



# **Building Zion: The Material World of Mormon Settlement (Architecture, Landscape and American Culture)**

*Thomas Carter*

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For Mormons, the second coming of Christ and the subsequent millennium will arrive only when the earth has been perfected through the building of a model world called Zion. Throughout the nineteenth century the Latter-day Saints followed this vision, creating a material world—first in Missouri and Illinois but most importantly and permanently in Utah and surrounding western states—that serves as a foundation for understanding their concept of an ideal universe.

*Building Zion* is, in essence, the biography of the cultural landscape of western LDS settlements. Through the physical forms Zion assumed, it tells the life story of a set of Mormon communities—how they were conceived and constructed and inhabited—and what this material manifestation of Zion reveals about what it meant to be a Mormon in the nineteenth century. Focusing on a network of small towns in Utah, Thomas Carter explores the key elements of the Mormon cultural landscape: town planning, residences (including polygamous houses), stores and other nonreligious buildings, meetinghouses, and temples. Zion, we see, is an evolving entity, reflecting the church's shift from group-oriented millenarian goals to more individualized endeavors centered on personal salvation and exaltation.

*Building Zion* demonstrates how this cultural landscape draws its singularity from a unique blending of sacred and secular spaces, a division that characterized the Mormon material world in the late nineteenth century and continues to do so today.

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