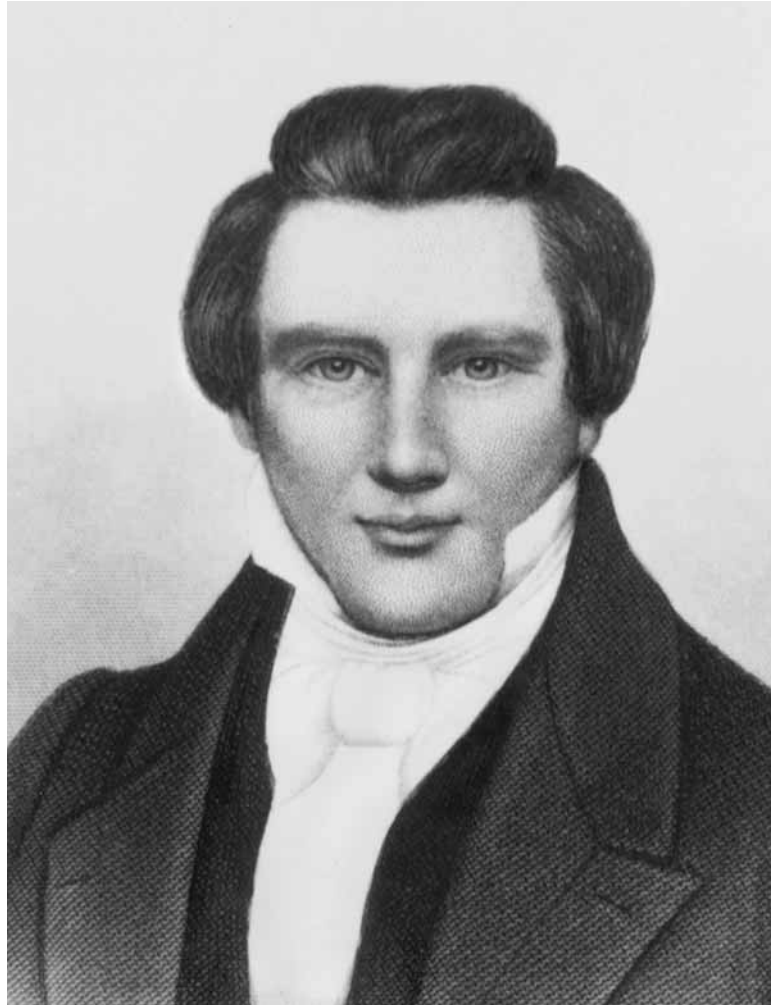


Joseph Smith

FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH



Engraving by Frederick Hawkins Piercy

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH SMITH

Age Events

- He was born 23 December 1805 in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith.
- 7 He endured surgery on his leg—diseased bone was removed (winter, 1812–13).
 - 14 He saw and talked with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (spring, 1820).
 - 17 Moroni visited him and told him about the Nephite record (21–22 Sept. 1823; Moroni visited him annually thereafter, 1824–27).
 - 21 He married Emma Hale (18 Jan. 1827), obtained the plates (22 Sept. 1827), and began the translation (Dec. 1827).
 - 22 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon were lost (June 1828).
 - 23 He and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist (15 May 1829); they received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James, and John (probably between 16–28 May 1829); the Three Witnesses were shown the plates (June 1829).
 - 24 The Book of Mormon was published (first copies were available on 26 Mar. 1830); the Church was organized (6 Apr. 1830).
 - 25 He moved his family to Kirtland, Ohio (1831); he dedicated the temple site at Independence, Missouri (3 Aug. 1831).
 - 26 He was sustained as President of the high priesthood (25 Jan. 1833).
 - 27 The First Presidency was organized (18 Mar. 1832).
 - 28 He led Zion's Camp from Ohio to Missouri (May–June 1834).
 - 29 The members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (14 Feb. 1835) and the Seventy (28 Feb. 1835) were called and ordained; the Doctrine and Covenants was accepted as scripture (17 Aug. 1835).
 - 30 He dedicated the Kirtland Temple (27 Mar. 1836); Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to him and Oliver Cowdery and restored priesthood keys (3 Apr. 1836).
 - 32 He was imprisoned in Liberty Jail (1838).
 - 33 He directed the Church from Liberty Jail (Dec. 1838–Apr. 1839); the building of Nauvoo was begun (1839); the members of the Church gathered to Nauvoo and commenced the building of the area (1839).
 - 35 Work began on the Nauvoo Temple; the immigration of European Church members was planned (1841).
 - 36 The book of Abraham was published (1 Mar. 1842); the Relief Society was organized (17 Mar. 1842); he prophesied the Saints' removal to the Rocky Mountains (6 Aug. 1842).
 - 37 He recorded revelation on eternal marriage (12 July 1843).
 - 38 He became a candidate for president of the United States of America (Jan. 1844); he and his brother Hyrum were martyred at Carthage Jail (27 June 1844).

President Spencer W. Kimball, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote:

“When clouds of error need dissipating and spiritual darkness needs penetrating and heavens need opening, a little infant is born. Just a few scattered neighbors in a hilly region in the backwoods [of Vermont] even know that Lucy [Mack Smith] is expecting. There is no prenatal care or nurses; no hospital, no ambulance, no delivery room. Babies live and die in this rough environment and few know about it.

“Another child for Lucy! No trumpets are sounded; no hourly bulletins posted; no pictures taken; no notice is given; just a few friendly community folk pass a word along. It’s a boy. Little do the brothers and sisters dream that a prophet is born to their family” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 324–25).

Joseph Smith Jr. was born on 23 December 1805 to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith. These faithful parents taught their children religious truths. Lucy especially encouraged her children to study the Bible. Joseph Sr., though suspicious of traditional churches, had a strong belief in God. Both parents descended from generations of ancestors who sought to live by correct religious principles.



Joseph Smith Sr., father of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was born 12 July 1771 in Topsfield, Massachusetts.



Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was born 8 July 1776 in Gilsun, New Hampshire.

Joseph Smith Jr. was a noble spirit, foreordained and tutored before he was born. He was raised a farm boy. During his early years his family moved often, trying to find a place to live where they could support themselves. Joseph worked with his family and suffered their hardships. They endured crop failure, land fraud, and betrayals in investment. Through it all, the Smith family played an important role in the restoration of the gospel in these latter days.

