



Leslie S. Hodgson (1878–1947), date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.

Utah Architect Leslie S. Hodgson and the Architectural Environment of Early Twentieth Century Ogden, Utah, 1900–1940

Michael H. MacKay

Architecture and Utah identity are inseparably connected. The forces that drew together iconic temples in religious tones and community outreach also imbued Utah with unifying symbolism and iconography. Unfortunately, the shadow cast by significant structures such as the Salt Lake Temple is so great that other buildings of architectural and historical value have been neglected in prominence and in the historical literature. Significantly, Ogden, Utah, one of the state's foremost cities in terms of its history, size, and economic importance, is also the home to a significant number of dynamic structures and architecture characterized by the economic boom of the 1920s and the depression of the 1930s. Without question, the civic structures built during these decades defined Ogden as the foremost exemplar of Art Deco architecture, not only in the state, but also in the entire Intermountain West. In the majority of instances, Leslie S. Hodgson was the architect.

Although many of the buildings and structures designed by Hodgson are relatively well known, and despite the acknowledgment that his work has received from the Utah Heritage Foundation, the Utah Preservations Office,

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the National Register of Historic Places, and a wide variety of contemporary, local, and national civic leaders, only Peter Goss has singled out and directly addressed Hodgson's work; hence the need for a more complete historical analysis of his accomplishments.¹

From the beginning of his career in 1905 until his death in 1947, Hodgson designed more than seventy-five of the most contemporary and aesthetically pleasing buildings and homes in the Intermountain region. Some of his most significant buildings include: Ogden High School (1938), the Ogden Municipal Building (1939), the U.S. Forest Service building (1933), the Bigelow-Ben Lomond Hotel (1927), the Eccles Building (1913), the Shupe-Williams Candy Company Factory (1905), the Scowcroft Warehouse (1904), Peery's Egyptian Theatre (1924), the Peery Apartments (1909), and the Masonic Temple/State House (1905). His architecture utilizes Victorian, Bungalow, Arts and Crafts, Prairie, Period Revival, and Modern styles; and in some instances, his implementation of these styles represents the only examples of these forms in Utah. Hodgson became the architect for Ogden's financial giants and the Ogden School Board. By the middle of the twentieth century, he had designed some of Northern Utah's most unique buildings and changed the appearance of Ogden City. Even today, Ogden's downtown space is dominated by his architectural influence, epitomizing his use of contemporary architectural motifs. This article demonstrates the prolific and eclectic development and height of Leslie Hodgson's architectural work, as one Utah's most prominent Mormon architects of the early twentieth century. His buildings represent Ogden at the height of the city's cultural prominence and endure today as a symbol of the community's former greatness as the Intermountain West's "Junction City."

Architectural Training

Leslie Hodgson was born on December 18, 1878, in Salt Lake City, the eldest child of Oliver and Mary Etta Simmons Hodgson. Building was a part of Hodgson family tradition and at the age of fourteen, his father, a contractor, began to inculcate the various aspects of construction-related activities into his life.² From 1892–99, Leslie worked as a machinist for his father's company, Salt Lake Building and Manufacturing.³ In 1899, he married Louie Maud Taylor and began pursuing educational training in architecture.⁴

Hodgson began studying as a draftsman in the office of Samuel S. Dallas, and later with Richard K. A. Kletting (architect of the Saltair resort on the Great Salt Lake and the Utah State Capitol building) in Salt Lake City.⁵ There were only a few academically trained architects in Utah at the turn of the twentieth century, men such as Taylor Woolley and Hyrum Pope, who were educated at the International Correspondence School (ICS) of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Others, like Lewis Telle Cannon, studied architecture at MIT, but for the most part Hodgson's generation gained their education through apprenticeship until they were prepared and had developed the trade skills and knowledge to begin practicing on their own.⁶ The Utah Association of Architects was established in 1911, and by 1921, it had aligned itself with other national professional bodies. Kletting apprenticed several generations of architects in Utah, and Hodgson became one of the most renowned architects to pass through his tutelage.

In 1904, after his time in Kletting's office, Hodgson built his own house in Salt Lake City, but he did not develop a substantial architectural firm because he extended his education by accepting a job in San Diego, California, as the



Leslie S. Hodgson, date unknown, ca. 1906–1910. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.

chief drafter for the office of W. S. Hebbard and Irving Gill. Gill, a nationally known architect who had worked with Frank Lloyd Wright, later went on to become one of the founders of the Modern architectural movement.⁷ Hodgson may have been given the opportunity to work with Hebbard and Gill through a connection with Salt Lake City architect Albert O. Treganza, who had previously apprenticed with Gill and had an established firm in Salt Lake City.⁸ Hodgson's nine-month stay in San Diego was relatively short, but during this time he developed an eclectic style similar to Gill's early work, including Prairie style influences.⁹ By the time he returned to Utah, he had worked for two of the most influential architects in Utah and California.¹⁰

Early Architectural Enterprises

Upon returning to Utah, Hodgson moved to Salt Lake City, but he soon settled in Ogden, due to the partnership he formed with Julius A. Smith. Hodgson and Smith had worked together on the Scowcroft Warehouse (1904) before Hodgson left for California and their partnership proved to be immediately successful.¹¹ Within a short time, the two men compiled a book, *Architecture of Ogden: J. A. Smith and Leslie S. Hodgson, Architects, 1906–07*, containing examples of the firm's output, along with photos of their thirty-five projects. These structures followed many of the popular early twentieth cen-



Scowcroft Warehouse (constructed in 1906), 105 23rd St., 2009. A major renovation of the building was completed in 2004.

ture styles, such as Arts and Crafts and Bungalow. They designed residential, commercial and civic buildings throughout the city. Their residential designs included houses and cottages for highly influential families like the Eccles and the Shupes. These prominent figures also had them build significant commercial buildings, such as the Shupe-Williams Candy Company (1905), the Peery Estates, and the Eccles Building (1913). The Scowcroft Warehouse, built in 1906, was a large building that housed up to eleven wholesale businesses on 23rd and Wall Avenue. W. H. Wright and Sons Department Store was a massive two-story building on the corner of 22nd and 23rd Streets in an “L” block style. Their designs became the face of many commercial companies in Ogden, and they drafted plans for several buildings for Ogden Canyon Resorts, including the Hermitage and a cottage for the resort. (The Hermitage later became a vacationing spot for both William Taft and Theodore Roosevelt before it burned down in 1939.) The two designers also built a variety of civic buildings, such as the Carnegie Library (1903), Dee School, Lewis School, and the Armory building.

