Lengthy articles in the Washington Star on the 15th, and in the Washington Post on the 16th of September reported that Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church has purchased the Mormon "Washington Chapel" at 16th and Columbia Road in the District of Columbia.

The Latter-day Saints originally acquired the site for the chapel in 1924. Ground was broken in December 1930, and the cornerstone was laid by Senator Reed Smoot in April 1932. Constructed during the world's worst economic crisis, the chapel cost $1.3 million. It was built of native Utah marble quarried from Mt. Nebo. A paleontologist at the Smithsonian Institution called it the most interesting geological specimen in building material he had ever known. The fossils embedded in the marble disclose its underwater origin, although the Mt. Nebo quarry is 9,000 feet above sea level.

The chapel was dedicated November 5, 1933, by Church President Heber J. Grant. It served as a symbol of the Church in the nation's capital for 43 years before being abandoned two years ago. Local church leaders felt the building was too costly to refurbish. It was the only Mormon chapel within the District of Columbia.

According to the report in the Post, the Unification Church acquired the chapel from Columbia Road Recording Studios, a Washington corporation. The firm's president, Mitchell NewDelman, said he had contracted in April 1976 to purchase the chapel from the Mormon Church, but because of zoning and other difficulties, including a restrictive covenant in the deed, he was unable to reach a final settlement.

According to the report in the Post, "NewDelman said on September 9 he formally purchased the chapel building from the Mormons for $300,000 and the same day, sold the building to the Unification Church for $475,000."

Neil A. Salonen, president of the Unification Church, was reported to say that Rev. Moon, who is accepted by his followers as the new messiah, had "sanctified" the building on September 12. The chapel will be used as a training center to initiate new church members, according to Salonen.

The Unification Church, said the Star report, "has been a target of inquiry by the House International Organizations subcommittee," and has been the "center of numerous court cases involving church members and their families." Parents of Moon's converts claim that their children have been victims of brainwashing and mind control. Some parents have kidnapped their children and have had them "deprogrammed."

The acquisition of the important Washington D.C. landmark will probably affect the Church's image there. According to one member close to the media, "Even though the stories are clear that the Church did not sell the chapel to the Unification Church, for years to come the building will always be referred to as the 'former Mormon chapel.'"

The promoters of World Gratitude Day honored the Tabernacle Choir on September 21 for "its contribution to a better life." Dr. Jerold D. Ottley, choir conductor, accepted the award at a luncheon honoring several religious organizations for their positive influence.

Edna Fuerth Lemie, founder and president of World Gratitude Day, Inc., said the choir has been a positive influence on the people of the world for many years.

An unusual kidnapping case involving a Mormon elder serving in the London South mission and his former girlfriend was carried on the AP and UPI wire services during late September and early October.

According to the wire reports, Kirk M. Anderson, 21, of Orem, Utah, disappeared on September 15 from the village of Epsom, twenty miles south of London, while in the company of an "investigator" who called himself Bob Bosner. The disappearance set off a two-day nationwide search by Scotland Yard September 16.

Anderson was released unharmed on September 17. He had been held, handcuffed and shackled, in a rented vacation cottage on an isolated farm near the town of Okehampton, Devon County, England, for three days until he was covered with a blanket, taken to a house in central London, and released.

Detectives picked up three English suspects during the manhunt but released them after questioning. Then on September 19, police arrested Joyce McKinney, 27, of Minneapolis, North Carolina, and Keith Joseph May, 25, of Los Angeles, California. Police said that the two Americans had arrived in England in August, sometimes identifying themselves as husband and wife and using a variety of assumed names. They were formally charged on September 21 with kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, and possessing an imitation firearm with intent to commit an offense.

The press and TV coverage emphasized the bizarre aspects of the case. According to their reports Anderson had been...
sent to England to avoid the ‘harassment’ of McKinney, whose affections he had rejected. He had been physically assaulted, his car’s tires had been slashed, and he had been run off the road several times in the two years before his mission. Local Utah TV stations attempted to interview Anderson’s family and neighbors and showed footage of individuals refusing to be interviewed along with their statements to reporters about Anderson’s background. News stories referred to McKinney as a “beauty queen” because of her entry in the 1973 and 1974 Miss Provo pageants. The Daily Universe, BYU’s student newspaper, reported that McKinney had been a graduate studying theater in 1972 and 1973, and that in a 1973 production of The Glass Menagerie, she had been (quoting an earlier review) “appropriately bash and pathetic, although occasionally inconsistent as Amanda Wingfield, the desperate mother.”