JOSEPH SMITH WAS A BOY OF COURAGE AND RESOLVE



Young Joseph Smith

Lucy Mack Smith wrote of the seven-year-old Joseph’s struggle with an unusually severe infection in his left leg, which afflicted him shortly after he recovered from typhoid fever:

“His leg immediately began to swell and he continued in the most excruciating pain for two weeks longer. During this time, I carried him in my arms nearly continually, soothing him and doing all that my utmost ingenuity could suggest to ease his sufferings, until nature was exhausted and I was taken severely ill myself.

“Then Hyrum, who was always remarkable for his tenderness and sympathy, desired that he might take my place. As he was a good, trusty boy, we let him do so, and, in order to make the task as easy for him as possible, we laid Joseph upon a low bed and Hyrum sat beside him, almost incessantly day and night, grasping the most painful part of the affected leg between his hands and, by pressing it closely, enabled the little sufferer the better to bear the pain which otherwise seemed almost ready to take his life” (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, eds. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor [1996], 73).



In 1811 the Smiths rented a farm in West Lebanon, New Hampshire. This home was identified as the Smiths’ residence. It was torn down in 1967.

Painting by Theodore Gorka

Photograph courtesy of Russell R. Rich

After several weeks and two unsuccessful attempts to reduce the swelling and drain the infection, a group of surgeons was consulted. Their recommendation was to amputate the leg, but Joseph's mother refused to allow it until they tried another operation. She wrote:

"The principal surgeon, after a moment's conversation, ordered cords to be brought to bind Joseph fast to the bedstead, but Joseph objected. When the doctor insisted that he must be confined, Joseph said decidedly, 'No, Doctor. I will not be bound. I can bear the process better unconfined.'

"Then,' said the doctor, 'will you take some wine? You must take something, or you can never endure the severe operation to which you must be subjected.'

"No,' answered the boy, 'I will not touch one particle of liquor, nor will I be tied down, but I will tell you what I will do. I will have my father sit on the bed close by me, and then I will do whatever is necessary to be done in order to have the bone taken out. But, Mother, I want you to leave the room. I know that you cannot endure to see me suffer so. Father can bear it. But you have carried me so much and watched over me so long, you are almost worn out.' Then, looking up into my face, his eyes swimming with tears, he said beseechingly, 'Now, Mother, promise me you will not stay, will you? The Lord will help me. I shall get through with it, so do leave me and go a way off, till they get through with it.' . . .

"The surgeons began operating by boring into the bone of his leg, first on one side of the affected part, then on the other side, after which they broke it loose with a pair of forceps or pincers. Thus, they took away nine large pieces of the bone. When they broke off the first piece, he screamed so loud with the pain of his leg that I could not forbear running to him, but as soon as I entered the room, he cried out, 'Oh, Mother! Go back! Go back! I do not want you to come in. I will tough it out, if you will go'" (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 74-75).

His recovery was slow, but young Joseph's leg eventually healed, leaving him with only an occasional slight limp.



Photograph by Jedd A. Clark

In 1816, Palmyra, New York, was a small agricultural village. When the Erie Canal was built through the area in 1822, the town became a prosperous trade center. This intersection is called the Four Corners and has a different church on each corner: Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist. The Presbyterian chapel was the first to be built, in 1832, one year after the Smiths had moved to Ohio. The others were completed by 1870.



(1) Wooded area known as the Sacred Grove, (2) location of the restored log home first built by the Smith family, (3) home started by Alvin Smith, (4) view of Palmyra village. The Church purchased the entire Smith farm, including the Sacred Grove area in 1907.

GOD THE FATHER AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, APPEARED TO THE BOY PROPHET



A typical camp meeting about 1830–35; drawing by A. Rider

There was much religious excitement in western New York in the early 1800s (see *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 2nd ed. [2000], 30–32). Young Joseph Smith, influenced by this fervor and concerned for his spiritual condition, was confused by the conflicting teachings. There were so many churches and opposing sects; each contended against the rest. Who was right? How could anyone know for sure? Joseph found answers to these questions in the spring of 1820 when he was visited by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:5–20.)



The Sacred Grove, near Palmyra, New York

When President Harold B. Lee visited the area we call the Sacred Grove on 28 July 1973, he said, “I know this is the place where the Father and the Son came” (in Dell Van Orden, “Pres. Lee Visits Hill Cumorah,” *Church News*, 4 Aug. 1973, 3).

ADDITIONAL DETAILS FROM JOSEPH SMITH’S 1832 ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST VISION

During his ministry, the Prophet Joseph Smith shared his experience of the First Vision many times. He wrote the account in Joseph Smith—History, in the Pearl of Great Price, in 1838 (see Joseph Smith—History 1:2).

In an earlier account he gave some additional details of his concern about which church was right and about the troubling questions that eventually led him to ask God: “At about the age of twelve years my mind



“When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

became seriously impressed with regard to the all-important concerns for the welfare of my immortal soul, which led me to searching the scriptures, believing, as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. Thus, applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly, for I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and godly conversation agreeable

to what I found contained in that sacred depository. This was a grief to my soul. Thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind, the contentions and divisions, the wickedness and abominations, and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind. My mind became exceedingly distressed, for I became convinced of my sins, and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatized from the true and living faith. And there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. And I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world, for I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday, today, and forever, that he was no respecter of persons, for he was God. For I looked upon the sun—the glorious luminary of the earth—and also the moon, rolling in their majesty through the heavens, and also the stars shining in their courses, and the earth also upon which I stood, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters, and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength of beauty. . . . And when I considered upon these things, my heart exclaimed, ‘Well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God.’ My heart exclaimed, ‘All these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power, a being who maketh laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds, who filleth eternity, who was and is and will be from all eternity to eternity.’ And when I considered all these things and that that being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth, therefore I cried

unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy. And the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord, in the [15th] year of my age, a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day came down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of God. And the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying, ‘Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments. Behold, I am the Lord of glory.

I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life. Behold, the world lieth in sin at this time, and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me.

And mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and apostles. Behold and lo, I come quickly, as is written of me, in the cloud, clothed in the glory of my Father.’ And my soul was filled with love, and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the heavenly vision” (Joseph Smith, “Kirtland Letter Book” [MS, LDS Historian’s Library], 1829–1835, 1–6, cited in Dean C. Jessee, “The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, Spring 1969, 279–80; the original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar have been altered to conform to contemporary usage).



