel McIntire) and Robertson.

Parley Scott's mother was a child of John Wesley Davis who was baptized 20 June 1896. Her name was Adah Belle Davis and she was married to James

Eden Scott. The Scott family was descendants of Wilford Orson Scott who had an early history of Church involvement in Oklahoma.

John Wesley Davis' second wife, Isabelle Hunter, joined the Church 7 November 1897. They had seven living children, four of which were married at the time.

Sandra Scott Copeland of the Cushing Branch and Wilford Herbert Scott of Derby Kansas are children of Brother William Parley Scott.

James Pope's son Jewel Albert Pope (Gladys Green) became a General Manager of the Boeing factory in Kansas City Missouri and served as the 2nd Stake President of the Kansas City Missouri Stake during the late 1960s.

Another son, James Lafayette Pope (Ina Marie Martin) was a talented singer who had a weekly radio show on a Kansas City area radio station (KIMO).

This Branch dissolved as oil field workers were assigned to other parts of the country and their children migrated to other areas such as Wichita and Kansas City.

DUNCAN

The first members of the Church in the Duncan area were likely the Albert C. and Bertha Mae (Poteet) Petty family who moved from Lockhart Texas during 1900. Albert C. Petty's father, Anderson Alexander Petty and his wife Amanda Catherine (Roach) Petty had previously been converted to the Church in Texas and thought the missionaries who converted them had moved to the Duncan area. After they arrived they discovered the missionaries had gone on to Utah.

Albert's son Elmer has for many years been involved in building the Church in Duncan and much of Central Oklahoma

The Duncan Church began as a Sunday School in the home of Anna Willis during 1940. It had been organized earlier but discontinued as families moved away. Shortly a Relief Society group was organized as well and met in member's homes. The Relief Society began almost immediately to raise funds for a building. Over the years the Relief Society held an annual bazaar and an occasional supper for the building fund raising.

Missionaries were sent into the area and the Church gradually grew stronger. The first meetings were in member's homes and then moved to the basement of the County Courthouse. Other places used for meetings included the American Legion Hut, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the old and new I.O.O.F. Lodges and a building across from the old Humpty Dumpty grocery.

Duncan was organized into an Independent Branch of the Church on 19 September 1942. Mission President John F. Bowman was present.

Lawrence L. Stephens who had been baptized in February 1942 became the Branch President. President Stephens served as Branch President for about 8 years. Later three missionaries served for a time as Branch President, they were Elder Odell Foote, Elder N. Kelland Jackson and Elder Bert L. Hayden.

A quarterly report dated 28 July 1950 shows E. Odell Foote as Branch President.

District President James A. Cullimore came to Duncan on 13 July 1952 and sustained Robert F. Beare as Branch President. President Beare was not ordained an Elder until Mission President J. Orville Ellsworth ordained him on 11 November 1952. Lawrence L. Stephens became his first Counselor. The Branch at this time was meeting in the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Soon Mission President Alvin R. Dyer began encouraging Church units to plan on constructing a Church building. The purchase of a building site was completed on 29 September 1955.

Conrad Zibberkob became 2nd Counselor in the Branch Presidency on 25 March 1956 and became 1st Counselor on 13 October 1957. Jack Arnold became 2nd Counselor on 8 December 1957.

Construction of the Duncan Church building began 23 September 1957 by Bremer Construction Company of San Antonio Texas. It was completed in about 3 months because much of it was prefabricated.

A great deal of labor on the new building was donated by Duncan members and members of the West Oklahoma District, with some driving long distances. The Duncan members sub-contracted the plumbing and electrical work on the building and this labor made it possible for the local group to donate much of their part of the cost of construction.

All brick used during construction was hauled from Wewoka Oklahoma to Duncan by Elmer Petty in his large truck, a distance of about 150 miles one way.

Dan Loewen of the Church Architectural Department in Salt Lake City supervised the project.

The first meeting in the new building was a Sacrament and Testimony meeting on 1 December 1957.

Seven active families moved into the Branch about the time of construction and several moved away soon after construction was completed. But these families had been an enormous support for a time when it was needed.

The first building was sold about 1980 and a new and larger building was constructed about that time.

EDMOND

Early Edmond Priesthood Leadership

Part of the Oklahoma City Branch from December 1931 to 23 October 1960.

Part of the Oklahoma City 1st Ward from 23 October 1960 to 14 February 1971.

Tommy Lamb was Bishop during 1971.

Russell Dean Wright, Branch President from 14 February 1971 to 12 September 1971.

Earle Leroy Overstreet, Branch President from 12 September 1971 to 25 February 1973.

Marshall Sullivan, Branch President from 25 February 1973 to 17 June 1973.

James Goodrich, Branch President from 17 June 1973 to 15 December 1974.

Harold (Hal) Pierce, Branch President from 15 December 1974 to 30 December 1979.

Richard Passey – Edmond's first Bishop beginning 30 December 1979.

Edmond Church Meeting Places

Old Baggerly Funeral Home – 3rd and South Boulevard Streets from February 1971 to 15 May 1977.

Oklahoma Stake Center – 63rd and Grove Streets – 15 May 1977 to 24 Nov 1979.

New Edmond Chapel – Meetings began 24 November 1979.

The Early Edmond Church

Much of what was written about the early Norman Church applies as well to Edmond's history and will not be repeated.

The Branch lasted for 8 years and 10 months before it became a Ward with its own new building.

The Edmond Branch was organized 14 February 1971 in a meeting held in the Oklahoma City First Ward Chapel at 44th and Lee Streets.

Wiley S. Callister, President of the Oklahoma City Stake presided. The Branch was divided from the Oklahoma City First Ward and Russell Dean Wright (Doralie) who was serving as a Counselor in the First Ward Bishopric was called as Edmond's first Branch President. His 1st Counselor was James Casey (Donna) with Roy Bartlett (Reva) as his 2nd Counselor. Hal Pierce (Donna) was called as the Branch Clerk and Financial Clerk.

Stake President Wiley Callister (Joyce) was also a member of the new Branch.

Boundaries were south to Memorial Road with Portland Avenue serving as the west boundary except when it jutted west to take in the town of Cashion. The towns of Crescent, Guthrie and Langston formed the north boundary going south then from Langston to include the towns of Meridian and Luther back to Memorial Road.

An old building located at 3rd and Boulevard was rented and became the Branch Chapel. The building had served for many years as the Baggerly Mortuary and a residence for the mortician. The building fit the needs and means of the new Branch.

Through Mormon resourcefulness the building was turned into a useful and even somewhat attractive meetinghouse. The exterior was badly in need of paint and the shrubs had been neglected for years. The owner provided the paint and the members worked several Saturdays to paint the building, cut out the dead wood, and trim the shrubs. Labor for this work paid the rent for about 3 months. A sign was placed in front of the building declaring it to be the Church.

Problems with the building included it being heavily roach infested, some floor boards were rotted to the point a person had to walk softly in certain areas to avoid falling through the boards and on one occasion an opossum died in the walls and created a stench for several weeks.

There was an upstairs apartment suitable for the Missionaries to live in if they so chose. There was an area suitable for setting up a ping-pong table for the youth of the Ward.

One of the largest classrooms was a former embalming room that wasn't popular with some students.

The first meetings in the building were held on the morning of 21 February 1971. The afternoon Sacrament Meeting had to be cancelled because of freezing rain, sleet and snow.

There were 47 members on record in the new Branch. The active members were the families of Wiley and Joyce Callister, Dean and Doralie Wright, Roy and Reva Bartlett, Charles Casey and wife, Hal and Donna Pierce, Gordon and Rosemary Eskridge, Jeff and Zelma Graham, and G. Neil and Afton Wilcox. The Graham and Wilcox families lived in Guthrie.

Three families who were members were discovered living in Crescent and others were found to be members in the Branch area once it began.

The first auxiliary leaders called were Afton Wilcox, Relief Society President; Joyce Callister, Primary President; Neil Wilcox, Sunday School President; and Reva Bartlett, Young Women President. The Branch Chorister was Doralie (Dee) Wright and Branch Pianist was Donna Pierce.

The first baptism in the Branch was Wayne Pierce whose 8th birthday occurred the month of the Branch organization. It was necessary to go to the Oklahoma City 1st Ward building for baptisms. The Bradley family who lived next door to the Caseys, became the Branch's first convert baptisms.

On 1 August 1971 Roy Bartlett was released as 2nd Counselor and replaced with G. Neil Wilcox.

Then on 12 September 1971 Russell Dean Wright was released and replaced with Earle Leroy Overstreet. President Overstreet's Counselors were G. Neil Wilcox as 1st Counselor and James Goodrich as 2nd Counselor. Ronald Lee Morey and Harold (Hal) Pierce also served as President Overstreet's Counselors later.

On 25 February 1973 Marshall Sullivan was sustained as Branch President with James Goodrich and G. Neil Wilcox as his Counselors.

Marshall Sullivan was called as a member of the Stake Presidency and released on 17 June 1973. His replacement was James Goodrich as President with Harold (Hal) Pierce as 1st Counselor and G. Neil Wilcox as 2nd Counselor.

On 15 Dec 1974 Harold (Hal) Pierce was sustained as Branch President when James Goodrich was called into the Stake Presidency. He served until the Ward was formed on 30 December 1979.

Richard Passey became Bishop of the Edmond Ward on 30 December 1979.

Early Move in Families

During the spring of 1971 the Leroy and Nedra Overstreet family moved into the Branch from Provo, Utah and soon a young and newly married James and Beth Goodrich joined the Branch. Both these men later served as Branch President for a time and James Goodrich was called to the Stake Presidency. Both men came to Edmond to work for the Central State University.

Soon afterwards two very good and strong families moved into the Branch. They were the Marshall and Linda Sullivan and Ronald and Penny Morey families. Both men were FBI agents. Ronald Morey served in the Branch Presidency while in Edmond and became a Counselor in the new Lawton Oklahoma Stake when it was organized. Marshall Sullivan served as Branch President and in the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake Presidency for a time. Both wives were active in the Primary organization and Linda Sullivan served as Seminary teacher.

All new families who came into the Branch were considered to be lifesavers and were greatly appreciated but many new members who came to the area quickly moved to Oklahoma City because it was close and they had a nice Church building there. The ones who chose Oklahoma City were normally the larger, stronger and more established families with Church experience that could have been a great help in Edmond.

Other move in families within the early years after organization were: Ralf and Ann Taupmann, Richard and Dawn Zitting, Thomas and Lenore Rippey, Leslie and Leslie Bassett, Beverly LeGate (male) and wife, John and Becky Marr, Charlotte Johnson (a single mother with 5 children who moved from Cushing), Sister Blanton (a single sister with 3 daughters), Bud and Kay Myers, Luke and

Laura Nigliazzo, Steven and Janice Bird, another Bird family (unrelated), Stephens family, Brinkerhoff (a young couple), Don and Lorraine Barton, Rusty and Lana Hale, McHone couple, Rowlett family, Jerry and Cindy Brasier, Matthew Hack family, Ofelia Wilcox, Lee Hutchison, Sister Pollard, Richard and Jackie Passey, Ron and Liz Gillum, Ron and Cheryl Marvel, Adrian Simonson family and the Clynn Whitworth family.

Others included JoAnne Maxwell (with her two sons named John and Allen Christianson), Eloise Collings (Gary, non-member), Hoyt Hughes family, Nolen Scroggins (single), Frank and Aliene Herrold, Linda Ledlow (single), Terry and LaDell Orgill, Dennis Datin (a young single Edmond convert), Emory and Ida Mae Scott (brother and sister attending the University from Enid), Mary Sinclair (single), Roger Scott (single), Butch Herman (single), George and Marcia Troutman, George Troutman's single brother, Linda Milliard (non-member husband), Clyde Vogel (a recent single convert, and Marla Pauls and Chess Brosh (teenage siblings). Many of these people were recent converts with little Church experience.

The Ron and Liz Gillum family was baptized soon after moving to Edmond as a result of the missionary efforts of Richard Passey.

Richard Zitting had been raised in a polygamist community and was not a baptized member, but his wife was a very faithful member.

Some Marriages

Some of the early marriages that took place included: Nolen Scroggin and Doralie Wright (the previous wife of the Branch's first President), John Lauti (from Tonga) and Kathy Holder, Stephen Pack Slater and Tricia Arleen Renaker, Frank Herrold and Aliene Garnand, Kenneth Shade (a recent convert) and Iva Adams from Norman, Henry Colson (a recent convert) and Linda Johnson, Jim Peery and Dagmar Puusalu, Fay Blanton and a young man named Clark (last name), Laurie Zitting married Jerry O'Daniel (a non-member), Brance Graham and Carole Morgan, Hazel Sandy married Charles Arden (a non-member) and Roger Scott and Rita Johnson.

Missionary Efforts

The first missionaries assigned by the Tulsa Mission to Edmond were Elders Adams, from Arizona, and Elder Fuhriman, from the Provo Utah area. Both were extremely popular with the members. Later Elder Miller and Elder Dewsnup joined Elder Fuhriman. During 1975 Elder Allen and Elder Childs were in Edmond. During 1977 Elder Betts was in our Branch for a long time and loved by all members. Other missionaries who served included Elder Obray and Elder Harris.

Dennis Datin, a recent convert, became the first full time missionary called from Edmond and served in the Calgary Canada Mission. Brother Datin was introduced to the Church by Gary Howell from Oklahoma City.

A high percentage of the Edmond Branch members were converts in Edmond after the Branch was formed. Until the new building was constructed baptisms were performed at the Oklahoma Stake Center.

Emory Scott, a University student from Enid Oklahoma was called to Perth Australia. Others who served full time missions from the Edmond Branch were Richard Passey, Paul Simonson, Cynthia Pierce (Barcelona Spain), Jackie Marr (Okayama Japan), David Teel (Taiwan), John Marr (did not complete), Pat Rainey (Barcelona Spain), Bill Story, Tony Collette, Frank Stuart, and Marsha Padgett (Argentina). The last five were young people who also converted shortly before serving their missions and had essentially no family support.

During the time in the old building in Edmond the Branch was visited by Reid N. Nibley a brother to Hugh Nibley. Reid Nibley was a very talented musician and songwriter and performed a piano concert for the Branch. He wrote the Hymn, "I Know My Father Lives" that is included in the Church hymnal.

With these types of visits by prominent people in the Church there was an attempt to influence the spirit and enthusiasm of small groups such as Edmond.

The Youth of the Branch were very actively involved in bringing their friends into the Church.

Much of the time Edmond was a Branch, Darrell Carlson served as the Branch Mission Leader.

Priesthood

Initially the Priesthood group was small and all met together beginning at 9:00 am each Sunday morning and before the Sunday School started at 10:30 am. After moving to the Stake Center building in Oklahoma City the times changed to accommodate room for the other Wards in the building.

On a few cold snow days the Priesthood body could be found shoveling snow and preparing for the larger body of Sunday School members who would come later.

Melchizedek Priesthood holders gradually increased in numbers over the life of the Branch. There were two ordained Seventies in the Branch. They were Darrell Carlson and Hal Pierce.

On 9 June 1978 President Spencer W. Kimball announced that all worthy males in the Church would be allowed to hold the Priesthood of God. This caused one semi-active family to leave the Church.

Relief Society

The Relief Society leaders were faithful sisters and were very good at visits to sisters in outlying areas of some distance. The first few Relief Society Presidents were Afton Wilcox, Dawn Zitting, Barbara Jolly and Cindy Brasier. Many times when the Branch President discovered a problem in the Branch that needed his attention he also discovered the Relief Society had already been there and was working on the problem.

There were a good many faithful sisters who were single or married to inactive or non-member husbands. Some, of the husbands joined the Church because of their wives faithfulness and others were activated.

Primary

The very early Primary Presidents were Joyce Callister, Nedra Overstreet, Rosemary Eskridge, Beth Goodrich, Janice Bird and Lorraine Barton.

Even in the early days of the Branch the Primary organization was one of the stronger ones in the Stake. Donna Pierce with her musical talent and enthusiasm had all the children excited about singing. She organized several singing groups and an outstanding Primary Chorus.

Mutual Improvement Association

There were many Primary children in the early Branch but few MIA age youth. At the start Eileen Callister and LaDawn Casey were the only Mutual age girls in the Branch. Paul Callister and Wade Wright were the only young men. This changed when a single sister moved in with her 3 daughters, Pamela, Faye and Kaye Blanton (twins).

Soon Cynthia and Jennifer Pierce entered this age group and others came such as Laurie Zitting, John Zitting, Jackie Marr, Jean Guillot, Linda, David and Danny Johnson, Chris and Rob Carlson, Stacy Liles, Shannon Brasier, Nancy Hanley (non-member), Gayle, Richard, Paula and Janet Passey, Allen Christianson, Sherry Davis, Paul and David Gillum, Wayne and Melissa Pierce, Marla Pauls, Chess Brosh, Cheryl, Candy, and Scooter Mullen, David Teel, Scott and Holly Stephens, Eric and Jeff Taupmann and other non-member youths, as the group began to grow.

Jackie Marr was an extremely faithful young girl who wouldn't accept that her parents wanted to send her and her siblings to another Church and her influence brought all 8 of the children in her family to the Edmond Branch. Four of the children's names were Olson and four were Marr.

During the 1976 and 1977 school year two foreign exchange students lived with Ward members. Renate Oberreider from Germany lived with the Pierce family and Monique Revillion came from Brazil and lived with the Sullivan family. In 1976 Cynthia Pierce went to French speaking Switzerland for a time but

came home because a suitable home for her was not found. Jennifer Pierce lived in Germany with the Oberrieder family for one semester from 1977 to 1978.

About 1976 Leslie Jean Bassett was called as the Young Women's President. She provided the enthusiasm to make the group the strongest girls group in the Stake. They were responsible for bringing Sherry Davis and others to baptism and eventual Temple marriage.

Dennis Datin and Sherry Davis are excellent examples of why the Edmond Branch needed to come into existence when it did. They were both married in the Temple sealing and both now have many children, and soon will have many grandchildren, who will serve missions and enjoy the blessings of the gospel.