Within five years after beginning his career, Hodgson had made significant ties to Ogden and its civic, commercial, and residential spaces, and had become an active proponent of the city. He became a member of the Weber



Early view of the Shupe-Williams Candy Company (constructed in 1905), 2605 Wall Ave., date unknown. The building was destroyed by fire in 2006. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.



Early view of the Ogden Carnegie Library (constructed in 1903), 26th St. and Washington Blvd., date unknown. The building was razed in 1969. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.

Club, the Ogden Golf and Country Club, and the Ogden Rotary Club; and in 1911 he became the official architect for the Ogden School Board. When the State Board of Architects was founded, he quickly became an influential member of the body. Through his profession and his connection to civic and commercial leaders, he developed a significant career and began redefining Ogden's urban, rural, civic, and commercial spaces through the buildings that he designed. His book, *Architecture of Ogden*, advertised his architecture and the builders and suppliers, while also trying to lure individuals and business to the city—promoting its location, financial potential, manufacturing industry, climate, and education. Note the following entry: “The city is delightfully situated. Bound on the one side by the Wasatch mountains, and on the other side by the Weber river, the parallelogram thus described almost crowded with the highest order of improvements, including massive buildings. . . . The public buildings are models of architectural superiority, while the private residences are designed to supply the comforts of home indeed, as also to exemplify the most recent developments or artistic excellence.”¹²

Hodgson and Smith's partnership dissolved in 1910 while they were working on the Eccles Avenue project, and Hodgson did not form any long lasting partnership for almost a decade. Before splitting, they hired Eber Piers as a drafter in their office, who was instrumental in the Eccles Avenue project. This project solidified Piers as one of the most prolific and committed Prairie Style devotees in early twentieth century Utah. His connection to Hodgson also demonstrates Hodgson's influence on other significant Utah architects.

Residential Designs

From 1910 to 1920, Hodgson designed just under twenty residences in Ogden. After this period, he did not design as many houses, but focused more on civic and commercial projects. Nevertheless, the owners of the homes he designed often hired him to design their commercial buildings. This is demonstrated by the significant number of Ogdenites who commissioned him to design Eccles Avenue.

From 1910–45, the Eccles district was an important residential area for noteworthy Utahns. It gleamed with the prestige of the city's leaders in civic and cultural affairs and prominent businesspersons. Because of the notoriety of the occupants and the distinctive architecture, the neighborhood attracted publicity for thirty-five years. The varying architectural styles, mainly Prairie Style, appealed to its residents and combined to define the Eccles district as an upper-class area. This historic neighborhood is located between 25th and 26th Streets, and Jackson and Van Buren Avenues, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

Hodgson's involvement in the Eccles district came about because of his relationship with David Eccles, who acquired the land in a lawsuit affiliated with Ogden Savings Bank, which he controlled; and in March 1909, Eccles organized the subdivision for Ogden's prominent families.¹³ Hodgson designed the pattern of the neighborhood to be slightly different from the rest of the area in order to give the effect of a tight-knit residential community. Though the surrounding neighborhood reflects a grid pattern, his design narrowed the roadway and created a circular split in the street as well as a large circular island in the middle of the street providing a small park for the residents.¹⁴

Members of the Eccles family occupied four of the thirteen Eccles Avenue houses, including Marriner Eccles, chairman of the Federal Reserve and co-founder of First Security Bank. Other prominent neighborhood families included E. O. Wattis, owner of Utah Construction Company, later one of five companies that built the Hoover Dam,¹⁵ and Marriner and Dortha Browning, descendants of Jonathan Browning, the gun inventor.

Hodgson worked on this group of houses in cooperation with Eber Piers, who worked for Hodgson, planning and designing the district before Piers independently built the Wattis residence on the east side of the circle.¹⁶ The Wattis house's exterior shows Piers' earliest attempts to capture the spirit of the Prairie School. Piers also went on to produce in some of his later Ogden residences other stylish examples of Prairie Style architecture.¹⁷ Hodgson, on the other hand, designed his houses in several period revival styles and in American Four-square. During the same period, he demonstrated his architectural capability in Prairie Style through his design of the LDS Deaf Branch (1916), a building reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple.¹⁸ The Houtz home on Eccles Avenue "reveals an American Four-square heritage, but the exterior is dominated by a wide variety of Prairie School, and Arts and Crafts Architectural features."¹⁹ Hodgson's designs that did not resemble these early twentieth century styles were significant even if they



John S. Houtz home (constructed in 1911), 2522 Eccles Ave., date unknown. Photograph courtesy Vanessa R. Nelson.

were outside of the norm. LeRoy Eccles's home, for example, is by far the largest house in the district and a "premier example of residential . . . Second Renaissance Revival architecture."²⁰ It also required massive cement pylons underneath the house to support it over the top of an underground stream, "an architectural feat of the day."²¹ Significantly, LeRoy Eccles's home and the other homes that are not distinctly Wrightian still use some Prairie School features to draw the district together in an eclectic fashion.

Commercial Designs

Outside of Eccles Avenue, from 1910–20, Hodgson designed only some eight additional homes. However, he designed and built eight commercial buildings during this period. Chief among these was the Eccles Building, constructed in 1913 and named after David Eccles, one of Ogden's foremost entrepreneurs. The three-part vertical block design building (trimmed with a



Early view of the Eccles building (constructed in 1913), 2401 Washington Blvd., date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.