Country road to Cumorah

Photograph by Don O. Thorpe

JOSEPH SMITH WAS PERSECUTED AND RIDICULED FOR HIS WITNESS THAT GOD HAD SPOKEN TO HIM

Revelation, so long absent, had returned, but Joseph Smith’s sincere claim of new revelation incurred immediate and seeming universal wrath (see Joseph Smith—History 1:21–26). Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet’s mother, wrote that from the time of the First Vision in the spring of 1820 “until the twenty-first of September, 1823, Joseph continued, as usual, to labor with his

father, and nothing during this interval occurred of very great importance—though he suffered every kind of opposition and persecution from the different orders of religionists” (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 101).

JOSEPH SMITH REMAINED HUMBLE



Painting by Dale Kibourn

“I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

The heavens had opened and Joseph Smith had seen the Father and the Son. Instead of claiming superior holiness and encouraging the adulation of the masses, he wrote:

“I continued to pursue my common vocations in life . . . , all the time suffering severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious, because I continued to affirm that I had seen a vision.

“. . . Having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me—I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament” (Joseph Smith—History 1:27–28).

Some enemies of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Church have tried to infer from Joseph’s honest

evaluation of himself that he was not worthy of his calling. He gave the following response to such critics:

“During this time, as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies; but as my accusers are, and have been forward to accuse me of being guilty of gross and outrageous violations of the peace and good order of the community, I take the occasion to remark that, though as I have said above, ‘as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies.’ I have not, neither can it be sustained, in truth, been guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men; and those imperfections to which I allude, and for which I have often had occasion to lament, were a light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation.

“. . . I do not, nor never have, pretended to be any other than a man ‘subject to passion,’ and liable, without the assisting grace of the Savior, to deviate from that perfect path in which all men are commanded to walk” (*History of the Church*, 1:10).

MANY ANGELS VISITED JOSEPH SMITH

In 1823 the angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith and commenced to teach about the Restoration and the role he was to play in it (see Joseph Smith—History 1:29–50). As the Restoration unfolded, the Prophet was instructed by divers (various) angels and ancients who had held priesthood keys, “all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood” (D&C 128:21).



The heavenly messenger Moroni appeared to the 17-year-old Joseph Smith during the night of 21 September 1823.

Painting by Tom Lovell

JOSEPH TOLD HIS FATHER ABOUT MORONI’S VISIT

The Prophet Joseph Smith’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote about what happened after Moroni’s visit:

“The next day Joseph, his father, and his brother Alvin were reaping in the field together. Suddenly, Joseph stopped and seemed to be in a deep study for some time. Alvin hurried him, saying, ‘Joseph, you must keep to work or we shall not get our task done.’ Joseph worked again diligently, then stopped in the

same way a second time. When his father saw that Joseph was very pale, he urged him to go to the house and tell his mother that he was sick. He went a short distance till he came to a beautiful green under an apple tree. Here he lay down on his face, for he was so weak he could go no farther.

He was here but a short time, when the messenger whom he had seen the night before came to him again and said, ‘Why did you not tell your father what I told you?’ Joseph said he was afraid his father would not believe him. ‘He will believe every word you say to him,’ said the angel.

“Joseph then promised to do as he was told by the angel and rose up and returned to the field, where he had left my husband and Alvin. . . . Joseph rehearsed all that had passed between him and the angel the previous night. Having heard this account, his father charged him not to fail in attending strictly to the instruction which he had received from this heavenly messenger” (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 108–9; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:48–54).

HE RECEIVED A FATHER’S BLESSING



Joseph Smith Sr. supported and encouraged his son Joseph to perform all the assignments given by the heavenly messengers.

Painting by William Whitaker

Joseph Smith Sr. gave his son unqualified support when Joseph told him about his visions and assignments from heavenly messengers. Some of young Joseph’s support came as fatherly warnings to be very careful not to fail in his important mission. The Prophet’s father learned by revelation that Joseph would continue faithful and live to fulfill his

mission completely. In his dying blessing to Joseph he said: “Joseph, my son, you are called to a high and holy calling. You are called to do the work of the Lord. Now, hold out faithful and you will be blessed, and your family shall be blessed, and your children after you. You shall live to finish your work.’

“At this Joseph cried out, ‘Oh, Father, shall I?’

“Yes,’ said his father, ‘you shall. You shall live to lay out all the plan of all the work that God requires at your hand. Be faithful to the end. This is my dying blessing on your head in the name of Jesus. I also confirm your former blessing upon you, for it shall be fulfilled. Even so. Amen’” (quoted in Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 434).

HEAVENLY TUTORS WERE SENT TO JOSEPH

President Joseph F. Smith wrote: “Joseph Smith was an unlearned youth, so far as the learning of the world is concerned. He was taught by the angel Moroni. He received his education from above, from God Almighty, and not from man-made institutions; but to charge him with being ignorant would be both unjust and false; no man or combination of men possessed greater intelligence than he, nor could the combined wisdom and cunning of the age produce an equivalent for what he did. He was not ignorant, for he was taught by him from whom all intelligence flows. He possessed a knowledge of God and of his law, and of eternity” (*Gospel Doctrine* [1939], 484).



Painting by Joseph Brickey

Many heavenly messengers were sent to tutor Joseph Smith.

HE MARRIED EMMA HALE



Painting by Lee Richards

Emma Hale was born 10 July 1804 to Isaac and Elizabeth Hale. She was twenty-two years old when she married Joseph Smith. She was well educated and an excellent seamstress and singer.

While Joseph Smith awaited the appointed time to remove the plates and begin translation of the Book of Mormon, he worked for a man named Josiah Stowell. During this employment, Joseph boarded in the home of Mr. Isaac Hale in Harmony, Pennsylvania. “Isaac Hale had a daughter, Emma, a good girl of high mind and devout feelings. This worthy young woman and Joseph formed a

mutual attachment, and her father was requested to give his permission to their marriage. Mr. Hale opposed their desire for a time, as he was prosperous while Joseph’s people had lost their property; and it was on the 18th day of January, 1827, the last year of waiting for the plates, before Joseph and Emma could accomplish their desired union. On that day they were married by one Squire [Tarbell], at the residence of that gentleman, in South Bainbridge, in Chenango

County, New York. Immediately after the marriage, Joseph left the employ of Mr. [Stowell] and journeyed with his wife to his parental home at Manchester, where during the succeeding summer, he worked to obtain means for his family and his mission. The time was near at hand for the great promise to be fulfilled and for his patience and faithfulness to be rewarded” (George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, Classics in Mormon Literature series [1986], 43).



