

HERITAGE

THE UTAH HERITAGE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2013

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Performance Anxiety: Mixed Reactions in the Cultural District

BY KIRK HUFFAKER

In the Spring of 2008, more than five years ago now, Utah Heritage Foundation highlighted the tremendous history and architecture represented within two blocks of downtown Salt Lake City that have been the subject of discussion as a cultural district. These two blocks, historically referred to as blocks 69 and 70 from their designation on the original city plat, are located between 100 South and 200 South, and West Temple and State Street while being bisected by Main Street. As far as cultural facilities, Block 69 is anchored by the Capitol Theatre and former Utah Theatre. Block 70 will be anchored by the new Utah Performing Arts Center (UPAC) on the northwest corner of the block.

You shouldn't be surprised when demolition starts on Main Street in January 2014 to clear the way for the UPAC. But I'd understand if you were. While there have been dozens of public meetings and the press has covered the issue on and off, many people don't really know what's happening and that it's happening NOW. The first thing to know is that the UPAC



Current view of the façade of the Prudential Bank Building. Photo by Jonathan Kland.

is a new performing arts facility of 2,500 seats that is being designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli and will cost over \$110 million. Pelli's firm was selected through an international, though non-public, design competition. It's also important to know that the project is funded and in the final stages of the design phase.

The city's choice of a site at the prominent location of 100 South and Main Street necessitates demolition of seven structures on Block 70. These include:

- 107 S. Main St., Montgomery Ward Department Store, c. 1935
- 117 S. Main St., Prudential Federal Savings & Loan, 1964, William L. Pereira and Assoc., Los Angeles
- 125 S. Main St., Farmers & Stock Growers Bank, c. 1913
- 127 S. Main St., Commercial building, c. 1925
- 135 S. Main St., Grayson's Department Store, 1948
- 136-150 Regent St., Salt Lake Tribune Newsboys Headquarters and NAC printing press building, c. 1930

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Preserving, protecting and promoting Utah's historic built environment through education, advocacy and active preservation.

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People in Preservation

Michael Mahaffey

Michael Mahaffey has been involved with and sponsored events at Utah Heritage Foundation for over twelve years. He currently serves as a Board of Trustees member, Historic Properties Committee member and his company, Home-Tech, Inc. has sponsored and presented at our annual Preservation Conference since it began in 2007. Home-Tech, Inc. has worked on countless historic properties in Utah since Michael started the business in 1983. Michael says his favorite part of working on projects is being able to see a building come back to life. And like most of us, his least favorite part is "the budget."

Most recently Michael has had the auspicious job of being the general contractor on our first Preservation at Work Project House on Pugsley Street. The Preservation at Work Project House teams Utah Heritage Foundation with the Redevelopment Agency of Salt Lake City to bring new opportunities in preservation education. Michael has facilitated construction, arranged and presented demonstration workshops, as well as donating his time and expertise to help the project be successful.

When he can cut out some free time, Michael enjoys biking. A cross-country bicycle ride is what brought him to Utah in the first place. Before that Michael used his "portable skills" to travel up and down the east coast. He finally came back to Utah for the skiing and lucky for us he decided to stay.



Jada Lindblom

Please help us welcome Jada Lindblom as our new Historic Sites Manager. She is in charge of promotions, reservations, and events related to both Memorial House in Memory Grove and the Ladies' Literary Club.



Jada has been in Utah for just over three years and has received her master's degree in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism from the University of Utah. She previously worked for the Utah Association for Justice, and recently spent time traveling in Europe including volunteering on an archeological dig in Bosnia. While not working or traveling, she also enjoys cooking, painting, skiing, and hiking.

Be sure to introduce yourself if you see her, as she is busy preparing our sites for the holiday rush!

Performance Anxiety: Mixed Reactions in the Cultural District

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Coincidentally and fortunately, none of the sites listed above are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

While their historic and architectural significance does not give rise to advocacy by Utah Heritage Foundation, the fact that these are sound, usable older buildings in a great location should resonate with the public.

And that's where the rub happens: knowing that seven buildings and tens of thousands of usable and affordable

square footage in the heart of downtown will be demolished to make way for the UPAC. It's only natural then to ask yourself, "Is this the right location for the UPAC?" You could answer YES for the following reasons. First is the idea that we are building a cultural district downtown and the idea that critical mass is necessary to help places feed off each other and create a more urban experience. Second is that there's this new place downtown called City Creek Center that you might have heard of that is attracting millions of people to downtown. Adjacency to this destination is what every building owner wants as there will be a natural draw for many years to come. Lastly, you may be of the

opinion that the buildings that will be demolished don't have a worthwhile current use, will always struggle to find good uses, are in shabby condition already, and will be replaced by something that is a higher density use, more appropriate to an evolving downtown.