Eccles building, 2401 Washington Blvd., 2009.

decorative cornice separating the first and second parts, while the third part was elegantly decorated in an eclectic period-revival design) stood eight stories tall—three stories higher than the First Security Bank Building across the street.²² It housed a clothing company and offices for a wide variety of professionals in the center of the city. Noble Warrum wrote that the “Eccles building [was] the finest and most modern building in Ogden.”²³ Across the street and on the other corner from the Eccles building stood W. H. Wright’s department store. The Masonic Temple, Joseph Parry Investment, and the Patterson/Nye Building were just down the road. The Scowcroft Warehouse and the Shupe-Williams Candy Factory were just blocks away on Wall Avenue.

From 1910–1920 Hodgson also designed a variety of schools for Weber County. He remodeled and made additions to Mound Fort School and Central School, built additions for the State School for the Deaf and Blind, and designed Lorin Farr School, Polk School, and the dormitory for the State School for the Deaf. In conjunction with the homes and commercial projects he built for prominent Ogdenites, his schools gave him the reputation of being Ogden’s architect. However, these achievements were still small in comparison to the designs and buildings he built in the 1920s and 30s.



Masonic Temple (constructed in 1905), 2550 Washington Blvd.



LDS Deaf Branch (constructed in 1916), 740 21st St.

Hodgson maintained a single partnership from 1919 to the late 1930s with Myrl McClenahan, and during the next twenty years, the two men completed the city's largest and most significant buildings, shaping Ogden into a much more dynamic and architecturally diverse city.²⁴ The Egyptian Theater, the Bigelow Hotel, the Federal Forest Service Building, Ogden High School, and the Ogden-Weber Municipal Building highlight the partnership's architectural versatility and expertise. Hodgson reached the apex of his career, partly due to his relationship with important civic and commercial leaders, like Harmon Peery. Peery's desire to build, and his appreciation for architecture, drove him to Hodgson repeatedly to design important buildings. For the first ten years of Hodgson and McClenahan's partnership they mainly designed hotels and other commercial buildings, such as Betts Apartment House (1923), Peery's Egyptian Theater (1924), the Union Stock Yards (1925, 1930, 1931, 1933), and the Bigelow-Ben Lomond Hotel (1927).

Such building projects were expensive and ambitious and could have materialized only because of Ogden's geographical position as an important junction between the eastern and western railroads. The Ogden of Hodgson's day was a national crossroads, ideally situated as a junction for those traveling across the country, the railroad being the major artery that brought a great number of people to and through the city. This sparked tourism and the construction of hotels and attractions to accommodate the influx of people, provoking the implementation of new architectural styles to Ogden. The discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1924 caused a surge in Egyptian Revival architecture.²⁵ Capitalizing on this newfound interest, Harman and Louis Peery invested in Ogden's new entertainment center—the Egyptian Theatre, “The Show Palace of the West”—which entertained not only Ogdenites, but thousands of travelers as they passed by on their way to California or to points in the East.²⁶

Hodgson and McClenahan designed the theatre during the 1920s economic boom. Prior to construction, the two men conducted extensive research into Egyptian architecture, as well as the designs of the newest contemporary theaters.²⁷ James H. Devine, the director of the Ogden Chamber of Commerce, commented at the theater's dedication that “an almost perfect replica of an Egyptian temple by the Nile built centuries ago has been placed in a modern city, as if by magic. It is a perfect reproduction of the art of a dead past.”²⁸ For nearly every aspect of construction, local artisans, mechanics, and merchants were hired. F. Berne built the theater, while Harmon and Louis Peery financed the costs, which exceeded \$600,000.²⁹ Years later, the Egyptian Theatre built in Park City and the Salt Lake Masonic Lodge were designed and built in Egyptian Revival architecture.



Early view of Peery's Egyptian Theater (constructed in 1924), 2415 Washington Blvd., date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.



Perry's Egyptian Theater, 2415 Washington Blvd.



Early view of the Bigelow-Ben Lomond Hotel (constructed in 1927), 2510 Washington Blvd., date unknown.



Modern view of the Bigelow-Ben Lomond Hotel, 2510 Washington, Blvd.

The overall effect of the architecture made going to a movie an event to remember, rather than just a night on the town. The theater's grand opening took place on the evening of July 3, 1924, featuring Zane Grey's, *Wanderer of the Wasteland*.³⁰ The mayor said that Peery's Egyptian Theatre "began the city's march towards a beautiful city."³¹ The theater, because of its designation as a demonstration theater, played the world premier of Paramount Productions at the same time as New York, Chicago, Salt Lake City, and Los Angeles.³² Moreover, the theater aimed to please the public with its ambiance and entertainment.³³ The theatre advertized itself as a social center, where friends could meet between the shows and "fill the halls, with tears, or laughter."³⁴

Harmon Peery later became the mayor of Ogden City (1934–39, 1942–43, 1948–49) and continued his call for monumental construction and architecture, starting with the Egyptian Theatre and later moving into a number of Art Deco buildings. Most important, Hodgson was the architect he turned to.

However, before this Art Deco period, Hodgson produced several more designs that represented Ogden's economic zenith. Constructed in 1927, Hodgson designed the Bigelow Hotel (later the Ben Lomond Hotel) in early Twentieth Century Revival style with an Italian Renaissance approach. It is one of the three most notable historic hotels in Utah (the other two being Hotel Newhouse and the former Hotel Utah). The floor plan of the hotel was designed to provide 350 guest rooms, one thousand seats for dining, ballrooms, meeting and display rooms, lounges, restrooms, retail shops, and a bank—all of which were located in the first four-stories. The Bigelows, one of Ogden's prominent families, resided in the two-story tower as a penthouse residence.³⁵

