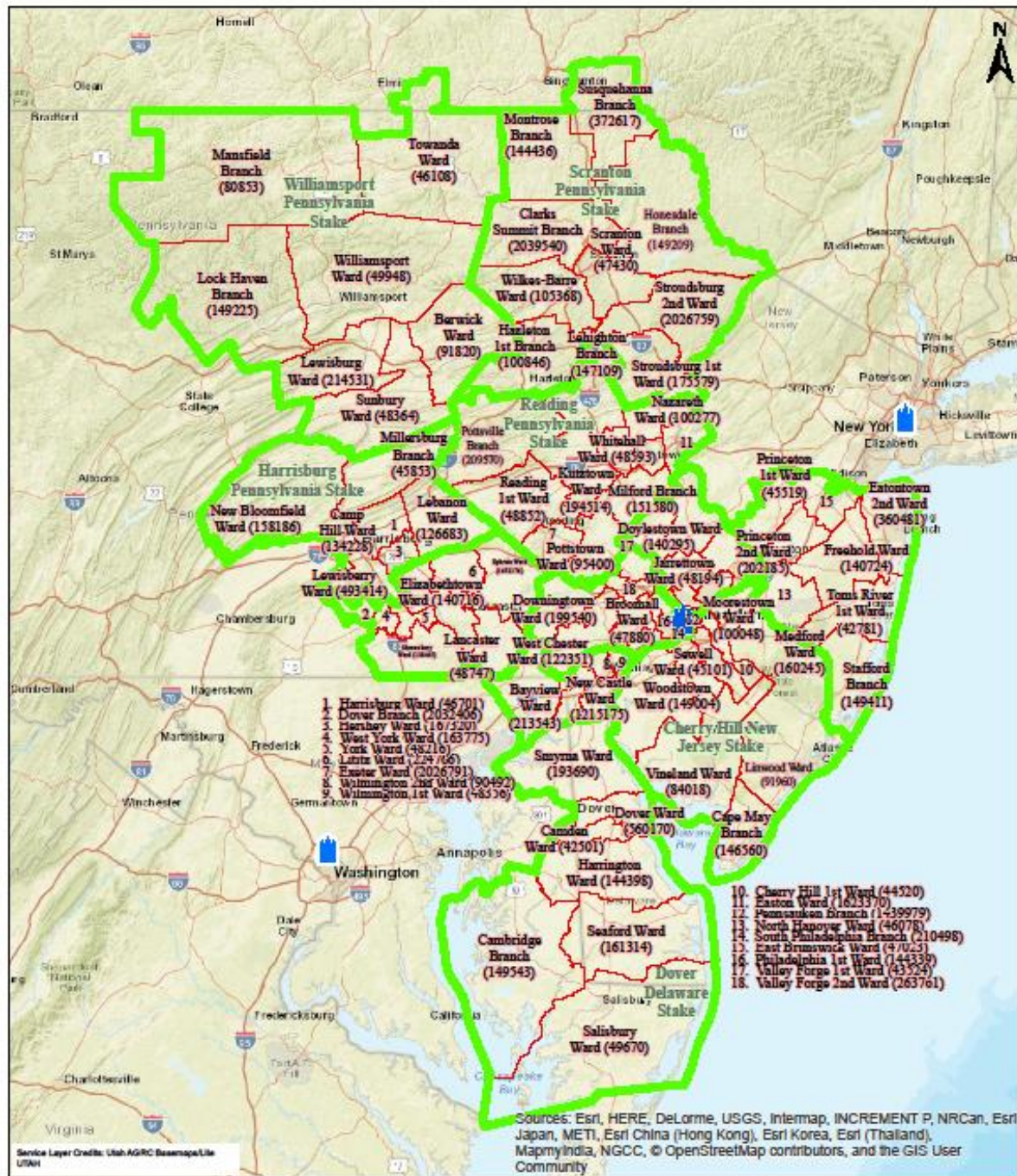


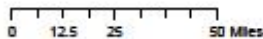
The Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake—Through the Years

When the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake was created from the East Penn Mission District in 1960, its geographic boundaries included most of what we call today the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple District.



Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple District

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Temple
 Stake/District Boundary
 Ward/Branch Boundary

What Happens When a Stake is created from a Mission District?

A mission district of the Church is a geographical administrative unit composed of a number of congregations called branches. A district is a subdivision of a mission of the Church and in some ways is analogous to a stake. The leader of a district is the mission president, who selects a local district president as his agent. The district president may choose two men to assist him; the three together form the district presidency. The three members of the district presidency are given the title “President.”

Districts are usually established where the church is new or where there are insufficient numbers of Church members to organize a stake. Prior to the late 1920s, districts were known as conferences. A district may be thought of as a stake in a beginning or embryonic state.

Notable Differences between Districts and Stakes

- A district does not have its own patriarch. Members are assigned to the nearest stake patriarch.
- Districts do not have a High Priests Quorum. The High Priests Quorum is a stake organization. Any men holding the office of high priest who live in a district meet with the local Elders Quorum. Men residing in a district are not ordained to the priesthood office of high priest.
- Districts are composed of branches only and cannot have wards, regardless of the size of the congregations.
- The presiding authority in a district is the mission president; members of the mission presidency conduct temple recommend, patriarchal blessing, Melchizedek priesthood ordination, and missionary qualification interviews, not members of the district presidency.
- The district presidency serves as a representative of the mission presidency since many missions have multiple districts and the mission presidency may live a great distance from the district itself.
- In many very small and remote districts, some full-time male missionaries serve as branch presidents or in other leadership positions at the local and district levels. Such arrangements may also be made in branches of stakes, but it is more common in districts.

Stake Organization

A stake is an administrative unit composed of multiple congregations. The name “stake” derives from the Book of Isaiah: “enlarge the place of thy tent; stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes” (Isaiah 54:2). A stake may also be referred to as a “stake of Zion.”

Stakes are organized from a group of contiguous wards or branches. To be created, a stake must be composed of at least five wards.

The presiding officer in a stake is known as the stake president. The president is assisted by two counselors and the three together form a stake presidency. The stake presidency is assisted in turn by a twelve-member body, called the stake high council. The members of the stake presidency and stake high council hold the priesthood office of high priest. The stake presidency and the high council handle the administrative and judicial business of the stake. The three members of the stake presidency are given the title “President.”

In addition to the presidency and high council, stake auxiliary leaders are called to oversee the operation of the various auxiliary organizations of the stake. The stake auxiliaries correspond to the ward-level auxiliaries, and include the Stake Relief Society, the Stake Primary, the Stake Young Men and Young Women, and the Stake Sunday School organizations. Typically, the stake-level auxiliary leadership consists of a presidency (a president and two counselors), and a secretary. The stake auxiliary leaders provide oversight, advice, and counsel for the ward-level auxiliary leaders and organize stake-wide activities. Other stake specialists may also be called, as needed.

Because what it means to be the Philadelphia Stake has changed so many times since 1960, this chapter is intended to help the reader better understand and follow how the history of this stake has unfolded from 1960 to the present day.