Dennis Datin and his wife Collette have eight active children in the Church and currently Brother Datin is serving as Bishop in the Quail Springs Ward. Possibly neither Dennis or Sherry would have known the Gospel without the influence of the Edmond Branch.

In May 1976 Brother and Sister Leslie Bassett took 9 Mutual age girls to Utah for baptisms at the Salt Lake Temple. They stopped in Emporia Kansas for a Regional Youth Conference on their way home.

Early Young Women Presidents were Reva Bartlett, Dawn Zitting, Linda Ledlow, Leslie Jean Bassett, Joyce Hoard and Jackie Passey.

The early Young Men Presidents were Marshall Sullivan, Leslie Bassett, Nolen Scroggin, Lee Liles, Roger Scott, and Bud Myers.

There were never many young men in the early Branch until the latter years of its existence. In spite of its small size the group made several converts. Pat Rainey, Tony Collette, Bill Story and Kenneth Shade are examples of young men who joined the Church.

The youth of the Branch were regularly called upon to fill important positions in the Branch. For example, Cynthia Pierce served as Branch Chorister, Jennifer Pierce served as Primary Pianist and Tony Collette published the Branch newspaper.

Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching

Because of the physical size of the Branch it was always difficult to get everyone visited each month for Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching. However visit percentages were high most months.

In January 1978 Edmond Branch set a Home Teaching target of 100% and made 93%, which was the all time high percentage for any month.

The Relief Society sisters were always quite faithful in their visits. Drives to Crescent alone were 50+ miles round trip.

Stake Patriarchs

Many of the Edmond youth obtained their Patriarchal Blessings from Lynn Gee (Eileen) of Stillwater who was Stake Patriarch most of the time the Branch existed.

After the creation of the Stillwater Oklahoma Stake on 14 June 1981 Joseph Kearl (Alice) of the Oklahoma City 3rd Ward was ordained a Patriarch and served until his death about 1986. At the death of Brother Kearl a new Stake Patriarch, Ronald Housley (Joan), was ordained.

Sunday School

Sunday School Presidents in the early years included; G. Neil Wilcox, Jefferson Morton Graham, Gordon Eskridge, Luke Nigliazzo, Homer Hoard, and Jerry Brasier.

Scouting

Troup 345 was organized in Edmond in 1972 but initially Scouting was greatly limited because of a lack of boys in this age group. Gordon Eskridge managed to keep the few boys in the group excited about Scouting and whenever there was a Stake Scout activity the boys always managed to come home with awards.

Doctor Robinson, a non-member and well-to-do Physician in the Deer Creek area brought his two sons into the troop and donated several hundred dollars and much equipment to help the troop get started.

By 1975 the Scout Troop had grown considerably and Ralf Taupmann, a member and Physician, became the Scout Master. He continued in that position throughout the remainder of the Branch's years. Brother Taupmann showed great devotion to his position and built the Troop to become the most active in the Stake. In every Scout Jamboree the Edmond Troop received many honors.

Bro. Taupmann showed great personal interest in each individual Scout. An example of his devotion was when, each week, he would drive about 40 miles (80 miles total) to pick up and return a boy north of Guthrie, so he could come to the meetings. The Branch produced 3 Eagle Scouts: David Gillum, Richard Passey and Bill Story.

Seminary

The first Seminary class was begun in 1974 with Tom Rippey as the teacher. Succeeding teachers were Linda Sullivan, Nita Liles, and Brother Leslie M. Bassett.

Initially the classes were held as home study but became early morning classes before school on 11 September 1979. They met in the Bassett home until the completion of the Ward building in November.

During March 1978 the Seminary took a bus trip tour of Church historical sites in Missouri and Illinois.

Branch Library

The Branch Library didn't come into existence until 1974. Neil Wilcox from Guthrie built shelves and installed a light in a closet and Dorrallie Wright Scroggin was called as the first Librarian. Sister Scroggin asked for and received donations of old Church magazines, pictures and books to begin the Library. Later Marsha Padgett was called as the Librarian and served until she left on her mission.

Linda Milliard was called during the spring of 1977. Although she knew she would only be in the Branch a short time she dedicated herself to her calling of preparing the Library for the future Edmond building. For a time these materials had to be stored in the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake building.

Before Sister Milliard left she trained Aliene Herrold to take her place. Sister Herrold was then called as the Librarian and Eloise Collings and Lee Hutchison were called as her assistants. Sister Herrold and Sister Collings were then responsible for setting up the Library in the new Edmond building as it came into existence.

The Branch Grows

Soon the Branch received some very good families who were now starting to move into the Edmond area. Some of the families that added great strength to the struggling Branch were the families of Roy and Barbara Jolly, Lee and Nita Liles, Homer and Joyce Hoard, Adrian Peterson family, Bill and Margaret Mullen, Lori Newman, Tom and Rita Galloway, Everett C. (EC) and Gloria Stangle, Swindell family, Reid family, Sister Burchett, Terry Traylor family, John and Alice Guillot, William Porter family, Richard (Duke) and Pat Murdoch, a single sister north of Guthrie with 3 children, Jim and Dagmar Peery, David and Melissa Stuart, Geoffrey and Lynette Orme, Marsha Padgett, Ron Preston, Darrell and Sherry Carlson, Bob Spears, Larry and Rosemary Thatcher, Don Silver family, Stephens family, Durkee family, Tom and Becky Gray, and Wanda Florer and her teenage daughter, Karen.

Three families living in Crescent were Karen Stanton (single with several children), Jean Godfrey (Ray, non-member), and the Tom Armstrong family.

Some Significant Activations/Converts

Homer Hoard was an inactive member who felt his work as the President of a local division of Lear-Siegler Corporation precluded his becoming active. He was called by President Pierce to serve as the Sunday School President, accepted the calling and has been very active since.

Roy Jolly, a non-member airline pilot for TWA, whose wife was the Relief Society President was invited by President Pierce to become the Elder's Quorum President. He accepted the calling, became an Elder and took his wife to the temple.

David Stuart, a young man married to a recent convert, was invited to take the missionary discussions. President Pierce took Sister Bryant and Sister Barnard with him on a home teaching visit, and he quickly joined the Church and has since served in the Guthrie Ward Bishopric.

Ron Marvel who was the Edmond High School football coach and had a very faithful member wife was invited by President Pierce to join the Church and accepted. President Pierce baptized him.

All of these families were accepted wholeheartedly into the Branch and were a great asset to the Church with their many talents.

As the new Ward building came into existence there was a large influx of new members into the area.

Transition to a Ward

Some members and families that added strength to the Edmond area near the time of the creation of the Ward included: Afton and Mary Catherine Gille, Tom and Susan Hines, Barbara Freeman, Darian and Elizabeth Anderson, Rodger and Rean Duncan, Doran and Nancy Merkley, Rhett and Dawn Ferrell , David Smith family, Charlie Sherwood family, Roger Jessen, Greg and Kimberly Brazier, Jeff Holm family, Lee Jones family, Montgomery couple (newly married and older), Mary Simmons (older sister convert), Kent and Laurie Bowman, Art and Gene Bushman, Roger and Maureen Ricks, Dee and Laurie Bithell, Brent Babcock family, Terry and Virginia Andersen, Robert Zahn family, Lee and Liz Bean, Keith and Flo Bailey, Ron and Jenice McArthur, Gary and Mary Newman, and Kent and Kay Downey.

Others included Ron and Judy Brewer, Marshall and Linda Sullivan who moved back from Ohio, John and Claudia Stallings, Jerry and Sherry Renfroe, Vanetta Arrington (James, Deceased), Tyrone and Maria Giles, Terry and Betty Bagley, Gary and Beth Goff, Art Storer, Ahlander, Susan Hiner, Bob Silver family, Sister Stoner, Hazel Sandy, Jeff and Nanette Orgill, Gary and Susan Hatch, Clyde and Mary Vogel, and Marie Thompson (non-member husband Ray).

Welfare Issues

There were frequent instances of people passing through the area asking for a financial handout and exclaiming themselves to be active members of the Church. The Church did try to support its own when they needed help but there were people who attempted to take advantage of the Church's generosity.

One example involved a young woman in a very dilapidated car with a young and very boisterous son who seemed intent on tearing the Church building down while the Branch President, Hal Pierce, attempted to speak with his mother.

After some telephone calls to the area of Arizona where she came from it became obvious she was simply trying to go across the country at the expense of the Church's Fast Offerings. It was cold and late and her car wouldn't start. President Pierce jump started her car and gave her \$20 from his pocket (this was not proper procedure), it much upset the young woman, and they parted ways.

These types of experiences will always test a young and inexperienced Priesthood leader.

Generally the members who were at least semi-worthy would be helped but would be required to work for that help. Many would make token efforts at working but not really put their hearts into the work. Some fortunately were sincere in trying to be worthy. If so, they were put to work cleaning the chapel or other such work.

For a short time the Branch allowed individual families to plant gardens on the property that had been purchased for a building site.

The Jefferson Morton Graham and Zelma Graham couple lived in a flood plain area of Guthrie, and it was not uncommon for the Branch to go help them clean up after a flood.

Shortly after the Branch became a Ward there was a family with very small means that had moved into the Ward and lived in a very dilapidated Trailer house.

The Ward also had a very skilled homebuilder in Larry Thatcher. Using his skills both as a builder and an organizer the Priesthood body came very early one Saturday and built an entire small house for this family.

Brother Thatcher had the foundation and building materials prepared before hand. The house was completed and comfortable before the priesthood body left just before dark.

Stake Farm

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the Stake had a wheat farm southeast of Jones Oklahoma that produced wheat for the Welfare system of the Church. The John Fryhover family lived there and cared for the property. One young man who needed welfare assistance was given the basement of the farm home to live in and worked on the farm for a time and joined the Church. Later it was discovered he was stealing from the Fryhover family, and he was moved out.

The Edmond Branch and later the Ward were only slightly involved in the activity involved at the farm because it did not require extensive labor. The land was sold during the late 1980s.

The Crescent Sunday School

Crescent is 25 miles northwest of Edmond and there were several families who occasionally came to Church but it was difficult for some to make the long trip. It was decided to create a Sunday School there to help keep them involved and to perhaps grow the Church in that area. They had for years had very faithful home and visiting teaching visits.

Roger Scott who was a recent convert to the Church and very bright and dedicated to the Gospel was called to serve as the President.

Member families in Crescent at the time included Karen Stanton (divorced) with young children, Jean Godfrey (Ray, non-member), and the Tom Armstrong family.

After a sputtering start that never really got going it was realized that one of the member families was really working to sabotage the efforts by working with an Anti-Mormon group and was producing handouts to criticize the Church.

The Sunday School was meeting in a plumbing shop provided by the Armstrong family. The Sunday School failed to get off the ground.

Community Activities

Because of a lack of numbers and the necessary talents the Branch rarely was involved in community things other than children's school activities which didn't highlight the Church in any way other than for those who were aware of the Church affiliation.

One young man, Tony Collette, who had recently joined the Church was upset with a teacher for criticizing another young convert, Bill Story, for joining the Church during a class and reported him to the school Principal. The Principal ignored the problem until Tony Collette went to the School Superintendent who chastised both the teacher and the Principal.

There was, originally, a great deal of bias against the Church in Edmond. This bias has largely been overcome with numbers as the Church is probably the 3rd largest denomination in the Edmond area at this time (2006) after starting from ground zero in the early 1970s.

A son of one of Edmond's members, G. Neil and Afton Wilcox, became the Student Body President at Brigham Young University and a daughter of Hal and Donna Pierce, was likely the only person in Oklahoma for many years to win BYU's top scholarship, the Spencer W. Kimball scholarship. This was their daughter Jennifer. Other students won full scholarships to BYU and were recognized for their success in the local Edmond Sun newspaper.

Cynthia and Jennifer Pierce were voted most likely to succeed and Melissa Pierce was voted most Courteous by their large graduating classes and all received full scholarships to BYU.

Relief Society President Barbara Jolly wrote a popular cooking article for the Edmond newspaper for many months.

During the bicentennial of 4 July 1976 there was no program by the Church but a member, Roy Jolly, flew a fighter jet from Tinker Air Force Base low over the parade route, and Hal Pierce won the city's horseshoe pitching tournament.

Hal Pierce served for a time as District Chairman of the Republican Party.

On 12 April 1978 the Brigham Young Folk Dance Team performed at Central State University and Branch members housed all 42 members of the dance team in their homes.

On another occasion the Modern Dance Team from BYU performed at Central State University and some members of that team attended Church with the Edmond members.

Deaths

There were a few deaths in the Branch that challenged the members. These included Pat Murdoch who was killed in a car accident, Otilia Cole, Joanne Maxwell (the Christianson boy's mother) who died of Colon Cancer, Anna Taylor, Leonard Ray Gidney, Scooter Mullin, Jeff Graham, and Ray Godfrey of Crescent.

Move to the Stake Center

On Sunday 15 May 1977 the Branch's meeting location was moved from Edmond to the Oklahoma City Stake Center on NW 63rd Street because the old funeral home building had been sold. The Branch had tried to locate a suitable rental place but was unable to do it, so Stake President Kenneth Hutto (Karen) asked the Branch to move into the Stake Center.

All meetings were held there from that time until the new building was completed and much driving was now necessary to attend meetings.

During 1977 the Branch had two full time missionaries that were dearly loved. They were Elder Albes from Canada and Elder Treft.

On 7 August 1977, the Edmond Branch's Sacrament meeting was visited by Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Ashton had presided at a Stake Conference that day and had some time in the evening to attend a Sacrament Meeting before his flight to Salt Lake City. At that meeting Sister Marsha Padgett gave a report of her successful mission to Argentina.

During March 1978 the Branch membership was 258 members.

Obtaining Land and a New Building

The Branch began searching for land for a new building in September 1972. Several pieces of property were considered and rejected for various reasons. Donna Pierce suggested looking at the site that was eventually bought and a proposal to the Priesthood body was unanimously approved to attempt to purchase it.

The purchase was completed on 17 October 1974 by Branch President James Goodrich and Hal Pierce. The land consisting of 2.3 acres was purchased for \$20,000. This was considered a high price at the time but the land quickly appreciated in value after its purchase.

A representative of Wal-Mart Company made a serious attempt to buy the property before building began and took, then Branch President Pierce, over many sites around Edmond and promised to put the sewer and utilities on any piece of land the Branch wanted and pay the Branch a sizable amount for the land. They never said how much they would pay because the offer was immediately rejected.

A full 5 acres including the corner of Bryant and 33rd Streets could have been originally purchased for \$25,000 but the Branch President Goodrich insisted on trying to get the two sellers to reduce their price, which allowed the person with the corner to back out of the purchase plan.

Later it was necessary to ask the remaining seller to add a small amount of land to the purchase for parking space and the cost went from \$12,500 to \$20,000.

A building committee was formed with Hal Pierce, Ralf Taupmann, Marshall Sullivan, Luke Nigliazzo, and David Stuart serving. Don Barton was later called to this committee and contributed greatly to it.

Ground was broken for construction on 4 September 1978 (a hot Labor Day) at 3:00 pm with about 125 people present. A Branch picnic was held later at Chitwood Park. The Edmond Sun newspaper covered the event well.

The building fund grew slowly in those days. Perhaps because there were so few members to contribute toward the fund, the required amount to start construction seemed out of reach for the small group.

As was the case in Norman it was necessary for the local group to pay 30% of the cost of the building at that time. In order to start construction the local unit had to have 15% of the total cost on hand. The remaining 15% had to be paid before dedication could occur. The Oklahoma City Stake originally did not participate in the fund raising effort.

However with the need well known among the members the building fund began to grow. Membership increases certainly helped the situation.

For several years Les Bassett and Hal Pierce put together as many workers as they could muster and cut and sold firewood to raise money using Brother Bassett's truck that he used in his roofing business and a chainsaw the Branch purchased. Also, fund raising dinners were held.

The following shows donations made to the building fund throughout the years shown:

1973..... \$646.06	1976..... \$6,142.85
1974.....\$2800.92	1977.....\$23,440.01
1975.....\$3,731.28	1978.....\$48,304.69
	1979..... \$6,456.09

The 1978 figure reflects approximately \$24,000.00 received from the Stake building fund. The odd amount of pennies shown each year indicates that the children made their donations along with the parents.

Hal Pierce became the Branch President in December 1974 and remained the Branch President until the first phase of the building was completed in November 1979 and until the end of the year. He served for 5 years and oversaw the construction phase of the new building. Bro. Pierce then became the Stake Physical Facilities representative and was able to oversee the final construction phase of the building three years later.

Richard Passey became the first Ward Bishop of the new Edmond Ward in December 1979.

Construction Facts

Edmond hired a local non-member architect named David Crandall to work with the building drawings that came from Church headquarters. President Pierce suggested that Mr. Crandall redesign the spire to get it away from the building and he came up with a detached three pronged spire that the Church architects liked and began using all over the world.

At this writing (2006) Church headquarters has changed its spire design again and no longer uses the unattached design. The Edmond building was the first to use it, and it still exists there today.

A local contractor named Cox Construction Company was chosen as the builder of the first phase but refused to bid on the second phase of construction, which was performed by a firm from Salt Lake City.

Mr. Crandall was the architect for the second phase as well but had recently gone through a divorce and was very inattentive to the second construction. This cost him the opportunity to become the Church's architect on many more buildings that would soon be built in the Central Oklahoma area when the Church's Salt Lake City architects asked President Pierce for a recommendation of an architect.

President Pierce recommended Don Fritzler, who was accepted by the Church's Architectural Department in Salt Lake City, and Mr. Fritzler did many

jobs for the Church during the 1980s. Unfortunately Don Fritzler and his wife died in the Murrah building bombing in downtown Oklahoma City.

Church headquarters said Edmond members must go to the Oklahoma City Stake building for all baptisms and President Pierce refused to accept that decision and was successful in getting Church headquarters to change its mind. A baptismal font was added to the original building by eliminating a classroom. The sandstone that had to be dug out for the font almost wrecked the large backhoe that was brought in to do the job.