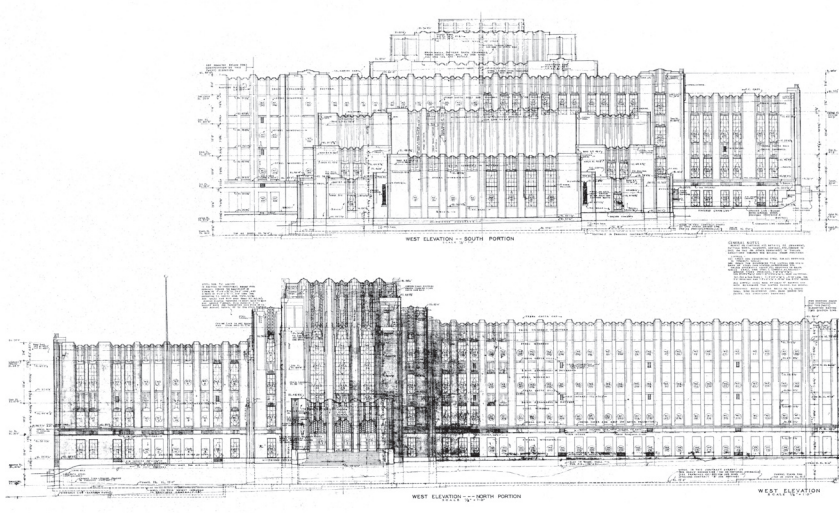
The interior of the building contains many different styles. The coffee shop was in an Arabian style, the ballroom contained Roman motifs, another ballroom had Mediterranean furnishings, one dining room had Japanese décor, while the women's parlor expressed a Georgian theme. The English room displayed rich oak paneling, and hand-painted murals bordered the Shakespeare room. Throughout the interior were ornamental plasterwork and terra cotta.³⁶ Coupled with the Egyptian Theatre, the building symbolized a period of optimism and economic expansion in Ogden.

Ogden High School

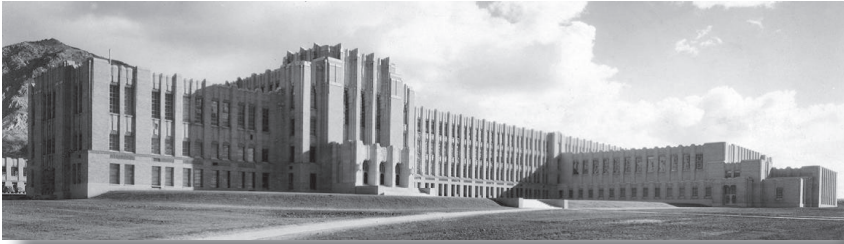
Although the economic prosperity of the 1920s did not continue, Hodgson persisted to produce monumental architecture. The experience of designing civic structures, combined with the prominence of Hodgson's social contacts, eventually led to the culminating works of Hodgson's career: the Forest Service Regional Office Building (1934), Ogden High School (1937), and the

Ogden Municipal Building (1939). Taken together, these buildings represent “the three most significant Art Deco structures in the city of Ogden and the state of Utah.”³⁷ However, of all his designs, Ogden High School is generally considered Hodgson's masterpiece.³⁸

Like most of the world, the Great Depression decimated the Utah economy in the 1930s, with unemployment rates as high as thirty-six percent.³⁹ The population in Ogden continued to rise, however, and the local school board concluded that a larger high school needed to be built in order to accommodate a student body more than double the size of thirty years previous.⁴⁰ Little documentation exists relative to the initial decision to build the school, but, despite the depression, Ogden High appears to have been planned on a grand scale right from the start. Initial estimates predicted the build to have a cost of \$830,000, a price the community was unwilling to cover on its own. Accordingly, in June 1933, Ogden City petitioned R. A. Hart, the Utah director of the Public Works Administration (PWA), for \$600,000 in federal aid toward construction of the school.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act limited PWA disbursements to thirty-five percent of costs, and Hart informed the city that he could allot only a quarter of a million dollars for the project.⁴² Faced with the prospect of having to pay over half a million dollars out of their own pockets, many residents began to express reservations about the school's scale and expense, effectively stalling the project for an additional two years.



Leslie S. Hodgson's architectural drawings of Ogden High School.



Early View of Ogden High School (constructed in 1937), 2828 Harrison Blvd., date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.

Following his election as mayor of Ogden in 1934, Harman Peery worked enthusiastically to promote Ogden as a locale of national appeal, and he tended to think big (once even offering to marry the Duke and Duchess of Windsor at the Ogden Pioneer Days festival).⁴³ Having worked with Hodgson ten years earlier on the Egyptian theater, Peery bought whole heartedly into the architect's vision of the transformative power of iconic architecture, and consistently championed the cause of monumental public works projects, while also attempting to place Ogden onto a national stage. Within a year of his elec-



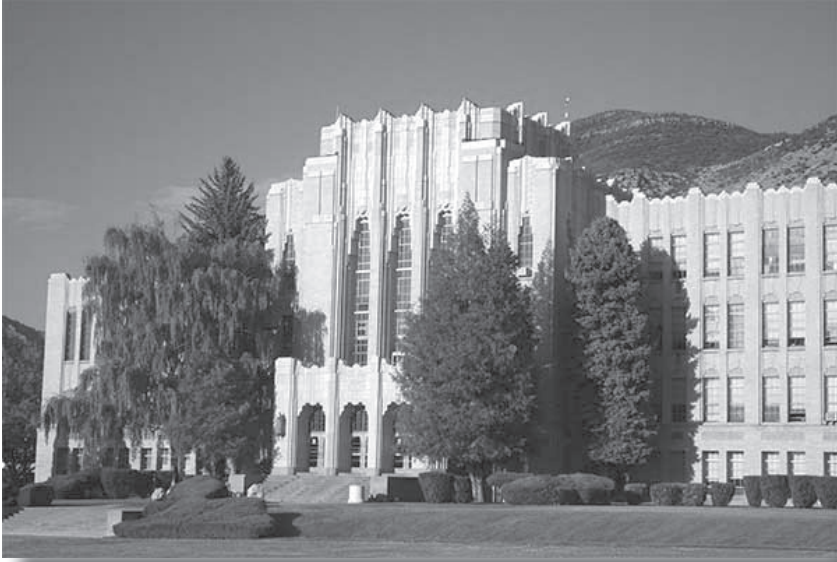
Early View of Ogden High School (constructed in 1937), 2828 Harrison Blvd., date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.