But you could also answer that NO, this is not the right place. There are numerous parking lots downtown, some an entire city block. Those seem like worthwhile locations to really push to fill in rather than where we have buildings currently. And isn't Salt Lake City supposed to be on the

forefront of the green-sustainable-conservation movement? Demolition and waste of so much material doesn't seem to match with that ethic. Even if the UPAC is going to be a "green" building, it will likely take decades to recover what will be lost. Lastly, buildings that will be demolished for the UPAC represent the type of smaller and affordable space local businesses need but is disappearing. In the bigger picture of planning in downtown Salt Lake City, it seems that small spaces for local businesses are slowly being

squeezed out. Local businesses are having to move out of the downtown area, choosing to relocate or establish in new emerging areas such as East Broadway and the Granary District. The lack of affordable available space, along with an upsurge in the market by City Creek Center makes it more difficult for downtown to be a place that incubates new retail and entertainment businesses. What we risk is that downtown won't be where you find the uniqueness of what we offer locally, and we'll lack the ability to showcase them to visitors who only make it downtown.

Let's not look forward without paying homage to the tremendous past that will be lost, particularly in

two bank buildings that deserve highlighting. The Farmers and Stock Growers Bank building is a classic, small bank building emblematic of the type that sprouted up on Main Streets across the state in the twenty years following statehood. The building served as home to numerous banking companies and brokers, from Wells Fargo in 1889, to Prudential Federal Savings in the 1950s and early 1960s, to State Savings and Loan in 1980. More recently, it was home to the State of Utah's visitor's center during the 2002 Olympic Winter Games and subsequently as the Museum



The original façade of 125 South Main Street, Farmers and Stock Growers Bank. Photo courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.

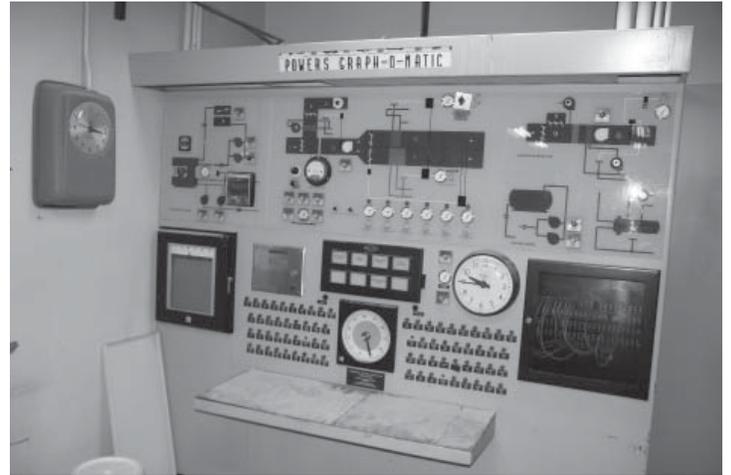
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Performance Anxiety: Mixed Reactions in the Cultural District

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of Utah Art and History. Its architecture, especially on the interior, represents one of the most intact historic interiors that remains on Main Street. Fortunately, Salt Lake City Corp. has enlisted the assistance of the Salt Lake City Arts Council to preserve a painted mural and a large stained glass window on the ceiling as artistic pieces. No decisions have been made as to where these will be displayed, if at all, in the future.

Prudential Federal Savings and Loan was designed by William L. Pereira and Associates of Los Angeles, CA and completed in 1964. It opened to great fanfare as evidenced by the special newspaper insert in the Deseret News that commemorated this new, modern landmark. Built at a cost of \$3 million, the building's innovative engineering allowed for a five story interior atrium with open offices on each



Powers Graph-O-Matic located in the basement of the Prudential Bank Building. This piece will be removed and utilized within the cultural district as interactive art.



View from the top floor in the Prudential Bank Building. This photo by Jonathan Kland was the winner of the Salt Lake Modern mid-century photo contest in 2010.

floor. The famed architectural photographer Julius Shulman photographed the building during its first year and Prudential remained in the building until 1989. The building was one of the first in the state to be automated with an IBM computer to complete massive calculations quickly. Unfortunately, the last twenty years have witnessed several ownership changes, alterations to the building, and a lack of maintenance to the point that the building has a reduced economic value.