Historical Overview

Stake Presidents	Stake Presidency Counselors
1960 Bryan F. West	Mark. B. Weed, Raymond Obendorfer, and Guy B. Alexander
1967 Mark B. Weed	Rulon E. Johnson, Jr.
1972 Ronald D. Jess	Mark H. Willes, Rulon E. Johnson, Jr., Richard S. Frary, and P. Duane Lloyd
1980 Darwin A. John	Howard E. Dransfield, Lowell S. Young, Roy Wennerholm, Jr., C. Nelson Dorny, and Anthony R. Temple
1988 Anthony R. Temple	LeeR Lambert, Jan W. Friis, Jr., John K. Itri, and Robert B. Smith
1998 John R. Crawford	Robert B. Smith and Milan F. Kunz
Feb 1999 Robert B. Smith (Valley Forge PA Stake)	Milan F. Kunz
Sep 1999 R. Brent Olson	Jordan P. Peterson
2008 Keith D. Coe (Valley Forge PA Stake)	Paul Brown
2009 Jordan P. Peterson	Steven Coltrin and Joel M. H'Leureux
2016 Paul Brown (Valley Forge PA Stake)	Clark B. Maxwell and John R. Traverso
2017 Stephen Ross	Joel M. H'Leureux and Russell J. Dalby

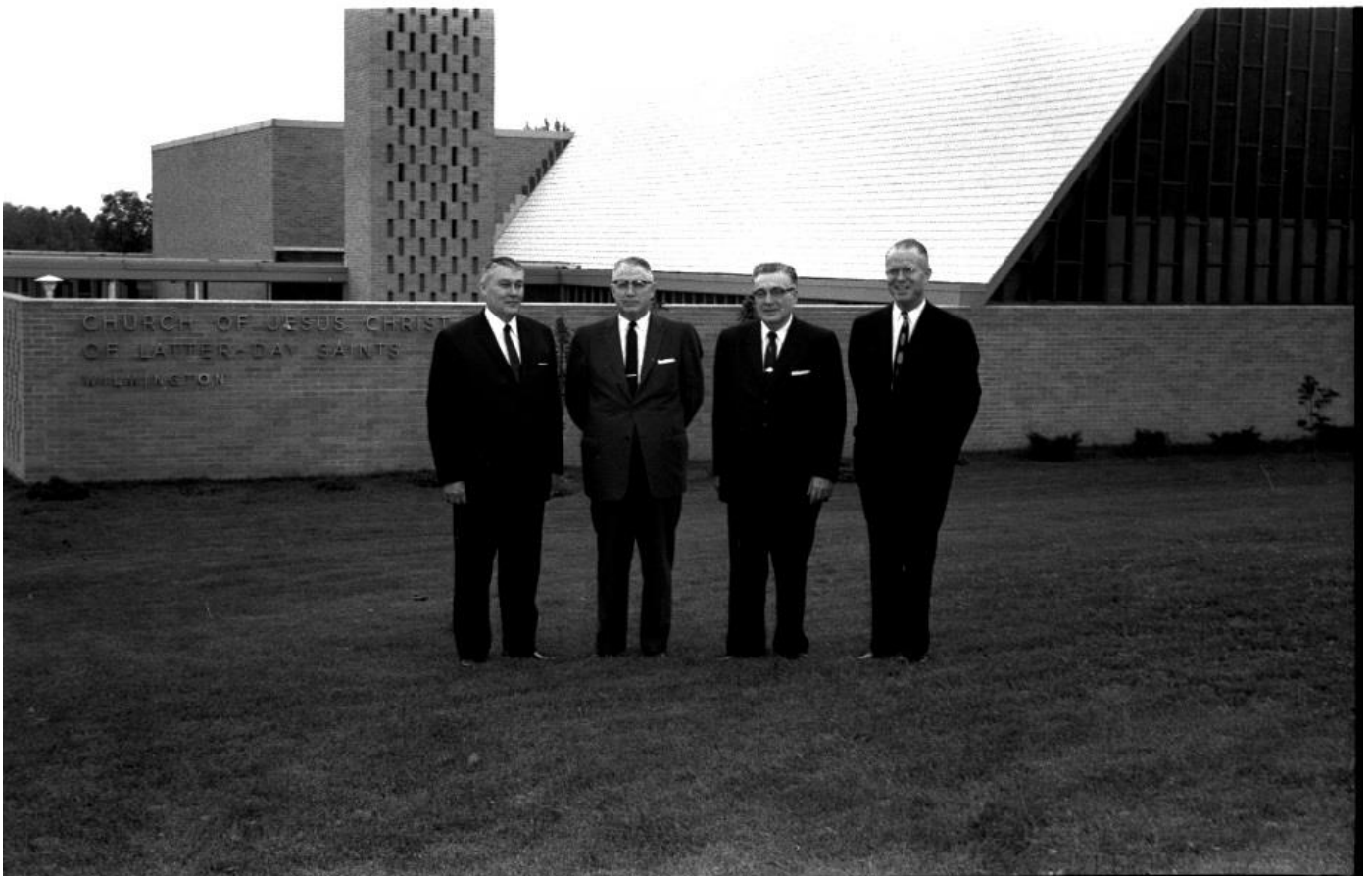
Stake Relief Society Presidents	Stake Patriarchs
1960 Mary A. Porter	1960 Alfred E. Southgate
1964 Fern L. Hatch	1972 J. Vern Hales
1968 Dolores Jess	1972 Merrill Andrus
1970 Betty Spittle	1982 Ronald D. Jess
1974 Louann Barrett	1991 Roland Brown
1975 Betsy Christiansen	2002 John Hopkins
1978 Norma Coldesina	2014 Lowell Young (Valley Forge PA Stake)
1983 Shirley Oscarson	
1984 Joye Ann Dransfield	
1986 Joan Young	
1990 Lona Engle	
1994 Cathy Moyer	
1999 Beverly Schrum	
1999 Mary Kay Temple (Valley Forge Stake)	
2000 Barbara Konover	
2004 Ann Herline (Valley Forge Stake)	
2008 Marie Doutré	
2008 Donna Neelan (Valley Forge Stake)	
2009 Lynn Schoendorfer	
2012 Lona Engle (Valley Forge Stake)	
2015 Amanda Hall (Valley Forge Stake)	

Bryan F. West was called as the **original Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake** President. He was followed by Mark Weed, who went on to serve as a Regional Representative and as a Mission President; Ronald D. Jess, who later became a stake patriarch; Darwin A. John, became a Regional Representative who moved to Salt Lake City to accept employment with the Church; Anthony R. Temple, who went on to serve as an Area Seventy; John R. Crawford, who was released when he moved out of the stake; R. Brent Olson, who went on to be a Mission President and now serves as a sealer in the Ogden Temple; Jordan P. Peterson, who was released to serve as a mission president in Texas; and Stephen Ross, the current Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake President.

In February 1999, with the dissolution of the Philadelphia Metro District experiment (see “The Church in Philadelphia City” chapter of this history), a **second “Philadelphia” stake** was created, named the Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake. The first stake president of the Valley Forge Stake was Robert B. Smith, who was released to serve as an Area Seventy. He was succeeded by Keith D. Coe and then by Paul Brown, the current Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake President.

The Original Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake Gets Organized

A regional conference was convened in the Wilmington, Delaware chapel with Elder Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles [pictured left below] and Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve [pictured middle below], presiding. Mission President Gerald G. Smith [pictured far left in four-person photo below] conducted. The Philadelphia Stake was created in the Sunday morning session on October 16, 1960.





[pictured below top, Elder Lee speaking; pictured below bottom, Elder Sill speaking]. The identity of the other persons pictured is not known.



1960-1968

Bryan F. WestStake Leadership

Bryan Foster West [pictured below left], a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, was called and sustained as the first president of the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake. Mark B. Weed [pictured seated left, below], a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Oak Lane Manor, Wilmington, Delaware, was sustained as first counselor. Ray M. Obendorfer [pictured seated right, below], a member of the Valley Forge Ward and living in Wayne, Pennsylvania, was sustained as second counselor. Alton J. Hayes [pictured standing, below], a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Crestfield, Wilmington, Delaware, was sustained as stake clerk.