Early view of the Ogden High School auditorium, date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.

tion, the issue of Ogden High School once again became a matter of intense public discussion. Not surprisingly, the school board sided with Peery and Hodgson, citing the community's need for the school and the wealth of jobs the project would create. In one debate, A. B. Foulger, president of the Ogden School Board stated, "The underlying principle [is that] the federal government is giving us \$249,700 as an outright gift, never to be returned, . . . and that employment might be given to Ogden workmen."⁴⁴ Although dissent was never fully quelled, such arguments eventually won the day. All that remained to be resolved were the matters of funding and location. To this end, the public approved the sale of a ten-year, two and one-half percent interest bond, and a ten-acre lot was purchased on the outskirts of town.⁴⁵ On May 21, 1935, the public bindingly voted to begin construction, from which point Ogden High School officially became Public Works Project #1423.

It is difficult to say to what degree Hodgson himself was involved in the politics surrounding the school; but as architect to the school board, and as friend of Ogden's leading civic figures, he undoubtedly had been privy to the nuances of the debate. Indeed, all criticisms regarding the extravagance of the school's style must have, in some sense, been directed at Hodgson himself, since it was he who first envisioned and then designed the structure in partnership with Myrl A. McClenahan.⁴⁶ Hodgson's personal attachment to the project is implied by Teddy Fullmer (Hodgson's daughter), who claimed that Hodgson and McClenahan "personally selected the placement of every single



Ogden High School.

brick in the building.”⁴⁷ Fullmer’s assertion does suggest a certain sense of ownership on the part of Hodgson. It may have been that despite the public nature of the edifice, Leslie Hodgson considered Ogden High School to be uniquely *his* project. By all accounts, other architectural firms were not even considered for the job, suggesting that his name may have been attached to the concept even before the project was formally approved.

Ground was broken for the school during a well-attended public ceremony on October 1, 1936, after which work proceeded rapidly. True to the promises made by Peery and the school board, the project created hundreds of jobs for local workers and funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars into the sluggish local economy.⁴⁸ Wherever possible, local businesses were chosen to manage construction and supply materials for the building, with only the most specialized work being procured from out of the county. In only one instance was it necessary for Hodgson and McClenahan to look out of state to obtain materials, and then only for the ornate cornice pieces that composed the building’s detailed facade.⁴⁹ Even before the building was finished, it became an important part of Hodgson and Ogden’s identity.

Given the massive scale of the building and the intricacy of its design, it’s unsurprising that the city’s goal of finishing construction in time for the 1937 school year went unmet. Lou Homer, Leslie Hodgson’s daughter, recalled the urgency of these moments as a young employee in her father’s office, during

which time her father admonished Lou and her sister to type the PWA documents as fast as possible to keep up with construction.⁵⁰

As the project's duration extended, so too did its costs. By the time of the school's completion in October 1937, the final bill tallied \$1,115,000—making Ogden High the first million dollar school in the state of Utah. Ogden residents were by no means pleased with the cost of the project, but they appear to have been unanimous in their praise of the building itself. At the school's dedication on October 29, 1937, Utah Governor Henry Blood opined that “while I don't mean to condone lavish expenditures, I can't point to a thing in this building but what is justified. . . . The quality of the building will endure long after the cost is forgotten.” Strong support for the project might well be inferred from the prominence of the other participants in the dedication. Speakers included Senator Elbert D. Thomas, PWA administrator R. A. Hart, LDS Apostle David O. McKay, and Leslie Hodgson himself. Senator Thomas heralded the building as a “monument to the faith of Ogden,” and Hart declared that through this building, “Ogden City and Weber County [had] done more for recovery through construction projects than any other unit in the state.” Perhaps the best evidence of the school's popularity, however, lies in just how well attended the dedication was. Local reporters estimated that on the day of the dedication three thousand Ogden residents packed themselves into the school's elaborate two-thousand-seat auditorium. Clearly, Ogden felt that it had built something worth building, and Leslie Hodgson agreed. Even before the ribbon had been cut, Hodgson used his speech to insist on the school's preservation.⁵¹ School board member Fred Nye, it seems, felt much the same way: “The building just completed is the last word in high school construction, and one of the finest buildings of its kind in the West. It was designed by Ogden architects and built by an Ogden contractor, both of whom are deserving of great credit for the excellency of their work. It will always be a great asset to our city and will serve the needs of this community for many years to come.”⁵²

The U.S. Forest Service Regional Office Building and the Ogden-Weber Municipal Building

While Ogden High School remains Hodgson's most significant piece of Art Deco, it was not his first. Three years previous, the federal government commissioned Hodgson and McClenahan to design the new Forest Service Regional Office Building. On December 20, 1932, the Murch Brothers Construction Company of St. Louis received a \$229,000 contract for the building, and construction commenced in January of 1933.⁵³ Like Ogden High, and the later Ogden-Weber Municipal Building, Hodgson conceived of the building

as a grand structure in the Art Deco style. At the time of its completion, the Forest Service Building undoubtedly represented the largest and most expensive piece of Art Deco in the state of Utah, for which reason it might rightly be construed as a prototype for Hodgson's latter Art Deco projects. Indeed, many of the stylistic elements employed in the design of the Forest Service Building were revisited and expanded in these later works, including the use of Collegiate Gothic motifs and terra cotta bricks as building material. Perhaps even more important, as the first of Hodgson's public buildings to be financed by the government, the Forest Service building demonstrated to both Hodgson and to Ogden that landmark pieces of architecture could be constructed in the city with the assistance of federal monies.

Almost six years later, Hodgson and McClenahan acquired the commission to design the Ogden-Weber Municipal Building, which provided them with the means to begin work on a third, and final, important civic structure.⁵⁴ In April 1939, after months of delay, the pouring of the foundation took place. Construction on the project took over a year, and in the end yielded a bill of \$911,500, far surpassing the initial estimate of \$600,000. Fortunately, a history of good relations with the government and changes to federal law enabled the Public Works Administration to provide for \$410,175 (forty-three percent of the final cost). The remainder of the cost was split evenly between Ogden City and Weber County, both of which contributed \$271,246 to the project.⁵⁵



U.S. Forest Service Regional Office Building (constructed in 1934), 507 25th Street, date unknown. Photograph courtesy Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University.



Ogden-Weber Municipal Building (constructed in 1940), 2549 Washington Blvd., 2008.
Photograph courtesy Kevin Delaney.