Photograph by George E. Anderson

Early photograph of the Hill Cumorah, 1906

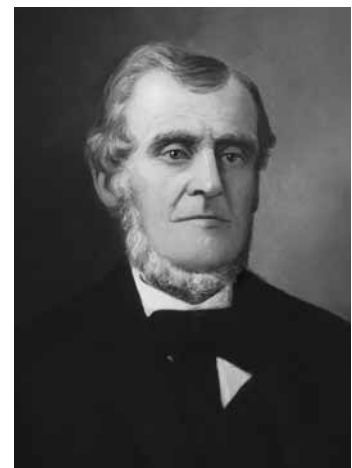


Photograph by Don O. Thorne

A more recent view of the Hill Cumorah covered with trees, which were not indigenous to the hill

THE PLATES WERE TRANSLATED

On 22 September 1827, the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained the plates upon which the Book of Mormon was written. In the face of relentless opposition, he had custody of these sacred plates for about eighteen months. While translating the Book of Mormon, he was assisted by several scribes—Martin Harris, Emma, her brother Jesse Hale, and Oliver Cowdery.



Painting by Lewis A. Ramsey

Martin Harris

THE FIRST 116 PAGES WERE LOST

The translation of the plates presented Joseph Smith with many lessons and challenges. Early in the translation effort, Joseph allowed his scribe Martin Harris to take the 116 manuscript pages that contained the translation from the plates to that point. The Prophet wrote the following about what happened: “Some time after Mr. Harris had begun to write for me, he began to importune me to give him liberty to carry the writings home and show them; and desired of me that I would inquire of the Lord, through the Urim and Thummin, if he might not do so. I did inquire, and the answer was that he must not. However, he was not satisfied with this answer, and desired that I should inquire again. I did so, and the answer was as before. Still he could not be contented, but insisted that I should inquire once more. After much solicitation I again inquired of the Lord, and permission was granted him to have the writings on certain conditions; which were, that he show them only to his brother, Preserved Harris, his own wife, his father and his mother, and a Mrs. Cobb, a sister to his wife. In accordance with this last answer, I required of him that he should bind himself in a covenant to me in a most solemn manner that he would not do otherwise than had been directed. He did so. He bound himself as I required of him, took the writings, and went his way. Notwithstanding, however, the great restrictions which he had been laid under, and the solemnity of the covenant which he [Martin Harris] had made with me, he did show them to others, and by stratagem they got them away from him, and they never have been recovered unto this day” (*History of the Church*, 1:21).



In 1822, Joseph's elder brother Alvin began building a nine-room frame home so that his parents might live more comfortably. He became ill and died in November 1823. The home was eventually finished in the fall of 1825, and the Smiths lived there until April 1829. This is where Joseph brought the metal plates and hid them beneath the hearthstone.

Lucy Mack Smith wrote the following about what happened after Martin Harris took the 116 translated pages of the Book of Mormon:

“Immediately after Mr. Harris's departure, Emma became the mother of a son, but she had but small comfort from the society of the dear little stranger, for he was very soon snatched from her arms and borne aloft to the world of spirits before he had time to learn good or evil. For some time, the mother seemed to tremble upon the verge of the silent home of her infant. So uncertain seemed her fate for a season that, in the space of two weeks, Joseph never slept one hour in undisturbed quiet. At the expiration of this time she began to recover, but as Joseph's anxiety about her began to subside, another cause of trouble forced itself upon his mind. Mr. Harris had been absent nearly three weeks, and Joseph had received no intelligence whatever from him, which was altogether aside of the arrangement when they separated. He determined that as soon as his wife gained a little more strength, he would make a trip to New York and see after the manuscript. He did not mention the subject to Emma for fear of agitating her mind in her delicate health.

“In a few days, however, she soon manifested that she was not without her thoughts upon the subject. . . .

“After much persuasion, he concluded to leave his wife in the care of her mother for a few days, and set out on the before-mentioned journey” (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 161–62).

Martin Harris had lost the 116 manuscript pages, which contained the translation of the book of Lehi. The Prophet was extremely distressed. In just a short time he had lost his newborn son, almost lost his wife, and now, the 116 pages. His mother described his reaction when Martin Harris told him of the loss:

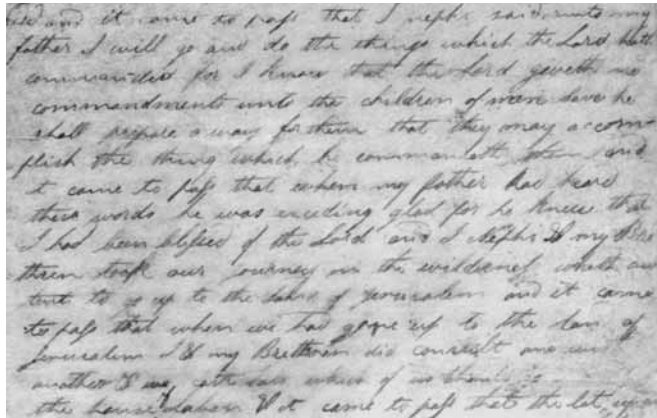
“‘Oh, my God, my God!’ said Joseph, clinching his hands together. ‘All is lost, is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I who tempted the wrath of God by asking for that which I had no right to ask, as I was differently instructed by the angel.’ And he wept and groaned, walking the floor continually.

“At last he told Martin to go back to his house and search again. ‘No’; said Mr. Harris, ‘it is all in vain, for I have looked in every place in the house. I have even ripped open beds and pillows, and I know it is not there.’

“‘Then must I,’ said Joseph, ‘return to my wife with such a tale as this? I dare not do it lest I should kill her at once. And how shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?’ . . .

