

Restorations Belong to Everyone

Florence S. Jacobsen

Restoring a home is a very personal matter for the restorer. After research and study, the restorer becomes a member of that long ago family, thinking their thoughts, living the routine of their daily lives, knowing what and when they ate, how they cooked, what they wore, how they communicated, traveled, and entertained. The restorer comes to understand the family's place in the community, their education, daily work, financial status, and even their personal tastes.

The restorer is faced with reconstructing, in those empty rooms, the historic yesterdays of another era and incorporating, along with the furnishings, the spirit of determination, love, strength, survival, and fulfillment of those who lived there many years ago. When the restoration is complete, a strong personal tie has developed which is not easy to break.

I remember well the night the restoration of the Joseph Smith Home in Palmyra was completed in the summer of 1965. The handmade curtains and oilcloth stenciled blinds were hanging at the windows, the furniture in place, the dishes in the cupboard, the pantry filled with crocks and pans, the beds made, the night clothes hung on large square nails in the closets, and the candles in the old tin candle holders, ready to be lit with sulfur matches. It looked as if the family had stepped outside for a moment. As darkness came on, we lit the candles and by their glow walked from room to room, surveying each familiar item, reminiscing regarding the work it had required, but not begrudging the hours we had spent scraping paint from the small window panes, hemming by hand the curtains, polishing the old floorboards on our knees, cleaning the rust of years from the old milk pans. But most of all, we keenly felt the spirit of the great family who had once lived there. We sat in the rocking chairs in the parlor and reverently remembered the great events that took place in Palmyra and in this home, and their relationship to our own lives. Reluctantly, we blew out the candles, shut the door, turned the key in

the lock, and said goodbye. In the morning, the home which had been "ours" during the restoration would belong to everyone.¹

Having been through this same experience with Brigham Young's Lion House, the Forest Farm in Salt Lake City, the Joseph Smith, Sr., Home in Palmyra, and helping to furnish the Wilford Woodruff and Brigham Young Homes in Nauvoo, and the Promised Valley Theatre in Salt Lake, the prospect of two more restorations in the St. George area was not a new or overwhelming task; neither was it without problems. November 1, 1974 was a typical day in the Curator's Office,² taking care of visitors, answering inquiries by phone and mail regarding historic sites, art, and artifacts, accepting the gift of a lovely pioneer quilt and an English blueware tureen brought across the plains by ox team, when I answered the flashing light on my phone indicating an incoming call. I suddenly realized I had an unusual situation on my hands. The call was from a representative of the St. George Chamber of Commerce, who expressed great concern that their busy winter season was upon them and Brigham Young's Winter Home in St. George (see Illustration 1) and the Jacob Hamblin Home in Santa Clara, Utah, were closed to visitors.

The city of St. George had booked many conventions and tour groups for the winter months and these two historic attractions—now closed, but advertised in the Chamber of Commerce brochures as "open to the public"—hurt the integrity of the community, since the homes were an integral part of their heritage where the story of St. George could be heard by visitors.

I was sympathetic to the Chamber of Commerce problem, but helpless, as negotiations for exchanging the Church-owned Brigham Young Farm Home in Salt Lake City for the state-owned Brigham Young Winter Home in St. George and the Jacob Hamblin Home in Santa Clara were not yet completed. All three homes which had been open to the public for tours, were now closed until the properties could be exchanged.

The Brigham Young Winter Home in St. George had been owned by the Young family from 1870 until 1882. After being left vacant for a decade, it served as an office and residence for other families until the mid-1940s, when it was again left vacant and allowed to fall into such disrepair, it was proposed the house be demolished.³

¹Those involved in refurbishing the home were: Mrs. Elizabeth E. "Tibby" Simmons, Kaysville; Mrs. Margaret R. Jackson, Mrs. Gwen Wilcox, Mrs. Vie Watts, and Mrs. Florence S. Jacobsen, all of Salt Lake City.

²From October 1973 to January 1975, the Curator's Division was part of the Church Public Communications Department; since then, it has been part of the Church Historical Department.