All but the northeastern and north and central portions of Pennsylvania and central New Jersey were included in the new stake. The stake was organized as the 360th Stake of the Church. The stake consisted of eleven units, 6 ward, 4 branches, and a proselyting group: Allentown (Pennsylvania) Ward—established 1949; Camden-Audubon (New Jersey) Ward—established 1950; Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) Ward—established 1905; Wilmington (Delaware) Ward—established 1941; Valley Forge (Pennsylvania) Ward—established 1955; Germantown-Wyncote (Pennsylvania) Ward—established 1950; Dover (Delaware) Branch—established 1954; Chester-Media (Pennsylvania) Branch—established 1949; Reading (Pennsylvania) Branch—established 1939; Salisbury (Maryland) Branch—established 1953; and the Bridgeton (New Jersey) Group—established 1959, later dissolved, then re-established.



Alfred E. (Ted) Southgate [pictured left], a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, was ordained the first stake patriarch. What a blessing! To finally have the benefit of a stake patriarch in our midst!

Each stake in the Church has at least one patriarch ordained, as the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons” (WJS, 6). The office of patriarch is a voluntary service in giving patriarchal blessings to stake members.

The training and preparation of Patriarchs includes spiritual enhancement through prayer and righteous living, constant study of the scriptural and historical heritage of the calling, and occasional meetings where they are instructed by their leaders.

Members of the Church receive a blessing from a stake patriarch on a bishop's recommendation following an interview. The patriarch lays his hands on the head of the person and invokes the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In the spirit of fasting and prayer all present are united in faith to seek inspired insight into the birthright blessings and destinies of the recipient. The patriarch also seeks inspiration to specify the dominant family line that leads back to Abraham. Then, as manifested by the Spirit, the patriarch gives admonitions, promises, and assurances.

Mary A. Porter, a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Wilmington, Delaware, was sustained as the first stake Relief Society President. Her counselors were Helen S. Lindsey, a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania and Norell S. Manley, a member of the Wyncote Ward and living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The members of the first stake high council were as follows:

- R. W. Christensen (Assistant Chairman, Melchizedek Priesthood Committee and Advisor, Elders Quorums) was a member of the Valley Forge Ward and living in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.
- William P. Sandbergen (Assistant Chairman, Welfare Committee; Chairman, Old Folks Committee; and Advisor, Seventies Unit) was a member of the Audubon Ward and living in Hammonton, New Jersey.
- Donald B. Bradley (Advisor, Primary Association and Advisor, Stake Music Committee) was a member of the Audubon Ward and living in Riverton, New Jersey.
- Guy B. Alexander (Chairman, Aaronic Priesthood over 21 and Chairman, Fellowshiping Committee) was a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Wilmington, Delaware.
- B. Lorin Richards (Chairman, Ward Teaching Committee) was a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Wilmington, Delaware.
- Clark Barrett (Chairman, Sacrament Meeting Attendance; Advisor, Genealogical Committee; and Coordinator, Service Men's Committee) was a member of the Wilmington Ward and living in Wilmington, Delaware.
- Norman D. Southgate (Advisor, Mutual Improvement Association and Chairman, Stake Auditing Committee) was a member of the Audubon Ward and living in Riverton, New Jersey.
- Burton D. Hatch (Chairman, Aaronic Priesthood under 21 and Advisor, Sunday School) was a member of the Valley Forge Ward and living in Wayne, Pennsylvania.
- Ronald Bulkley (President, High Priests Quorum and Chairman, Stake Board of Education) was a member of the Audubon Ward and living in Haddon Heights, New Jersey.

- Spencer W. Little (Chairman, Genealogical Committee) was a member of the Valley Forge Ward and living in North Wales, Pennsylvania.
- Israel Abbott (Advisor, Stake Mission and Supervisor, Coordinating Couples) was a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Yeadon, Pennsylvania.

The stake mission president was G. Merrill Andrus, member of the Audubon Ward, living in Maple Shade, New Jersey.

Other Stake Auxiliary Leadership included:

Lester P. Taylor, Sunday School Superintendent, a member of the Audubon Ward and living in Haddonfield, New Jersey; Connie Aston, Y.W.M.I.A. President, a member of the Audubon Ward living in Stratford, New Jersey; Douglas Kerr, Y.M.M.I.A. Superintendent, a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Mary B. Alexander, Primary Association President, a member of the Wilmington Ward, and living in Wilmington, Delaware; and Edith P. Clarke, Music Committee Chair, a member of the Philadelphia Ward and living in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania.

Ward Bishoprics and Branch Presidencies

Below: Allentown Branch: Kenyon Hackney, Branch President [pictured below, center, right], Wilhelm Werner, 1st Counselor [center left], Lawrence Behrmann, 2nd Counselor [far right], Lee A. Adams [far left], Clerk. [This picture may be of the Salisbury Branch Presidency?]



[Below] Audubon Ward: Bishop Bernard E. Yeager [seated, center]; Rex V. Johnson, 1st Counselor [seated left], Donn M. Humphries, 2nd Counselor [seated right], Wilson T. Hall, Clerk [standing left], George J. Downing, Assistant Clerk [standing right].



[Below] Bridgeton Group: Robert E. Nesbit, Group Leader [seated left]



[Below] Dover Branch: Jack E. Russell [center], Branch President, Benjamin C. Deputy [left], 1st Counselor, Ray A. Perry, 2nd Counselor [right], Gardner H. Glenn, Clerk



[Below] Media Branch: M. Richard Edgell [center], President, Robert D. Scott [right], 1st Counselor, Frank B. Kamor [left], 2nd Counselor, A. W. Plattenburg, Clerk, H. Leland Loy, Records Clerk



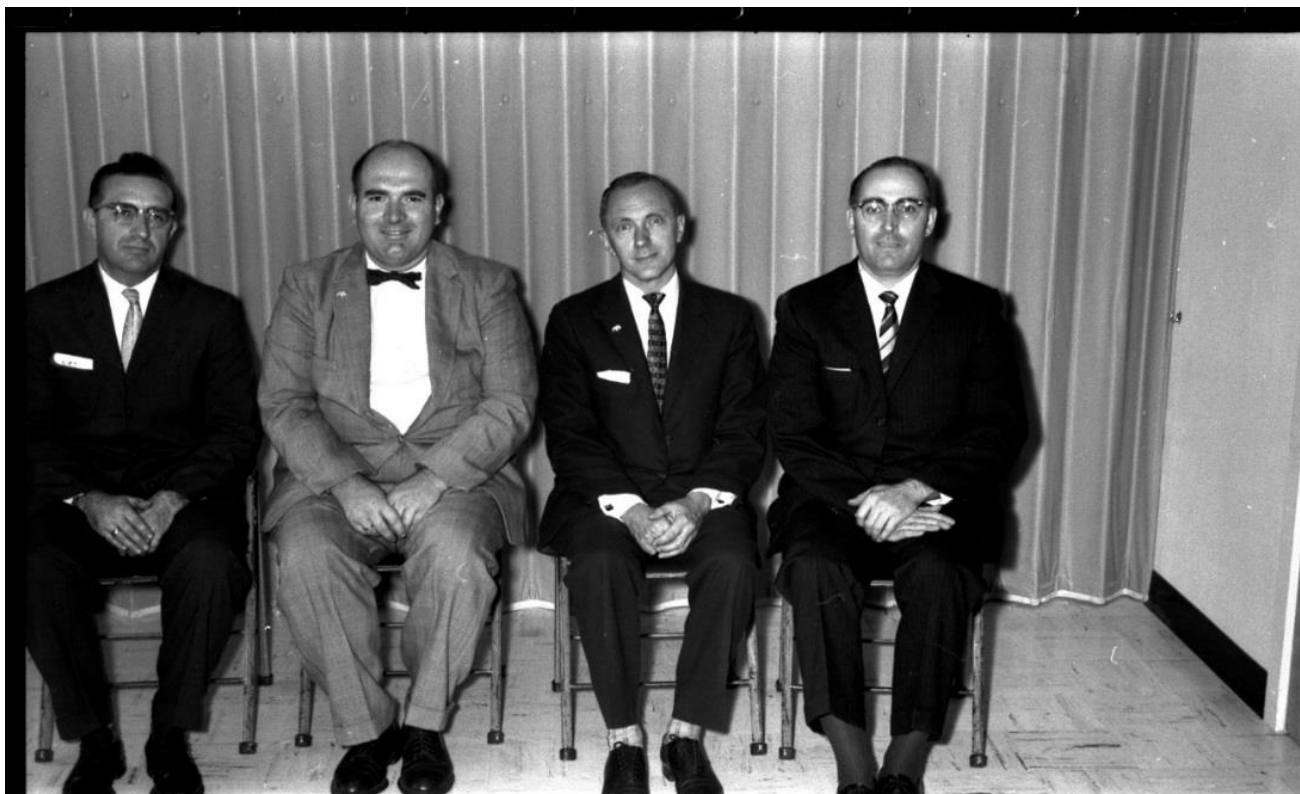
[Below] Reading Branch: Henry F. Sharp [center, right], President, Floyd D. Yeager [center, left], 1st Counselor, John K. Putt [far right], 2nd Counselor, Raymond Smith, Jr [far left], Clerk, Melvin Brown and Leslie Rixon, additional clerks