“I well remember that day of darkness, both within and without. To us, at least, the heavens seemed clothed with blackness, and the earth shrouded with gloom. I have often said within myself that if a continual punishment, as severe as that which we experienced on that occasion, were to be inflicted upon the most wicked

characters who ever stood upon the footstool of the Almighty—if even their punishment were no greater than that, I should feel to pity their condition” (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 165–66, 171).



The Book of Mormon manuscript containing 1 Nephi 2:23–3:18. The first part of the page was written by Oliver Cowdery and the remaining was written possibly by John Whitmer. This was part of the small plates, which were translated to replace the lost 116 manuscript pages.

THE LOSS WAS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Prophet Joseph Smith remained with his parents “for a short season” after he learned of the loss of the 116 pages. He wrote: “[I] then returned to my place in Pennsylvania. Immediately after my return home, I was walking out a little distance, when, behold, the former heavenly messenger appeared and handed me the Urim and Thummim again—for it had been taken from me in consequence of my having wearied the Lord in asking for the privilege of letting Martin Harris take the writings, which he lost by transgression—and I inquired of the Lord through it” (*History of the Church*, 1:21–22).

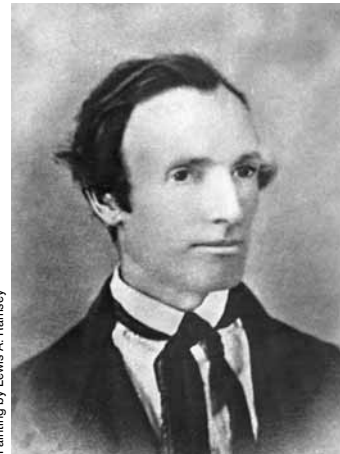
The Prophet received the revelation found in Doctrine and Covenants 3, which contained the following rebuke from the Lord: “For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him” (D&C 3:4). Yet even in the rebuke there was hope. The Lord told Joseph that his privileges would be taken away only “for a season” (v. 14).

Joseph Smith’s repentance was deep and sincere, and his privileges were soon restored. He wrote that after he received the former revelation, “both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again; but in a few days they were returned to me, when I inquired of the Lord and the Lord said thus to me” (*History of the Church*, 1:23). He then received the revelation found in Doctrine and Covenants 10. In that

revelation the Lord made it clear that Satan had an influence in the loss of the manuscript but that God’s “wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43).

A NEW SCRIBE WAS PROVIDED

During the winter of 1828–29, the Prophet Joseph Smith periodically worked on the translation of the Book of Mormon with the help of Emma and her brother, but earning a living left little time for translating. In March of 1829, the Prophet prayed earnestly for help to complete the translation. The Lord told Joseph to stop translating until He provided help (see D&C 5:30, 34).



Painting by Lewis A. Ramsey

Oliver Cowdery

Oliver Cowdery was a teacher at the village school in Manchester township and boarded at the home of Joseph Smith Sr. While in Manchester he heard much about Joseph Smith Jr. and the gold plates. After gaining the Smith family’s trust, Oliver spoke with Joseph Smith Sr., who told him about the plates. Oliver prayed privately and meditated upon the

matter. He told Joseph Smith Sr. that “it had been put into his heart that he would have the privilege of writing for Joseph,” whom he had not yet met. He told the Smith family that he would go with Samuel to visit Joseph in the spring, after the school term. He said, “I firmly believe that if it is the will of the Lord that I should go, and that there is a work for me to do in this thing, I am determined to attend to it” (Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 181–82).

Samuel Smith and Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on 5 April 1829 and the Prophet Joseph Smith recognized Oliver as being the assistance the Lord had promised.

On Tuesday, 7 April, they began the work of translation and labored on it throughout April. With Oliver’s help, Joseph proceeded faster than ever before. During the next three months, they translated approximately five hundred printed pages of the Book of Mormon.



John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood by the Susquehanna River.

THE AARONIC AND MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOODS WERE RESTORED



Painting by Ken Riley

Peter, James, and John restored the Melchizedek Priesthood.

On 15 May 1829, the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery went to the woods to pray for understanding about baptism, a subject they found mentioned during their translation of the Book of Mormon. While they were praying, John the Baptist “descended in a cloud of light” (Joseph Smith—History 1:68; see vv. 66–75). He

conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph and Oliver. Later, Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver, restoring the power to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth once more (see D&C 128:20). “The day, month, and year designation that so precisely identifies the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood (15 May 1829) is absent in the case of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Similarly, knowledge of the attendant circumstances of that restoration is limited. Even so, sufficient elements of the historical puzzle can be put together to give us a close approximation of the time sequence. Evidence suggests a date within the 13-day period from 16 May to 28 May 1829” (Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 33).

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM WERE BESTOWED

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, then a member of the First Council of the Seventy, said: “Peter, James and John came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When they came they did three things. They conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is power and authority. They gave them the Keys of the Kingdom of God. In other words, they gave them the right to preside in the Melchizedek Priesthood and over the kingdom of God on earth which is the church of Jesus Christ. Now, it did not exist yet, but they had the right to preside over it. Then Peter, James and John gave Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery what is called the Keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times. That means the right to preside over the dispensation and direct all of the labors in spiritual things of all the people who ever live in this dispensation of the earth’s history” (“The Keys of the Kingdom” [address at Wilford Stake priesthood meeting, 21 Feb. 1955], 3).



The reconstructed Peter Whitmer home in Fayette township, New York. The translation of the Book of Mormon was completed here, the testimony of the Three Witnesses was signed here, the Church was organized here, and twenty of the revelations included in the Doctrine and Covenants were received here.

THE CHURCH WAS ORGANIZED

On 6 April 1830, after the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods, the kingdom of God was once again established upon the earth when the Church was legally organized in the Peter Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. The work of the Church began, under the direction of a prophet with power to lead the kingdom of God through its opening years. During the following years the Prophet Joseph Smith received more revelations, called more missionaries, and gathered converts together. Newspapers were established, property was purchased, crops were planted, businesses were chartered, and industry was commenced.

THE SAINTS WERE COMMANDED TO BUILD A TEMPLE



Photograph by Don C. Thorpe

The Kirtland Temple is 79 feet long, 59 feet wide, and 50 feet high. The tower reaches 110 feet above the ground.