³Dorothy O. Rea, "Restoration Nears Finish," *Deseret News*, 26 March 1963.



(1)

Full Sale Coly H. J.
July 26 1878

James G. Bleakley
St George

Please deliver to Sister Lucy P.
Young, Guardian & Trustee for & in behalf of Rhoda Maria
Young, Clara Young and Anna Young, the following
personal property in your charge at St George:

1 Unpainted pine table	...
1 Flat-iron	4.00
1 Glazed washbowl	1.25
1 Fly catcher	.75
3 Feather dusters & Broom corn brooms the lot	1.00
3 Small glass table lamps	1.00
1 Varnished paper Map of U. S.	1.50
1 Pine table & leaves	6.00
1 do centre table with figured cover	11.00
12 Rush bottom chairs (painted)	24.00
6 Black walnut hat racks	6.00
1 Large table bell	.25
1 Small oval tray	.75
2 Match safes	.25

Fortunately, Gordon C. Young, a great-grandson of Brigham Young and Mary Ann Angell Young, hoping to preserve the home for posterity, put up the initial money to save it from demolition. He and other descendants of Brigham Young then purchased the house and property in 1959 and gave it to the state of Utah to be restored and operated as an historic site. From then until the exchange of homes was proposed by the state and Church in September 1973, it was operated as a state historic site. In August 1975, the exchange had still not been made when I visited the homes in the Dixie area to assess possible restoration needs.

I was impressed with these two historic homes, but my personal feelings were mixed regarding giving up the Brigham Young Farm Home which in former days was on the outskirts of Salt Lake City surrounded by acres of meadows, fields of grain, alfalfa, corn, potatoes, mulberry trees planted for sericulture, and black locusts for making furniture. The home was a "modern cottage of generous proportions" and a favorite place of entertainment and festivities, especially New Year's Day when family and friends would arrive from the city by sleigh, sheltered from the cold by buffalo robes.

Upstairs, the long hall which spread across the south end of the house had many uses, one of which was dancing, with a band of musicians in one end playing to the caller's "Balance to the Corner" and all "Promenade."⁴

After the death of Brigham Young, the Farm Home was used as a Church meetinghouse, then a residence, and as it changed hands the original structure was remodeled, the large porches and the rear of the house, including the long hall, removed. The farm land was divided into building lots until houses, city streets, and a freeway encroached, leaving only a portion of the original house on a small city lot. Gwen and Frank Wilcox lived in the home for fifteen years, having purchased it in 1954. In 1969, they proposed giving their equity in the house to the Church providing it would be restored. Approval was given, the remaining mortgage paid, and the physical restoration commenced.

My involvement was as adviser throughout the long months of restoration, as the contractor literally put back that portion of the home which had been removed. I watched as Frank and Gwen Wilcox lovingly "put together" the interior furnishings, the major portion coming from their own collection. The restoration was done under the direction of Elder Mark E. Petersen, of the Quo-

⁴Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 343-44.

rum of the Twelve, in his capacity as Chairman of the Church Historic Sites Committee.

It was a happy day, 2 April 1970, when Elder Spencer W. Kimball, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, gave the dedicatory prayer. Now the old house, which more than a hundred years ago had been home for the daily living and festivities of an historic family, plus the center of a thriving 600-acre experimental farm of intermountain agricultural "firsts," was ready to provide the public a glimpse of a way of life and the culture of the past.⁵

During my twelve years of involvement with restorations in the Church, a special process had evolved, even though each project had been uniquely different. The Dixie restorations of the Brigham Young Winter Home and the Jacob Hamblin home in Santa Clara (to be completed simultaneously), again posed special problems. Following the exchange of properties, restoration approval was given, and a budget was allocated. A supervisor from the Church Building Department was assigned, and an architect chosen with the Curator's Division serving as consultant.⁶

First—Thorough historical research regarding the purpose and period of the community, the property, the home, family life, and individual members was completed.

