

President Hinckley Dedicates Mountain Meadows Monument

In addition to dedicating three temples during August and September, President Hinckley dedicated a newly rebuilt monument at Mountain Meadows, Utah; spoke at a youth fireside in Spokane, Washington; dedicated a new building at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho; and participated in commencement and a fund-raising celebration at BYU in Provo, Utah.

Mountain Meadows Monument

“Let the book of the past be closed,” said President Hinckley to about 1,000 people gathered on 11 September at the site of the 1857 massacre of more than 80 emigrants on their way to California. “Let peace come into our hearts. Let friendship and love be extended. May the peace of heaven be felt over this hallowed ground.”

To memorialize the slain emigrants, the Church recently rebuilt a cairn that was originally erected in 1859 and subsequently rebuilt several times, including once in 1932 by the Church. The tall pile of rocks is now surrounded by a low, flower-adorned stone wall and a taller iron fence. President Hinckley said that the Church “will be here as long as the earth lasts, and it will take care of this place.”

Relayed by satellite transmission to meetinghouses in Arkansas, southern Utah, the Salt Lake area, and Idaho, the service was viewed by descendants of those involved in the tragedy. To prepare the site and assist in construction, about 1,000 local members and friends donated nearly 4,000 hours of labor. The monument is located about 30 miles northwest of St. George, Utah.

“This is an emotional experience for me,” said President Hinckley. “I come as peacemaker. This is not a time for recrimination or the assignment of blame. No one can explain what happened in these meadows 142 years ago. We may speculate, but we do not know. We do not understand it. We cannot comprehend it. We can only say the past is long since gone. It cannot be recalled. It cannot be changed. It is time to leave the entire matter in the hands of God, who deals justly in all things. His is a wisdom far beyond our own.”

President Hinckley continued: “I sit in the chair that Brigham Young occupied as President of the Church at the time of the tragedy. I have read very much of the history of what occurred here. There is no question in my mind that he was opposed to what happened. Had there been a faster means of communication, it never would have happened and history would have been different. That which we have done here must never be construed as an acknowledgment on the part of the Church of any complicity in the occurrences of that fateful and tragic day. But we have an obligation. We have a moral responsibility. We have a Christian duty to honor, respect, and to do all feasible to remember and recognize those who died here.”

The day before the dedication, descendants of the wagon train pioneers held a two-hour memorial service and reinterred the remains of 29 men, women, and children that had been accidentally uncovered during construction of the new monument.

Youth Fireside in Spokane

While in Spokane, Washington, for the temple dedication, President Hinckley spoke to about 12,000 youth, young single adults, and their families in a hockey arena near downtown Spokane on 22 August. Also offering remarks were Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy, First Counselor in the North America Northwest Area Presidency.

“Gratitude, I believe, is the mark of an educated man or woman,” President Hinckley said. “Walk with gratitude in your hearts. Be thankful for the wonderful blessings which you have. You live in the greatest age in the history of the world. And on top of that, you have all of the marvelous blessings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Elder Haight said: “I know that you can do and accomplish and become what you want, if you really want to do it. If you put your mind to it and do it in an intelligent, thoughtful, prayerful way, the Lord will magnify you and the Lord will bless you and the Lord will answer your prayers and you will be able to do things far beyond your present ability.”

Elder Madsen recalled the words spoken by Heavenly Father when He introduced His Son during the Prophet Joseph Smith’s First Vision. “As you come to understand those few precious words of testimony,” Elder Madsen said, “then and only then can you understand and explain the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has been restored to the earth following the vision, the visit of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, to the boy prophet.”

New Building at Ricks College

On 7 September President Hinckley dedicated the new Spencer W. Kimball Student and Administrative Services Building at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. “He was a man I loved, a man I respected, a man I honored,” said President

Hinckley about President Kimball, “who taught the entire Church to lengthen its stride and quicken its pace.”

Also participating was Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who serves as Commissioner of Church Education.

Later in the day, President Hinckley gave a devotional address to about 4,000 Ricks students and via closed-circuit television to another 4,000 students. “Do not become a weak link in the chain of your generations,” he said. “You come to this world with a marvelous heritage. You come of great men and women, of men of bravery and courage, of women of accomplishment and of tremendous faith.” He admonished students to “pass on in unblemished fashion to those who come after you the great virtues of those who have preceded you” and “to continue bright and strong the links of your generations.”

BYU Fund-Raising Celebration

President Hinckley joined about 14,000 people at BYU’s Marriott Center on 24 September to celebrate the university’s successful “Lighting the Way for the 21st Century” fund-raising campaign, which so far has brought in \$317 million and another \$65 million in pledges to assist both BYU and BYU—Hawaii Campus. “In our Church,” President Hinckley remarked, “the tradition of giving starts young. But there are a great many of our donors who do not share our faith but do share our vision.”

Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy, president of BYU, said the campaign’s purpose is “extending the reach of BYU to bless the lives of others around the world. New friends are being made for the Church and the university with these sacred funds.” The funds are helping BYU gradually expand enrollment.