Below: Philadelphia Ward: Maxim L. Graham [center], Bishop, Blayney J. Barton [left], 1st Counselor, Herbert Obendorfer [right], 2nd Counselor, George W. Jorgensen, Clerk, Naera Smith, Clerk



[Below] Salisbury Branch: William K. Bartlett, President, Friedrich W. Fischer, 1st Counselor, Chester N. Nelson, 2nd Counselor, Marion F. Ardis, Clerk. [This picture may be of the Allentown Branch presidency]



Below: Wilmington Ward: Leon A. Monson [center], Bishop, Wesley Porter [left of center], 1st Counselor, Eugene Ennis [right of center], 2nd Counselor, Wendell P. Long [far left], Clerk, Donald J. O'Day [far right], Assistant Clerk.



[Below] Valley Forge Ward: Stanley R. Hurst [center left], Bishop, T. Kent Pugmire [far left], 1st Counselor, William F. Fulmer [center right], 2nd Counselor, Leonard M. Stillman [far right], Clerk, Walter W. Rosenberger, Assistant Clerk.

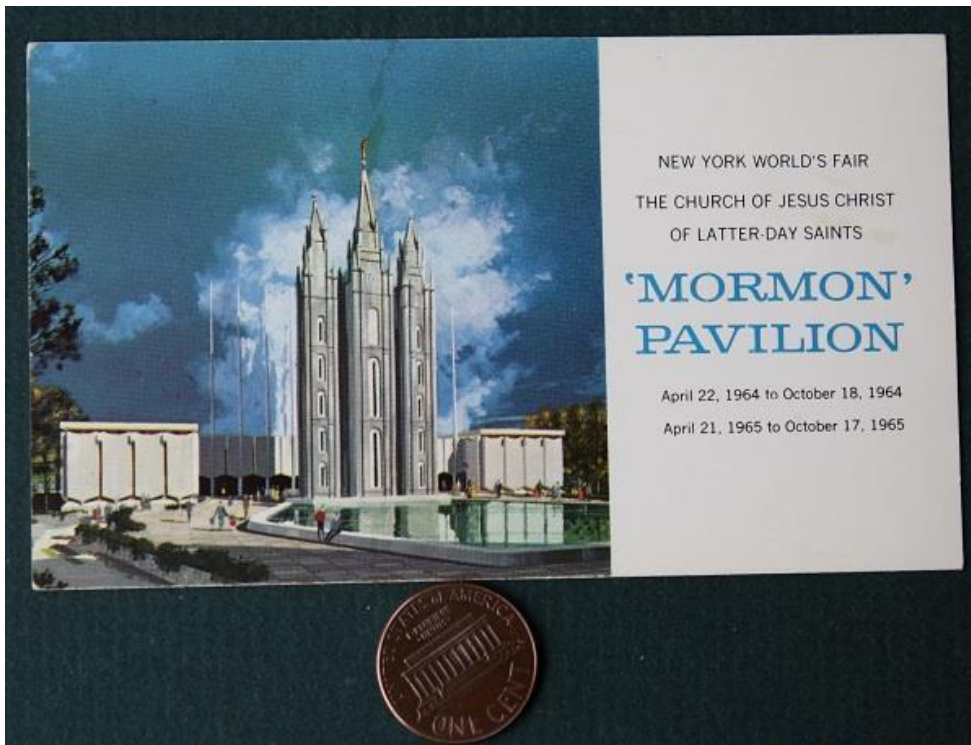


[Below] Wyncote Ward: Ronald D. Jess [center], Bishop, Theone C. Cordon [left], 1st Counselor, Vaughn E. Peterson [right], 2nd Counselor, F. Hubert Reichley, Clerk.



The 1965 New York World's Fair

Held in Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York City from April 1964 to October 1964 and April 1965 to October 1965, the Church chose to participate by sponsoring a pavilion. People from all over the country and the world attended the fair. Many signed the Church guest book telling about their experience at the pavilion. This event had a great impact on missionary work along the mid-Atlantic coast. Missionaries were kept busy finding and teaching people interested in knowing more about the Church. Frank Wirig, Bishop of the Morrisville Ward at the time, remembers that in 1965 his ward had 72 baptisms. Other wards in the Philadelphia Stake had similar experiences. Pictured below is the invitation used to encourage members and non-members to visit the Church pavilion.



A Stake Center

It was clear to President West and other local leaders that in order to provide for future growth, a larger and more centrally located stake center was urgently needed.

The stone meetinghouse at 46th Street in Philadelphia was beautiful, but the growing membership outgrew its capacity. The building was never intended to be a traditional stake center and stake conferences were squeezed into the largest building in the stake, the Wilmington building, or held in local high school auditoriums. In the late 1960s and early 1970s conferences were held in the Irvine Auditorium at 34th and Spruce Streets on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. Stake leadership meetings were held in the Valley Forge meetinghouse. Rotating the meeting places helped share and ease the time, cost, and driving burden on far-flung leaders and members.



In the 1960s, when buildings were to be erected, local members had to pay 30 percent of the cost and stake did so by raising the funds through direct donations and other work projects. Raising the cost of a large stake center seemed like an almost impossible task. Local money was not only needed for construction costs but also to purchase the land. Fortunately, a local Church member, Herbert Obendorfer [pictured left], in his generosity, had left a large bequest from his estate for the purpose of building a new “Philadelphia Chapel.” These funds made it possible for plans to move forward toward a new, large building, a stake center.

Plans were made for its design and, with future growth of the Church in mind, given the nearly 8 million people in the area, a larger-than-usual building (by Church standards), was envisioned. In addition to the chapel, it would have a full-size basketball court, a theatrical stage, a materials center, multiple offices, classrooms, and meeting rooms for Primary, Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood, and Relief Society. It would be built in three stages. A sizeable plot of land was purchased on Paxon Hollow Road in Broomall and plans proceeded. [An “exchange of views” on this topic took place between local leaders and Salt Lake City officials; this exchange, and its outcome, is described in the “The Church in the Western Philadelphia Suburbs” chapter of this history.