Second—The historical architect, using the research available, and consulting with the curator, drew plans of the original building and specified reconstruction needs, including the inconspicuous addition of some modern necessities, such as heating and air conditioning systems, electrical outlets, a security system, along with the finish of interior and exterior walls, floors, woodwork, and landscaping. Even the visitors' entrance, exit, and route through the home were considered in the early planning stages, so consecutive tour groups would not cross each other's paths.

Third—The actual reconstruction and restoration was undertaken, with bids being taken from various contractors and the contract let.⁷ Then the physical work began, with the architect, building supervisor, and the Curator's Division guiding the restorative process, including gardens, fences, gates, and drinking fountains.

Fourth—Using research information, the Curator's Division attempted to locate and acquire all the necessary furnishings (see Illustration 2) from feather ticks to pantry crocks, bric-a-brac to window blinds, carpets to fringed linen towels, books to candle-

⁵Ibid.

⁶The Church Building Division Supervisor was Karl G. Lagerberg, and the architectural firm was Steven T. Baird and Associates, A. I. A., Salt Lake City, Utah.

⁷To the E. Lavell Goodwin Construction Company, St. George, Utah.

sticks, and coal oil lamps to coverlets. Using the floor plan, a proposed furniture schedule was detailed on paper with each item in place and each picture hung. Along with the furnishings, special replaceable rag-rug runners, to protect the historical wooden and carpeted floors, were woven for the areas where the public would walk.⁸ Barricade standards were designed and hand-grained to match the woodwork and complement the decor of the home.

Fifth—As each item was acquired, it was tagged with a number corresponding to the furniture schedule on the floor plan (see Illustration 3), then stored in a space allocated for the specific room. For example, the secretary (desk) to be placed in the parlor was purchased from an antique dealer in Salt Lake, moved to the Curator's storage area, cleaned, repaired, and tagged with "J Parlor" to correspond with the parlor furniture schedule, then moved to the storage space reserved for the parlor furniture. Each item was thus treated, including curtains, bric-a-brac, chandeliers, wall sconces, crocks, irons, and even dust ruffles. To furnish nine rooms by long distance and include every item for a "living" home, required months of searching and many decisions, plus consternation with soaring prices and the unavailability of many historical items. Sometimes concessions were made with the hope that eventually a better example could be acquired and placed in the home later.

