

# Mormons meet at new

By LLOYD D. BROWN  
Sun Cities Independent

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints no longer have to drive to Peoria and other parts of the Valley to attend weekly worship services.

A Sun City building that once served as a place for people to store their money has been purchased by the church and now serves as a place for people to store their faith.

The approximately 450 Sun Cities area members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moved into their new facility at 108th Avenue and Windsor in early May.

The remodeled building also houses the church's Peoria region's family history research center.

According to Sun City Ward Bishop Blaine Bradshaw, for many years church members traveled to Peoria on Sunday mornings for services.

About a year ago, the main church in Salt Lake City bought the former bank building from the Resolution Trust Company and put it through a major remodeling.

Mr. Bradshaw says a Mormon Church building was not originally planned for Sun City.

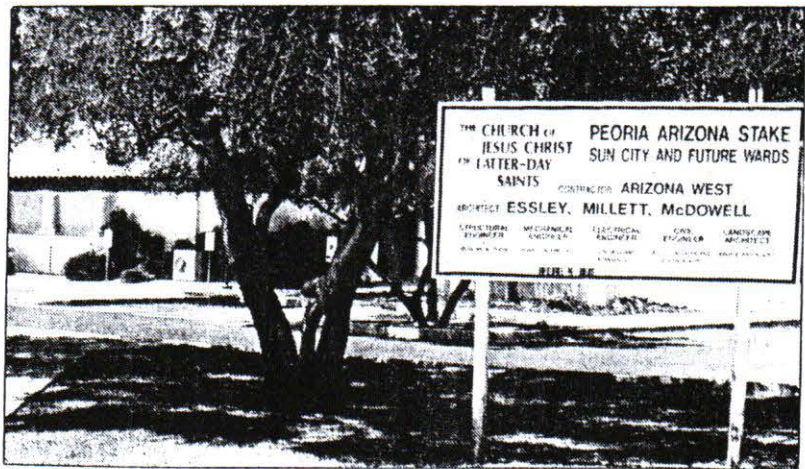
"As long as we could meet in our other building we were fine," says Mr. Bradshaw. "When the other wards got bigger, we needed more space."

Mr. Bradshaw says Sunday services are about three hours long with an hour for worship services, an hour for Sunday school and another hour for service group meetings.

The new church building will not only be for Mormons. Mr. Bradshaw says the new family research center often is used by more non-Mormon's than actual church members.

With a collection of computers, microfiche and other resources, people can trace their family trees back several generations.

## Sun City site



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has chosen Sun City as the site of its newest church. About 435 residents of the Sun Cities area attend the church.

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**BLAINE BRADSHAW**  
Sun City Ward Bishop

# Sun City Mormons get local church

By BRUCE ELLISON  
Staff writer

SUN CITY — The Sun City Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints finally has its own house of worship.

The Mormons, who have about 450 members in the Sun Cities and Youngtown, had been meeting at a building in Peoria for many years, said Colonel Vause, a retired bishop of the Sun City Ward, who led the efforts last year to get a church building nearer to home.

Members of the Sun City church first attended services May 14, though the new church has not yet been formally dedicated. The site is at 108th Avenue and Coggins Drive, just south of Grand Avenue.

The building, Vause said, is a former MeraBank branch office that has undergone extensive remodeling to be used for worship services and to accommodate the relocated Family History Center, a genealogical library.

The 8,500 square-foot building has parking for 144 cars.

Blaine Bradshaw, a Sun City West resident who is the current bishop, said his flock "had been looking forward for some time to having a building we could call our own.

"We're happy to be in it now," he said.

Mormons in Sun City and Youngtown didn't have a

ward, or local church district, until 1979, Vause said.

Services initially were held in the Fairway Recreation Center, then later at two existing churches in Peoria, the retired bishop said.

But both churches have been outgrown, and the Sun City location offers better accommodations and more space, church officials said. The Peoria ward has about 700 members.

The Mormon Church was organized in 1830 by Joseph Smith, who led the church followers westward to escape persecution. The denomination, later headed by Brigham Young, eventually settled in Utah. Salt Lake City remains its world headquarters. The denomination claims about 4.5 million members nationwide, with Utah, California, Idaho and Arizona hosting the highest number of Mormon adherents.

When the Sun City ward was established in 1979, Bishop Vause said, it had about 225 members. That number has doubled in 16 years, "with most of that growth coming in the last few years."

Services are at 10 a.m. each Sunday. Traditionally, the first Sunday of each month is reserved for what Vause called a "fast and testimony meeting" in which members speak their minds on topics of concern, or explain how their religion has affected their lives.

## Mormons open Family History Center in Sun City



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Rex Wiant of Sun City West looks for the brother of his great-grandfather who migrated from Iowa to Colorado. He's working on a computer in the Church of Latter-day Saints Sun City building, 108th Avenue and Coggins Drive.

By BRUCE ELLISON  
Staff writer

SUN CITY — The Mormon Family History Center in Sun City drew more than two dozen genealogical researchers when it opened to the public Tuesday.

The center, which had been in Peoria, houses computerized family history records, computers to access them, research books and microfilm and microfiche readers.

It also provides access to the genealogy records of the Family History Library run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, said center director Joanne Janson.

The genealogical research center is in the Mormons' new Sun City Ward church building at 108th Avenue and Coggins Drive, just south of Grand Avenue. The church serves about 450 members who had been attending services in Peoria or Glendale. Its first services were May 14.

The Family History Center is open to the public free of charge. Non-Mormons are always welcome, Janson said.

In fact, on Tuesday, many of those researching their family trees — and even some of the volunteers staffing the center — were not Mormon.

One visitor was Rex Wiant of Sun City West, a retired highway engineer from Ames, Iowa, who was searching a computer for records from Colorado for information on a little-known great uncle.

"My wife and I did some of this family background checking maybe 20 years ago," Wiant said as he paused in his computer search. "After we retired, we decided to revisit it."

Wiant, who had used a computer in his work, said it wasn't that difficult for him to operate one at the center.

For those who are less sure of what they are doing, or how to search the records, volunteers are on duty to help, also at no charge.

Materials from the library may be checked out for minimal fees.

The Mormon family history center is located only a few blocks from the research library in Youngtown run by the Sun Cities Genealogical Society. Willi Waltrip, a member of the

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# Computer files on tap in center

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Sun Cities group, was among the volunteers at the Mormon facility Tuesday.

Her club, with about 600 members, has more research books than the new Mormon center, Waltrip said, but the Mormons have more up-to-date computerized records and census materials.

The two groups will work closely together, Janson and Waltrip agreed.

Genealogical research can be catching, Janson said. "People often get caught up in this and spend years at it, discovering all sorts of fascinating things.

"It's not just a hobby," she added. "It can be wonderful. It becomes a great love."

Because Mormon doctrine puts great store in locating and identifying ancestors for religious reasons, the Latter-day Saints operates an ex-

tensive genealogical reference service. It always has shared that research with the public, said Terry Brown, a spokesman for the church's Peoria Stake, an administrative district that includes several wards.

There are several other Family History Centers scattered around the Valley, from Buckeye to Glendale to Phoenix, Mesa, Chandler and elsewhere.

The nation's biggest collection of genealogical materials is in Salt Lake City, Brown said.

The Mormons' Sun City Family History Center, 13014 N. 108th Ave., is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. It also is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

The center's telephone number is 974-2749.