With the original phase building it was necessary to add a portable classroom on the lawn until the final phase was added. It was also necessary for the Church to pay for bringing the city sewer to the construction site. The City promised to reimburse the Church as additional people attached to the sewer line but did not keep their promise.

The Choir seating area was flat which President Pierce insisted must be gradually raised from front to back, and it was done.

After the building was nearly complete it was realized that the new organ and piano were not in place, and they had to be manually lifted over the front barrier of the podium area, which was already in place. If the organ and piano had been dropped, by the men lifting them they would have done serious damage to the new building. Some very strong Branch members did the job, and all went well.

Construction took 1 year from November 1978 to November 1979.

Needless to say the Branch members were thrilled to get their new building and move back to Edmond for meetings.

The first meeting held in the building was a baptism, appropriately, of new convert Sister Ronda Kelly and her young son Ahern Burns on Saturday 24 November 1979. Branch mission leader Darrell Carlson conducted the meeting. The first Sunday meetings were held on 25 November 1979 with 121 people in attendance.

A very successful open house to introduce the community to the new building was held on Saturday 1 December 1979 with approximately fifty non-members attending.

Don Barton placed the Church's name in lettering on the front of the building with letters provided from Church headquarters and a sign in the front lawn let everyone who passed know the Church was there.

The building was dedicated by Regional Representative H. Aldridge Gillespie during 1980.

Becoming a Ward

On Sunday 30 December 1979 the Edmond Branch became a Ward with Richard Passey becoming the first Bishop. His counselors were Don Barton and Luke Nigliazzo with Ron Gillum serving as the Ward Clerk.

At the time the Branch became a Ward the Elder's Quorum President was Don Barton, Seventies Group leader was Darrell Carlson and the High Priest Group leader was G. Neil Wilcox.

The Ward now had organ music with its new chapel, and Lorraine Barton became the Ward's first organist.

The longest serving person in the Branch was Sister Zelma Graham who served as the Sunday School Secretary from August 1971 to December 1979.

During the 5 years and 1 month that Hal Pierce served as Branch President there was an extensive list of brethren who served as his counselors. This position seemed to be a good way to integrate inexperienced brethren into the operations of the Church. Those who served during this time were: Gordon Eskridge, Jeff Graham, Roy Jolly, Lee Liles, Homer Hoard, Terry Traylor, William Porter, Geoffrey Orme, Ron Gillum and Luke Nigliazzo.

Those who served as the Branch Executive Secretary were Tom Rippey, Ron Morey, William Mullen and Homer Hoard.

Those who served as Financial Clerk for the Branch during its existence were Hal Pierce, James Goodrich, E. C. Stangle, Bud Myers, William Mullen, Geoffrey Orme, Clyde Vogel and Frank Herrold.

Richard Passey, Rodger Duncan, Doran Merkley, Jeff Holm, and Ron Brewer served as Bishops in Edmond during the 1980s.

The Edmond 2nd Ward was formed during the early 1980s with Dee Bithell as the first Bishop. He was succeeded by Arthur Bushman during 1986 who was Bishop until 1990.

ELK CITY

CLINTON

The Elk City area has been organized into a Branch twice, only to be dissolved later for lack of members. It was organized originally on 27 May 1956 with C. Walker Slater becoming the Branch President. However in 1960 it became part of the Clinton Branch.

It was also organized into a Branch in the early 1980s during the "oil boom" with Dan Turner (Toni) as President. Land was purchased at this time for a building as the Branch was growing rapidly. However, with the "oil bust" that

came in the late 1980s the Branch went back to meeting with the Clinton Branch and the land was given away.

During January 1954 the C. Walker Slater family moved from Stillwater to Clinton. During the spring of 1954 District President James A. Cullimore called a meeting of members in the area to meet at the Slater home. About 30 people came and bore their testimonies of the truthfulness of the Gospel. Other families at the meeting included the Carroll Eggers family from Hammon, the Cyrus Sanders family from Elk City and the Denny Old Crow family of Hammon.

During the next 18 months the Slater and the Eggers families met weekly by alternating meeting places between their homes. Their homes were 45 miles apart. They used the Book of Mormon as the text for their studies.

On 29 August 1955 the District Relief Society Presidency organized a home Relief Society with Esther A. Slater as President and Florence Sanders and Lena B. Eggers as Counselors. The sisters gathered weekly in their homes and 7 sisters were at the first meeting.

On 1 April 1956 members began meeting in a Sunday School that had been organized with the rental of a six room house in Elk City. C. Walker Slater who was now a District High Councilman presided over the meetings.

During a District Conference in Oklahoma City President Alvin R. Dyer announced the formation of the Elk City Branch, which was accomplished on 27 May 1956. C. Walker Slater became the first Branch President with Carroll S. Eggers and Denny Old Crow as Counselors. Esther A. Slater was called as Branch Clerk.

The new Branch area included 7 counties in western Oklahoma, namely Ellis, Roger Mills, Beckham, Dewey, Custer, Washita and Blaine.

At the first Branch meeting held in Elk City on 3 June 1956 there were 14 people present.

On 8 July 1956 Cyrus B. Sanders was set apart as the Sunday School President. Denny Old Crow and Calvin E. Slater were his assistants and Wanda Queenan was Secretary.

In August, President and Sister Slater traveled over 1000 miles while finding and contacting Branch members.

On 10 February 1957 the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association was organized. Esther A. Slater was called as President. Among the activities they held that year was an overnight camping trip to the Wichita Mountain area.

On 1 December the Branch moved into a larger rental building after being forced to move because of a sale of their prior rental property.

A great boost to the Branch was when members of the reactivated Clinton-Sherman Air Force base began attending meetings in the fall of 1958.

On 2 November 1958 the home Relief Society became a Branch Relief Society with Lena B. Eggers as President. Her Counselors were Florence Sanders and Wanda Queenan.

On 4 January 1959 the Elk City Branch was forced to move again because of the sale of their rental property. This time they moved to an upstairs hall in downtown Elk City that was owned by the I.O.O.F. and stayed there until 1 April 1960 when they moved to Clinton and became the Clinton Branch.

By April 1960 the Branch had an attendance at meetings as high as 76 with some persons traveling as far as 170 miles round trip to meetings. At this time all meetings were held on Sunday mornings except Relief Society being held on Wednesday and Primary on Thursday.

During 1960 the Branch established a building fund and within a year had nearly \$3000.

The Branch had a first phase of their new building but added a Chapel, which they moved into on 28 April 1985. With this first meeting in the new Chapel members were required to sit on folding chairs. Charles Rogers was Branch President at the time.

Construction was not satisfactory and it was necessary to wait for corrections before dedication. The new Clinton Branch Chapel was dedicated on 12 November 1989. Levon Williams was the Branch President at that time. Stake President Rodger Duncan presided over the dedication service, Katie Rogers was the Pianist and Deann Williams was the Chorister.

Former Stake President Kenneth Hutto spoke and a special musical number was performed by Judy Dunlap and Todd Salisbury. President Duncan gave the dedicatory prayer.

ENID

Thanks to Sid Ercanbrack

A Branch of the Church was organized in Enid on 10 April 1938 but no other information on that organization is now available.

Prominent Oklahoma City member F. Conover Jacobson served as a missionary to Enid during 1941. Brother Jacobson who was from Arizona returned to the area and married Elva Lindsey from Oklahoma City. He established an LDS bookstore in the garage of his home. His daughter (Vickie Howell) later established a bookstore called Howell's Hive in Bethany.

The Branch apparently lay mostly dormant until 31 July 1949 when a Sunday School and Relief Society was formed and met into Messman Hall at 215

1/2 N. Washington Street above a business. The Enid Church would meet at this location until their new building was completed during October 1962.

District President James A. Cullimore and his wife Grace were regular visitors to the Enid Church and their support was appreciated. At times the numbers got very small but President Cullimore assured them that they would increase and they did increase.

The Branch had rented old park benches for seating until 1953 when they raised enough money to buy 2 folding tables and 50 chairs.

On 3 May 1953 Herbert L. Ward (Edith) was set apart as Presiding Elder of the group and on 15 August 1954 he became the first Branch President as an Independent Branch was formed. Brother Ward was set apart to his position by President Alvin R. Dyer of the Mission.

On 26 September 1954 Sister Edith Ward became the Branch Clerk and served until 1956. From the mid 1950s to the late 1970s the leadership of the Branch was mostly held by Service men from Vance Air Force Base. Kelvin E. Evans was set apart to replace Brother Ward as Branch President on 27 May 1956.

Immediate succeeding Branch Presidents included Clair J. Fischer, Cleve Bolingbroke, and Paul Bates. Hubert Ward and Jimmy Lee Mitchell served as President Bate's Counselors.

On 19 March 1961 Jimmy Lee Mitchell was sustained as Branch President with Conrad V. Zitterkob and Daniel A. Stanton as Counselors.

On 5 May 1963 all officers and teachers of the Branch were released but asked to continue functioning until the new organization was in place. Don Epperson of the Stake Presidency presided. The new Branch Presidency included Lawrence G. Evert as Branch President with LaVar O. Earl and David C. Millis as Counselors and Edward H. Carey as Branch Clerk. Steven E. Bates was called as an Assistant Branch Clerk.

President Evert was later killed in the Vietnam war.

On 22 August 1965 Ronald B. Tronier was called as Branch President of Enid by Stake President William Waldrop with Winfield M. Scott as Counselor. On 17 October 1965 Loren Butler was sustained as an Assistant Branch Clerk and during November Remi Greeff was called as the Branch Clerk.

On December 11, five Elders from Enid traveled to Stillwater to help work on the new building there.

Enid got a new Scout Master on 9 January 1966 with Bruce E. Snethen being called to that position.

During February 1966 a box lunch social was held to benefit the Children's Primary Hospital.

President Tronier was transferred to Vietnam and Remi H. Greeff became Branch President 13 March 1966. Winfield M. Scott and Huey R. Patterson became Counselors.

During April 1966 LaRee T. Scott was called as the Relief Society President.

President Greeff was later killed in the Vietnam war.

On 22 October 1967 Gary E. Cox was set apart as the Branch President. Robert N. Jones and Steven W. Hicks were his Counselors with Everett R. Sharp as Clerk. On 29 October 1967 John W. Lines was called as Sunday School Superintendent, Elizabeth Greeff was called as Primary President and Faye Shepard was called as Young Women's leader.

David A. Rasband, Loren F. Butler and Edward V. Hayhurst were called as Assistant Clerks at this time.

A wood cutting project was used during 1968 to raise money by cutting wood from the Loomis family property.

David L. Shields became Branch President on 27 October 1968 with Robert N. Jones and Richard T. London as Counselors. Michael Link Alley became the Branch Clerk.

During February 1969 word was received by the Branch that former Branch President Remi Greeff had been killed in Vietnam.

President Shields was actively involved in creating and strengthening Church units that were dependent on Enid for leadership. Woodward and Alva became Dependent Branches.

On 22 June 1969 a Sealing Dependent Group was created with Billy J. Shirley as Group Leader with David Morris as Counselor.

Sealing had a relatively large Indian population because of the efforts of President H. Aldridge Gillespie in teaching them.

President Shirley later stated that if he told the Indians in the area that they would have a Church meeting no one would come but if he told them it would be a Powwow, everyone would come. Powwows implied food would be there.

On 22 July 1969 was sustained as the Fairview Dependent Group Leader and in October 1969 Hennessey became a Dependent Group with Luther E. Barnett as Group Leader with David G. Evans as his Counselor. They met in the back of the 1st National Bank of Hennessey building. The Hennessey Group lasted about 8 months.

The difference between a Dependent Branch and a Dependent Group would have to be defined by President Shields.

During September 1969 Brother Larry McMahan of the Branch was killed in a small airplane accident in Colorado while going to Salt Lake City.

Enid Becomes a Ward

On 12 October 1969 High Councilor C. Jay Murray came to Enid and created the Ward with David L. Shields becoming the first Bishop. His Counselors were then Robert I. Russell and Connoly R. O'Brien.

On 19 April 1970 the Canton Dependent Branch was established with Kenneth J. Allen as President.

A blessing given to a young daughter of the J. D. Smith family was credited with saving her life during 1970. The blessing was given by Gary Cox and Bob Russell to Angela Smith who had swallowed some Phenobarbital pills. Her doctor said she should have died.

On 29 November 1970 Rodney N. Dotson was ordained Bishop and his Counselors were Milton R. Sanders and Lawrence Allen. The Clerks were Bruce E. Snethen, Stanley R. Smith and James D. Price.

Six missionary open house activities were held during 1971 and members were encouraged to gather their food storage with the order of wheat, vitamins and honey. There were a total of 58 baptisms that year and many were youth baptisms.

Summer activities included a Youth Conference in Edmond, a softball tournament in Stillwater and a Father/Son campout at Roman Nose State Park.

By 1971 the Canton Branch included the towns of Fairview, Seiling and Watonga.

During 1971 the Relief Society Presidency included Kay Jackson as President with Counselors Joan A. Whitmore and Caryn Alley. The Primary leadership was made up of Clara Hansen as President and Kay Sanders and Beth Muse were Counselors.

In 1971 Marlene Dotson, Leonora Allen and Sharon Alvey served as Young Women's President. Also, Willis F. Mabey and Wallace R. Alvey served as Young Men's President for a time.

The Sunday School was led by Max D. Long and Richard C. Murrow.

During 1971 Bishop Dotson rented a bus and took a group of Arapaho Chiefs to Salt Lake City to meet with President Spencer W. Kimball.

On 2 January 1972 Robert N. Jones was ordained Bishop. His Counselors were Michael Link Alley and Bruce Snethen. Ward Clerk was Bruce Whitmore and Bruce Carlson, Lytle Mason, Loren Butler and Barry Walker were Assistant ward Clerks.

For a time during 1972 there was a concern about a division between the military people and the civilian people of the Ward. An effort was made to downplay that division and to be more unified.

A Lamanite Conference was held on 26-27 February 1972 and efforts were made to get a strong attendance by the Lamanite youth.

A Ward campout activity was held at Canton Lake during July and the Scouts attended summer camp with them getting a good many merit badges.

A Father-Son outing was held at Roman Nose State Park during August.

For the October General Conference the Enid building was wired for television broadcasts and getting that for the first time was a special treat for the Enid members.

Bishop Jones left the military and attempted to find employment in the area without success and was released as Bishop on 12 November 1972.

Terrell Wade Hansen was called as Bishop on 12 November 1972 with Michael Alley and Richard Arnold as Counselors. Seth Jensen became Executive Secretary and Bruce Snethen was Ward Clerk. Loren Butler was High Priest's Group Leader and Elmer Barnett became Elder's Quorum President.

Before being called as Bishop in Enid Brother Hansen had served as the Branch President in Anadarko and drove the long distance every Sunday morning for his meetings.

There was a Stake Conference in April with Elder Victor L. Brown as the visitor from Salt Lake City. The Enid Ward was assigned to provide the choir at this Conference.

Teresa Henkel moved into the Ward in April 1973 and Loren Butler at age 64 and who had never married fell in love. They were married in the Enid building on 7 May 1973 by Bishop Hansen.

For Pioneer day celebration during 1973 a Ward Campout was held at Roman Nose State Park.

Ward Conference was held 9 September 1973 and the Alva and Woodward Branches became independent from the Enid Church.

During October 1973 a very serious flood hit the area of Enid and many member's homes were flooded with some losing all their possessions. The Ward had to rally by moving some families in with others and in replacing and repairing damaged property.

During June 1974 Darlene Passey was released as Relief Society President and Barbara Fischer was sustained in that position.

Ernest Grant Passey (Darlene) became Bishop on 17 August 1974. Bruce Snethen and Verl Wadley were his Counselors. Barbara Fischer was Relief Society President and Deborah Snowden as Primary President.

Bishop Passey was ordained by Elder O. Leslie Stone.

From September 1974 to the years end the Elder's Quorum had a fire wood cutting project and the Ward entered a Stake volleyball tournament and held a ham and bean dinner.

Membership of the Ward was now 430 because of a loss of the two Dependent Branches.

During May 1974 members painted the outside of the Church building and the Boy Scouts cooked hamburgers for the workers.

In July there was a girl's camp held at Keystone Lake and the softball team took second place at a Stake tournament in Anadarko.

February 1976 was declared Family Unity Month by Enid City Mayor Paul Croslin and Governor David Boren of Oklahoma did the same.

Also in February long time member Charles Loren Loomis died.

Todd Minchey was called as Bishop of Enid on 20 June 1976 and served until 18 March 1979.

Sidney Reed Ercanbrack (Peggy) served as Bishop from 18 March 1979 until 6 June 1982.

Dennis Gregson (Lisa) was called as Bishop on 6 June 1982.

On Sunday 28 August 1983 the Ward moved into a large addition to its building.

Peter Gorshe (Linda) served as Bishop in Enid later during the 1980s.

For many years the Enid Church was required to give support to the Woodward, Alva, Fairview, Hennessey, Canton and Seiling Church units and to oversee their activities and growth with the sharing of Priesthood leadership at times.

A New Building

During 1960 land for a building was purchased and fund raising projects were started to raise money for a building including a gardening project.

During 1962 a corn crop of 6 acres was planted but was mostly lost because of a lack of moisture. Later that year a bean crop was planted on part of the land. Approximately \$120 was earned from the beans. \$180 was made from the corn. Also that year \$63.90 was earned from a millet crop and \$27.50 was collected from the sale of bales of hay.

Brother Ward presented a plan to build a house for \$16,000 and sell it for a profit to raise funds for a Church building. The personnel at Vance Air Force Base who were members agreed to help with the construction and it was successful. The Branch raised \$3,000 for their fund this way.

On 10 March 1960 the Branch membership was 114.

On 15 April 1962 Enid held its groundbreaking ceremony for its new building. The lot was a 300 x 325 feet piece of land in the 600 block of North Eisenhower Street.