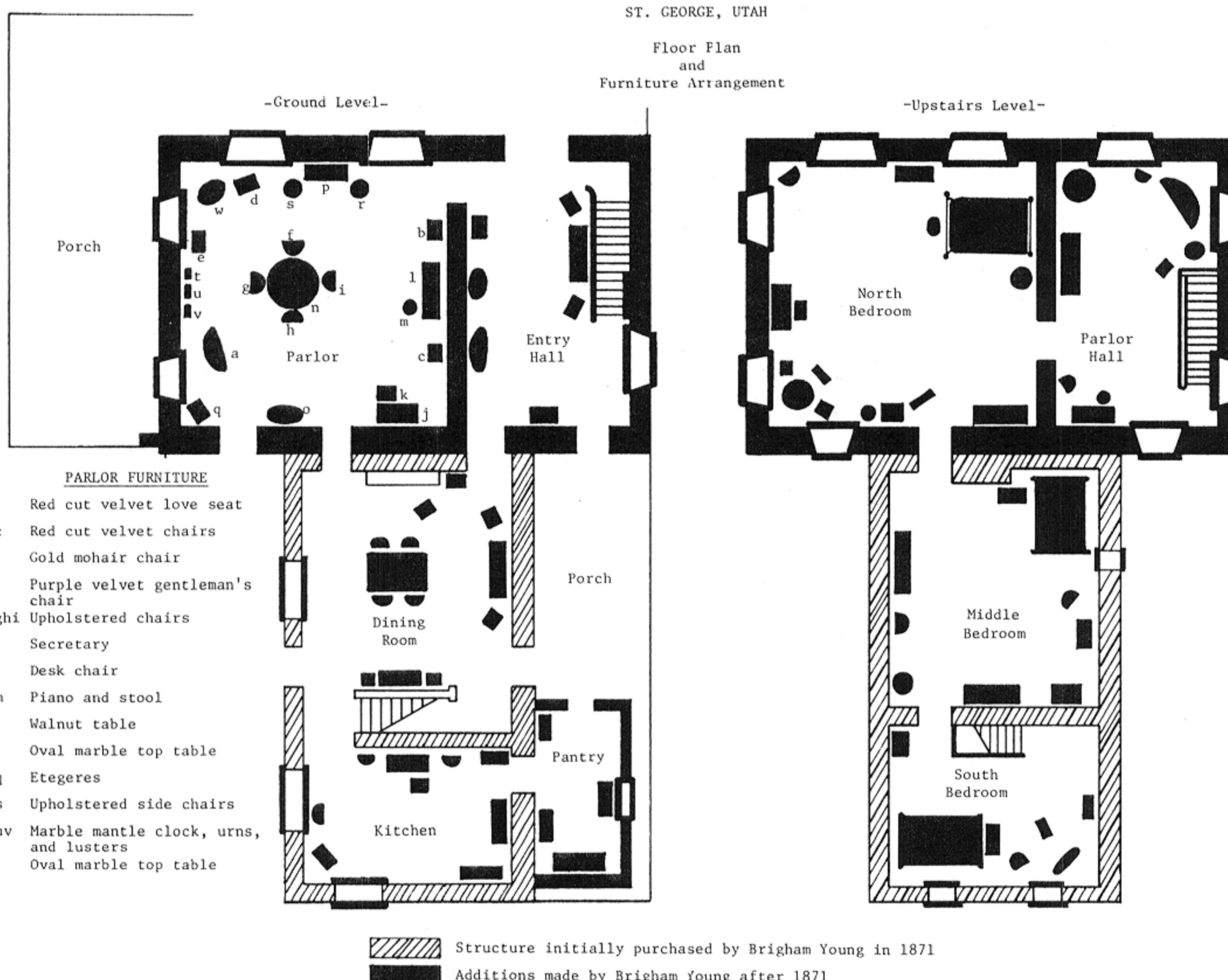
Sixth—Along with the acquisition of furnishings which were historically related to the Brigham Young Family, their contemporaries, or the period, the Curator's Division began working on the script for the guides who would escort visitors through the home, plus a printed brochure to give to the public, the completion of which had to coincide with the opening of the restored home.

Seventh—When the physical restoration of the building was complete, a good housecleaning was in order: paint scraped from the old window panes, windows washed inside and outside, porches scrubbed, and floors cleaned and polished. Local members of the Church responded to the request for help and the home was spotlessly cleaned, ready to receive the "new" old furnishings.

Eighth—A moving van was rented to transport the furnishings to the home in St. George, along with such modern equipment as an ironing board and iron, sewing machine, nails, hammer, picture wire, hooks, wax, cleaning cloths, brass polish, shoe polish, stove black, window cleaner—the list was much longer, and all were used to complete the home. As the van was unloaded, rugs and

⁸The rag rug runners were woven by Deseret Industries from all wool rags, and then dyed brown by Salt Lake Cleaning & Dying Company, to soften the brightness of the modern colors used in weaving the runners.

RESTORED BRIGHAM YOUNG'S WINTER RESIDENCE
ST. GEORGE, UTAH



carpets were laid first. Furniture followed, each tag showing in which room and where it was to be placed.

Ninth—After all was unloaded, the real work began. The newly-wired antique hanging lamps, coal oil wall sconces, and chandeliers were installed, the rope beds were roped, and made up in the manner of 1872, with feather ticks, sheets, old quilts, pillow shams, and coverlets, all ready to receive a weary family member. Curtains were pressed, some shortened, curtain rods and tie backs installed, and finally the curtains were hung. Pictures adorned the walls, and the bric-a-brac was carefully unpacked and placed on the polished surfaces of the furniture. Then the pathway rugs were laid and the barricades put in place to protect the lovely artifacts of long ago.