In structure and style, Hodgson designed the Municipal Building to echo that of his earlier work. He said of his design, "It might be termed 'restrained contemporary design' with vertical lines emphasized and marked by the absence of horizontal accentuations."⁵⁶ Like its predecessors, the building was well received by the public, in spite of its inflated cost. During the dedication ceremony on October 29, 1937, Utah Governor Henry H. Blood expressed his confidence in the continuation of Ogden's civic prominence, citing that

“communities are judged by their public buildings and civic spirit,” both of which he found crystallized in the superiority of Ogden’s architecture.⁵⁷ The regional head of the PWA, Morgan M. Lewis, while concurring with Blood’s valuation, took especial care to note the contributions of the architects when he heralded the building as “a monument to the creative and public spirited activities of the architects, Hodgson and McClenahan”⁵⁸ Clearly, in the eyes of their contemporaries, Leslie Hodgson and Myrl McClenahan were far more than mere designers of buildings. In a very real way, they should be credited with inventing the public face of Ogden.

Hodgson’s Architectural Legacy

Within Ogden itself, the dominance of Hodgson’s architecture is evident. It takes little more than a quick drive through downtown to recognize this. To go shopping in central Ogden is to go shopping in one of Hodgson’s shops; to go to school in Ogden is to go to Hodgson’s school; and to visit local civic leaders is to visit them in Hodgson’s municipal building. One hardly needs to elaborate on the effect that such constant contact with one man’s work can have on the evolution of a community’s identity. Unquestionably, Leslie Hodgson continues to have vast local, and perhaps even regional, importance.

PWA Art Deco was not absent from Utah, but Ogden High was unique. Aside from the high school, Forest Service Regional Office Building, and the Ogden-Weber Municipal Building, other architects designed fourteen other Art Deco buildings in Utah during the 1930s, almost all of them partially funded by the Public Works Administration. Some of the best examples are the Morgan High School and Millard High School gyms, both of which were additions to the already existing high schools. Morgan Elementary and North Ogden Elementary are also examples of schools built in PWA Art Deco, but pale in comparison to the size and style of Ogden High’s exterior, the plasterwork over every door and the marble interior, and the ornate auditorium. Although many of these buildings employ the characteristic vertical massing of Art Deco, in terms of style, scale, and public prominence, Hodgson’s buildings stand alone. While the streamlined modernity of these smaller buildings may be said to have alluded to the style, Hodgson’s work truly embraced it.

Carla Breeze has argued that within the Art Deco movement are patterns of regional variation that use geographical motifs to build upon baseline forms. Certainly, it is reasonable to state that building projects necessarily adapted to the economic and aesthetic nuances of their environment. Breeze suggests that it is for this reason that American Art Deco exhibits such a wide array of stylistic contrasts: the inclusion of a building’s miniature in the art design of Northwestern skyscrapers, the use of iron grill work in Southern Spanish

Colonial styles, the prominence of steel in mid-Western industrial buildings, Native American influences on the colors and patterns in Southwestern structures; and the dominance of maritime allusions in California and the Pacific Northwest.⁵⁹ It is self-defeating to attempt to impose these themes on every building within a region, but it seems clear that certain trends are more localized than others. Interestingly, Breeze's assessment does not account for, or allude to, the American Intermountain West. We are to assume from Breeze's book that this region either had no noteworthy examples of Art Deco, or that the examples which do exist fail to rise above national uniformities and exhibit unique regional variations. In other words, on the map of American Art Deco, the Intermountain region has heretofore been perceived as being devoid of distinction. Hodgson's work, however, may represent a unique regional style. While it is true that the large majority of Art Deco architecture within the Intermountain region is relatively benign in terms of renown or innovation, certain notable exceptions (including the work of Hodgson and McClellahan) suggest that architects within the region deliberately attempted to meld regional themes with prototypical Art Deco elements.

Intermountain West architects building PWA structures appear to have drawn inspiration from the mountains that surrounded them. Like all Art Deco, Intermountain Art Deco draws heavily upon the verticality of the style, primarily through the use of pilasters and elongated metal frame windows. Spandrels exhibiting geometric lines and regional floral patterns intersperse windows, often terminating on upper floors in glazed terra cotta crenellations, as is sometimes found in Collegiate Gothic architecture. Typically, a vertical flat-roofed mass forms the center of a rigid symmetry, flanked by similar rectangular units of lesser height. The general effect of this design is highly reminiscent of a mountain peak, marked by earth tones, undulating corrugations, and a descending slope around a central promontory. The Collegiate Gothic crenellations, however, demonstrate an obvious regional pattern. Among the PWA buildings in Utah and Idaho, over half of them use the crenellations found at the peak of Ogden High School's roof, and the large majority of Art Deco buildings used them.⁶⁰

Given its status as Hodgson's greatest work, it is not surprising that Ogden High School is particularly evocative in the strength of its regional imagery. As the Utah Preservation Office notes, "The horizontal massing almost negates the vertical implications which are so characteristic of the Art Deco Style."⁶¹ In defiance of the general form, Hodgson designed the school asymmetrically, using an offset vertical mass as the focus of other rectangular masses of varying height. This design choice had clear functional implications, enabling the building to have a wide array of rooms mandated by a public school, but it also imbued the structure with a greater ability to reflect the backdrop of its

surroundings. When viewed from the southwest to the northeast, the building unmistakably mimics the contours of the Rocky Mountains behind it. Given that the main access to the school is from the southwest, and that all official photos of the school were taken from this angle, it seems unlikely that these similarities went unnoticed. Indeed, the record suggests that the precision of this imitation was deliberate on Hodgson's part. The initial plans called for the school to be built in an urban, centrally located part of the city; but in the summer of 1935, against the wishes of the public, the Ogden School Board voted to purchase ten acres of land at 28th and Harrison, a location much distanced from the city center and more rural in development. This nestled the school outside of urbanity underneath the Rocky Mountains. As soon as the property had been purchased, Hodgson completely redesigned his extant plans. His earlier designs (published in the *Ogden Standard Examiner*), although still featuring horizontal units, closely followed the symmetrical conventions of the Art Deco style. Especially noteworthy in these first plans is the total absence of variances in height, which caused the roof to appear level across the top.⁶² The Edward L. Bailey School in Jackson Mississippi, built from PWA funds, and also in Art Deco, is extremely similar to Hodgson's first design, but outside of the entrance, the roof never varies in height and has no crenellations. Furthermore, Eastern High (Baltimore Maryland), Northside Senior High (Ft. Worth, Texas), Senior High (Morrison, Pennsylvania), and Daniel Webster High (Tulsa, Oklahoma), were all designed in part by PWA funding and have a very similar Art Deco form, evidence that Hodgson's design was like that of other Art Deco schools through the country.