On 15 April 1962 construction began on the new Enid building with Roland Watkins in charge of overseeing construction.

Members did as much work on the building as possible to save money and members of the Oklahoma Stake came long distances to help with the work.

The first meetings held in the new building were on 7 October 1962 and the building dedication occurred on 29 March 1964. Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles dedicated the building.

On 27 June 1966 the second phase of the building construction began with H. L. Ward Construction Company winning the contract to do the work. Members of the Branch were heavily involved in the construction and the cost of their labors went back to the building fund.

The contracting company was owned by Hubert L. Ward who was a High Priest in the Branch. The Relief Society group participated by preparing meals for workers on some Saturdays.

Brother Ward's business also built Church buildings in Hot Springs Arkansas and in Texas. In his construction business he frequently hired members from Vance Air Force Base with the agreement that they would donate their salaries to the Branch building fund.

A problem developed as high winds blew down the steeple on the building the night after it was installed. A much stronger attachment was prepared when it was put up the second time.

On 21 October 1967 the second phase of the building was dedicated by President William Waldrop of the Stake. Elder Milton R. Hunter was to have performed the dedication but was required to remain in Salt Lake City for the funeral of Elder Antoine R. Ivins.

Some Early Members

A listing of some members who have been in the Enid Branch/Ward would include the names of Lytle, Grantz, Reese, Ward, McKeever, Geddes, Brown, Alexander, Gibby, Privette, Ging, Wood, Webber, Egan, Smith, Maness, Zitterkob, Stanton, Lent, Loomis, Gerrard, Eubanks, Carlson, Collins, Ridgway, Williams, Ensminger, Isenberg, Butler, Earl, Price, Bates, Starky, Farnsworth, Sanders, Ingelsbe, Harbican, Carson, Hicks, Fuqua, Lines, Sharp, Bakewell, Baugh, Moss, Barnett, Scott, Hedin, Ashlock, Cox, Hayhurst, Shepard, Hicks, Jensen, McMurdo, Bright, Jones, Rasband, Loomis, Black, Russell, O'Brien, Mason, McMahan, Allen, Murnan, Ercanbrack, Hinring, Cochran, Kittley, Patterson, Shirley, Lamar, Alley, Mabey, Alvey, Murrow, Funk, Parker, London, Long, Chipman, MacArthur, McDaniel, McBlair, Leuck, Shields, Walker, Fischer, Snowden, Holder, Nicholas, Lange, Burgy, Passey, Tate, Troiner, Brian, Tanner, Bevers, Soelberg, Snethen, Wadley, Wichert, Kimball, Mayer, Ross, Beers, Whitmore, Millis, Dotson, Carey, Remi Greeff (killed in Vietnam), Lawrence G. Evert (killed in Vietnam) and an outstanding quarterback for the Oklahoma University football team, Monte Deere, who joined the Church in August 1968 while he was training pilots and later served in the Norman Oklahoma Stake Presidency.

These many names are evidence of the transient nature of the Branch/Ward as people moved in and out rather quickly.

EUFAULA

A Eufaula Branch was organized by Mission President Francis Brown on 16 March 1947. Roy A. Barber was called as the first Branch President with Earl Price and Charlie Price as his Counselors. Anna Mae Weeks was the first Relief Society President.

Succeeding Branch Presidents were Earl Price and Burke George, Senior.

Because of diminished attendance in Eufaula a Branch was formed in McAlester and the Branch in Eufaula was discontinued on 23 March 1952.

GORE

The Gore Branch roots go back to a missionary meeting held in the area about 1893 when Simon Peter Hubler attended this meeting. He had been warned by neighbors to lock up his horses and women because the Mormons were in the area but he went to their meeting and received a copy of the Book of Mormon. He was converted to the Church by the book as he read it.

The Gore Branch began on 7 November 1911 and had John E. Stephenson as President. His one Counselor was David Cople. By 1921 this Branch had 113 members.

When John E. Stephenson died the Branch members would not accept the President chosen to replace him by the Mission President and most members scattered to other areas and the Branch became essentially dormant for many years.

The Hubler family was a large family that stayed in the area and remained faithful to the gospel. As the children married most brought those they married into the Church by baptism. Ordinances were performed by missionaries from the Central States Mission who visited the area twice each year. Blessings, Baptisms, Priesthood Ordinations and meetings were held with Sacrament being served.

Family members stayed in touch with Church activities and received spiritual messages from the Church periodicals. They tried to read the scriptures each evening before bedtime.

During the early part of 1946 a Sunday School was organized with Peter Penrose Hubler, Jr. being called as the Superintendent. John Moroni Hubler and Howard Douglas Hubler were his Counselors. Minnie Jewell Hubler a non-member wife of Peter became the Secretary.

The Gore Relief Society began about 1951. The first President was Ella J. Hubler and she served in that capacity for about 17 years. Most of that time the meetings were held in Sister Hubler's home and later in the Gum Springs schoolhouse. Ella Hubler donated 1 acre of land for a small building for Relief Society and the sisters did much of the work of constructing it.

Many sisters walked to meetings carrying their children or pulling them in a small wagon frequently on muddy and rutted roads.

The visiting teachers that had cars were faithful visiting teachers and sometimes traveled over 100 miles doing it.

The Gore Branch was reorganized during July 1953. The Branch President called was Peter Hubler. Succeeding Presidents of the Branch were Joseph I. Hunt (called in 1966), Lynn Hubler (called in 1968), DuWayne Briley (called in 1974) and Larry Ellsworth who became the first Bishop of the Gore Ward in 1978.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball and his wife Camilla unexpectedly showed up at the Hubler home during the early 1950s. He had an interest in the area because of the service of his father as a missionary and Mission President in the area. With Elder Kimball's encouragement and support the Gore Branch got a new building that was dedicated in 1956 by Elder George Q. Morris. Members donated most of the labor and some of the money needed for construction.

The Gore Ward was transferred from the Tulsa Stake to the new Ft. Smith Arkansas Stake when it was organized on 19 April 1978.

HENRYETTA

A Sunday School was first organized in Henryetta 23 March 1928 with James Guthrie as Superintendent. Jim McKindrick was 1st Counselor with Gussie Edgar as Secretary. This Sunday School initially met in the home of James Miller about 3 miles north of Henryetta. Primary was held in the homes of members including the Meddie E. Ross home.

James Bardeen Ross was one of the earliest converts in the area, being baptized during 1929. He became blind in later years but recited the Sacrament Prayers from memory when asked to perform that ordinance.

Later the group moved to a small building they purchased in Spelter City just south of the junction of Highways 75 and 266 (now Highway 62). The

building was a former store and gas station on which the members added siding to dress it up.

From there they moved to Okmulgee and became part of the Okmulgee Branch when it was organized on 23 August 1931. Parley P. Reed was the Branch President with Counselors Jim McKendrick, John Lamb and David Lamb at times. Parley Reed moved to California during 1948 and was replaced as Branch President by John Minson.

Meetings oscillated between Henryetta and Okmulgee in the early years depending on the location of the current membership and Priesthood leadership.

Henryetta was organized as a Dependent Branch on 9 July 1950 with John Minson as Branch President. Then on 29 October 1950 Virgil Houghton became Branch President when Brother Minson moved.

Later President Houghton moved to Monticello Utah and the Branch was reduced to Sunday School status once more.

During August 1952 David C. Lamb was sustained as Presiding Elder of the Henryetta group.

On Sunday 15 December 1957, Henryetta was organized into an Independent Branch by Mission President Alvin R. Dyer with President Robert N. Sears of the East Oklahoma District assisting. David Crockett Lamb was sustained as Branch President with Frank L. Herrold as 1st Counselor and Connie Shaver as 2nd Counselor. Marcus Maddox became the Branch Clerk.

Boundaries included Okmulgee County, including the town of Okmulgee, and that part of Hughes County north of Highway 9. The Branch included about 150 members.

For a time the Branch met again in the small building in Spelter City. Later the Branch moved back to Henryetta and met in the Legion Hut and sold their small building in Spelter City for \$500. They then moved to the upstairs of a building at 4th and Main Streets.

On 31 December 1960 three acres of land was purchased from Cliff Hudspeth for \$2500 for a building site.

Tommie G. Lamb became Branch President during November 1961. Marcus C. Maddox was 1st Counselor and E. Rex Jackson was 2nd Counselor.

October 1964 was a special time for the Henryetta Church as George E. Nolen was baptized after giving dedicated support to his wife Nellie and children in their Church activity for 21 years.

Construction of the new building began 9 May 1964. Total construction cost was \$62,000 with the local group responsible for paying 30% of the cost. Funds were raised through bake sales, bean suppers, Mexican suppers, fish fries and member pledges.

Ben Haskin, a non-member made a sizable pledge by agreeing to prepare the land for construction at no cost to the Branch. He donated his road building equipment and his employee's time to the work. Members were heavily involved with the construction process.

During construction the Branch Presidency included Tommie G. Lamb, E. Rex Jackson and James Bardean Ross. Branch Clerk was M. C. Maddox. Ed Orpin was the building contractor.

The building was dedicated on 13 June 1965 with Tulsa Stake President William H. Day giving the dedicatory prayer.

Pillows for the chairs in the Chapel were sewn and donated by Elsie Knight who was blind and her husband Jess Knight.

The new Chapel was located at 1514 north 5th Street.

George E. Nolen became Branch President during August 1970 and served until January 1972 when Earl A. Stidsen became Branch President until his move from the area during 1974. George E. Nolen then became Branch President a second time.

In February 1976 Kenneth Herbert became Branch President and Henryetta's first Bishop on 30 April 1978 when it became a Ward.

The Branch membership was very low during 1975 but quickly recovered to almost 90 active members by 1978.

Relief Society leaders in Henryetta included Hilda Barker (first President), Meddie E. Ross, Nellie Nolen, Rebecca Collett, Mozell McKendrick, and Bonnie Lamb.

Meddie Ross remembers walking 6 miles one way to 2 different Church meetings on Sundays regardless of weather (24 miles total). Her home was always a safe haven for missionaries.

Hilda Barker came from England and had endured watching her mother being tarred and feathered along with some missionaries in England. She also had sung with the Tabernacle Choir for a time in Salt Lake City.

Other faithful early families in Henryetta include: Reese, Miller, Edgar, Guthrie, Hawk, Davis, Cox, Carpenter, Ferrill, Vance, Cole, Thompson, Oliver, Fortner, Terrill, Willis, Verneti and Robbins.

LAWTON

FT. SILL

The Lawton Ward has its beginnings based on the many LDS military personnel who came to the area during 1939 through 1941. For example future Apostle Dallin H. Oaks, future Tabernacle Choir director Jerald Ottley, and future U. S. Senator Robert Bennett served at the Ft. Sill base.

The group began with Sacrament Meetings in the New Post Chapel and later in the South Boulevard Chapel. Also at times they met in the Recreation Hall and occasionally held classes in the back of an Army truck. During 1956 the Army made a great concession to the LDS services by allowing them to meet in the Cantonment Hospital Chapel, which was exclusively theirs as well as two annexes adjacent to the Chapel for meetings and activities.

A listing of some of the outstanding young men who served the group includes the names of Van Damm, Robert Phillips, Paul Schulz, John Herstad, Maren T. Peterson, Timothy Irons, Reed Richards, Douglas Johnson, Kenneth Biddle, William Galbreath, and John Clifford. Many of these young men went on to become significant leaders in the Church and others lost their lives in the Wars.

Some names that must be included in the very faithful early servants of the Church in Lawton are Ray and Dora Mae Catlin, Myron and Vera McChurin and Faye Teakle.

The Lawton/Ft. Sill Branch was organized 25 May 1956 with John W. Clifford as Branch President. (Note: The local history states that the Branch was formed in June 1957 with Don Stevenson as Branch President and states that he was replaced 1 year later by Willard LaGrand Nielsen. The difference may be in a military service Branch versus a civilian Branch).

The Lawton Branch became a Ward on the day the Oklahoma Stake was formed in Oklahoma City, 23 October 1960. W. LaGrand Nielsen (Beatrice) became the first Bishop.

Brother Nielsen had a good relationship with the base commanders and was allowed to borrow an army bus to pick up members in the area for church and return them home after meetings.

After much searching and praying the Ward purchased a property for a building at 917 Hilltop Drive just north of the Hillside Cemetery. The property was purchased from Jeff Runyon whose asking price was \$10,000. Bishop Nielsen asked Mr. Runyon if he would take \$5,000 cash and donate the other \$5,000 to the Church as a tax deduction. Although he wasn't a Church member he agreed. Later a building site was obtained for a building at 70th Street and S. W. Drakestone Boulevard.

The second Bishop in Lawton was Floyd A. Alldredge who had served as a counselor to Bishop Nielsen.

Prior to obtaining their own building in Lawton the Branch/Ward would sometimes drive to the Duncan building for baptismal services.

Shortly after his baptism in March 1958 Ray Catlin was called as the first Scout Master to the Lawton Church.

An article in the December 2006 Church News stated that 99 years old W. LaGrand Nielsen of Hemet California was inducted into the Huntsman World Senior Games Hall of Fame. His daily routine each morning began with 80 to 100 pushups a 3-mile walk and a 3-mile bicycle ride.

LEADER

The Leader Branch was established among the Chickasaw Tribe, with 10 members during 1894 with Elder E. L. Causey as Branch President.

LEHI

This Branch was created by President Henry Eyring during 1859 in the Cherokee Nation but was soon dissolved as its leader migrated to Utah.

MASSEY

This Branch was created in the Choctaw Nation during 1892 by President Andrew Kimball and was the site of the 2nd LDS meetinghouse in Oklahoma. A Choctaw widow donated the land for the building. Massey is a short distance west of McAlester. The building was used as a school house Elder William H. Leigh and others teaching there at times.

MANARD

The Manard Branch was organized in the early 1890s by Mission President Andrew Kimball in the Cherokee Nation. It was the site of the first constructed LDS meetinghouse in Oklahoma on land donated by William H. Hendricks. The building was a log structure and built in 1892. It is located about 7 miles east of Ft. Gibson.

MARLOW

This Branch was organized 7 May 1908 with A. L. Beeler as Branch President. On 11 Jun 1913 the Branch was renamed the Sharon Branch under the direction of Mission President S. O. Bennion. At this time S. M. E. Fain became Branch President.

McALESTER

Originally, a Sunday School and Primary were held in the homes of members in the McAlester area. The Sunday School was organized 13 August 1940 in the home of William O. (Bud) Duff. Later it was held in the rural schoolhouse at McNally Flats.

On 16 March 1947 Mission President Francis Brown organized a Branch in Eufaula with Roy A. Barber as the Branch President.

Members who attended the McAlester Sunday School included Norwood and Hazel Duff, Oliver and Lula Duff and Delores and Dora Lee Giacomo who were granddaughters of Oliver and Lula Duff. Missionaries were also assigned to the area at this time by the Central States Mission.

On 23 March 1952 the McAlester Independent Branch was formed by Mission President Orville Ellsworth with William Wilder as Branch President. The local history states that George A. Standifird was the first Branch President but the Church History Department does not agree.

During 1955 Lula Duff was Relief Society President with Lila Standifird and Ida George as Counselors.

During the 1950s a Dependent Sunday School attached to McAlester and about 65 south of McAlester near the Texas border was established at Boswell. Thomas Donald Lee and his son Amos Cantrell Lee functioned as the Superintendent and Counselor. Tennis Adeline was Secretary. Meetings were held in the LeFlore School building located 2 ½ miles west of Boswell. Seven families were in the group during 1957 and during 1961 the area became part of the Dallas Texas Stake.

The McAlester boundaries included counties south to Texas, east to Arkansas, west to Holdenville and north to Checotah.

Additional Branch Presidents who have served in McAlester are George A. Standifird (1955), Albert M. Hunt (1960), Alfred Young (1962), Carl Anderson (1966), Lee R. Wilson (1967), John Lanbeck (1968), Jerry Ward (1969), H. Norwood Duff (1969), and George Loch (1979).

The Branch normally rented buildings in the downtown area of McAlester while growing and usually had stairs to climb to get to meetings.

As membership grew a large replica of a thermometer was posted to reflect the progress of the Branch building fund. During 1956 the amount topped the thermometer and construction was begun.

The work on the building drew the members together in a spirit of joy and expectation. Bricks were purchased from the State Penitentiary at a modest price. Also, inmates from the prison made and installed the pews and other building furnishings from solid mahogany. Many layers of varnish were stripped away from an old Eufaula Branch piano, which revealed a very beautiful finish.

The building was dedicated Thursday, 17 October 1957. Vivien Romney played prelude music, President Standifird had opening remarks, and the opening hymn was "Come, Come, Ye Saints" with an invocation by Norwood Duff.

Talks were given by LaRon D. Stewart, Robert N. Sears of the District Presidency and Mission President Alvin R. Dyer.

A musical duet was performed by Norman K. Barnum and Maryalice Stewart. The dedicatory prayer was given by Elder Adam A. Bennion of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The closing hymn was "Let Us All Press On" with Burke George, Sr. giving the benediction.

Membership in the Branch had some ups and some downs but as it continued members tried to prepare for the day when they could go to the Temple and receive their ordinances.

Many missionaries have been sent out from the Branch.

The Relief Society sisters met during the week to study, and quilt to prepare for the bazaars that were usually held near holidays, to make for a festive occasion.

The Branch gathered for special dinners, ice cream socials, watermelon busts, as well as activities for the youth and Primary children, which helped maintain a fellowship among members.

During 1969 a portion of the Branch was transferred to the Central States Mission.

For many years the Branch had a large welfare assessment that caused a debt to accumulate but was reduced somewhat when the Talihina area was formed into a Branch.

Much work by the Branch made it possible to pay off this welfare assessment debt during 1979, which brought pride to the group for their accomplishment.

George Washington Aaron and his wife Mary Elizabeth Harrison Aaron were early members of the Church in Eastern Oklahoma who joined in the late 1800s. Some of their descendants remained in the McAlester area.