In researching the history of the home and the community, we discovered their special skills, the kinds of furniture and fabrics manufactured and used, and what they raised on their farms and in their gardens. We also learned of Brigham Young's Dixie experiences, that he owned other houses in the community, and that the purpose for his long winter stays in St. George during the last years of his life was to find rest from his heavy responsibilities and improve his failing health.⁹

In diaries, Church minutes, and histories, it was exciting to find colorful descriptions of the colonization of St. George, so named by Brigham Young for his close associate, George A. Smith.

For example, Erastus Snow, the apostle assigned to oversee the Cotton Mission, gave the 300 families called in October Conference 1861 to settle Dixie, these instructions in preparation for leaving their homes to build a new community:

I do not feel it will be wisdom to load ourselves down with household furniture, but if a woman wishes to take her rocking chair along, why, let her take it, . . . but leave the heavy furniture behind.

In reference to timber for making our bedsteads and other articles of furniture, we can find plenty of it.¹⁰

We want every mechanic to take with him his tools.

Those brethren who can, will do well to take along tents, particularly those who have large families.

All kinds of choice seeds should be taken, particularly those that are adapted to that part of the territory.

Next spring we shall have a carding machine; hence those that have sheep should take them along . . . for we not only want to

⁹Dale Glen Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George During the Later Years of His Life" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1963), p. 27.

¹⁰Western White (Ponderosa) Pine was quite plentiful and was the principal wood used in Dixie for making furniture.

raise the cotton, but the wool. We want the linsey woolsey and the jeans.

All musicians that are called will take their instruments with them, . . . also their music books. . . . Take your school books along. We will pitch our tents and teach our children.¹¹

Among those called to go were blacksmiths, farmers, vinedressers, wheelwrights, machinists, coopers, adobe makers, masons, plasterers, painters, carpenters, joiners, shingle makers, cabinetmakers, chair makers, weavers, tailors, millwrights, farmers, tanners, and many others with skills to establish a permanent settlement.¹² Their new homes were well-built, usually of adobe, the architecture reminiscent of the homes they had left behind in other settlements.

Brigham Young often visited the southern settlements as he had great interest in the success of the industries which would help make the Saints more self-sufficient by producing commodities that could not be produced in the northern territories, such as cotton, grapes, figs, molasses, indigo, olives, madder, sugar, almonds, and other products of a southern climate.¹³

From 1861 to the first winter visit in 1870, Brigham Young made eight recorded journeys to St. George, not staying any one time long enough to really rest. Late in 1866, Brigham Young sent word to St. George that he would like to winter there, but felt he could not until the settlement was linked to Great Salt Lake City by telegraph. The telegraph line was completed in 1867. On 25 November 1870, St. George authorities received a telegram stating President Brigham Young and George A. Smith had departed from Salt Lake to spend the winter in Southern Utah. The party arrived 8 December 1870. A letter from George A. Smith, dated 10 January 1871, explains Brigham Young's need to winter in a warmer climate:

It is clearly apparent that President Brigham Young did not seek a temporary retirement from the pressure of his ministry and business any too soon.

He has been confined to his room most of the time since we arrived.¹⁴

He was suffering from rheumatism and fatigue.

Susa Young Gates, daughter of Brigham Young and Lucy Bigelow, writes:

¹¹Ivan J. Barrett, "History of the Cotton Mission and Cotton Culture in Utah" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1947), pp. 113-15.

¹²Juanita Brooks, "St. George, Utah—A Community Portrait."

¹³Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), 9:201.

¹⁴Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George," p. 28.

In 1870, father moved my mother to St. George, where he bought a good house, surrounded by a semi-tropical garden of grapes, almonds, peaches and other luscious fruits.

At first, father brought his friends and Aunt Amelia, as well, to spend the winter at mother's home, which was always over-crowded. Aunt Eliza Burgess also had a home in St. George.¹⁵

In 1870, Brigham Young purchased a four-room adobe house from Henry W. Lawrence. Lawrence had previously purchased the home from James A. Chesney, who had built the house on a lot he had "won" in a draw from a hat when property was allocated to the new settlers in 1862. This home became known as Brigham Young's "new" home.¹⁶

In 1872-73, Brigham Young had Miles Romney and son add to the original Chesney structure a spacious two-story adobe and native pine front section. The addition consisted of a large parlor, hall and stairway, upstairs parlor hall, and bedroom, plus porches and a full basement. An office was later built east of his residence.¹⁷