Someday, we'll want to begin looking back at decisions we've made today and assess them in the greater context of time. Will the location be the right place for the UPAC? Will its design be brilliant enough to begin considering it a cultural and/or architectural landmark in 30 years? It's a perplexing question and one that will only be revealed through the course of time. Will it still hold its integrity of design intent and what will be our historical view of its designer, Pelli Clarke Pelli. Given that it will be the third construction on the site in the state's first 150 years, can we expect that it will physically and economically last 50 years? We need the distance of time in order to give us perspective in evaluating the significance of what will be built today.

There are also ways to leverage the opportunity of building the UPAC to start building a true cultural district outside of

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a theater. To us that means placing an emphasis on linking spaces with creative design, programming, and interest. Utah Heritage Foundation participated in the recent design competition sponsored by the Young Architect's Forum of AIA Utah called *SixtyNineSeventy: The Spaces In Between*. Over 150 entries from every continent were received giving new ideas with a global perspective to these two local blocks at the heart of Salt Lake City's proposed cultural district. While the competition itself was a significant achievement and received great acclaim, it's the ideas that were generated that provide a foundation of enlightened thinking about how design makes transitional places better, safer, and more fun. Several entries highlighted and utilized the history and existing architecture of downtown as springboards for new concepts and designs to be integrated into spaces that would make anyone's walk more interesting and enjoyable.

The loss of character and economic usability of the buildings that will be demolished to make way for the UPAC never hit the radar of the mass public. Neither did the idea that demolition isn't the most environmentally responsible choice. With lots of press and public discussion about the size of the theater and impact on existing cultural organizations, the issues of location and demolition became a lower priority. For any of these reasons or for many of these reasons, this project may give you anxiety. No matter your opinion, the UPAC is on its way soon. There will continue to be opportunities to create a cultural district downtown that has fantastic venues and spaces, and they will continue to need your ideas and creativity.

Additional Resources:

UPAC website at <http://www.newperformingartscenter.org/>

Spring 2008 issue of Heritage at http://www.utahheritagefoundation.org/images/stories/newsletters/newsletter_spring_08.pdf

A comprehensive history of the Prudential Federal Savings & Loan building at <http://saltlakearchitecture.blogspot.com/2009/12/prudential-federal-savings-and-loan.html>

SixtyNineSeventy design competition at <http://www.sixtynineseventy.com/>



Salt Lake Tribune Printing Press Building located on Regent Street (50 E). Slated for Demolition in January 2014.



Ornamental plaster and mural detailing inside 125 S. Main Street. The mural will be restored and conserved by the Salt Lake City Arts Council.



Preservation Issues

J. Ruben Clark Farm, Grantsville

The Friends of the Clark Farm have hosted several public events during the summer and fall, including a Harvest Festival that attracted over 2,000 attendees over one weekend.

Their efforts have raised awareness about this historic farmstead, one of the few intact farms remaining near the center of town. Their goal has been to enlist the assistance of local residents and partners in advocacy for keeping the

city-owned farm intact rather than converting its open space to cemetery plots. The city cemetery across the street will be out of space in a few years so land for expansion is needed. Besides preservation of the farm, Friends is also discussing alternative locations for cemetery expansion with the city. You can find them on Facebook as “Grantsville Clark Historic Farm.”



Denver & Rio Grande Depot. Photo Courtesy of Utah State Historical Society.

Rio Grande Depot, Salt Lake City

On November 9, the Downtown Alliance began hosting the Winter Market at the Rio Grande Depot at 300 S. Rio Grande St. (450 W). Every other Saturday throughout the winter between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., the Winter Market will offer local produce, meat, dairy, and packaged & specialty food vendors. There will also be several unique craft vendors present. As the Rio Grande Depot is home to the Utah Department of Heritage & Arts which includes the offices of the State Historic Preservation Office and the History Research Center, the market is presented in partnership with the State of Utah. For more information visit www.slcfarmersmarket.org.

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*If you would like to donate to the Ladies' Literary Club
 building restoration, visit us at
www.utahheritagefoundation.org.*

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Holiday Open House and 2013 Annual Meeting

Celebrate the Holidays with us!

Ladies' Literary Club Building

Tuesday, December 3

Reception 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.

Open House 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Come enjoy some light refreshments while we highlight current projects and conduct our Annual Meeting. **Please RSVP for this event by Wednesday, November 27**, to (801) 533-0858 ext. 107.



UHF'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Pursuant to the bylaws of Utah Heritage Foundation, the Annual Membership Meeting will be held at 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, December 3, 2013 at the Ladies' Literary Club, 850 E South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah. The business of the Annual Membership Meeting will include: 1) announcing the Trustee of the Year, 2) the election of new trustees, and 3) other such business as may be laid before the membership.

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