Examples of members descended from early converts include William O. and Ella Duff, Oliver and Lula Duff, Burke and Ida Aaron George, Eva Murdaugh and Nancy Aaron.

MIDWEST CITY

At a meeting Presided over by Mission President Alvin R. Dyer the Midwest City Branch was organized on 15 August 1954. John M. Bunker became the first President of the Branch with William Vandergriff as 1st Counselor, William Alberry as 2nd Counselor and David W. Eaton as Branch Clerk.

A temporary meeting place was at the Sooner School at S.E. 15th Street and Sooner Road. Immediate plans required establishing a budget and ordering songbooks.

At the next week's Branch Presidency meeting plans were made to begin a building program. Within the next few weeks the auxiliary organizations were all staffed as much as available membership would permit.

In mid-October a Barbeque Carnival was held at the Vandergriff Ranch near Harrah for a building fund effort. This activity netted the Branch \$400. There were only 47 members at this time.

Being very near Tinker Air Force Base (called Tucker Field at that time) many inspired and inspiring Church members came into the Branch for short periods of time. These good people brought many benefits to the Branch. They brought their examples, hard work and talents that left a lasting impression to local members. Parting without sorrow, was a term that the Branch learned to use as so many left the area.

Rapid and complete reorganization of Auxiliaries was frequently necessary.

Finances of the Branch improved with a hot dog supper sponsored by Boyd Edwards in August 1955 and the Relief Society began holding bazaars that brought in funds.

Full time Sister missionaries began working in Midwest City during 1955 and brought the Wayne Word family into the Branch. The District missionaries under the leadership of LeGrande Wooley were successful in their work of taking the gospel to others.

A Branch Conference on 8 January 1956 brought a new Branch Presidency. Branch President was David W. Eaton with Douglass Morris, 1st Counselor, and Robert Sagers, 2nd Counselor. Statistical Clerk was Rose Marie Eaton. One week later Quintilla Cole was sustained as Branch Historian.

Land for a Church building was purchased on 15 February 1956 as President James A. Cullimore and Branch President Eaton finalized the purchase of property with landowner Russell Showalter.

That same year the Branch set up a fireworks stand and sold fireworks for the 4th of July celebration and made a profit of \$300.

During August Brother Theon Laney became the Building Chairman and his wife Lucille was sustained as Relief Society President. A daughter Ann Laney was put to work as the Primary Chorister Leader.

The Don Olsen family organized the first Branch Choir and served on the Genealogy Committee. Kenneth and Ruth Nix served on the Genealogy Committee.

By January 1957 Oklahoma City Church member and architect Afton Gille had the drawings ready for construction of the new building, which were approved by the Mission and District leaders.

A "Big Brick Drive Dinner" was held during February with a display of a model of the new building available for members to see.

This first phase building was completed in 1959, was dedicated 25 October 1959 by Elder Antoine R. Ivins, and during November 1959 the Priesthood voted to begin work on a second phase for the building as soon as possible. Members and especially the Auxiliaries were thrilled with their new space.

A District Conference was held 22 May 1960 in the Municipal Auditorium at Oklahoma City and in which Midwest City got new leadership. Branch President was Wayne Travis Word with Otto Lewis Grimes as 1st Counselor and Frederick C. Place as 2nd Counselor.

Also, Keith B. Boden was called as Financial Clerk, Donald Pierce as Statistical Clerk, Lela Pierce as Assistant Statistical Clerk and Quantilla Cole as Historical Clerk.

To raise funds for the second phase of the Church building a fireworks stand was again set up during June and July 1960. A profit of over \$1100 was realized. Otto Grimes was helpful in using his influence to get the permit from the City Council.

With the organization of the Oklahoma Stake in October 1960 Midwest City became a Ward. The existing Branch Presidency became the first Ward Bishopric.

During November the Sunday School Superintendent and his Counselors were Howard Engel, George C. Paynter, Sr., and Kenneth R. Glado. These men organized a successful Thanksgiving dinner for \$5.00 each as a fund raising project.

A skit called "Pocohontas and John Smith" was performed with Duane Erickson and Craig and John Shepley playing lead roles. Sisters Willene Grimes, Rae Ann Engel, Leona Larsen, Mavis Harrell, Mary Alberry, and Donna Wheeler

were accompanied by Doris Shepley as they sang “Indian Love Call” as background music. Otto Grimes was narrator.

During December 1960 the average attendance at Sacrament was approximately 120.

Midwest City served as the Stake Center of the South Oklahoma Stake (later renamed the Norman Oklahoma Stake) from 18 October 1970 to the completion of the new Stake Center in Norman during February 1976. They also served as the place of baptisms in the area for many years.

MUSKOGEE

Clifford W. (Bud) and Dorothy Boyd moved to Muskogee in 1948, they were not members of the Church but had known missionaries they had met in Kansas City. In traveling in his employment to Okmulgee Oklahoma Bud met a missionary he had known in Kansas City, Jack Satterfield from Pocatello Idaho. Bud learned from Elder Satterfield of the Hubler family in Gore and joined the Church with his family.

Soon meetings were begun in Muskogee with a few scattered members in the area as well as social activities with the Hubler family at Honor Heights Park.

The Boyd family occasionally attended Sunday School in Eufaula and prayed for missionaries to be sent to Muskogee. Soon missionaries came and began a Sunday School in Muskogee where the Book of Mormon was taught. These meetings were normally in the Boyd home.

Later meetings were held at the YMCA building at Main and Court Streets at 12:30pm, which was the only time the building was available. The building was a wooden structure that resonated noise with the slightest movement.

The missionaries found a railroad engineer named Leonard Peterson who spent every other weekend in Muskogee although his home was in Kansas and he held the Priesthood.

Next the Agent Funeral Home was used as a meeting site and then the Walker Funeral home. After these funeral homes the Saints rented space in the VFW hall in west Okmulgee. It was necessary to clean up each Sunday after the Bingo games from the night before.

The group was now growing from both baptisms and move-ins and the Muskogee group began to plan for their own building.

The Muskogee Relief Society was organized on 25 July 1950 in the home of Gladys Fortner at 903 Osage and continued meeting in member’s homes for several years. Gladys had been baptized in 1929. Some of those present when the Relief Society was organized were Elders Albert Bowler and Norman Clyde, Mary

Krider who was Relief Society District Supervisor, and Sister Laura Stephens, a Tulsa missionary.

Officers of this new Relief Society included Gladys Fortner, President; Cecile McDaniel, Counselor; Thelma Myers, Counselor; and Dorothy Boyd, Secretary-Treasurer.

The Primary was organized during March 1957 with Dorothy Boyd as President and Jean Anderson and Nedra Heitmann as Counselors.

In March 1958 Muskogee became a dependent Branch under the tutelage of the North Tulsa Branch with Leonard Peterson and Gordon Grey each serving as Presiding Elder at times.

On 16 March 1958 Calvin B. Asay who had moved from Wyoming to Muskogee with his wife and 5 boys was set apart as the first Branch President. Leonard Peterson and Don Jones became his Counselors with Clarence Anderson as Clerk. Meetings at this time were held in the VFW hall except Relief Society, which was held in member's homes.

During March 1960 Branch President Calvin Asay was released and James R. Keaton became Branch President. His Counselors were Albert Harris and Calvin Asay with Clarence Anderson remaining as Clerk.

On 10 December 1961 Muskogee became a Ward with James R. Keaton as the first Bishop. He had Clifford W. Boyd and Albert H. Harris as Counselors. Clarence H. Anderson was Clerk. When the Andersons moved to Tulsa during May 1962 Vene D. Boyd became Ward Clerk.

A new Church building was begun under Bishop Keaton during September 1960 on 10 acres of property at York and Hancock Road in the southeast part of Muskogee. Brother and Sister Maxwell were sent to Muskogee to assist the construction efforts. The first meeting held in the building was a fundraiser before the building was complete.

The Keaton family moved from Muskogee during April 1963 and Clifford W. Boyd became Bishop with Vene D. Boyd (no relation) and Clarence Sexton as Counselors. Beemer (Bill) G. Towry became Ward Clerk at this time. Later Vene D. Boyd moved to Adair and Calvin B. Asay replaced him as a Counselor.

Victor Manwaring became Bishop during 1968 with Counselors Calvin B. Asay and Clarence F. Sexton. Alva E. Baker was Clerk.

The Muskogee Ward included Tahlequah, Wagoner, Chouteau, Boynton and the surrounding areas. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a Sunday School in Wagoner. However Tahlequah became a Dependent Branch and then an Independent Branch overseen by the Muskogee Ward.

With the sale of 5 acres of land that wasn't needed for the building the Ward was able to meet all financial obligations for their building. On 3 March 1968 Paul H. Dunn of the First Council of the Seventy dedicated the building.

Some of the early and dedicated members of the Church in Muskogee included Vадnia P. Roberts, Eva Hunt, Ruby Hanna, Evelyn Cawvey, Clarence and Jean Anderson, Calvin and Colleen Asay, Clifford (Bud) and Dorothy Boyd, Helen Guppy, Betty Andrasko, Bill and Polly Towry, Mildred Towry, Jean Yadon, Albert and Lucille Harris, James and Reah Keaton, Jennie Houlette, Vene and Dolly Boyd, Haskell and Flora Gene Wood, and Clarence and Ann Sexton.

The first full time missionary sent from Muskogee was Steve Boyd who later became a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Additional Bishops to serve the Muskogee Ward was John M. Hubler and Donald Porte.

NEPHI

The Nephi Branch was organized by Elder Heinrich Eyring in the Creek Nation during 1859. It may have been a replacement for the Princess Creek Branch that was dissolved because members migrated to Utah.

OAK

This Branch was organized on 7 November 1911 with Thomas E. Scott as Branch President. At this time Samuel O. Bennion was the Mission President and was likely formed by him but little is now known of the history of this Branch.

OKLAHOMA CITY

On Tuesday 10 December 1918 a conference was held in Oklahoma City of Elders serving in the Oklahoma Conference. It was held under the direction of a Conference President, Alex F. Dunn. Mission President Samuel O. Bennion arrived the following day from Austin Texas. During 1899 the Oklahoma Conference consisted of the Territory of Oklahoma and the Chickasaw nation. At the end of 1899 there were 274 Church members in the Oklahoma Conference.

At this conference the following Elders were in attendance: W. Victor Beckstead, Anthon Jorgensen, Elmer C. Hale, Douglas C. Harker, F. A. Hunger, Parvin E. Church, W. Lester Glade, Daniel M. Price, Dennis W. Black, Seymour B. Murray, J. Oliver Finch, Ephraim N. Storey, E. A. Palmer, Herman J. Winkler, and Robert H. Hoare. Also in attendance were Alex F. Dunn and Samuel O. Bennion.

President Dunn had recently been nursed back to health by Brother and Sister Jones of Howe Oklahoma while he suffered from influenza. It was mentioned that Sister Viola Robertson of El Reno had died and that a miraculous healing of the son of John L. Sconlers of Hugo who had suffered from dropsy, had occurred.

Since July 1917 the Conference had distributed 353 copies of the Book of Mormon, 590 other books, 7 copies of the Standard Works, held 3 baptisms, and secured 13 subscriptions to the Liahona magazine.

A Sunday School was organized in Oklahoma City during 1925 while Samuel O. Bennion was the Central States Mission President. John Henschel served as Superintendent with Louis Scoville and Hugo Patterson as his Counselors. They met in the K.P. Hall on North Broadway.

Oklahoma City's Branch was organized 19 January 1929 with George R. Wooley as Branch President. First Counselor was John Henschel and 2nd Counselor was Oscar J. Lindsey. Branch Clerk was Allen M. Giles. The Branch was part of the Central States Mission, which was headquartered at Independence Missouri. Meetings in Oklahoma City had begun two weeks before the organization.

This early Branch was dissolved or "closed" as of 25 December 1931 and reorganized in 1932 and again on 9 December 1934.

Sister Elva Lindsey Jacobson (wife of F. Conover Jacobson) has provided minutes from some early Sacrament meetings in Oklahoma City as follows:

22 February 1931, 7:00pm. Pres. R. E. Lortz, Presiding. Attendance was 28 people meeting in the County Court House, including Elder John Herschal, 2nd Counselor conducting, Elder Hugo Patterson, Agnes Patterson, Branch Clerk, Charles Thomason, Felix Gray, Van Lewen and Olga Cooley.

1 March 1931, 12:00 (Noon), at the Court House. 19 people present. Rudolph Lortz gave the opening prayer.

8 March 1931, 7:30pm at the Court House with 31 people present.

15 March 1931, Court House with 24 people present. Elder Melcher from Dallas was present.

During 1932 the Branch was reorganized with George Wooley as Branch President and only 6 people present.

9 December 1934, the Branch was reorganized by Lawrence R. Briggs, Oklahoma District Mission President at the Court House. George R. Wooley became President with John Henschel and Oscar Lindsey as first and second Counselors. Allen M. Giles was sustained as Branch Clerk. Names of others present included Theodore Bates, Hugo Patterson, Leonard Cole, and Elder Alton V. Thatcher. A Relief Society all day quilting activity was announced for a member's home that week.

27 January 1935, District Conference was held in the Court House under the direction of Mission President Elias Woodruff. Oklahoma Branches represented included DeNoya with President Albert Scott, Oklahoma City with President George R. Wooley, Okmulgee with President Parley Reed and others. Participants in this conference included additional names of Elder Max J. Blake, Lawrence Morriss, Louise Wooley, Osa Lela Giles, Nora Gibson, Eula Lindsey, Laurel Jones and the Scott sisters who sang a musical.

2 June 1935, An Oklahoma District Conference was held on the 10th floor of the Chamber of Commerce building with Mission President Elias Woodruff presiding and District President Max J. Blake conducting.

22 September 1935, Branch moved to the Capital Hill Funeral Home at 2801 SW Robinson until 5 January 1936.

During 1935 George Wooley moved to Salt Lake City and Hugo Patterson became Branch President with N. A. Butler and Oscar Lindsey as Counselors.

1 March 1936, met in Capital Hill Lions Club, Dawson Hall.

22 November 1936, Hugo Patterson was Branch President, A. N. Butler was a Counselor. They were meeting in the Masonic Temple, Shrine Auditorium.

4 December 1938, Branch was reorganized with James A. Cullimore as President with A. N. Butler and Don L. Decker as Counselors. Their meeting place was the YWCA until moving into their new building at 540 NW 44th St.

There was a slowing of activity in the Church in Oklahoma City after the Depression struck in October 1929 for a time, as members were scattered trying to find a way to survive. However, it would become necessary for the Oklahoma City area to provide the leadership to the small Branches that would spring up in much of the State of Oklahoma in the coming years.

On 12 February 1937, Oklahoma was divided into the East and West Oklahoma Districts by President Elias Woodruff of the Central States Mission. Gillman Housley became the West Oklahoma District President.

Brother Housley was required by his employment for Safeway Stores to travel the State in his business and was able to visit outlying Branches when he traveled.

The next District President was Don Ashdown who served from April 1951 until 4 November 1951.

James A. Cullimore (Grace) moved to Oklahoma City during 1937 and had a very large effect on the area with his leadership skills, which led him to become a Branch President, a District President, the first Oklahoma City Stake President, a Mission President to England, and a General Authority of the Church as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Brother Cullimore served as Branch President of the Oklahoma City Branch from 1938 to 4 November 1951 when he became the West Oklahoma District

President. As Branch President his Counselors were Wilford Nelson and Dean Anderson with Wilhelmina Sellers serving as Clerk. It was not uncommon to have a sister serve in a Clerk position in the early years.

Later Branch Presidents in Oklahoma City included DeMar J. McKinnon (Bernice), Carl Brown, Don Epperson, Ron Housley, and Darrell L. Miller. Brother Miller became the first Bishop when the Stake was created on 23 October 1960.

War preparations brought a large influx of service men and women into the area during the early 1940s.

There were large numbers of military personnel in the West Oklahoma District with military bases or training facilities located at Norman (Navy), Midwest City (Air Force), Lawton (Army), Ardmore (Air Force), Clinton (Air Force), Altus (Air Force), Stillwater (various military) and Enid (Air Force).

These military personnel were a great asset to the Church although they frequently moved.

Also there were military contractors that brought in good people.

Meeting Places

Early buildings the Church group met in included the K. P. Hall on North Broadway Street about 1925, Courthouse building at the corner of Main and Dewey (twice), Capital Hill Funeral Home, Dawson Hall at S.W. 24th and Robinson Streets, Roberts Upholstery shop about 1928 in the 1200 block of N.W. 2nd Street, Judge Bar's home about 1932, a small Church owned building on N. W. 10th Street about 1935, the Masonic Temple at 6th and North Robinson during 1937, the YWCA Venetian Room in 1941, a new Church building at the corner of 44th and Lee Streets (540 N. W. 44th) beginning 5 November 1950 and a new Stake Center dedicated 3 April 1966 at 5020 N.W. 63rd Street. There may have been other locations.

New Building

Many fund raising activities for the new Church building were held during the late 1940s and early 1950s. They included an organ recital by Frank Asper in the Shrine Auditorium, plays and musicals at the Y.W.C.A., Relief Society dinners and financial pledges from members.

Ground breaking for a new building took place on Mother's Day, 21 May 1950 and Sunday, 5 November 1950 was the first Sabbath in the new building. An open house was held in the new building on 28 January 1951 from 2 to 5 pm. The Branch Presidency at the time was Pres. D. J. McKinnon with Hugo Patterson as first Counselor and Ronald Housley as second Counselor. The building was dedicated on 4 November 1951 by Elder Spencer W. Kimball.

Early Members

A few of the important Church families in the very early Oklahoma City history includes Barnett, Bates, Giles, Cole, Morriss, Gibson, Jones, Choate, Lindsey, Jacobson, Scoville, Gilpin, Henschel, Wooley, Housley, Cullimore, Butler, Decker, Dougherty, Epperson, McKinnon, Brown, Anderson, Barlow, Jensen, Hales, Ashdown, Waldrop, Nelson, Miller, Phillips, Rowe, Patterson, Stallings, Sellers, Allen, Feder, Whitaker, Arrington, and many more.