McKinney and May have appeared before Epsom magistrates weekly since under British law they cannot be held for more than a week without being brought before magistrates. In the October 7 hearing, which lasted only two minutes, McKinney was “hustled sobbing and screaming into court,” according to a wire dispatch.

Neither of the suspects has entered a plea, and no trial date has been set.

Church spokesman Jerry P. Cahill said Anderson’s mission is not expected to be terminated. “Right now he is a London South missionary,” he said.

Three BYU films have received media attention recently. “The Mailbox,” the latest film by Dr. David K. Jacobs, film producer-director with the BYU Film Production Department, was shown during October to the National Association of Postmasters and the National Consortium of University Film Centers.

The 24-minute production stars 84-year-old Lethe Tatge of Midway, Utah. She portrays an elderly woman who is continually disappointed to find her mailbox empty when she goes out to it each day. The story emphasizes family communication, especially with the aging. Through their acts of kindness a next door neighbor (Rebecca Glade of Salt Lake City) and the woman’s daughter (Rachel Jacobs of North Hollywood) make life a little more bearable.

Two other BYU films represented the United States in a world peace festival of young teenagers in Moscow, Russia. “Cipher in the Snow” and “John Baker’s Last Race,” both of which have received numerous other national and international awards, were screened in English. Miriam Morton, internationally known author, translator, and lecturer, selected the BYU films, the only U.S. films shown, for the festival. Viewers were aided by a simultaneous translation into Russian and by abstracts prepared in English, Russian and French.

The trial on the “Mormon Will” of the late Howard Hughes was again postponed on October 1. The new date for the beginning of what Attorney Harold Rhoden has called “jungle warfare” is November 7.

The number of stories in the media on the disputed document was reduced sharply after September 12 when Judge Keith Hayes issued a gag order prohibiting attorneys from talking to the press about the case. But when a September 20 UPI dispatch reported that prospective jurors would have to specify their religious preference, the Church’s interest in the will as a potential beneficiary again made headlines. (Mormons will not be barred from the jury, however.) Church sources were also quoted as saying that no part of the court costs would be paid by the Church.

Melvin Dummar, named a beneficiary in the will, had his Ogden Utah, shoplifting charge dismissed September 15.

The Kirtland Temple was designated as a United States Historic Landmark in a public ceremony on Sunday, July 17. Present were officials of the National Park Service, Department of Interior, and of the RLDS Church, which owns the structure. Designation of national historic sites is limited to landmarks that commemorate significant events or places in American history and that have value to the nation as a whole and not just a state or locality.

According to the latest ALMA newsletter, Church-owned Bonneville Productions has recorded a four-hour radio show, “Christmas and Then Some,” which will be released for syndication. The program was produced by Jim Gartner and includes Christmas music, vignettes, and interviews.

Disdissents were again attracted to the Church’s General Conference in October. Douglas Wallace, who attempted to ordain a black man to the priesthood and then disrupted General Conference in 1976 in an attempt to put President Spencer W. Kimball on trial, was allowed on Temple Square and held a news conference during October conference.

Wallace had previously been barred from Temple Square under a restraining order issued this summer by Third District Judge Stewart Hanson, Jr. The Church asked that Wallace be permanently barred from the area, which is open to the public, but succeeded only in gaining a restriction that prohibited him from disrupting the meetings.

Another dissident, Byron Marchant of Salt Lake City, who opposes the Church’s position on blacks and the priesthood, interrupted President N. Eldon Tanner during what the press called “the perfunctory reading and sustaining of general authority names” to register a “no” vote. Marchant reportedly called, “Did you note my vote,” from the north balcony of the Tabernacle. The dissident had earlier called for supporters to join in a “peaceful march” around Temple Square, but later called off plans for the demonstration.