In his earlier years, Joseph T. Lindsey [pictured left] was an engineer who worked with Admiral Hyman Rickover at the U. S. Department of the Navy. He was well known and respected for designing a critical switch gear used in the USS Saratoga and other large ships during World War II. Brother Lindsey was long-time, active member of the Philadelphia Ward and served as its Bishop from 1966-1968. He was called to coordinate and supervise construction of the stake center. He served faithfully in this capacity for two years and was released in August 1971. [His wife, Helen S. Lindsey, was a stalwart in the Relief Society and also served as Assistant Superintendent of Stake Center Construction with her husband. At his funeral, 19 January, 2014, his son, Joe Lindsey, offered this touching eulogy to his deceased father: “My father was not one to gush with compliments, but you knew when he said something good about you it was worth remembering. As a young Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood in the Philadelphia Branch there were only three boys who were regular Church attenders over the years. The prayers on the Sacrament are very specific and must be pronounced word for word, so we read them off a card containing the proper wording. My Dad told me one day he thought my reading of the prayers was so good that it sounded like I was saying them from my heart. How could I ever forget the feeling I got from my Dad paying me a compliment like that? I love him for it.”

The first meeting in the new chapel was held on the last Sunday in January, 1971. The Philadelphia region’s first stake center proved to be a great boon to the growth and functioning of the Church.

1968-1972

Mark B. Weed



On March 10, 1968 President West was released and Mark B. Weed was sustained as the second Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake President. His counselors were G. Merrill Andrus of the Audubon 2nd Ward and J. Vern Hales of the Valley Forge Ward. The stake Relief Society President was Fern L. Hatch of the Valley Forge Ward. His clerk and executive secretary were Alton Hayes of the Wilmington Ward and Ronald Jess of the Jarrettown Ward. The stake high council members were Norman Southgate of the Audubon 2nd Ward, Burton Hatch of the Valley Forge Ward, Maxim Graham of the Audubon 2nd Ward, Bernard Yeager of the Audubon 2nd Ward, Edward West of the Wilmington Ward, Lamont Tyler of the Allentown Ward, Robert Nesbit of the Pitman Ward, Leon Monson of the Wilmington Ward, Stanley Hurst of the Valley Forge Ward, Henry Sharp of the Reading Ward, Donald O’Day of the

Wilmington Ward, Arden Engebretsen of the Wilmington Ward, Loran D. Stephenson of the Philadelphia Ward, Robert Daum of the Wilmington Ward, and Blayney Barton of the Philadelphia Ward.

During his tenure the young men of the Philadelphia Ward, after winning the stake and regional volleyball tournament championships, were sponsored by the stake to participate in the All-Church Volleyball Tournament in Salt Lake City. He presided over the final stages of the building of the stake center and was released in 1972.

1972-80

Ronald D. Jess



On September 24, 1972 Ronald D. Jess was sustained as the Stake President. His counselors were J. Vern Hales of the Valley Forge Ward and Mark H. Willes of the Broomall Ward. Betty Spittle of the Pitman Ward was the stake Relief Society President.

Philadelphia Stake Divided; Wilmington Stake Organized

When Elder LeGrand Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles presided over a stake conference on December 8, 1974, he cited “the spectacular growth of the Church

in recent years.” Membership had more than doubled since the stake was created in 1960. On that same day, Elder Richards divided the Philadelphia stake. He organized the Wilmington Delaware Stake, which included all of the wards and branches in southern New Jersey, Delaware, a branch in Salisbury, Maryland, and a dependent group in Pocomoke, Maryland. The new, smaller Philadelphia Stake now included just the Allentown, Broomall, Jarretstown, Philadelphia, and Valley Forge wards and the Philadelphia City, Pottstown, and Lawrence Park branches.



1978 Philadelphia Stake Presidency and High Council

Back Row: David Berges, Gardner Glenn, John Coldesina, Don VanNoy, Jack Moyer, Lowell Young, Hubert Bennett, Barrie Gove, Melvin Beard; Front Row: Nelson Dorny, Frank Kamor, Richard S. Frary (Stake Presidency 1st Counselor), Ronald D. Jess (Stake President), R. Duane Lloyd (Stake Presidency 2nd Counselor), Richard Ross, Richard Huey

1980-1988

Darwin A. John



On March 23, 1980, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve called Darwin A. John to be President of the Philadelphia Stake. President John was a Scott Paper Company executive who had been transferred from Minneapolis nine months earlier. President John left the area in 1988 for employment with the Church. He went on to serve as a sealer in the Jordon River, Washington D.C., and Salt Lake temples and as First Counselor in the Draper Utah Temple Presidency.

His counselors were Howard E. Dransfield of the Broomall Ward and Lowell S. Young of the Valley Forge Ward. The stake clerk was Stephen A. Leitz of the Valley Forge Ward and the stake executive secretary was C. Nelson Dorny of the Broomall Ward. The stake Relief Society President was Norma Coldesina of the Valley Forge Ward.

The stake high council members were Richard Huey of the Valley Forge Ward, David Berges of the Valley Forge Ward, William Fulmer of the Valley Forge Ward, Roy Wennerholm of the Broomall 2nd Ward, T. Bowring Woodbury of the Broomall 2nd Ward, Anthony R. Temple of the Valley Forge Ward, Jack Taggart of the Jarrettown 1st Ward, James Clark of the Valley Forge Ward, J. Eugene Holladay, Jr. of the Valley Forge Ward, Paul L. Tripp of the West Chester Branch, E. Lewis Frasier of the Broomall 2nd Ward, Shyam B. Advani of the Jarrettown 2nd Ward, John K. Itri of the Broomall 1st Ward, George W. Latimer, Jr. of the Valley Forge Ward, and Gordon Case of the West Chester Branch.

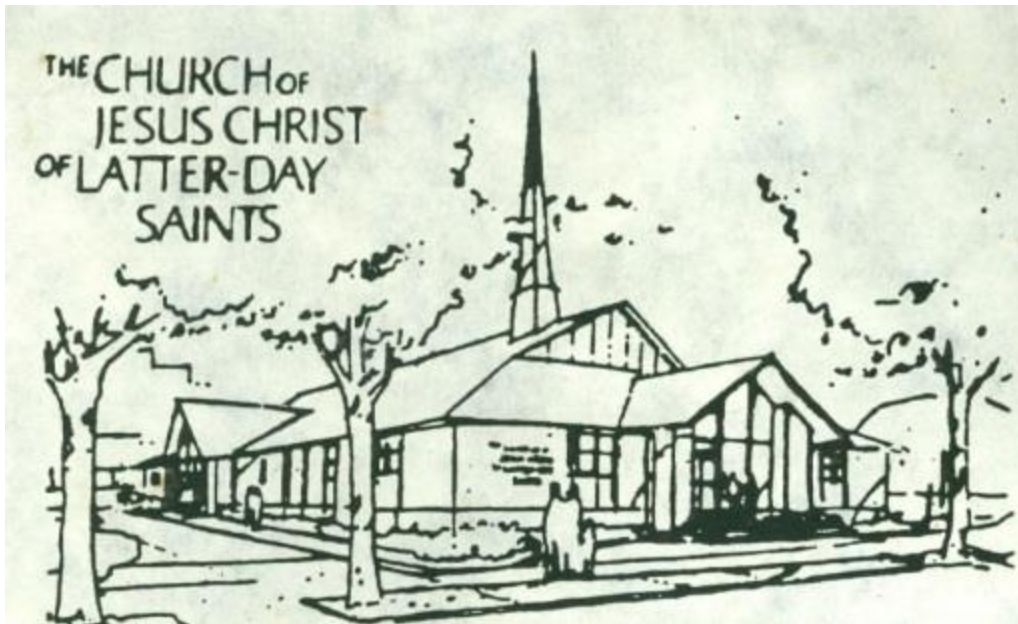
Philadelphia Stake Divided; Reading Stake Organized



On October 31, 1982, Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve presided at a stake conference in Allentown Pennsylvania, where he divided off a few units from the Philadelphia stake to help create Reading Pennsylvania Stake. This was the 1,380th stake of Zion, whereas the Philadelphia Stake had been the 360th when it was organized 22 years earlier. The Reading Stake was made possible by incorporating wards and branches from three adjoining stakes: From the Philadelphia Stake: Doylestown and Pottstown wards; From the Scranton Stake: Allentown and Kutztown wards, and Bethlehem, Hometown, and Lehighton branches; From the Harrisburg Stake: Reading and Mt. Penn wards, and Pottsville Branch.