Branch Divided

On 5 May 1957 the Oklahoma Branch was drastically reduced in size when the South Oklahoma City Branch was organized taking the area south of Main street in Oklahoma City. The new Branch in the south covered a very large area but was not well defined.

A New Stake

The Oklahoma City area got its first Stake on 23 October 1960 with James A. Cullimore called as the first Stake President by Elder Mark E. Petersen. The Stake headquarters would be at the 44th and Lee Streets address until the completion of the new Stake Center on 3 April 1966.

During 1962 Gary Jacobson became the first young man to be called on a Church Mission from Oklahoma City First Ward and he went to England. Later Michael McAdams would also serve his mission in England.

The Stake Conference meeting place was frequently a rented school building in Edmond until completion of the new Stake Center.

William Waldrop became the Oklahoma City Stake President on 15 January 1961 as James A. Cullimore was called to head a Mission in England.

The new Stake Center building was a wonderful blessing on 5 acres of land with 20,000 square feet of space and a cost of approximately \$450,000 including furnishings.

At the dedication of the new Stake Center Elder Alvin R. Dyer presided and gave the dedicatory prayer, L. Orville Barlow gave the invocation, speakers were Bishop Kelvyn H. Cullimore, Perry S. Bolyard, Stake President William L. Waldrop, and Elder Alvin R. Dyer. Eugene Peterson gave the benediction.

Surnames of some of the people in the north Oklahoma City area at the time of the building dedication included Cullimore, Housley, Stallings, Jacobson, Allen, Fisher, Gille, Longhorn, Snart, Waldrop, Wade, Bolyard, Young, Beers, Stangle, Willis, Sheppard, Rose, Peterson, Ratliff, and Brown.

H. Aldridge Gillespie became Stake President on 20 October 1968. His Counselors were Glenn Orr (Shari) and Calvin Woodstock (Charlcie). He was set apart by Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

The Stake headquartered in Oklahoma City was initially called the Oklahoma Stake but was renamed the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake during the 1970s.

On 18 October 1970 Wiley Callister became the Stake President with the organization of the Oklahoma South Stake. He was set apart by Elder Thomas S. Monson. His counselors were Leland J. Housley and Robert Ezell.

A list of those who served as Stake President of the Oklahoma Stake and later the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake includes James A. Cullimore, William L. Waldrop, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Wiley E. Callister and Kenneth R. Hutto. Bro. Hutto was called by Elder Delbert L. Stapley.

OKMULGEE

The Okmulgee Branch was formed on 23 August 1931 by Mission President Samuel O. Bennion. Parley P. Reed became the first Branch President.

Later the Okmulgee area became part of the Henryetta Branch. See the Henryetta history.

PONCA CITY

Missionaries came to Ponca City during 1939 and organized a Sunday School with 5 members. This meeting was held in the home of Louis M. Dickerson who had been a member only 3 months but had been ordained a Priest.

After a year they rented the Carpenter's Labor Union Hall for meetings and stayed there for 14 years. After the first year, membership had grown to 12 members. Under Louis Dickerson's leadership the group grew until the Branch was formed on 14 November 1954.

After meeting in the Carpenter's Union Hall they moved to a Recreation Hall for teenagers. Here they had chairs set up along the walls with pool and Ping Pong tables in the middle.

Roy Edgar became the first Branch President and his first obligation was to find a better meeting place. President Edgar's home served as the Place to hold Sacrament meetings. The Nonamaker Hall was selected and it had an old piano of poor quality.

In the fall of 1955 the Branch was reorganized with Donald A. Catron as Branch President. The membership grew with successful missionary efforts and move-ins after the end of World War II.

As early as 1950, members had begun to contribute to a building fund for the Branch. During 1956 a 5 acre piece of land was purchased on East Hartford Street for a building site.

In the fall of 1957 the Branch meeting location was moved again to an old 2-room country schoolhouse that had been moved to 1921 East Hartford Street. A 3-year lease was obtained which allowed members to remodel it. Members did roofing jobs and home remodeling to raise money for the new building fund.

President Catron moved to Salt Lake City in 1958 and William G. Lacey became the Branch President. During 1962 he traveled to Salt lake City to discuss building plans for a new Ponca City building.

Work on the first of four phases of construction began in August 1962 with Alden Stradling as the building supervisor. The first meeting in the new building was a Fast and Testimony meeting on 3 March 1963.

The Branch Presidency at this time included William G. Lacey with Counselors Richard Ray Rawson and Walter Harlow Farnsworth. The Clerk was Leila Loree Farnsworth.

On 2 June 1963 the Branch Presidency was reorganized by Marion H. Tolland who was a Counselor in the Wichita Kansas Stake Presidency. Robert William Wotring, Jr. became Branch President with Jimmie Jacob Jones and Grover Roy Edgar as Counselors and Raymond Lee Pierce as Clerk. In November Louis M. Dickison became Branch Clerk.

Max C. Pitcher became the first Bishop of the Ponca City Ward and he was followed by Walter E. Zabriskie, Marlow Lyle Slade, Dennis E. Palmer and William G. Lacey.

Additional men who served as Bishopric Counselors or Clerks at times include: E. Harvey McDonald, James W. Isenberg, W. Ralph Hardy, James J. Pistorries, Joseph M. Jackson, Larry Dean Evans, Neil J. Simpson, Robert H. Stolt, Wesley K. Sorensen, Howard Joseph Foy, and Dean J. Bybee.

Some sisters who served as Relief Society President are: Leila Farnsworth, Charlene Holland, Betty M. Lacey, Mary Edith Isenberg, Virginia Stephenson, Joyce Reynolds, Donna Stolt, Barbara Palmer, Joyce Messick, Patricia Foy, and Laura Christiansen.

On 1 September 1975 the Blackwell Branch became part of the Ponca City Ward. And then on 12 September 1976 a Dependent Blackwell Branch was formed to be dependent on Ponca City.

On 30 April 1978 Ponca City and the Blackwell Saints became part of the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake when the Tulsa area was divided into two Stakes to include the Tulsa East Stake. They were taken from the Wichita Kansas Stake.

PRINCESS CREEK

The Princess Creek Branch was created within the Creek Nation.

It was organized by Elder James Case in the Spring of 1856 but was soon dissolved when many of its members migrated to Utah or lost interest in the Church.

PRIOR CREEK

The Prior Creek Branch was organized in the Cherokee Nation during 1856 in the area of what today is called Pryor Oklahoma although it was not far from the Cherokee Branch.

Most of the members of this Branch soon migrated to Utah and the Branch was dissolved.

PRYOR

On 19 March 1950 a home Sunday School was formed at Disney in the home of a Church member. This area is a short distance from where the Church began originally in Indian Territory. Families from Pryor, Adair, Disney and Strang attended the Sunday School. The meetings were alternated between member's homes and for a time in the back room of the Strang Post Office.

This group was dependent on the Bartlesville Branch beginning during 1955 when the Branch President there was William R. Oxford with Counselors Isaac D. Smith and Charley Littleford.

On 28 July 1957 Primary and MIA was formed and also held in member's homes. The Relief Society was not organized until 3 October 1971 with Marie Boyd as President.

During July 1962 responsibility for this dependent group was transferred to the Tulsa 2nd Ward and meetings were held in the Littleford home in Adair.

A building that had been a Laundromat was converted to a meeting place and rented during 1970. In time a home behind this building was converted for use by Relief Society and for additional classrooms.

Families that were involved in bringing about the gospel in this area included Littleford, Smith, Boyd, Keller, Hogan, Hollingsworth and Toungate.

Vene G. Boyd served as Branch President of the Dependent Branch starting 23 November 1969 with Counselors Charley Littleford and Isaac D. Smith. Later

the Dennis Lamb family moved into the area and Brother Lamb served as the Branch President.

When the Lambs moved to Kansas Joseph Carter served as the President for a short time.

During 1971 Jimmie Bland became the Branch President and served until 22 June when the Stake Presidency organized Pryor into an Independent Branch. The Stake Presidency at this time included Veigh J. Nielsen as President with Counselors Walter M. Bowers and Harvey W. Thompson.

Samuel J. Hughes was called as Branch President of the newly Independent Branch.

Land was soon purchased for a building site with money contributed by members and fund raising projects such as an auction. \$40,000 was raised in just nine months.

Growth in the Pryor area was slowed by anti-Mormon feelings and actions. Missionary work was difficult.

On 30 April 1978 when the Tulsa Stake was divided the Pryor Branch became part of the Tulsa Oklahoma East Stake. Branch President Hughes was called as a Counselor into the new Stake Presidency and R. Christian Weierman became Branch President.

Ground was broken for the new building on 25 August 1979 and the first meetings in this new building occurred during May 1980.

SAPULPA

During October 1971 a Sunday School group was organized and the old Episcopal Church building at the corner of Walnut and Thompson Streets was rented for meetings. Billie Lee Davis was called as Sunday School President.

The five families in the new group were Billie Lee and Mary Davis, Sarah Williams, L. D. and Willine Hair, Glen and Lila Stinecipher and Doris Gleason.

Lila Stinecipher taught the Gospel Doctrine class and Doris Gleason taught the children who were ages four to fifteen.

The group grew when two new couples soon came to attend with 4 more children. They were Robert and Gerry McGuire and Darrell and Mary Arrowood. Also, Don and Rebecca Dill were baptized and came with their small daughter Michelle.

The building was shared with a Senior Citizens group and Alcoholics Anonymous. Both groups moved out shortly and the Sapulpa group had the building to themselves.

In August 1972 Bishop Raleigh Huntsman from the parent Tulsa Ward came and organized Relief Society, MIA, and Primary. Doris Gleason was called as

Relief Society President, Darrell Arrowood and Mary Davis were called as Presidents of the Young Men and Young Women programs, and Geraldine McGuire as Primary President.

The missionaries found some inactive members in the area and others moved to the area. O. B. and Lealue Kerr and Lealue Kerr's sister, the Ronald Hollingshead family, and the Robert Lumly family were added.

Sister Kerr played the piano and later played the organ when the Lumly family brought one for the Church's use.

A Relief Society Social was held on 9 September 1972 with Stake visitors Lynetta Bingham, Janice Bouck, Sue Weedn, Patricia Hughes and Thora Cochran. The first Relief Society meeting was held on 5 October 1972.

During January 1973 Sapulpa became a Dependent Branch with Billie Lee Davis as Branch President and Donald P. Hassell and Oleum B. Kerr as Counselors. Emphasis was placed on starting a building fund right away.

In February a Chili supper was held with a bean dinner at the Tulsa 1st Ward the next month sponsored by the Sunday School. Sapulpa also held some garage sales and bake sales to be able to pay their Stake budget requirements.

Building fund dinners were used to raise funds for the building program.

In early fall 1974 Donald P. Hassell was called as Branch President and served for 2 years. Don Hair then became the Branch President and served until the spring of 1976 when his family moved to California.

Randall Pope became President at this time and served about 3 months before he moved to Denver. Walter Banning then was sustained as Branch President.

Doris Gleason was released as Relief Society President during August 1976 and Lealue Kerr was sustained in the position. Sister Kerr was released in April 1977 and Debbie Smith was called as President. On 1 March 1977 the Branch held its first meeting at the Sacred Heart schoolhouse. The new meeting place seemed to bother some members and attendance dropped.

Jack Richardson replaced President Banning as President during June 1977. President Richardson negotiated with the Seventh Day Adventist Church to rent their building on Sundays and Tuesdays starting in September 1977.

The Sapulpa members enjoyed the building but found it necessary to finish some of the rooms of the building that were left undone, including the kitchen.

The Seventh day Adventist group became unhappy with the way the building was being used and discord resulted.

Sister Lois Pineau was appointed by President Richardson to be in charge of the building fund activities and she arranged a bazaar in the garage of Doris Gleason with advertising on radio and television.

The Pastor of the Church of God of Prophecy offered their Church building for sale to the Sapulpa group and they were much impressed with the building and began to pursue the possibility of buying it. It was located at 1400 South Water Street.

On the first Sunday of January 1978 Stake President Veigh J. Nielsen and Bishop Robert Bingham came to Sapulpa and formed the Independent Branch.

President was Jack Richardson with L. D. Hair and O. B. Kerr as Counselors. Doris Gleason was sustained as Relief Society President, Rebecca Dill was called as Primary President and Lila Stinecipher was called as Young Women's President.

Effective May 1978 the Church was asked to move from the Seventh Day Adventist building. The only place available for the needs of the Branch was the American Legion Hut and the Branch moved there on the first Sunday in May. With guns and bayonets hanging on the walls it was a grim reminder of World War II and not a very spiritual place.

Relief Society and Primary meetings were then held in the member's homes.

During July 1978 the Branch moved to the building at 1400 South Water Street, purchased it and shared it with the selling group until October 1978.

Lealue Kerr was called as Relief Society President on 18 February 1979 with Counselors Caroline Lumly and Lila Stinecipher. Geneva Osborn served as Secretary.

On 4 March 1979 Robert Stephenson was called as Branch President with Stephen Walley and Kevin Davis as Counselors.

Colleen Walley became Relief Society President during June 1979 with Counselors Shelia Keithley and Judy Hamner. Two sessions of Relief Society were held at this time with one on Sunday mornings at the same time as Priesthood meetings to accommodate the working sisters, and one on each Tuesday morning.

On 13 January 1980 the Bristow Branch was formed from the Sapulpa Branch.

SHAWNEE

Thanks to Dale M. Holyoak

Elders Dale Holyoak from Utah and Eldon M. Jenkins from Wyoming arrived in Shawnee on Sunday 4 February 1951 by bus to open the missionary work to the Indians in the area.

The supervising Elder of the Indian District of the Central States Mission was Blaine L. Olson of Idaho. The Mission President at that time was J. Orval Ellsworth.

The population of Shawnee was just under 25,000 people.

The missionaries rented a two-room apartment with a shared bathroom for \$35 per month from Mrs. W. B. Emery at 315 N. Philadelphia Street.

The missionaries taught from what was called the Anderson plan that had 16 discussions and didn't bring up baptism until the 16th discussion. It had a short Lamanite teaching plan. One lesson per week was to be taught which seemed to leave contacts time to forget what was taught in the earlier lessons.

A Mr. Goodwin who was a member of the Reorganized LDS Church and who owned a factory that did copy work was very helpful to the missionaries. He helped them copy their visual aids and handouts.

The Police Chief, H. H. Bonner, gave permission for the missionaries to hold street meetings and invited them to eat at his house many times. He and his wife were given a complete set of the Standard Works of Scripture.

The missionaries regularly held street meetings on Main Street. They were also expected to memorize one scripture per day. Filmstrips were used in discussions and the children enjoyed having the missionaries visit.

The missionaries walked everywhere they went except when going to Tecumseh when they rode a bus. Mrs. Ira Goodman, who was a Pottawatomie Indian, and her daughter were taught in Tecumseh but did not join the Church. Her husband stated that his parents had bought some of the land originally owned by Mormons in Far West Missouri.

Bill Newashe who had played football with Jim Thorpe in Carlisle Pennsylvania was taught the Gospel and was very supportive in helping missionaries teach the Fox and Sac Indian Tribes. He stated at a Pow-Wow that the Indians must find a new way of serving the Lord, implying they needed to listen to the missionaries.

Some Sac and Fox Tribe people that were members of the Native American Church that used peyote were not receptive to missionaries.

Frank Wano, a Chief in the Pottawatomie Tribe was taught but did not join the Church. He stated that his tribe had been near Council Bluffs Iowa while the Church members were there.

Pauline Lewis, Mae Fairchild, Lee Barnett, Ed and Mary Mack and Sadie Feder who were all of the Sac and Fox Tribe were taught. Ed Mack was related to Joseph Smith through his Mack line. The missionaries attended many Pow-Wows.

Sacrament Meetings and a Sunday School were being held in Seminole at this time and the missionaries discovered Perry Newmeyer living in Tecumseh.

Brother Newmeyer had served a mission to Germany. The missionaries also found a member, William H. Jackson living in the area.

The Mark Edgell family with 11 children attended Church in Seminole by walking 3 miles with their family to meetings. Other members who attended in Seminole about that time were Bobby and Harold Bennett, the Holden family and the Nash family.

The missionaries went to Wewoka and Holdenville and met with missionaries serving there. They met with Gene Venable and his wife there.

The work was hampered for a time when there was a report that some missionaries near Ft. Cobb had been immoral with Indian girls. It was not confirmed but slowed progress. A Mrs. Abbott in Shawnee had been active in passing along the rumor.

On 18 March 1951 the missionaries began holding a home Sunday School at the home of Dorothy Davis and they had the Sacrament served. They listened to the Spoken Word on the radio as part of their lessons.

On 19 March 1951 Elder Jenkins was diagnosed with ulcers, which greatly restricted his work and he was soon sent home early from his mission. On 18 April 1951 Elder Doyle Randall from Arizona replaced Elder Jenkins. Elder Randall had a new pickup truck that greatly accelerated the work in rural areas.

During April 1951 District President James A. Cullimore and Elder Harding of the Mission spoke at the First Presbyterian Church in Shawnee at the request of the Church.

For several months the missionaries went to the Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Tecumseh every Friday evening and played the records called "The Fulness of Times" over the loud speakers of the Sanatorium. These records detailed the western migration of the Saints under Brigham Young. Indians were the patients at the Sanatorium.

On 8 June 1951 Elders Vaughn Marshall from California and Richard Hill from Idaho arrived in Shawnee to help with the work. Elders Holyoak and Hill sang in the Methodist Church Choir a few times. The new missionaries had bicycles.

On 17 June 1951 Elders Holyoak, Randall, Manship, Hill, Marshall and Holligsworth attended a Pow-Wow in Prague.

During June the missionaries found out about the hazards of Oklahoma chiggers.

On 10 July 1951 Elder Randall was transferred to Apache and Elder Dell Stringham came to work in Shawnee. Elder Stringham suffered with migraine headaches and his work was limited.

