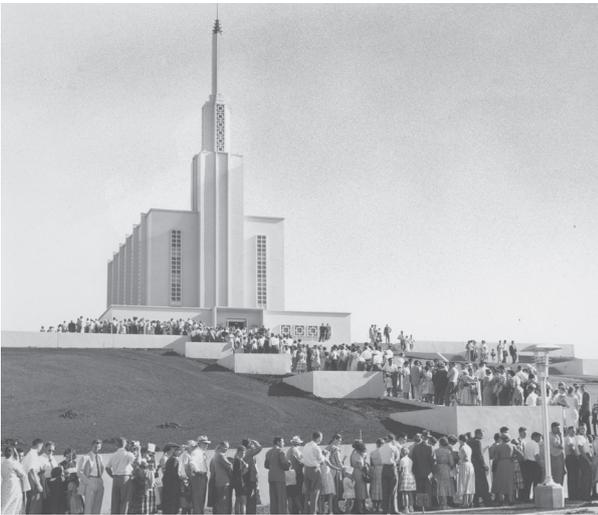


A Brief History of the Hamilton New Zealand Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints



The story of the Hamilton New Zealand Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began long before ground was broken in 1956. As early as 1830, Māori matakite (seers) from several tribes had foreseen the coming of religious messengers who would be distinct from the Christian missionaries their people had already encountered. Describing various signs by which these new messengers could be recognised, the seers urged their kindred to look for these messengers and then accept their teachings as the true word of God.

During the 1880s, many Māori who were familiar with the matakite prophecies identified missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the foretold messengers. In the Book of Mormon, published in te reo Māori in 1889, many of the Māori people found teachings that resonated with their own traditional beliefs. As a result, whole villages converted and were welcomed into the Church of Jesus Christ. Between 1885 and 1905, Church membership in New Zealand increased by 500 percent, to about 5,000.

Recognising the need for more educational opportunities for its younger members, the Church established two schools in New Zealand during the 20th century. The Māori Agricultural College near Hastings operated from 1913 until 1931, when the campus was destroyed by an earthquake. After World War II, the Church developed plans to build another school near Hamilton. Building materials and skilled labour were in

short supply, so the leaders at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, offered to provide materials, equipment, and experienced construction managers if New Zealand Latter-day Saints, then numbering about 12,000, would agree to provide volunteer labour as well as supplies to support the workers.

The construction of the Church College of New Zealand (CCNZ) was well underway in 1955 when Church President David O. McKay traveled from Salt Lake City to several countries in the South Pacific. President McKay's itinerary included a visit to the Hamilton construction project. At the time, only a few knew that he was also seeking a site for a new temple to serve the 40,000 Latter-day Saints then in the South Pacific. Wendell B. Mendenhall, a consultant on the CCNZ building project, took President McKay to the hilltop next to the college site and later reported: "President McKay looked at this area, saw this beautiful hill, and said, 'This is the place where the temple should be.'"

At a Church hui tau (national conference) a few weeks later, 4,000 Church members joyfully raised their hands to support the addition of a temple to the already massive college construction project. Like the school, the Hamilton New Zealand Temple—the first such edifice in the Southern Hemisphere—would be built by volunteer missionary labour.

President McKay returned to New Zealand in 1958 to dedicate the temple, which has since become a sacred destination for Latter-day Saints in all of the countries of the South Pacific. In 2017, the building closed for renovations to comply with current seismic resistance standards.

Church President Russell M. Nelson has announced plans to construct two additional temples in New Zealand to help serve the country's 115,000 Latter-day Saints. The Auckland New Zealand Temple was announced in October 2018 and is now under construction in Manukau, with an anticipated opening in 2024. In April 2022, a temple was also announced for Wellington. In the meantime, New Zealand Saints eagerly look forward to the reopening of the Hamilton temple, a holy place where they can learn more about God's plan for His children.