Hodgson's final design for Ogden High, however, appears to have peaks and valleys stretching across its mountain range-like structure. His changes appeared only after the location of the school had been changed, suggesting that he intended for the school and the mountains to be viewed together. Surely, it was in this spirit that Ogden Superintendent W. Karl Hopkins observed in 1937 that Ogden High "caught the rhythm of the Rockies."⁶³ A more regional interpretation of Art Deco can scarcely be imagined. It is because of these Intermountain regional identifiers that Hodgson's work, and others like it, can be seen as a new, and as of yet overlooked, regional variation of Art Deco. Ogden High, therefore, represents not only one of the many regional variations of Art Deco in the United States, it represents a region that was not heavily influenced by other trends in other regions, like the Southwest or the Pacific West.

Hodgson's national merit is further supported by the extreme cost of buildings he designed. At a final cost of \$1,200,000, Ogden High School was not only the first million dollar school to be built in Utah, but it was also one of the most expensive PWA-financed schools to be built in the entire nation.

Between 1933 and 1938, the PWA financed the construction of 5,989 secondary schools, of which only fifty-one (eight and one-half percent) cost over one million dollars. Almost all of these fifty-one schools were constructed in New York, Massachusetts, or California. Regionally, Ogden High School is almost completely without precedent. Consider, for example, George Washington High School in San Francisco (1937), which had a similar capacity and similar number of classrooms, yet cost almost one-third less than Ogden High; or even more telling, North Side Senior High School in Ft. Worth, Texas (1938), which cost almost two-thirds less. Furthermore, buildings of comparable costs to Ogden High tended to be much bigger, such as Eastern High School for Girls in Baltimore, Maryland (1938), which had almost double the amount of classrooms; or the massive 3,500,000 cubic foot Western High School in Detroit, Michigan (1937). Ogden High was smaller in some cases, but Hodgson spared no expense in his ornate designs in the marble floors, and Art Deco designs in the entryways, auditorium, and library. When one realizes that the PWA aided in building only twenty-four new nonfederal buildings in Utah, while funding 221 in California, 120 in New York, 126 in Pennsylvania, and 119 in Texas, one begins to realize that Ogden, Utah, was indeed an unlikely spectacle.

The people of Ogden did not enter into architectural projects of this scale blindly. They knew full well the price that would be demanded of them, and many publically denounced Hodgson's buildings as too lavish and beyond justification. It was only through the stalwart encouragement of prominent civic leaders that funding could be secured; and in the economic climate of the Great Depression, funding was never an easy thing to come by, particularly when it meant new taxes. Given these conditions, it would not have been surprising if Hodgson's proposals had been turned back at the door. What is surprising is not that they gained public favor, but that they did so almost unilaterally. The *Ogden Standard Examiner* reported on May 22, 1935 that the city had voted to approve the sale of a ten-year, two-and-a-half percent interest bond, by a total of 1,469 for, and 291 against (about a five-to-one ratio). Considering that the issue of a bond election had been raised and defeated only two years previous, attitudes on the project had clearly changed, and had done so dramatically.

It is extraordinarily difficult to trace the driving forces behind public opinion, but in this instance a likely candidate appears to have been Harman W. Peery, who was elected mayor in 1934. By all accounts, Mayor Peery was a showman, a cowboy, and a shameless promoter of Ogden's interests. In 1937, early in his political career, he expressed an interest in reintroducing Ogden to the national stage through the creation of a Pioneer Days festival, celebrating the Mormon migration to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Conceiv-

ing of the festival on a grand scale, Peery created a guest list to match, inviting the governors of all forty-eight states, Franklin Roosevelt, and famous celebrities like Abbot and Costello to attend.⁶⁴ He had such great success in attracting national figures that he claimed it had become “nationally known” and believed Ogden to have become a nationally significant city.⁶⁵ Politically, Peery considered it his duty to restore the city to its rightful place as “Junction City,” the bustling and progressive center of transcontinental commerce. Like Hodgson, Peery considered the building environment to be critical to this transformation, and whole heartedly embraced the vision of a modern Ogden. As Peery expressed in 1935, it was partly on this platform that he campaigned for office, noting that “in my pre-election pledges for mayor of Ogden city, I endorsed the building of a new high school for Ogden. While this was some months ago, I am strongly convinced that such an improvement is a necessity in order for us to maintain the *national* standard of our education.”⁶⁶ The strength and frequency of Peery’s appeals, combined with those of the Ogden School Board, appear to have won the public to their side of the issue, thus making way for the school’s construction. Importantly, however, Peery appears to have seen construction of the high school as a crucial step in the revivification of Ogden as a city of national importance.

Admittedly, intent is a poor basis upon which to judge significance. Surely most budding artists consider their work to be important and ground-breaking, but only some truly are. On these grounds it is somewhat inappropriate to claim that Ogden High School—and by association Leslie Hodgson—has national significance merely because it was built to have such. Certainly, Hodgson’s work may have appeared significant in his own time without seeming significant in our own. Thus, if intent was the only measure upon which to determine Hodgson’s worth, he might well be labeled no more than a man of local importance. However, as I have hopefully demonstrated, Hodgson’s work is rife with historical value.