During July and August 1951 anti-Mormon literature began to appear in Shawnee.

On 3 August 1951 the missionaries got on a city bus and the bus driver said he couldn't make change for their dollar. A young Negro boy named Burner Mavis Jackson paid the bus fare.

On 17 August Elder Garland E. Lee from Arizona replaced Elder Elder Hill as the missionaries were looking for a meeting place in Shawnee. Elder Lee was a good barber, which the other missionaries appreciated. He had previously broken both legs in a parachute jump but had no trouble walking around Shawnee.

On 30 August 1951 the Shawnee News Star newspaper ran a favorable article about the missionaries with a picture that got a favorable response from the community.

During September 1951 the missionaries rented the Knights of Columbus Hall for \$3 and began holding meetings there. At the first meeting only Perry and Mary Newmeyer were present other than the missionaries.

During September some dogs ran into Elder Holyoak's bike causing him to lose control and skin his elbow and to get an infection that slowed his work. Later the missionaries bought some impact Cherry Bombs they threw at the dogs when they approached and solved the problem.

During November 1951 because Elder Spencer W. Kimball was to be in the area to dedicate the Oklahoma City building, a meeting of only Indians was planned for Shawnee. The Elders and some members were very active in going to the Indians in the area, including the Shawnee Tribe southwest of Shawnee, to invite them to hear the Apostle speak. There was an ice blizzard on that day and in spite of their great effort no Indians came to the meeting.

Elder Holyoak recorded that on the day of the meeting he and Elder Stringham rode from Oklahoma City to Shawnee with Elder Kimball who insisted during the ride that the missionaries eat some of his chocolate candy. He was apparently teaching the Elders that it was all right to eat chocolate in spite of the fact that some members were avoiding it because of its caffeine content.

During November 1951 a Church member, H. E. Gilpin, from Oklahoma City and representing Alcoholics Anonymous, spoke at a meeting of the group in Shawnee, which the missionaries attended.

A church member Boyd West Madsen moved to Shawnee with his non-member wife who was baptized later by the missionaries.

On 9 December 1951 seven people, besides the Elders, attended Sacrament meeting in Shawnee.

During December Elder Stringham received deer hides from his family to give to the Sac and Fox Indians.

On 15 December 1951 the missionaries had their first convert baptism in Shawnee as Anna Pearl Dodson was baptized in the new Oklahoma City building.

Later Sadie Feder of the Sac and Fox Tribe moved to Oklahoma City and joined the Church.

During January 1952 some new members moved to Shawnee. They were a Mr. Corely and 3 of his children and a young person named Carmel Viner.

On 12 January 1952 the University of Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra played in Shawnee with two missionaries in their group. They were Elders Bolton and Fowles.

In January Elder Stringham was transferred to Anadarko and Elder Cliff Daral Johnson from Idaho replaced him. Also, Elders Lee and Marshall were transferred from Shawnee.

On 9 March 1952 meetings in Shawnee were moved to the Carpenters Union Hall. Sunday morning Sunday School meetings were still held in Sister Davis' home.

Stalwarts at the Sacrament meetings included the Madsen family, Sister Dodson and her grandson, Jim Hutchinson, Jewel Blakely, Sister Stevens and her son Jimmy Stevens and the Newmeyers who were less frequent.

On 22 Jun 1952 Jewel Blakely, Viola Madsen and Sister Stephens were baptized.

On 10 August 1952 District President James A. Cullimore spoke at the Sacrament meeting.

During September 1952 the missionaries changed to a 6-discussion method of teaching the gospel that was instituted by the Great Lakes Mission. It became much more effective and was accepted throughout the Church.

During September the missionaries installed a missionary tract rack for the Shawnee bus station and filled it with tracts for travelers.

Also in September the Sunday School began meeting in the Carpenters Union Hall. Rent for this hall was only \$16 per month and was rented by a Mr. Pace.

On 6 October 1952 Elder Holyoak received a release from his missionary calling by Mission President J. Orval Ellsworth.

On 12 October 1952 a total of 17 people were in Church that included the Masquat family, Mrs. Harris and a child, Louie and Julie Longhorn, Jim Hutchinson, Jim Stephens and his mother, Sisters Madsen, Dodson, Blakely, and Viner, Kathleen, Glen Earl and Dale Croy. This was a first time to attend for some of the people.

On 13 October 1952 Elder Marshall returned to Shawnee to replace Elder Holyoak.

The Shawnee Branch was formed at a West Oklahoma District Conference on 15 August 1954 by District President James A. Cullimore. The new Branch President was Perry L. Newmeyer with Counselor Boyd Madsen.

The Branch was very small at the beginning but grew in time. Shortly the Branches of Seminole and Shawnee were combined which increased the numbers.

A great loss occurred when an airplane factory in Shawnee closed causing the loss of members.

Brother Boyd Madsen died and new Counselors were called to the Branch Presidency.

Full time missionaries were assigned to the Branch and several baptisms occurred. However, dissention among the group also occurred and the growth was slowed.

During March 1957 President Newmeyer was released and William Vandergriff was sustained to the position of President. Roy Hawkins became 1st Counselor and Mark Edgell became 2nd Counselor.

In November 1957 William Vandergriff was released and Roy Hawkins was set apart as the President of the Branch. Mark Edgell served as his Counselor. The Branch began to progress again.

New members came through baptisms and move-ins and in 1958 Morris Jones was called as 2nd Counselor in the Presidency.

The District Presidency under the direction of James Cullimore and later the Oklahoma Stake under the leadership of William Waldrop offered good support to the Shawnee Church.

The H. Jerrell Chesney (Peggy) family was a wonderful addition to the Branch and they offered much needed leadership at an important time.

SOUTH OKLAHOMA CITY

South Oklahoma City was for a time a Dependent Branch to Oklahoma City. During the fall of 1956 Relief Society was held in member's homes with Lorraine Hales teaching the lesson.

The Oklahoma City history applies to South Oklahoma City until 5 May 1957 when South Oklahoma City became a Branch. This Branch was originally named the Capitol Hill Branch. Dean Symons Anderson became the first Branch President. At the organization of the Branch, Mission President Alvin R. Dyer was present as was James A. Cullimore the West Oklahoma District President.

Boundaries for the new Branch were all areas south of Main Street in Oklahoma City, east to the Oklahoma County line and west until it encountered anyone who was a member of the Elk City Branch. The south boundary was not well defined.

Officers of the Branch were:

Dean Anderson

Branch President

Ronald Douglas Hales	First Counselor
Leonard Orville Barlow	Second Counselor
Gloria Roylance Zerr	Branch Statistical Clerk
Donald Eurcell Booth	Branch Financial Clerk
Ellis Jensen	YMMIA President
Mary Thompson	YWMIA President
Albert Kuehne	Sunday School Superintendent
Irma Kidwell	Primary President
Edna Jensen	Relief Society President
Margaret Anderson	Genealogy Chairman

The building the group would meet in was located at 5305 S. Pennsylvania Street. The building needed repairs and a good cleaning. Five windows were added, the building was painted and the roof was stained by the Priesthood. Most all Members participated in the cleaning. The building had been used as a store prior to the Branch moving there, it had large front windows and a large central room for meetings. Curtains were used to divide the large room for classrooms.

The first Sacrament meeting of the new Branch was held on 26 May 1957 with Wiford O. Nelson, Jr. of the District Presidency presiding and President Anderson conducting. Fifty-six members were present.

The new Branch grew quickly although a major portion of the Branch broke away when the Norman Branch was organized on 15 March 1959.

On 3 July 1960 the Branch broke ground on a new building.

STILLWATER

Thanks to Camelia Berry and
The Church History Department

John O. Ellsworth and Lawrence Morris were members living in the area that taught gospel discussions in their homes and influenced some to join the Church including some who attended Oklahoma A&M College.

During 1928 Celia Slater and her son were baptized into the Church by John O. Ellsworth.

During 1929 Jack and William Berry who lived in the Stillwater area were baptized into the Church. They had originally been members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Peter and Clara Nelson were also members in the area.

The Stillwater Church began with an unofficial Sunday School on 20 August 1933 but soon became official with callings on 1 October 1933. Family heads that were in the early meetings were John W. and Florence Whipple, Celia Slater,

Lawrence Morris, Peter and Clara Nelson, Thomas N. Berry, Rulon and Minnie Winter, John Scruggs, James Pope, R. H. Fowler, Cordner, Monroe Jobe and Clara Marshall Otey, Dante, Sherman, Stallings and Myers.

The first meeting place was in Ripley, not Stillwater. The meeting location was moved to the American Legion Hall in Stillwater on 1 November 1935.

On 29 October 1934 in Ripley a Conference was held in which Apostle Charles Callis was in attendance. On 28 October 1935 Apostle Melvin J. Ballard presided at a meeting at Thomas N. Berry's home. President and Mrs. Henry G. Bennett of the A&M College were present at this meeting. Other distinguished members of the community were in attendance.

During Apostle Ballard's visit he prophesied one day, they would have a building overflowing with young people.

The area was visited occasionally by Samuel O. Bennion while he was the Central States Mission President and by President Elias Woodruff who replaced him.

On 19 October 1936 Apostle George F. Richards attended a Conference held in Stillwater at the American Legion Hall.

A new member, Thomas N. Berry, provided a new meeting site beginning March 1936 at 6th and Duck Streets in Stillwater. But because it was decided to build a new building at this location it was necessary to move back to the American Legion Hall until construction was completed in November 1936. (See Cushing history).

On 13 September 1936 the Branch was organized with John W. Whipple as Branch President, Peter Nelson as 1st Counselor and Lawrence Morris as 2nd Counselor. James Pope was called as Branch Clerk.

Succeeding Branch Presidents included Lawrence Morris, Jack Berry, Lloyd Brinkerhoff, Bob Duffin, Bryce Montgomery and LaVelle Henderson.

Relief Society officers called were Harriet V. Berry as President and Clara V. Nelson and Minnie Winter as 1st and 2nd Counselors. Florence Whipple was Secretary.

Sunday School Officers were William Berry, Superintendent, with Rulon Winter and R. H. Fowler as assistants. John Scruggs was called as Secretary, Peter Nelson as Chorister, Florence Whipple as Organist, John W. Whipple as Adult Teacher, Clara V. Nelson as Primary Teacher, Minnie Winter as Kindergarten Teacher, William Berry as New Member Teacher and Iris Scruggs as Librarian.

The College began training armed forces personnel during World War II, which brought some young people into the small group. At one Sunday morning meeting 60 young men and women came marching in military order, down the middle of the street and into the Branch building and filled it completely.

These young people were from many parts of the Country and for a time filled the meetings and participated in Priesthood ordinances, taught lessons, gave prayers, and organized parties. They were all welcomed into member's homes with the Morris family having young people almost every night.

Names of some military people who came for advanced degrees were Stricklen, Miller, Lund and Egan.

Very early missionaries who served from Stillwater were William Berry who served in Great Britain from 1935 to 1937 and his brother Jack who served in Hawaii from 1937 to 1939. Also, James Pope served in California very early. Other missionaries from Stillwater include Ezma Morris to Missouri in 1941, Jerald Hilton to California during 1944, and Calvin Slater to Alaska in 1958.

A Recreation Hall was built during 1948 with a lot of labor by members. Camelia Berry painted a 30 feet mural inside the building.

As time proceeded, the College hired LDS professors, which joined the group. Jack Berry taught the M-Men and Gleaner class in the Church for about 8 years in which college credit was given. Also, Church members August Jaussi and Victor Christopherson helped teach the class.

A genealogy team from the Church surveyed the cemeteries in the western part of Payne County, recorded the information and placed it in the Stillwater Public Library, the Genealogical Society of Utah and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Peter Nelson wrote a history of the early years of the Stillwater Church, served as 1st Counselor in the first Branch Presidency, Branch Clerk, Chorister and taught the Gospel Doctrine Class for 17 years.

Major Howard Lund coached a team of young men to the Mission basketball championship. The players were Leslie Manzer, Steve Gray, Bill Gray, Terry Thorne, Jim Balkman (Sonya), Buddy Clark and Jim Brinkerhoff.

Joyce Murray served as Den Mother for the Cub Scouts for a time and had the boys very excited to participate.

The Stillwater Ward got a new building during 1966 and it was dedicated 12 November 1967.

Stillwater became a Stake Center on 14 June 1981 and C. Jay Murray was called as the first Stake President.

TAHLEQUAH

In early 1963 a group of 13 members of the Muskogee Branch created a Sunday School group that met in the VFW hall. The hall was drafty and cold during the cold months. Henry Farmer was the Presiding Elder of the group.

Sacrament meetings were then held immediately after Sunday School to avoid the necessity of travel later. Priesthood from Muskogee came frequently to help with the sacrament ordinances and any other necessities that required Priesthood.

Missionaries had left the area earlier but soon returned and the membership grew. A missionary couple was called to the area and with visits to encourage inactive members to attend meetings the group grew to approximately 100 members.

The Farmer, French and Trapp families were involved in the early days and the Braun family came in through baptism.

The Pythian building became the new meeting place in the mid 1960s.

On 17 October 1965 the Tahlequah Dependent Branch was formed with Henry Farmer as Branch President and two missionaries, David Crest and Stanley S. Young as his Counselors. Two succeeding Elders who served as Counselors were Richard Hammond and Orlen Peterson and they were permitted a long stay in Tahlequah, which brought much progress for the Branch.

Then the Branch moved to a former store building on North Vinita Street. Fund raising dinners and activities now knitted the group together in a tight bond of fellowship.

Boundaries of the Branch included Adair and Cherokee Counties and approximately 75% of the membership was Lamanite or American Indian.

A building site adjacent to Northeastern State College was purchased for a building on 31 July 1966.

Tahlequah became an Independent Branch on 9 March 1969 with Henry Farmer as Branch President and Jerry Speir and Don Wacaster as Counselors. A month later Brother Speir moved and Edward Kirkpatrick replaced him as Counselor.

Ground was broken for construction to begin on the new building on 30 April 1969 and Brother and Sister Asay, a missionary couple from Wyoming, were helpful in getting the building started.

During construction Lizzie Bunch, a Lamanite sister crippled with arthritis, entertained children while their parents helped with the construction. She told them stories and taught them the Cherokee language. Brother Fred Hudlin was in poor health but labored many hours on the new building.

The first meeting in the new building was Sunday October 19, 1969.

During March 1970 the Branch leadership was reorganized with Don R. Wacaster becoming Branch President with Thomas French and Edward Kirkpatrick as Counselors. Henry Farmer became Branch Clerk.

In June 1971 Thomas French became Branch President with Edward Kirkpatrick and Billy C. Enkey as Counselors. John Henry later replaced Edward Kirkpatrick as a Counselor.

Robert Duckworth became Branch President during 1974 and was followed by Eldon Storer.

The building was dedicated on 4 July 1976.

Others who served as Branch President included DeLoyd Dodd, David Gueir and Billy C. Enkey.

Some who served as Counselors in the Branch Presidency include Victor Manwaring, George Carter, Robert Duckworth, and DeLoyd Dodd. Some who served as Branch Clerks included Thomas French, Eric Trapp, Elder Nelson, Darrell Hubler and Barry Golden.

TULSA

A Sunday School was formed during April 1926 to meet in the home of Claud and Lillian Markham at 2804 East 4th Street. Six members were present at the first meeting and Harry Wells was appointed Superintendent with Ernest Roebuck and Claud Markham as his Assistants.

During 1929 the group was meeting in the City Hall building. This was the year that the Roberts family moved to Tulsa and became a force for good in the Church in the area. Mary Addie Roberts became a member of the first Relief Society group that began with 6 members. She also served in District and Stake Relief Society leadership positions for many years. With her husband Bob Robison the Church in Tulsa had Stalwart leaders.

On 1 January 1933 a Branch was created by Mission President Samuel O. Bennion with full time missionary Elder Gene R. Gierisch as President. Ernest Roebuck served as his Counselor.

On 4 February 1934 with Ernest Roebuck as Branch President and John Aaron, Sr. as Counselor the group dedicated their first Chapel near the Sand Springs line. A Chapel at 13th and Quincy Streets was dedicated as a meeting place later.

During 1935 President Roebuck died and John Aaron, Sr. became the Branch President. His first Counselor was Paul Baxter and his Second Counselor was Joseph Lewis.

The White family joined the Church during 1938 and for a time held Sunday School in their home near Sand Springs.

On 16 May 1944 Mission President Thomas C. Romney reorganized the Branch Presidency and called Paul Baxter as President with Charles W. Zeimer and Stephen Krider as Counselors.

During May 1946 Charles W. Zeimer was named President with Wallace R. Hemming and LaRon D. Stewart as Counselors. President Zeimer served until August 1950 when Wilford O. Scott was sustained as President with Brothers Hemming and Stewart retained as Counselors.

President Scott is said to have been a very spiritual man who encouraged members to develop a high degree of humility and love for one another. He and President Zeimer were very active in fund raising for a new building.

On 17 January 1954 Charles R. Hansen was called as President and his Counselors were Glen Peterson and Mitchell V. Lillywhite.

Fund raising activities for a building for the Branch started very early in its history but it was during President Hansen's administration that a building was actually built.

On 11 September 1954 a groundbreaking service for a new building was held. Fred Schaefer was appointed to supervise construction by the building committee. Construction took 16 months.

Contributions to the building project came from almost all active members and some non-members.

The first meetings were held in the new building were in September 1955, first for a square dance and then on 25 September for a Branch Conference. Soon total membership was nearing 500 with more than 200 attending Sunday School.

On 17 May 1957 the Branch was divided to form a Tulsa Branch and a North Tulsa Branch with each having about 400 members.

In the Tulsa Branch Virgil Nelson served as Branch President from July 1957 to 1959 and Conrad Head served from 1959 to 1 May 1960 when the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake was formed. Bonnie Lee Blamires became the first Young Women's President in the new Stake and served in the Stake and Ward Relief Society organizations for many years.