Beginning in 1980 near the end of President Jess' tenure, efforts were made to re-establish the Church in the city. A branch was organized, meeting on the Navy Base in South Philadelphia. In 1984 President John made a bold commitment to the work of the Lord in the city. Office space was rented in West Philadelphia and the boundaries of the Broomall 1st and Jarrettown 1st wards were adjusted to bring most of the city's neighborhoods into one Church congregation numbering over 900 members. Only the far northeast section of the city remained in the Jarrettown 1st Ward. Members who had had little access to Church meetings could now participate again together conveniently and with other members in the city at a location accessible by car and public transportation.

On October 18, 1986, ground was broken for a new chapel at 39th and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia City. At the time there were no Church-built meetinghouses anywhere in the city. The building would be the first new building erected by the Church since the sale of the 46th Street chapel in 1975. President John sought for and gained approval from Church headquarters for nearly all of the cost of the land and construction to be covered by the Church.



The building was dedicated by Elder John K. Carmack of the Seventy on find the date for this.

Not long after the building was completed the Spanish-speaking members of the Church in the city were formed into a ward and they began meeting at the new building. Soon thereafter, the city English-speaking ward was divided into the Philadelphia 1st and 2nd wards.



1988-1998

Anthony R. Temple



On October 23, 1988, Anthony R. Temple was sustained as Stake President. President Temple was a medical doctor who worked for the McNeil Pharmaceutical Company.

President Temple's counselors were LeeR Lambert of West Chester and Jan W. Friis, Jr. of Wayne. The stake clerk was John Hoffman of Malvern and the stake executive secretary was Nicholas C. Itri. The stake Relief Society President was Joan Young. The members of the stake high council were A. Wayne Burton of West Chester, Gardner Glenn of Warminster, James F. Cobb of Berwyn, Lane Kiriya of Downingtown, Charles Geltz, Jr. of Audubon, Geoffrey Campbell of West Chester, David Babbel of Wynnewood, David Wonnacott of West Chester,

Donald Dilks of King of Prussia, C. Nelson Dorny of Broomall, Martin Marostica of Downingtown, and Bart Frechem of Hatfield.

President Temple, Philadelphia Mission President J. Anthon Ferrell, and Northeast Area President F. Enzo Busche worked together on the idea that the city might become a more fertile proselyting ground for its many ethnic communities and cultures if the people were placed under the care of the Pennsylvania Philadelphia Mission.

They agreed that the "vineyard was ripe to harvest" and that if meetings were held where transportation was readily available, more people would have the opportunity to hear the gospel in their own language and actively participate in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Doing this would enable the Mission to provide more full-time missionaries to help support the new branches and reduce travel time, expense, and distance.

This led to the third division of the Philadelphia Stake on June 23, 1991. Elder Busche organized the Philadelphia Metro Mission District and placed it under the care of the Pennsylvania Philadelphia Mission. Luis A. Sopeña was sustained as the District President and Vera Resch was called to be the District Relief Society President. The history of the Metro District is available in the "The Church in Philadelphia City" chapter in this volume.

1998-2000

John R. Crawford

On February 15, 1998, John R. Crawford was sustained as the new Stake President. When he was called he thought a lot about what the prophet Enoch's ancient city of Zion might have been like. That beautiful Sunday at the Philadelphia Stake Conference he found himself looking out at the faces of the people in the Broomall chapel and it was obvious to him that *they* were amazing children of God. This was a view of Zion!

"From that first day the Lord impressed on my mind two words: vision and vitality, or the two "Vs." I urged the members of the stake to envision what can be as we invite the Savior into our life's journey. And, just as importantly, I prayed they would have the vitality to convert inspiring ideas into reality."

In his talks he often used a hard hat to represent the idea that we are all construction workers building Zion. When we pass construction signs on the road, it should serve as a reminder to each of us what the Lord has assigned us to do to build Zion in our part of this world. He taught that the Gospel can make a huge difference in our lives. President Crawford often produced a giant bolt to illustrate a point. He used to say, "On our own, we are nice little bolts; but with the Lord in our lives, it's a whole new world. He can make us equal to any challenge, He will help us bring great good into the world, and blesses us with happiness that only the gospel can bring."

He assured us that there are many wonderful experiences that can be shared. To quote President Crawford:

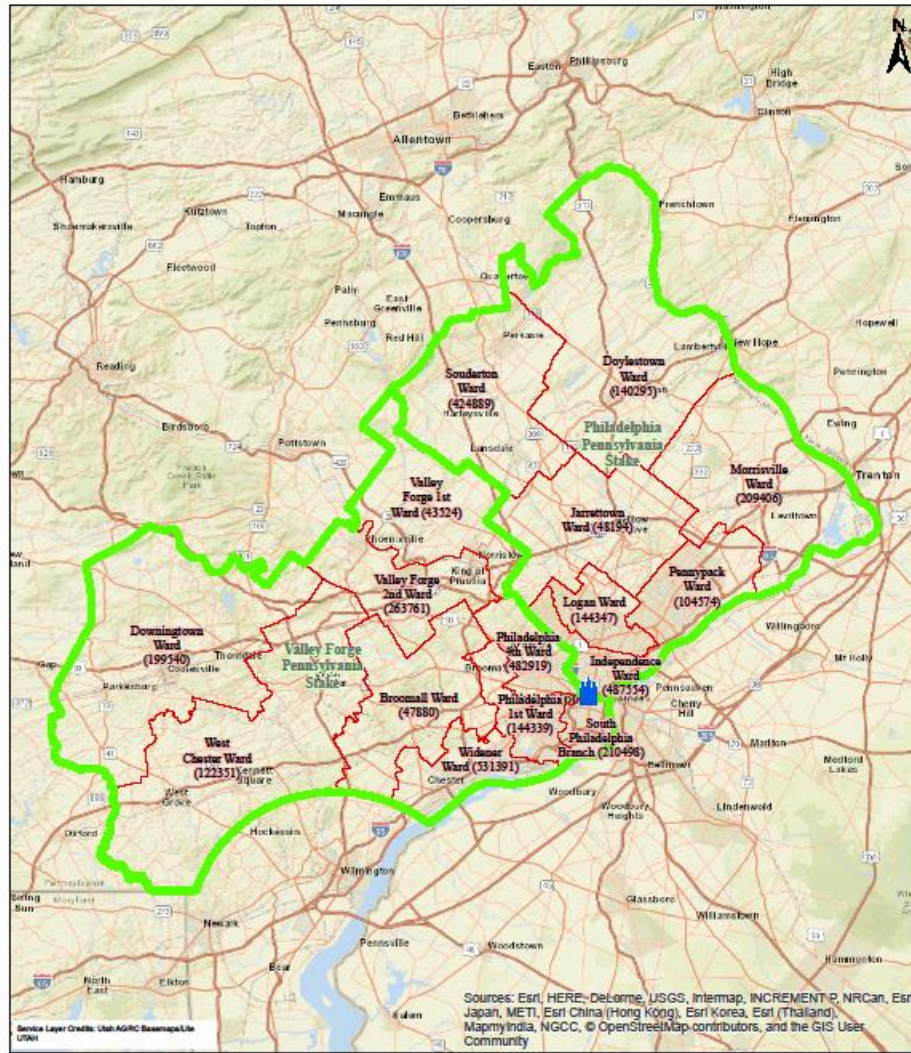
"I often think of Zion, what it would be like to live there and the type of people you would meet. I know what these people look like. Some are young; others are old. They speak many different languages. You will find people with much and little in terms of worldly goods, but rich in those things that matter eternally. They have vision and vitality. They look like members of the Philadelphia Stake."