Church members gained converts by sharing the gospel message with relatives and friends. Many had

been gathered to Fayette, Palmyra, Colesville, and other settlements of western New York. Later, the Saints were commanded to move westward to Kirtland, Ohio. The means of the members were taxed to the limit in caring for the growing Church population in Kirtland and the surrounding counties. They were largely penniless and destitute. Among these challenges came the Lord's command to build a temple: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119).



An early photograph of the Kirtland Temple

A committee was appointed to collect funds for the building of the temple. The Prophet Joseph Smith knew that the spiritual survival of this last gospel dispensation depended upon the spiritual endowment that God had promised to pour out upon the Saints when the temple was completed. Of Joseph's

faithfulness in this, President Brigham Young later declared:

"The Church, through our beloved Prophet Joseph, was commanded to build a temple to the Most High, in Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph not only received revelation and commandment to build a temple, but he received a pattern also. . . .

"Without revelation, Joseph could not know what was wanted, any more than any other man, and, without commandment, the Church were too few in number, too weak in faith, and too poor in purse, to attempt such a mighty enterprise. But by means of all these stimulants, a mere handful of men, living on air, and a little hominy and milk, and often salt or no salt, when milk could not be had; the great Prophet Joseph, in the stone quarry, quarrying rock with his own hands; and the few then in the Church, following his example of obedience and diligence wherever most needed; with laborers on the walls, holding the sword in one hand to protect themselves from the mob, while they placed the stone and moved the trowel with the other, the Kirtland temple—the second house of the Lord, that we have any published record of on the earth, was so far completed as to be dedicated. And those first Elders who helped to build it, received a portion of their first endowments, or we might say more clearly, some of the first, or introductory, or initiatory ordinances, preparatory

to an endowment" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 415).

MIRACULOUS MANIFESTATIONS ACCOMPANIED THE BUILDING AND DEDICATION OF THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE

Spiritual blessings were poured out upon the Saints as the Kirtland temple was being completed. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote of a great spiritual outpouring that occurred on 21 January 1836:



Painting by Robert T. Barrett

Many spiritual experiences, revelations, and heavenly manifestations were received within the Kirtland Temple.

"At early candle-light I met with the Presidency at the west school room, in the Temple, to attend to the ordinance of anointing our heads with holy oil; also the Councils of Kirtland and Zion met in the two adjoining rooms, and waited in prayer while we attended to the ordinance. . . .

"Many of my brethren who received the ordinance with me saw glorious visions also. Angels ministered unto them as well as to myself, and the power of the Highest rested upon us, the house was filled with the glory of God, and we shouted Hosanna to God and the Lamb. My scribe also received his anointing with us, and saw, in a vision, the armies of heaven protecting the Saints in their return to Zion, and many things which I saw. . . .

"The visions of heaven were opened to [the high councilors of Kirtland and Zion, who were invited into the room] also. Some of them saw the face of the Savior, and others were ministered unto by holy angels, and the spirit of prophecy and revelation was poured out in mighty power; and loud hosannas, and glory to God in the highest, saluted the heavens, for we all communed with the heavenly host. And I saw in my vision all of the Presidency in the celestial kingdom of God, and many

others that were present” (*History of the Church*, 2:379, 381–82).

The Kirtland Temple was dedicated on 27 March 1836. In his final note of the marvelous events that occurred on that day, the Prophet wrote concerning an evening meeting held in the newly dedicated temple: “Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place. This continued until the meeting closed at eleven p.m.” (*History of the Church*, 2:428).

On 3 April 1836 the Savior appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple and accepted it as His house; Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared and restored priesthood keys (see D&C 110).

DEALING WITH POVERTY AND APOSTASY IN KIRTLAND

Church members enjoyed a great spiritual outpouring at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Yet, within two years they were forced to leave their temple and the beautiful community they had built. The cause of this had its roots in the challenges they faced as new members settling in Kirtland, Ohio. Many converts were anxious to start a new life in Kirtland and had little means after they exhausted their resources moving to the area. Regardless of these problems, a spirit of optimism filled Kirtland after the temple dedication, as ambitious Church members attempted to correct the impoverished conditions.

During this period, from 1836 to 1838, a number of banks were being organized in the United States. The leaders of the Church petitioned the state of Ohio for permission to start a bank, but a charter was denied. It was decided that it would be beneficial to form a banking society that would assist the community with its financial concerns. They called it the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. The Prophet Joseph Smith served as the treasurer of the organization.

The bank printed its own bank notes and opened for business in January 1837. Trouble soon surfaced when other banks refused to accept the bank notes. This, coupled with the economic situation in Kirtland, unwise speculators, the United States’ own banking problems

(known as the Panic of 1837), and creditors who did not invest in the society as promised, caused its failure.

Many blamed Joseph Smith and a number of members apostatized, considering him to be a fallen prophet. Later, the Prophet’s life was threatened and he and other Church leaders were forced to flee to Missouri. The Prophet left Kirtland in January 1838 for Far West, Missouri. Most members of the Church left their homes in Kirtland to follow the prophet. The focal point of the Church then shifted from Kirtland, Ohio, to Missouri, where many members had started moving to as early as 1831.



John Johnson farm home. In September 1831, Joseph and Emma accepted an invitation from John and Mary Johnson to live with them on their 100-acre farm in Hyrum, Ohio. The farm was about thirty miles from Kirtland. While living with the Johnsons, the Prophet Joseph recorded fifteen revelations, which included the visions now found in Doctrine and Covenants 76. It was here that Joseph and Sidney Rigdon accomplished much of their work related to the inspired revision of the Bible.

Photograph by Don O. Thorpe

HE WAS TRIED IN RICHMOND AND IMPRISONED IN LIBERTY JAIL

In November of 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church leaders were taken prisoner on false charges and tried in Richmond, Missouri. A number of bitter witnesses testified against them, and when defense witnesses were identified, they were jailed or driven from the area so they could not testify. For two weeks the prisoners took heavy abuse. Elder Parley P. Pratt, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, reported that one night they had listened for hours to the unspeakable persecutions that the guards claimed they had inflicted upon the Saints:

“I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

“SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and bear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!”



Painting by Danquart Anthon Weggeland

Joseph Smith rebuking the guards in the Richmond Jail

“He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt, Classics in Mormon Literature series [1985], 179–80).