Norman A. Lish became the first Bishop of the Tulsa Ward with Walter M. Bowers and Thomas Mickelsen as Counselors. During February 1961 Walter M. Bowers became the Bishop and served until November 1967. His first Counselor for the entire time was Frank R. Clark and his second Counselors were Bill Thompson, Ted C. Asay, Norman G. Wallace, Frank Dupree and Jack J. Geer.

Frank R. Clark was a brother of J. Reuben Clark, Jr. of the First Presidency of the Church and was 80 years old when called into the Bishopric. He was dedicated to his calling although he suffered from arthritis. He regularly attended Primary and once when he wasn't there one of the Children said, "where is Heavenly Father today."

The Tulsa Ward building served as the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake Center for about 5 years and before that it served as the East Oklahoma District headquarters.

A memorable Welfare project involved raising two steers named Bishopric and Relief Society. They were hauled to the Whitely farm in a Volkswagen bus. When the steers were sold the calculated profits were 35 cents.

George M. Paulson served as Bishop from November 1967 to 6 December 1970 with Counselors Wallace Hunt, Jr., Jack J. Geer, Larry Dozier, Jerry Earl, and K. Anthony Snow. Many outstanding people joined the Church about this time because of the Missionary efforts.

The second phase of the building was added at a cost of approximately \$52,000, and it came in 1968. Carousel Construction was the contractor with Harold McLaughlin as Foreman. Members participated in construction with Kenneth Duckworth doing a great deal of work.

From 6 December 1970 to 16 July 1972 K. Anthony Snow served as Bishop. The Counselors who served with him were J. Ronald Dozier, Alma J. Hintze, John Detter, and W. Bruce Bolander.

By the spring of 1972 the membership of the Tulsa Ward was about 600 members with 52 Elders.

Larry Dozier conducted a successful job clinic that helped the youth locate summer jobs. The youth also redecorated the Relief Society room and did some landscaping of the building grounds.

During January 1973 the Sapulpa Dependent Branch was an organized break away unit from the Tulsa Ward.

Priesthood Leadership was exceptional at this time in Tulsa. Top quality Priesthood leaders included Nathan Sams, R. Mack Bettis, Howard West, Frank Clark, C. W. O. (Bob) Robison, and Jerry Fryer. Outstanding sisters at this time included Addie Robison, Sue Weedn, Linda Williams, and Jenny Bolander. Bob Robison was especially gifted in missionary work and many converts came into the Church.

On 12 August 1973 the Tulsa and Tulsa Second Wards were restructured to create the Tulsa Fourth Ward. Robert J. Bingham became Bishop of the Tulsa Ward with Counselors Richard C. Huffaker and R. Mack Bettis. Later Counselors included John F. Richards and Sterling W. Ming, Junior. Members in this new Tulsa Ward organization were about 380. To aid staffing of the Ward some inactive members were called upon for help.

The Elders Quorum President was Jimmy S. Verneti and the Relief Society President was Jeanette K. Winter. Soon the Ward was crowded once more.

The building was in need of much remodeling and the leadership could see that a division of the Stake was not far away. Therefore the remodeling plans

called for additional Stake offices. A building committee was organized and fund raising projects were begun.

Building fund projects included catering meals and taking store inventories and raised approximately \$30,000. The total remodeling costs were about \$700,000.

During this activity several families were sealed in the Temples and missionaries called to serve from the Ward increased.

A single sister was helped by the refurbishing of her home and a couple were aided with education and vocational help.

The remodeling project was completed and the building was occupied by November 1978.

The Stake was divided prior to the completion of the remodeling on 30 April 1978. George V. Richins was called as the Tulsa Ward Bishop with Counselors John F. Richards and Sterling W. Ming as Counselors. Later Counselors were Mitchell C. Voges and Darrell L. Smith.

During 1980 the Tulsa First Ward members spent many hours landscaping the property around the building and soon noticed that the landscaping of homes in the neighborhood had improved, possibly because of the Ward's example.

TULSA NORTH

On 17 May 1957 the Tulsa Branch was divided to form a Tulsa Branch and a Tulsa North Branch with each having about 400 members. The Tulsa North Branch was the nucleus of what would eventually become the Tulsa 2nd Ward and much of the Tulsa 3rd Ward.

The division was under the direction of Elder Henry D. Taylor an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The families that became part of the new north Branch included Romney, Scott, Egbert, Blamires, Oliver, Moore, White, Bess, Wilson, Birch, Engel, Fletcher, McClure, Hood, Owen, Peterson, Crowson, Franklin, Barnum, Bradshaw, Pittman, Stephens and Robison.

Bonnue Lee Blamires begun publishing a Branch newsletter at this time and continued it for 19 years.

Branch President of the new north Branch was Wilford O. Scott with Albert L. Egbert as Counselor and Joseph Davy as Clerk. President Scott became the first Bishop when the Tulsa Oklahoma Stake was formed on 1 May 1960.

This Branch/Ward had responsibility of the members in Hominy and Cleveland until October 1975 when Cleveland became an Independent Branch.

During June 1961 Sylvester (Jack) Bradshaw became Bishop with Counselors Wiford O. Scott and LeRoy Egbert.

During the spring of 1962 Bishop Bradshaw moved to Winslow Arizona and a High Councilman, Glen Peterson, was called to preside as Bishop. Jack Morrison and Sidney Rainer became Counselors with LeRoy Egbert as Clerk. All the Peterson family attended meetings in 3rd Ward although they did not live in the Ward boundaries. Meetings were held in the Northside YMCA.

During July 1962 James R. Blamires was called as Bishop with Wilford O. Scott and Owen Romney as Counselors. In December the Ward moved to the Northside McClure YMCA on 48th Street north that had a dirt parking lot that turned to mud with each rain. The building consisted of one long hall where 5 Sunday School classes were held and with the Junior Sunday School meeting in a large shower room.

Primary was held in a different building two miles away and Relief Society was held in member's homes.

Ground was broken on 11 July 1964 for a new first phase building and a year later the second phase construction was begun. Total costs for the building was \$130,000.

Additional Bishops who served the 3rd Ward are Samuel Curtis Hood (1965), Billy Claude Enkey (1968), Owen T. Romney (1970), Phillip Wach (1974), John Roy Drummond, Mitchell V. Lillywhite and Harold Engel.

Relief Society Presidents included Vivien Romney, Shirley Hall, Leona Fanning, Birdie Taylor, Vangie EchoHawk, Rachel Ramsey, Laura Harmon, Margaret Akers, Bonnie Lee Blamires and Jane Silfies.

The Ward for a time and under the direction of Tulsa 2nd Ward member Mildred Wolfe raised money shuttling rental cars to various locations. Third Ward members took this project on exclusively later under the direction of Floyd and Laura Harmon and Jess and Lorraine Willard. Budget and Welfare assessments were paid with this project.

Sister Vivien Romney was the musical talent in the Ward and served as pianist/organist for many years. Nancy Jo Enkey and Lois Bess were also talented musically. Sister Louise Egbert was the inspiration and leader of genealogy efforts.

Additional members of the Tulsa North Branch/Tulsa 3rd Ward would include Gerald Adair, Earl Adams, Bradford Baker, Larry Birdsall, John Carlisle, Dorothy Egan, Carolyn Eslick, Floyd Harmon, Marie Hassell, Don Jerome, Roy McCauley, Jack Morrison, Bart Rowe, Ronald Sloan, Carole Jean Snyder, Donel Tucker, Marion Wade, Earl Wall, and Larry Willis.

WAGONER

A Wagoner Sunday School and Relief Society were organized during 1966, 1972 and 1974 but all of them eventually failed to generate a group large enough for a Branch and were dissolved. The groups were dependent on the Muskogee Branch for support.

Early families of the Wagoner group were McDaniel, Copple, Murphy, James, Johnson, Williams, Barney and Baker.

Sunday School Superintendent was Charles Williams with Pearl James as Relief Society President.

Bishop Calvin Asay and Clifford Boyd came from Muskogee to preside at the meetings. Meetings were held in a rented home at 802 N. Jefferson Street.

Priesthood members at the time drove to Muskogee for Priesthood meetings and returned to Wagoner for Sunday School.

After the meetings in Wagoner were dissolved several Wagoner people held positions in Muskogee, which strengthened that Branch. Monthly firesides and a night Relief Society group continued to meet in Wagoner.

The Wagoner Branch was organized 23 September 1979 with John Chapo as Branch President without Counselors. Jesse Birdsall negotiated with the Wagoner school system for the Branch to meet in the new High School.

Missionary couples came to help the Branch grow and it did grow.

President Chapo soon got John Crowe and Jesse Birdsall as Counselors with Charles Williams as Branch Clerk. Sister Crowe and Sister Birdsall both served as Relief Society President with Wanda Johnson as Primary President and Gayle McFarland as Young Women's President.

WOODWARD

Thanks to Martha Logan

A daughter of Jack Berry who was baptized in Stillwater during 1929 became one of the earliest proponents of the Woodward Church. Her name was Dora Berry and she married a non-member named Lewis L. Snow. One of their daughters was Martha who became Martha Logan when she married John Duane Logan, a non-member as well.

Although Sister Logan's husband was a non-member he was faithful in looking after the missionaries of the area and made sure they got plenty to eat.

The earliest Church group in Woodward was a Dependent Branch, which was dependent on the Enid Branch and was formed by District President James A.

Cullimore. This group also had a well run Relief Society and it occasionally held rummage sales as a way to raise funds for the Branch.

The first meeting place of the Woodward Branch was in the Logan home and later they met in Carpenter's Hall on 8th Street, which was rented. Later they met in a rented upstairs of the Woodward Community building.

From there the Branch moved to a very large building on Main Street that had a large basement and lots of meeting spaces. This building was purchased by the Branch. The basement of the building had previously served as the home of the family that owned it while community dances were held upstairs.

The Woodward Church met in the Main Street building for many years until they were able to construct their own building on Quail Street and move to it during 1992. They retained the Main Street building and used it as a Family History Center with an out building being used for food storage.

The Woodward Church was organized into a Dependent Branch, dependent on Enid, on 3 March 1968 by Stake President William Waldrop.

The Dependent Branch President was Billy J. Shirley with Vernon W. Shephard as Branch Clerk. Both were from Enid Branch. On 12 May 1968 two full time missionaries were called to serve as Counselors to President Shirley. They were Douglas Patterson and Scott Johns.

During July 1969 Robert N. Jones became President of the Woodward Dependent Branch and during July 1971 Richard L. Arnold replaced Brother Jones. Both were from Enid.

There have been many faithful Saints in the far away and isolated area of Woodward. The Link and Caryn Alley family have been stalwarts in the area for many years with Brother Link Alley serving as the Branch President on at least 3 different occasions.

On 9 September 1973 at an Enid Ward Conference the Woodward Branch became an Independent Branch. This new organization was under the direction of Stake President Wiley S. Callister and Link Alley became the Branch President.

When the Stillwater Stake was formed on 14 June 1981 it was intended that the Branch become part of that Stake but President Alley insisted they wanted to remain with the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake, which was accepted by the visiting General Authority.

Names of some families who have lived in the area would include Snow, Logan, Field, Clem, Talley, Shirley, Jeffcoat, Clark, Arrington, Alley, White, Adams and Sullivan.

DISASTER STRIKES

3 May 1999

Source: Oklahoma City South Stake Disaster Recovery by Gordon Scott and Marjoire Hasler.

On the above date a series of severe tornadoes struck the central part of Oklahoma. Wind speeds were claimed by some to be as high as 318 miles per hour and it was likely the most intense tornado ever recorded in the United States. Officially the highest wind speed recorded on earth was 301 miles per hour and was part of this tornado. The worst devastation occurred in the Moore Oklahoma area.

A series of tornadoes traveled from southwest to the northeast through the Metropolitan area of Oklahoma City and destroyed as much as a mile swath of homes and businesses in parts of the area.

38 people were killed (a later count was 44 killed) with 71 treated for injuries in local hospitals. 4,156 homes were destroyed and over 10,000 homes or apartments were damaged.

A Stake Center, Bishop's Storehouse, Mission Home and Mission Office were seemingly in the tornadoes paths but none were damaged.

Oklahoma City Oklahoma South Stake President David L. Lawton (Carole) had been preparing his Stake for some kind of disaster since 1995. The Oklahoma City Oklahoma South Stake was headquartered in Moore.

Mission President James R. Engebretsen had also felt inspired to warn his missionaries of impending danger and that they should be prepared to act if necessary.

As part of his assignment the Bishop's Storehouse Director, Charles Wiggins (Barbara) always maintained a large stock of food commodities, toiletry and household items in the Storehouse. These items are always there for any need that may arise.

The home of Church members Jerry and Karen Doshier was completely destroyed with Sister Doshier hiding in a small closet. This closet was the only place left of the house with sufficient room for her to survive. Fortunately they had no children at the time.

Sister Doshier had only small cuts and bruises after the experience although items from an upper shelf of the closet she was in were found across the street later and six neighborhood vehicles were found among the debris of the Doshier home.

Member Hugh A. Underwood and his non-member wife were killed in the tornado. This was the only Church member to lose his/her life in the tornadoes.

Three Stake Presidents in the area were President Lawton, President Richard Wilson (Carolyn) of the Norman Oklahoma Stake, and President Gary Newman (Mary) of the Oklahoma City Oklahoma Stake. These men were able to use

conference calls to coordinate their actions. Of course their counselors and the local Bishoprics were also heavily involved.

The Presidents efforts were directed by Elder Rex Pinegar (Bonnie) who was the North America Southwest Area President, and who resided in Salt Lake City. The Church's Handbooks of Instructions were already in place to help direct their efforts.

Authorization was given quickly for a large quantity of resources to be distributed to local charitable and relief organizations. Many of these came from the Bishop's Storehouse that had them on hand and ready for use.

President Lawton and his home phone initially became the central clearing place for decisions and actions but two Command Centers were established at the Stake Center in Moore and the Church building in Tuttle.

President Lawton coordinated the distribution of supplies and volunteer workers to the areas that most needed them at the time and where local governments were prepared to receive them. These were sent to Moore, Tuttle, Newcastle, Oklahoma City, Midwest City, Del City, Stroud and other smaller or more distant areas.

Church volunteers came from at least 11 States including Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Iowa and California.

Most efforts of the Church volunteer workers were directed toward the community as a whole but first and foremost the Church member's needs were satisfied as much as possible.

Devastation from the storm left debris from homes and businesses, destroyed vehicles and broken trees looking like a large dumping ground in many cases. Sometimes bodies of animals were found among the debris. In some places only a bare field was left where a large building once stood.

One large problem after the storm was to match owners to lost pets and possessions. It was also necessary for police to restrict access to some areas to prevent looting or traffic problems caused by the curious.

Local news media outlets were helpful in informing the people where they could go for help and did include the Moore Stake Center as one of those places.

President Engebretsen released the missionaries for cleanup work, which created a large force that was immediately available. These missionaries also became a rapid source of communications to direct relief workers to the most needful areas. They also read scriptures and prayed with many families to help relieve their emotional stress.

Approximately 70 referrals were obtained by the missionaries and members performing this work.

A performing group from Ricks College in Idaho that was scheduled to be in Oklahoma to perform on Tuesday 18 May cancelled their performance and went to work in the cleanup. They did perform an impromptu performance on Monday evening 17 May for the volunteer workers.

Volunteers coming from long distances sometimes slept on the floors of the Churches, in tents on the Church grounds, and in Motor homes they brought with them.

One Church member, Ray Boyce, had a business that operated large tractor and bulldozer equipment and he made those available for the cleanup while his employees donated their time.

Cutting limbs, picking up debris and moving it to the streets or roads, for pickup by county trucks, was a major part of the cleanup effort. Shoveling away mud and going into homes and cleaning or reconstructing damaged homes was also done.

Since May is an important time of harvest for wheat farmers in Oklahoma, many lost their crops and some school children had the rest of their school year cancelled just before finals. Some schools were also seriously damaged.

Closed schools were now able to make their school busses available for transport of volunteer workers.

Relief Society Sisters were heavily involved in preparing meals for workers to take with them to the job sites or delivering them to workers. Also, the Red Cross and Salvation Army were active in providing meals and drinks, sometimes with food given to them by the Bishop's Storehouse.

Church volunteers also worked at Command Centers established by other churches, providing food, drinks, supplies and sleeping arrangements.

To alleviate a problem of identifying volunteer workers the Church purchased 7500 T-Shirts that were worn by the Church volunteers. They were white with orange lettering that read "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Disaster Recovery" and were printed on both sides.

These shirts were obvious in pictures taken and shown in the media and became a badge of respect, which allowed workers to quickly get into areas that were controlled by local authorities.

Brother Wiggins estimated that approximately 6000 Church workers were involved in the relief efforts during the first two weeks of clean up.

A State sponsored relief agency called "Volunteers Active in Disasters" (VOAD) had a Church member, Larry Wasson (Denise), as its President. Brother Wasson was heavily involved in the recovery efforts in the Oklahoma City area. He also served as the Church's Welfare Regional Agent in the Tulsa area.

A discussion between a Grady County Commissioner and Mayor of Newcastle was overheard and it was reported that one of them said, "The Mormons

are here and it is a joy to watch them work.” (Matthew 25:40, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.)

POSTSCRIPT

Now that the Oklahoma Church Genesis is history we tend to forget the difficulties and frustrations of the early days and recognize that it was a great and growing experience to be cherished forever.

Inactive members became active and accepted callings sometimes because there was no one else available and many non-members were baptized and brought under the umbrella of full Church blessings. There was togetherness, a sense of belonging and a love for each other, which must exist if we are to prepare ourselves for a Celestial law. And of course, much sacrifice was involved.

It is likely that thousands of missionaries have served to build the Church in Oklahoma and it is not possible to name them all, but they are well known by the Lord and their efforts are much appreciated by the members in Oklahoma.

The Spirit and power of the Holy Ghost was necessary to drive the people to do what they did to bring the growth. Knowing that faith precedes the miracle (Ether 12:18) it must be said that the faith of the people brought this growth.

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