Figure 1. Salt Lake Tabernacle under construction in early 1866. The photo was taken from the interior looking north. 6.3 cm. x 10.7 cm. (2.5 in. x 4.25 in.), Edward Martin, photographer; in private possession. Used by permission.
October 2017 marks the 150th anniversary of the first general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle.¹ On October 6, 1867, the first day of the conference, Brigham Young prayed,

O God our Heavenly Father, who dwells in the heavens, in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ we come before thee at this time to worship thee on this occasion. . . .

We pray thee in the name of Jesus to bless this congregation who have assembled within the walls of this house for the first time to worship thee. We dedicate ourselves unto thee, each and every one of us. We dedicate unto thee this house and all that pertains there unto, and pray thee in the name of Jesus Christ to give us the ability to complete the same. After we dedicate it unto the Lord of Hosts, it is then really thine.²

Known as the “New Tabernacle” or “Great Tabernacle” during the nineteenth century, the Salt Lake City Tabernacle became one of the most recognized buildings of Mormonism and the American West.³

This photographic essay begins a new series for BYU Studies Quarterly, the Photographic Archive, which will highlight previously unpublished LDS historic photographs, correct misidentified photographs, and provide additional context for photographs published without extended information.

The authors thank Elwin C. Robison for his assistance in identifying elements in the featured photograph. Robison is the author of Gathering as One: The History of the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, available from BYU Studies, https://byustudies.byu.edu.

During a visit to Salt Lake City on Sunday, April 26, 1953, world-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright said the Tabernacle was “one of the architectural masterpieces of the country and perhaps the world.”

The construction of the Tabernacle was documented between 1864 and 1867 by numerous photographers, including Edward Martin, a lesser-known Utah pioneer photographer.

Edward Martin

Edward Martin was born on November 18, 1818, in Preston, England, and was baptized by Orson Hyde in the River Ribble on October 14, 1837. Within four years, Martin emigrated from Liverpool to Nauvoo, Illinois, via New Orleans. In Nauvoo, he was ordained a seventy and appointed senior president of the twenty-fourth quorum of the seventy on April 9, 1845. He left Nauvoo with his family on February 15, 1846, arriving in Council Bluffs, Iowa, on June 20, 1846. Less than a month later, on

5. The authors gratefully acknowledge the help of W. Randall Dixon in providing additional information about Edward Martin as well as Salt Lake City and the Temple Block in 1866.
8. Edward Martin to John Melling, April 9, 1849, Martin Family Papers, MS 14852, image 43.
July 16, 1846, Martin enlisted in the Mormon Battalion. He served as a corporal and sergeant in Company C. After marching to California, Martin was discharged at Los Angeles on July 16, 1847.

Martin made his way eastward to Salt Lake City with the Hancock, Hunt, Pace, and Lytle Company, arriving on October 16, 1847. He discovered his family had not arrived, so he walked back to help them, arriving in Council Bluffs on December 10, 1847. In the following year, Martin and his family departed the Mormon staging ground with the Heber C. Kimball Company, arriving in Salt Lake City on September 24, 1848.

Four years later, Martin was called to serve a mission in England and arrived in Liverpool on February 8, 1853. After completing his missionary labors, Martin was appointed captain of a company of 856 Latter-day Saints who left Liverpool on May 25, 1856, on the ship Horizon. Following the ship’s arrival in Boston, the Saints took a train to Iowa City. Martin was assigned to be the company captain of the fifth handcart company, which contained 575 individuals, 145 handcarts, and 8 wagons. The ill-fated Martin Handcart Company departed Iowa City on July 28, 1856, and encountered early snowstorms in Wyoming in October. Over a hundred lives were lost, but Martin survived and returned to Salt Lake.

Eventually, Martin advertised as a “Carriage and Sign painter” in a Salt Lake City newspaper, announcing the opening of his new “Paint Shop” in the “premises formally known as Wardle’s Hall . . . two blocks west of the [Old] Tabernacle” in January 1859. Martin began a career as a photographer when he opened a “new portrait gallery, opposite Walk-
The “E. Martin Photography Gallery” was located on the west side of East Temple (known today as Main Street) between First and Second South in Salt Lake City. Like many pioneers, Martin engaged in a variety of economic activities, including “dealer in fruit, confectionary and groceries” at the same time as he began his photography career.

Martin concentrated on portrait photography printed on the most popular form of photographs in the nineteenth century, *cartes de visite* (known as CdV, a business card size). Martin also took some important panoramic views of the Salt Lake Valley, including a series of views “taken from the top of the New Tabernacle” in 1867. A collection now in the Church History Library contains twelve of Martin’s views of Salt Lake featuring the Lion House, the Council House, the Salt Lake Theater, the temple construction site, and homes and businesses.

By early 1874, Martin’s advertisements for his photography business disappeared from local newspapers and city directories. Most likely, intense competition from other well-known photographers in Salt Lake City, including Charles R. Savage and Charles W. Carter, forced him to consider another occupation. Martin was identified as a “real estate agent” in a local city directory in 1879. He died on August 8, 1882, in Salt Lake City’s Fourteenth Ward at the age of sixty-three.

Collectors of historical photographs have long wondered whether any more Edward Martin photos might someday be found. For example, in his landmark book, *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass: The Great Mormon Temple and Its Photographers*, Nelson B. Wadsworth dreamt, “Perhaps somewhere beneath the dust of more than a century, 'Photography

19. G. Owens, comp., *Salt Lake City Directory* (New York: By the compiler, 1867), 115–16; see also Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and R. Q. Shupe, *Brigham Young: Images of a Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Eagle Gate; Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2000), 195.
21. The photos can be seen online as part of the Bathsheba Wilson Bigler Smith Photograph collection (PH 8004, box 1, fd. 29), Church History Library, https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE7691204.
by Martin’ remains to be discovered.”  