After the trial in Richmond, Joseph Smith and several other Church leaders were sent to Liberty Jail, in Clay County, Missouri. They spent the winter incarcerated in Liberty Jail, from December 1838 to April 1839. On 16 April 1839 they were allowed to escape and joined the Saints who had been driven from Missouri to Quincy, Illinois.



Liberty Jail. The Prophet Joseph and several other Church leaders were confined in a cold, dark, dirty, fourteen-foot-square cellar room of the jail called the “dungeon.” The outer walls of the jail were gray limestone rock and two feet thick, with a sturdy inner wall of hewn oak timbers. The jail was constructed in 1833 and was used for twenty-three years.

While in prison, the Prophet Joseph heard reports of the persecutions and suffering of the Saints. This troubled him deeply. He prayed fervently and frequently on their behalf. In March 1839 he pleaded with the Lord with deep concern:

“O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

“How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?” (D&C 121:1–2).

The Lord’s answer came beginning with Doctrine and Covenants 121:7 (see also D&C 122).



Painting by Gary E. Smith

In February 1841, workmen commenced labor on the temple in Nauvoo. It was built almost exclusively through donated labor—volunteers who offered one day’s work in ten as a tithe. At the time of the martyrdom, the temple was not completed. It was dedicated in private and public ceremonies in the spring of 1846. Before traveling west, 5,629 Saints received their endowments in the temple.

THE SAINTS FIND REFUGE AT NAUVOO

Kirtland, Ohio, was the headquarters of the Church from February 1831 until January 1838, when the Prophet Joseph Smith moved to Far West, Missouri. In 1838–39 the Saints were forced to leave Missouri and sought refuge in Illinois. There they purchased land and established the city of Nauvoo. Thousands gathered there and Nauvoo was one of the fastest growing cities in Illinois at that time. In 1844, because none of the other candidates would adequately support the cause of the Latter-day Saints as they sought redress for their losses during the persecutions in Missouri, Joseph Smith announced his candidacy for president of the United States of America.

THE PROPHET KNEW MORE THAN HE WAS PERMITTED TO TEACH



Painting by Dale Kilbourn

The Prophet Joseph Smith

The Prophet Joseph Smith was not allowed to teach everything that the Lord revealed to him. He explained that we receive knowledge when we are prepared to receive it:

“[The Apostle] Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder—the teletial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for

him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.

“The Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it. The inhabitants of the earth are asleep; they know not the day of their visitation” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 305).

“There has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. . . . Even the Saints are slow to understand.

“I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 331).

The Prophet also explained that “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149).

MANY OF THE SAINTS DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE OF JOSEPH SMITH’S CALLING

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord restored truths that had been lost. But, as Joseph Smith explained, not all people will understand and accept those truths:



Painting by John Falter

Brigham Young said, “What a delight it was to hear brother Joseph talk upon the great principles of eternity” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:54).

“Many men will say, ‘I will never forsake you, but will stand by you at all times.’ But the moment you teach them some of the mysteries of the kingdom of God that are retained in the heavens and are to be revealed to the children of men when they are prepared for them they will be the first to stone you and put you to death. It was this same principle that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, and will cause the people to kill the prophets in this generation. . . .

“There are a great many wise men and women too in our midst who are too wise to be taught; therefore they must die in their ignorance, and in the resurrection they will find their mistake. Many seal up the door of heaven by saying, So far God may reveal and I will believe” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 309).

The Prophet Joseph Smith sought diligently to teach the truths of the Restoration and firmly establish

the kingdom of God throughout the earth. While he was a prisoner in Liberty Jail, the Lord told him:

“The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand” (D&C 122:1–2).

Addressing an assembly of thousands a few months before his death, Joseph Smith declared:

“You don’t know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I was born in the world. My voice is always for peace.

“I cannot lie down until all my work is finished. I never think any evil, nor do anything to the harm of my fellow-man. When I am called by the trump of the archangel and weighed in the balance, you will all know me then. I add no more” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 361–62).

JOSEPH SMITH LOVED PHYSICAL CONTESTS

“There were few manly sports that [the Prophet Joseph Smith] didn’t have a try at, and many in which he excelled. For example, he wrestled, and wrestled effectively. He jumped at the mark. In this activity you simply drew a mark on the ground, then jumped and marked where you landed, then challenged someone else to match or exceed the jump. He pulled up stakes: Here two men faced each other, placing feet against feet, and then pulled; the stronger one remained on the ground, the other came up. There’s another version of that in which, face to face, you hold a pole, like a broomstick, and then pull down. The stronger of the two holds, and his hands don’t slip. The weaker’s hands slip.

“With the boys Joseph often played baseball and variations on quoits [a game similar to the game of horseshoes, often using a flat stone as the object to throw]. He was known to create games with prizes, including booby prizes. On occasion, especially when he had beaten a challenger, he would say something like, ‘You



Pulling sticks

Painting by Del Parson

must not mind this. When I am with the boys I make all the fun I can for them’ [see recollection of Calvin W. Moore in *The Juvenile Instructor*, 15 April 1892, 255]” (Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* [1989], 20–21).

THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH HOLDS THE KEYS OF THIS DISPENSATION



Painting by Douglas Fryer

The Prophet enjoyed being with the Saints.

President George Q. Cannon, who was a counselor in the First Presidency, stated: “The Prophet Joseph informs us in his letter, addressed to the Saints when he fled away from Nauvoo to escape the hands of his enemies, that ‘It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time’ [see D&C 128:18]. He, therefore, received the ministration of divers angels—heads of dispensations—from Michael or Adam down to the present time; every man in his time and season coming to him, and all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their Priesthood. So that Joseph, the head of this dispensation, Prophet, Seer and Revelator, whom God raised up, received from all these different sources, according to the mind and will of God, and according to the design of God concerning him; he received from all these different sources all the power and all the authority and all keys that were necessary for the building up of the work of God in the last days, and for the accomplishment of His purposes connected with this dispensation. He stands at the head. He is a unique character, differing from every other man in this respect, and excelling every other man. Because he was the head God chose him, and while he was faithful no man could take his place and position. He was faithful, and

died faithful. *He stands therefore at the head of this dispensation, and will throughout all eternity, and no man can take that power away from him.* If any man holds these *keys*, he holds them subordinate to him. You never heard President Young teach any other doctrine; he always said that Joseph stood at the head of this dispensation; that Joseph holds the *keys*; that although Joseph had gone behind the veil he stood at the head of this dispensation, and that he himself held the *keys* subordinate to him. President Taylor teaches the same doctrine, and you will never hear any other doctrine from any of the faithful Apostles or servants of God, who understand the order of the Holy Priesthood. *If we get our salvation we shall have to pass by him; if we enter into our glory it will be through the authority that he has received. We cannot get around him*" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:360–61; italics added).