A year later, on February 14, 1999, the Metro Mission District was dissolved and members in it were returned to the care of the newly realigned Philadelphia Stake and the newly-created Valley Forge Stakes. John R. Crawford continued as President of the Philadelphia Stake. Beverly Schrum was called as stake Relief Society President.

The Philadelphia Stake included the Doylestown, Jarrettown, Morrisville, Pennypack, and Philadelphia 2nd wards, and the Frankford Branch. The Jarrettown building was designated the Philadelphia Stake Center with the hope it could be expanded or serve adequately until a new stake center could be built (something that would not happen for another 17 years, when the new stake Center was built across the street from the Philadelphia Temple).

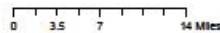
Robert B. Smith was sustained as the Valley Forge Stake President and Mary Kay Temple continued as a Stake Relief Society President, only now with the Valley Forge Stake.

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Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake and Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Stake/District Boundary
Ward/Branch Boundary

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1999-2009
R. Brent Olson



President Crawford found it necessary to move out of the stake, so on September 19, 1999, R. Brent Olson was sustained as Stake President. He was an attorney who worked for Merck Pharmaceuticals. Shortly thereafter, Barbara Konover was called to be the Stake Relief Society President.

The focal point of President Olson’s tenure became known as “The Philadelphia Commitment.” Individuals and families of the Philadelphia Stake are invited to follow the Savior through personal service to their families, their ancestors, the families they home or visit teach, and those of our Heavenly Father’s children whom He has prepared to be taught the gospel. All members of the stake are invited to join in and *Follow the Savior* in three key areas:

- 1) Testify of Christ: Through our prayers, seek to find people to whom you might testify of Christ.

2) Participate a Family Temple Trek. “Each One Take One” was his motto. We were urged to take names of ancestors to the temple or perform temple work on their behalf.

3) Feed the Lord’s Sheep. We should follow the Savior by ministering to your family, to every Church member in a monthly home teaching or visiting teaching visit, and make the families you visit your most important priority. Pray for them daily; greet them or take them to Church meetings, and provide at least one meaningful act of service to them in the coming year.

In President Olson’s own words:

“Our theme narrowed or matured from 2004 through the end of 2009 to the following: Remember that whoever enters the doors of our chapel was sent from the Lord and our job was to accept them. If you will, God would send many more. It is probably best expressed in my poor attempt to write the following poem (which I recited several times in stake conferences), titled “Sent from Thee:”

All who enter our chapel door
We declare with a mighty roar
We will accept as sent from Thee
That with their gospel wings may soar.

Yea, black or white or young or old,
They often fail to fit the mold,
Spanish, Asian or Liberian,
None are excluded from Thy fold.

They may be pregnant, and alone,
Rejected feelings to be sewn,
With many habits to be lost,
And testimonies to be grown.

Send us, these fallen souls from Thee,
Our softened hearts with theirs shall be
Entwined in grace and peace and love,
That we may live in harmony.

With contrite hearts, they are baptized,
Their hopes and dreams are realized,
Their self-esteem and spirits rise
More than they ever fantasized.

And with Thy blood didst gladly pay,
Their grievous sins are washed away.
May we accept these precious souls,
And humbly serve Thee every day.

The inner city part of the stake experienced tremendous growth during this time. Robert Fillmore, Pennsylvania Philadelphia Mission President, inspired the missionaries serving here to find those who were ready to hear the Gospel – and they did!

Over the next three years there were 696 baptisms, sometimes so many that the entire Sacrament meeting was spent confirming new members. Missionaries were moved from the suburbs to work with city units. The suburban wards baptized as many people without the missionaries as they had with missionaries. Elder D. Todd Christofferson

met with the newly-baptized members and talked to them about their missionaries. One new member in Doylestown turned to Sister Tina Nielsen and asked what “missionaries” are. The *ward* members had done all the teaching.

The challenge for the leaders and members of city wards, as well as stake leaders, was in friendshiping the new members, to ensure their testimonies continued to grow and that they stayed active in the Gospel.

2009-2017

Jordan P. Peterson



Sustained on March 22, 2009, Jordan P. Peterson was a banker with the PNC Bank. His counselors were Steven Coltrin of Yardley and Joel L’Heureux of Feasterville. Shortly after his call, Lynn A. Schoendorfer was called as Stake Relief Society President.

At General Conference in October, 2008, President Thomas S. Monson had announced the approval for the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple. Eight years later, members in eleven stakes participated in the open house, youth cultural celebration, and dedication of the temple (located on Vine Street near Logan Circle in center city) on July 24 through September 18, 2016.

One of President Peterson’s emphases centered on the increased work force of missionaries throughout the world that occurred when the age limit was lowered. Since more missionaries were being assigned to serve in our stake, they needed more people to teach. The Philadelphia Stake challenge was to “set-a-date” with friends, family, and acquaintances for the missionaries to teach.

Church Educational System

The birth of the Seminary and Institute programs took place in the Granite Utah Stake in 1912. Priesthood leaders there felt that the youth of the Church needed an established program in which they could study in more depth the scriptures and it has grown to become the primary educational entity in the Church, with a larger enrollment than any other LDS educational venture and a wider reach than almost any educational organization worldwide.

Begun largely as an experiment by a single stake, the program has since grown into a worldwide system of religious education, bringing gospel instruction to young members of the Church throughout the entire world. From small beginnings, the seminary program and its collegiate counterpart—institute of religion—grew to become the primary educational entities in the Church, with a larger enrollment than any other LDS educational venture and a wider reach than almost any educational organization worldwide. Today the seminary and institute programs teach over 700,000 students in 143 different countries through the efforts of nearly 50,000 full-time, part-time, and volunteer teachers and administrators.” (A Century of Seminary, by Casey Paul Griffiths)

Beginnings in Philadelphia



Early morning and home study Seminary were begun in the Philadelphia area September 1969 in various locations, including the Lew and Marian Frasier downstairs family room and the Stephenson family upstairs music room. The classes were taught by Brent Malin, an executive with DuPont and Loran Stephenson, a public school music teacher.

When the Chestnut Street building was planned, the Stake Presidency and leaders of the Church Educational System agreed that three rooms be allocated for dedicated use by the Institute of Religion associated with the University of Pennsylvania. Stake President Darwin John’s letter

requesting approval indicated that forty-five or more students within the boundaries of the Metro Ward were typically enrolled in Institute classes each year. They came from the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, and Drexel University as well as five local medical schools, local art colleges, and schools of music. Today, institute

classes are also taught in many wards so other young single adults, students in outlying colleges (such as Bryn Mawr College, West Chester University, Arcadia University, and Widener University) and wives of students can have the same opportunity.

The Church Educational System also oversees the seminary programs in each ward. Early morning seminary is encouraged, but when there are extenuating circumstances home study or online seminary is also approved. Early morning seminary, besides giving the youth doctrinal and historical bases in the gospel, allows youth to be with one another and have a spiritual experience before they go off to school each day.

Temple and Family History Work

Temple work has been a focal point in the lives of the members of the Philadelphia Stake. Members have always had the goal of being sealed in the temple and the construction of the Washington D.C. Temple in 1974 made it possible to get to the temple more readily. Even though we were in the Washington D.C. Temple district, when the Manhattan New York Temple opened it was even closer for some members of the stake. It was also possible for many members of the stake to become ordinance workers in the D.C. Temple.

In the 2000s, President Olson instituted “Temple Trek” which encouraged members to get to the temple often and once a year a special meeting for the Philadelphia Stake was held in the Washington D.C. Temple as part of Temple Trek. It included a music offering by the stake choir as well as comments from the Stake President and one of the Temple Presidency or Matron. Following this meeting, there would be a special endowment session for those in attendance.