Recently, a private collector realized Wadsworth’s dream when he found a previously unknown carte de visite photograph of the Great Tabernacle with the Edward Martin logo printed on the reverse side (figs. 1, 2).

The Great Tabernacle

Martin’s photograph shows the Great Tabernacle under construction in 1866. It is no wonder that Martin would choose to photograph the Tabernacle, for the Saints had reason to be proud of the community project.  

Architectural historian Elwin C. Robison described the magnitude of the edifice:

Measuring two hundred fifty by one hundred fifty feet outside to outside, and holding as many as fifteen thousand people during nineteenth-century meetings, the Tabernacle missed the world record for an uninterrupted clear


26. Robison, *Gathering as One*, 21: “More than a century [after it was built], the 1971 designation of the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City as a National Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers validated the pride residents of the Great Salt Lake Valley had in the structure.”
span by only twelve feet. The Tabernacle is still a large audience hall by today’s standard, but the fact that the structure was built in a remote valley of the Great Basin with no railroad to bring in tools or materials underscores the ambition of the enterprise. . . . The push to provide an all-weather covering for the entire population of the Church resulted in a United States record for a clear span of one hundred thirty-two feet. The Tabernacle exceeded anything built in North America up to that time. . . . The lattice truss arches of the Great Tabernacle rose six stories above the valley floor.\textsuperscript{27}

Martin’s photograph was taken from inside the Tabernacle, underneath the scaffolding that was constructed to hold the truss elements in place until they could be pegged and completed.\textsuperscript{28} The scaffolding posts in the foreground are tall tree trunks with the branches lopped off—some posts even retain their bark. There are four stone piers in the photograph’s field of view. These are the four piers on the north side of the Tabernacle, flanking modern doors number seventeen through nineteen. The stone piers to the extreme left and right are mostly obscured by the scaffolding, but the center two piers are visible [fig. 3, A]. The four trusses bearing on the stone piers are visible as well. However, the two trusses toward the center of the photograph are in the center of the camera’s field of vision, and, consequently, only the bottom chord of the truss is visible. The truss to the right in the photograph is obscured by the scaffolding, but the remaining truss is far enough to the left of the field of vision that the diagonal planks on the side of the truss are visible through the scaffolding [B]. The thin rafters are in place between the trusses, ready to receive the roof sheathing (boards) that will be nailed to the rafters.

Behind the tabernacle is a shaded work area covered with brush and boughs [C]. Behind the shade pavilion is the adobe wall that encircles Temple Square, known as the Temple Block in the nineteenth century. The top of the wall is obscured by the shade pavilion, but to the left of the photograph the coping stones at the top of the wall can be seen through the scaffolding posts [D]. Above the wall, several houses and outbuildings are visible on Arsenal Hill, known today as Capitol Hill, north of Temple Square [E].

\textsuperscript{27} Robison, \textit{Gathering as One}, 21–22, 24.

\textsuperscript{28} The authors gratefully acknowledge Elwin C. Robison in providing the architectural descriptions found in this and the two following paragraphs. He also first identified the orientation of the view—looking north.
Figure 3. A: stone piers. B: wooden truss. C: shaded work area. D: wall surrounding the Temple Block (Temple Square). E: buildings on Arsenal Hill (Capitol Hill), north of Temple Square.
Martin’s photograph was taken before roof sheathing was installed on the north side of the Tabernacle. The Deseret News reported in June 1866, “The sheeting [roof sheathing] for the roof of the new Tabernacle is beginning to glisten in the strong glare of the sun, in its proper place, being covered with a coating of lime to prevent the heat drawing the wood. It looks like the paddle wheel of a hundred Great Eastern’s [a famous iron steamship]29 built together, and is as novel in appearance as it is unique in design and massive in dimensions.”30 Since roof sheathing has not yet been installed in the photograph, this dates the image to the spring or early summer of 1866.

Edward Martin captured a singular view from inside the Tabernacle during the construction in early 1866. During the last one hundred and fifty years, the Tabernacle has hosted Sunday worship meetings and, until the year 2000, general conference sessions. Since 1929, it has been the home of the Sunday morning radio broadcast of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s “Music and Spoken Word.” It has been the place of many celebrations, concerts, and speeches by famous leaders including U.S. presidents. Interestingly, the Tabernacle has also been the site of the funerals of the presidents of the Church except Joseph Smith, who died in Illinois, and Gordon B. Hinckley, whose funeral was held in the LDS Conference Center on North Temple Street in Salt Lake City.31 It seems fitting that the unique Edward Martin photograph was found and can be published at a time when members of the Church are reflecting on this marvelous building and the events that have happened there.

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29. The Great Eastern was launched in 1859 and served as a passenger liner between Great Britain and North America until it was converted to a cable-laying ship and laid the first permanent transatlantic telegraph cable in 1866. Instead of screws, the Great Eastern primarily used paddle wheels for propulsion. George S. Emmerson, S.S. “Great Eastern”: The Greatest Iron Ship (Exeter, UK.: David and Charles, 1981).


31. Robison, Gathering as One, 221.
history. He is the author of numerous books and articles in Latter-day Saint history and Mormon historic photographs.

Ronald L. Fox attended California State University at Fullerton. He was employed by the California Assembly and Senate and served for over twenty years as a corporate governmental affairs representative. For over forty-three years, he served six U.S. presidents as a professional volunteer advance-man traveling the country and the world, responsible for visits and events by the president. He has coauthored two books: *When the White House Comes to Zion*, with Michael K. Winder; and *Visions of Freedom*, with Michael De Groote. He is known as a researcher and expert on early photography; he discovered the earliest individual and family photographs of President Wilford Woodruff and the only known photograph of John Perry, first conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.