James A. Bleak, official St. George historian, reports that President Brigham Young arrived 15 December 1873, and immediately moved into his "new" house even though it was not completely finished. The home was not as ornate as its Salt Lake counterpart, but was comfortable with its high ceilings, well-lighted deep casement windows, and pine woodwork hand-grained to resemble oak.¹⁸ The decor was in keeping with his love for fine, well-built furniture, and proudly displayed store-bought carpets in the parlors. Brigham Young was usually accompanied on his visits by one of his wives, who saw to his comfort in the "new" home. When he was not in residence, the home was unoccupied.¹⁹

His last winter, 1876-77, was spent in his St. George Home. He was happy over the pending completion of the temple and proud that the entire structure, including the furnishings, was to be a home enterprise. Late in 1876, he reported:

The Provo factory is making upwards of a thousand yards of beautiful light-colored carpet for the building. Washington factory is busily engaged in making some, and the sisters of the Southern settlements are busy making rag carpets for the hallways. Fringe is being made out of Utah-produced silk for the altars and pulpits.²⁰

On 4 April 1877, the annual conference of the Church con-

¹⁵Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, p. 359.

¹⁶Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George," p. 42.

¹⁷Brigham Young Manuscript Collection, Box 90, Folder 4, Items 911, 919, and 022, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹⁸Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George," p. 43.

¹⁹Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*, pp. 343-45.

²⁰Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George," p. 56.

vened in St. George, combined with the formal dedicatory services of the temple. During that winter, Brigham Young attended to the temple ordinance work for his father, mother, and other kindred dead. One of his sons, a nephew, and five of his daughters, spent the winter assisting in this family temple work.²¹

At a meeting in St. George on 15 April, the President said: "I have been with you more than five months. I have this to say to those present and those of this stake of Zion, you have done an excellent work." The next day he left the southern community for the last time and started the return trip to Great Salt Lake City.²²

On 29 August 1877, Charles L. Walker of St. George, made the following report in his diary:

This afternoon a telegram came from Salt Lake City announcing the death of our much beloved President Brigham Young at 4 o'clock which spread a gloom over the entire city. Stores were closed and business suspended and all are wrapt in grief.²³

After Brigham Young's death, the executors of his estate compiled inventories of the furnishings of the St. George home. It was from this source that we knew he had an engraving of the Salt Lake Temple and lithographs of Joseph and Hyrum Smith hanging in his Winter Home, along with the other typical furnishings of the 1870-77 period. The inventories became the guide for furnishing the restored Brigham Young Winter Home.²⁴

With the help of many people, by May 1976, the restoration of the house and furnishings were completed and ready for dedication, everything in it having been cleaned, repaired, personally evaluated and chosen, polished, hung, draped, or placed.²⁵ Once again, we took that final reminiscing walk of inspection through the rooms, and knew it was time to turn out the lights, lock the door, and again say goodbye—the restoration no longer belonged to those of us who had worked on it, but to everyone.

²¹Gates and Widtsoe, *Life Story of Brigham Young*.

²²St. George Stake Records, 15 April 1877.

²³Wood, "Brigham Young's Activities in St. George," p. 60.

²⁴Inventory of household furniture, Brigham Young's Winter Home, St. George, noted in a letter from George Q. Cannon (executor, Brigham Young estate) to James G. Bleak (attorney), St. George, Utah, 25 July 1878. Brigham Young Manuscript Collection, MS d #54, Item 4, Church Historical Department.

²⁵Those who assisted in the restoration were: President Kenneth R. Metcalf, St. George, Utah Stake; Donald Ellsworth, director of the St. George Visitors Center; Missionaries Robert L. and Luella Wilson, Springville, Utah; Relief Society sisters from the stakes in the area and personnel from the Curator's Division of The Church Historical Department. The home was dedicated on 29 May 1976 by Elder L. Tom Perry, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A complete catalogue, including a photograph of each item, was compiled simultaneously as the furnishings were put in place.