The Stake Primary also provided a “Temple Trek” for the children of the stake to be able to go to the Washington D.C. Temple, have a special program, feel the specialness of the place, tour the temple grounds, and visit the Visitors Center. Each child and their family could have their individual picture taken with the temple in the background as a remembrance of their visit.

A Family History Center was first housed in the Broomall building about 35 years ago and since then local Family History Centers have been organized in a number of Church buildings. Currently, the Philadelphia Stake has Family History Centers in the Broad Street, Doylestown, Morrisville, and Pennypack buildings. The Valley Forge Stake has centers in the Broomall, Marshallton, Valley Forge, and 39th Street buildings. These centers are available to both the public and members and are staffed with knowledgeable people to help patrons find the information about their ancestors. In 2017 the Church will open a Family Discovery Center in downtown Philadelphia.

Over the years, various “Family History Conferences” have been held throughout the stake. These conferences, open to the public, have usually been one-day meetings offering mini-seminars on a variety of topics that would benefit anyone doing family history research.

A Stake United Through Service

Giving service to others is an important part of serving the Lord. In doing so we exemplify how He served when He was on the earth during His short ministry. Every adult member has the opportunity to serve as a Home Teacher or Visiting Teacher with several families or women under their stewardship. Hours of volunteer time have been offered helping to build chapels, fulfilling callings in the ward, stocking shelves in the bishop’s storehouse in New Jersey, putting together education kits or hygiene kits to be distributed to those who need them both at home and abroad, collecting clothes, shoes, and canned goods for those who need them, and keeping our ward buildings clean.

For the last five years or so the stake has taken on an annual service project to clean up Camp Liahona, the camp used for girls’ camp. There are opportunities for every family member to contribute to this cause. Over the winter, tree limbs, branches, and twigs have fallen, and there are larger repair or paint projects that need to be done.



The Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake as of 2016 is composed of 8 wards. Four of these are in the City of Philadelphia: Independence, Logan, Pennypack, and Spring Garden, a Spanish-speaking ward. The remaining wards, Doylestown, Jarrettown, Morrisville, and Souderton serve the nearby suburbs and rural areas. The stake center [pictured above] is located across the street from the temple. Church membership in the stake numbers about 4,500. The stake membership shows great ethnic diversity with many Hispanic, Asian, and African-American members. A significant portion of the success by missionaries in the last ten years has come from growth in the city.

2017 to Present

Stephen A. Ross



On February 5, 2017 President Jordan P. Peterson was released to prepare for service as a mission president in Houston, Texas. Stephen A. Ross of the Morrisville Ward was called and sustained as the ninth president of the stake by Elder Juan Uceda of the Seventy. His counselors are Joel L'heureux of the Pennypack Ward and Russell J Dalby of the Doylestown Ward. The stake clerk is Michael Pond of the Souderton Ward and the stake executive secretary is Ryan C. Asay of the Morrisville Ward. The high council members are Will Anderson, Michael Anthony, Daniel Daniel, Michael Kimball, Richard Long, Lee Miller, Bryan Monson, Thomas Nelson, Nolan Polson, Leopoldo Rollins, Frank Schoendorfer, and Jeffrey Thorley. Candice Vander Wilt serves as the Stake Relief

Society President.

The Valley Forge Stake (Organized 14 Feb 1999)

The Valley Forge Stake was created on Sunday February 14, 1999. In a joint conference of the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake and the Philadelphia Metro District, the areas included in those territories were combined and reorganized to create the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake and the Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake. The Valley Forge Stake is one of the newest stakes in the Temple District and has the largest number of members.

1999-2008

Robert B. Smith

On February 14, 1999, the Philadelphia Metro Mission District was dissolved and members in it were returned to the care of the newly realigned Philadelphia Stake and the newly-created Valley Forge Stakes. John R. Crawford continued as President of the Philadelphia Stake.

Robert B. Smith was sustained as the Valley Forge Stake President and Mary Kay Temple continued as a Stake Relief Society President, only now with the Valley Forge Stake. The new Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake included the two Broomall wards, the two Valley Forge wards, and the West Chester and Downingtown wards. The Philadelphia (YSA) Ward and the Spanish Ward located in South Philadelphia were made part of the Valley Forge Stake. The Broomall building became the stake center for the Valley Forge Stake. For more information on the Valley Forge Pennsylvania Stake, see below.

President Robert B Smith, a counselor in the former Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake Presidency was sustained as the first Stake President of the newly-created Valley Forge Stake. After years of faithful leadership he was released and succeeded by President Keith Coe who had been serving as a counselor to President Smith. After his release, President Smith told us there would be only one President at a time in our stake so we should refer to him as Elder Bob. President Smith was subsequently called, sustained, and served as an Area Seventy.

2008-2016

Keith D. Coe

President Keith Coe, who had been serving as a counselor to President Smith, was sustained as the new Valley Forge Stake President. President Coe served as Stake President for eight years, and was released at the first stake conference in 2016.

Stake Patriarch

At the time the stake was created, Roland G Brown was serving as Patriarch. For a period of time he even provided blessings in the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake. At the time Patriarch Brown was released, he had given 1,499 blessings. Lowell S. Young was called as Patriarch after Roland Brown was given Emeritus status.

Stake Relief Society

The first Valley Forge Stake Relief Society President was Mary Kay Temple who had been serving in the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Stake before it was divided. She was followed by Ann Herlin. Next was Donna Neelan, who was followed by Lona Engle. The current Stake Relief Society President is Amanda Leigh Hall.

Messiah Sing-Along

Valley Forge Stake has for many years sponsored a Messiah sing-a-long of the noted work by George Fredrick Handel. The concert is presented on a Sunday evening before Christmas. The chorus and orchestra are made up of amateur musicians that approach a near professional level of performance.

Everyone loves participating and enjoying this performance and there is little chance that it will not continue to be a highlight of the Christmas season for many years to come.

2016 to Present

Paul Brown

President Paul Brown, who had been serving as a counselor to President Keith Coe, was sustained as the new Stake President.

The Valley Forge Stake includes the Broomall 1st and 2nd wards, Downingtown Ward, West Chester Ward, Valley Forge 1st Ward, Valley Forge 2nd Ward, Philadelphia 1st Ward, Philadelphia 4th Ward, Philadelphia Singles Ward, and the South Philadelphia Branch.

For three years the stake included a Singles Branch that met in the Broomall Stake Center. It was eventually combined with the Philadelphia Singles Ward that was meeting in the Chestnut Street building. Also, a Spanish-speaking branch was established in Norristown as a magnet ward for Hispanic members who wished to be in a Spanish-speaking ward.

Geographically, the Valley Forge Stake includes most of historic “Old Town” Philadelphia including Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, the First Bank of the United States, the Society Hill neighborhood, Jewelers Row, the sports complex in south Philadelphia, and many museums.

The Valley Forge Stake includes two strong inner-city wards which meet in the Chestnut Street building and a strong South Philadelphia Branch which has a varied cross section of people of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Filipino decent along with Italian families and the families of married students.

The Valley Forge Stake was fortunate to have an existing stake center and has always met as a stake in the Stake Center in Broomall although they have started to broadcast Stake Conference via television to the Chestnut Street building.

Youth Program

The stake has a very strong program for the youth. All of the wards have had regular trips to the Washington D.C. Temple to enable the young people to do baptisms for those who did not receive this important ordinance while alive. There have been regular youth conferences and other social experiences such as dances which often included the youth of neighboring stakes. The stake also planned and executed regular “Pioneer Trek” experiences and opportunities to travel to Palmyra, New York to attend the Hill Cumorah pageant. There have also been visits to the Priesthood Restoration site.