

## The Historic Gate at Brigham Young Academy Square

*L. Douglas Smoot*

During the long and arduous seven-year process (1994–2001) of preserving and reconstructing the Brigham Young Academy building located between 500 and 600 North on Provo’s University Avenue, we were aware that an ornamental gate had been erected at the southwest corner of the square. However, we were so concerned about having sufficient funds to complete the building preservation process that we did not seriously consider the idea of reinstalling the gate at that time.

The original gate was a gift from the graduating class of 1912. At that time, Provo’s north end did not include a substantial business or residential sector north of the Academy to justify a gate on the northwest corner, so only one gate was installed. The white oolitic limestone rock came from Sanpete County, a gift of Peter C. Peterson. The same stone was used for the Manti Temple and the Maeser Building on Temple Hill. Architect J. E. Allen donated his services. The total cost was about \$800, including the wrought iron fencing. By 1962, the gate was deteriorating and was removed.

In about 1999 I received a call from an acquaintance telling me that parts of the old gate were in an orchard near the LDS Pleasant View chapel, west of the Provo Temple. I found the parts, which included the granite foundation stones and the deteriorated round concrete spheres. These parts were given to Provo City but not used in the reconstruction. A few years ago, Provo Mayor Lewis K. Billings suggested that we consider reconstructing the original southwest gate, and at the same time erect a second gate on the northwest corner. In early 2003, I met with Mayor Billings, Library Director Gene Nelson, Provo Facility Services Director Dick Blackham, and MJSA architect Christina Phillips to consider this restoration process. A preliminary design

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L. DOUGLAS SMOOT ([dsmoot@iveracity.com](mailto:dsmoot@iveracity.com)) is professor emeritus of Chemical Engineering and dean emeritus of the College of Engineering and Technology at Brigham Young University. He is also an advisor to the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation.



and cost estimate were completed, and efforts to raise funds were approved. The privilege of fund raising was assigned to me.

The final architectural design was completed, and all required Provo City approvals were obtained by late 2003. The bids obtained in mid-2004 dictated that pre-cast concrete be used to reduce the total cost. The concrete is highly durable and blends well with the building concrete. A bid was approved in late 2004 from Child Enterprises of Springville, Utah, the same firm that did the outstanding preservation brick work on the restored Academy Building. Construction was initiated in late 2004. The total cost was \$61,000. (Interestingly, the difference between an \$800 original cost and \$30,500 current cost per gate is an average of four percent inflation per year for the intervening ninety-three years from 1912–2005). Dedicatory services for the newly installed gates were held on May 4, 2005.

A plaque on each gate captures and describes the original gate's history. Donors or their honorees are also acknowledged on the gate plaques. I express my appreciation to those who donated to this effort and to Provo City for their financial and manpower support to complete this project.

These massive, thirteen-feet-high ornamental gates on each corner of University Avenue represent a fitting capstone to the beautifully restored Brigham Young Academy building and Provo City Library at Academy Square.