

## **The BYU Law School Building A Short History**

On March 9, 1971 (forty years ago), LDS President Harold B. Lee announced the formation of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

The next month (April 1971), BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson sent a group of individuals to various recently constructed or remodeled law schools around the country. He wanted to have the building finished by the start of the law school's charter class in August 1973, twenty months later.

On July 31, 1971, on his last day in office, BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson signed the building's contract with Fetzer & Fetzer, the architects who designed the J. Reuben Clark Building. (These were the same architects who designed the Ogden and Provo Utah temples, which were dedicated in early 1972.)

Then, BYU President Dallin H. Oaks delayed construction on the building until input was possible from the law school's first dean, Rex E. Lee, who was selected on Nov. 9, 1971, and initial faculty, who were announced on August 21, 1972 (Woodruff J. Deem, Bruce C. Hafen, Carl S. Hawkins, Edward L. Kimball, David Lloyd, Dallin H. Oaks, C. Keith Rooker, and Dale A. Whitman). A major change made in the plans was to expand the law library in the north half of the building from 100,000 to 200,000 volumes.

The floor plans and architectural rendering here were done in 1972.\* Around the same time, temporary quarters for the first two years of law school classes (Aug. 1973-April 1975) were being remodeled further south of campus at the former St. Francis [Catholic] School (around 300 North 900 East, Provo). Library materials and study tables went in the gym while the nuns' quarters became professor offices.

On May 1, 1973 (Law Day), the JRCB ground-breaking was held, with Dean Rex E. Lee, BYU President Dallin H. Oaks, and LDS Apostle Ezra Taft Benson, all in a Caterpillar front-end loader to break the asphalt in the Wilkinson Center parking lot. Former BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson gave the opening prayer, after which Lee, Oaks and Benson spoke briefly.

Law school classes at St. Francis, nicknamed "St. Reubens," began in August 1973, after an initial opening ceremony in the Pardoe Theater in the Harris Fine Arts Center on campus on August 27, 1973.

The building was finished in summer 1975, and dedicated on Sept. 5, 1975 by Marion G. Romney, then Second Counselor in the LDS First Presidency. The dedication ceremonies were attended by LDS President Spencer W. Kimball, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Assoc. Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.

Later, the law library was remodeled and expanded in 1995-1997 and named the Howard W. Hunter Law Library. LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the addition on March 21, 1997.

\*Plans are courtesy of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.