The U.S. Forest Service Building, Ogden High School, and the Ogden-Weber Municipal Building are without question the premiere examples of Art Deco in the state of Utah, and arguably in the entire Intermountain West region; so much so that one is hard pressed to find other buildings against which to compare them. As Peter Goss, has pointed out, if someone wants to find Art Deco in Utah, “You have to drive up to Ogden.”⁶⁷ The stylistic quality of these buildings would not be out of place in the wealthy suburbs of Los Angeles or Boston, but in Northern Utah, the casual passerby cannot help but feel that he or she is observing something distinctly out of the ordinary. This sensation is not the work of coincidence. Hodgson specifically designed these buildings to become lasting landmarks and spectacles. Like many of his peers, Hodgson maintained a vision of Ogden as an ever-expanding and ever-relevant “Junc-

tion City.” As such, he considered it his duty to provide the city with a face commensurate with its position as a present, but also future, hub of national commerce and tourism.

Notes

1. See Peter L. Goss, “The Prairie School Influence in Utah,” *The Prairie School Review* 12, no. 1 (1975): 5–22.
2. Lou Homer, interview by Michael H. MacKay, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2003, typescript, n. p.; also Teddy Fullmer, “The Hodgsons,” unpublished manuscript, Stewart Library Special Collections, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah; Oliver Hodgson, *Memoirs*, copy in possession of the author; and Rachel Emma Woolley Simons, *Journal*, copy in possession of the author.
3. R. L. Polk, *Salt Lake City Directory*, 1899; see also Hodgson, *Memoirs*, 6.
4. Fullmer, “The Hodgsons,” 2; Michael Crouch, interview by Michael H. MacKay, Bountiful, Utah, 2004.
5. Fullmer, “The Hodgsons,” 5.
6. Spiro Kostof, ed., *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 301–10. The first architectural programs were established at MIT (1868), Cornell University (1871), and the University of Illinois (1873).
7. See Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (New York: Reinhold, 1960): 59–102.
8. Goss, “The Prairie School Influence in Utah,” 18–19.
9. Fullmer, *The Hodgsons*, 5; Goss, “The Prairie School Influence in Utah,” 1–23.
10. McCoy, *Five California Architects*, 63–64.
11. A historical building survey of Ogden credits Hodgson as the architect for the Scowcroft Warehouse. Teddy Fullmer reported that Robert Hodgson, Leslie’s son and partner, stated his father designed the building.
12. J. A. Smith and Leslie S. Hodgson, *Architecture of Ogden: J. A. Smith and Leslie S. Hodgson, Architects, 1906–07* (n. p., 1908).
13. Utah State Historical Society, Utah Historic Sites Inventory, Historic Preservation Research Office, Eccles Historic District, 1.
14. *Ibid.*, 3.
15. See Sterling D. Sessions and Gene A. Sessions, *A History of Utah International: From Construction to Mining* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005).
16. John Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms 1600–1945* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 3.
17. Goss, “The Prairie School Influence in Utah,” 19–21.
18. *Ibid.*, 18.
19. Utah State Historical Society, Eccles Historic District, 11.
20. *Ibid.*, 9.
21. *Ibid.*, 8.
22. John Sillito and Sarah Langsdon, *Ogden Images of America* (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 63.
23. Noble Warrum, *Utah Since Statehood: Historical and Biographical*, vol. 3 (Chicago: S. J. Clark Publishing), 381.
24. McClenahan first worked for Hodgson in 1912 before leaving for military service

at Camp Mills and Camp Fremont, but later returned as a partner after his discharge from the army in 1919.

25. See Jean-Marcel Humbert and Clifford Price, *ImhotepToday: Egyptianizing Architecture* (London: UCL Press, Institute of Archaeology, 2003).

26. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, Special Supplement, January 12, 1997, 15.

27. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, July 2, 1924, 4. Grauman's Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood is a good example.

28. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, July 4, 1924, 10.

29. Bruce Bergstrom, "Peery's Egyptian Theatre," unpublished manuscript, 10, copy in possession of the author.

30. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, July 2, 1924, 8.

31. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, July 4, 1924, 1.

32. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, July 2, 1924, 1.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. National Register for Historic Places, Nomination Form, Bigelow-Ben Lomond Hotel, 3.

36. *Ibid.*, 1.

37. *Ibid.*, Item #7, 1.

38. Fullmer, "The Hodgsons," 1.

39. Dean L. May, *Utah: A People's History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987) 177.

40. "Ogden's Million Dollar High School," *The Utah Educational Review* 31 no. 2 (1937): 61 also Carl W. Hopkins, "Ogden City Schools," *The Century Officer* 9 (July 1945): 9.

41. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, June 18, 1933, 1; June 21, 1933, 1.

42. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, May 19, 1935, 1; also Larry H. Malmgren, "A History of the WPA in Utah" (MA thesis, Utah State University, 1965), 16.

43. Chick Barnes, "Cowboy mayor brought Pioneer Days," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, Special Supplement, September 6, 2001.

44. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, May 19, 1935, 1.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Fullmer, "The Hodgson's," 8.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, September 5, 1982, 1E.

49. See Ogden High School Annual Yearbook, *Classicum* (1937), 170.

50. Lou Homer, Interview, n. p.

51. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, October 30, 1937, 8A.

52. "Ogden's Million Dollar High School," 61.

53. *Deseret News*, June 19, 1933, 1.

54. U.S. Department of the Interior, Nation Park Service, National Register for Historic Places Inventory, Nomination Form, Ogden Art Deco Buildings, 4.

55. *Ibid.*, 4.

56. National Register for Historic Places, Structure-Site Form, Ogden-Weber Municipal Building, Ogden, Utah, 2.

57. "Ogden High School," *Ogden Standard Examiner*, October 30, 1937, 8A.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Carla Breeze, *American Art Deco: Architecture and Regionalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003).

60. National Archives, Photographs Used in Photographic Report to the President,

“Survey of the Architecture of Complete Projects of the PWA,” compiled 1939, under Utah and Idaho.

61. Utah State Historical Society, Historic Preservation Research Office Form.

62. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, May 19, 1935, 1.

63. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, October 31 1937, 1.

64. Harmon W. Peery correspondence with U.S. governors, Stewart Library Special Collections.

65. Harmon W. Perry to Franklin D. Roosevelt, Stewart Library Special Collections.

66. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, May 20, 1935, 1.

67. *Ogden Standard Examiner*, January 28, 1996, 1E.