The Mansion House, Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph and Emma Smith moved into the Mansion House on 31 August 1843. The house was designed for the Prophet's family and to entertain guests and conduct Church and civic business. The twenty-two-room structure featured a southern wing that served as a hotel. The wing had a large living room and kitchen on the ground floor, plus sleeping rooms on the second story. The wing was torn down in 1890.

THE CHURCH WILL FILL THE WORLD

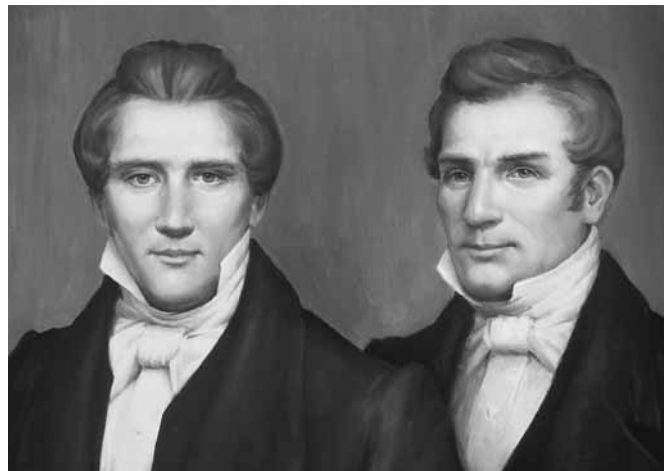


Side views of Joseph and Hyrum Smith

On 6 April 1830, the day of its organization in Fayette, New York, few people might have understood how large the Church would grow. President Wilford Woodruff spoke of hearing the Prophet Joseph Smith speak of how the Church would grow to fill the world:

"I had just been baptized. . . . I arrived in Kirtland on Saturday and there met with Joseph and Hyrum Smith in the street. I was introduced to Joseph Smith.

It was the first time that I had ever seen him in my life. He invited me home to spend the Sabbath with him, and I did so. They had meeting on Sunday.



Painting by Ken Corbett

The Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. "In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated!" (D&C 135:3).

"On Sunday night the Prophet called on all who held the Priesthood to gather into the little log school house they had there. It was a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. But it held the whole of the Priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were then in the town of Kirtland, and who had gathered together to go off in Zion's camp. That was the first time I ever saw Oliver Cowdery, or heard him speak; the first time I ever saw Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, and the two Pratts, and Orson Hyde and many others. There were no Apostles in the Church then except Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When we got together the Prophet called upon the Elders of Israel with him to bear testimony of this work. Those that I have named spoke, and a good many that I have not named, bore their testimonies. When they got through the Prophet said, 'Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it.' I was rather surprised. He said 'it is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world'" (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1898, 57).

HE WAS A PROPHET, SEER, REVELATOR, RESTORER, WITNESS, AND MARTYR

With authority from God, the Prophet Joseph Smith laid the foundation for a mighty restoration in the last days preparatory to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Yet, like many prophets before him, he faced great

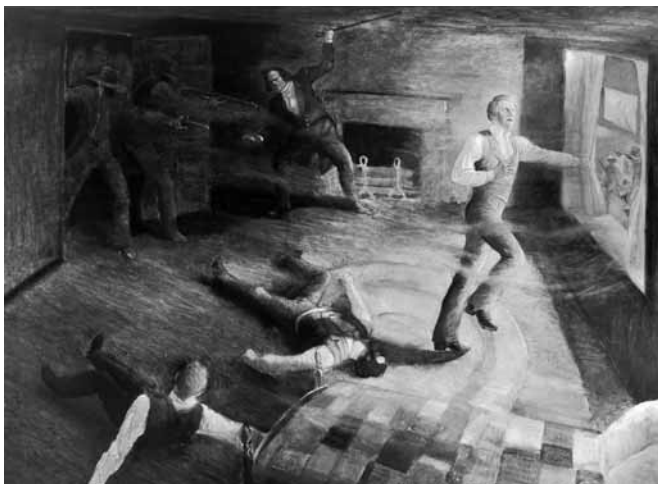
opposition and gave his life for the kingdom of God. He was ridiculed, mobbed, and beaten—carrying scars of persecution to his grave. Six of his and Emma’s eleven children, two of whom they adopted, died in infancy. Many people who were once his friends turned against him. Over forty-six lawsuits were brought against him.



Photograph by Wayne R. Dorman

Carthage Jail, Carthage, Illinois

He spent months in jail on false charges. “When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: ‘I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD’” (D&C 135:4). On 27 June 1844, an armed mob rushed the jail and killed the Prophet and his brother Hyrum. His work in mortality was completed. His last words were “*O Lord, my God!*” (D&C 135:1).



Painting by Gary E. Smith

Martyrs

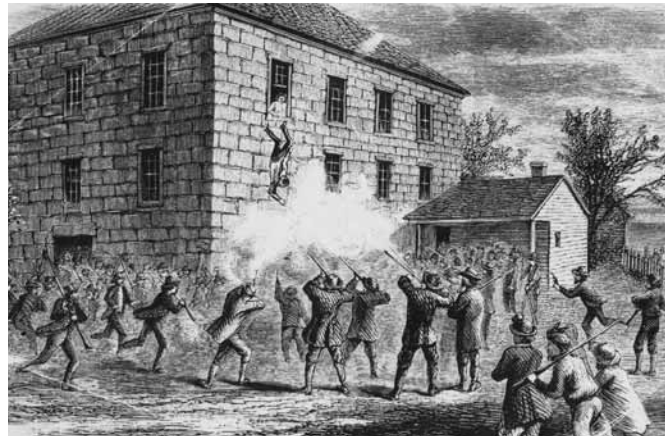
President Joseph Fielding Smith testified:

“Joseph Smith was a prophet, called in these last days to receive by revelation the saving truths of the gospel and to stand as a legal administrator, having power from on high, to administer the ordinances of the gospel.

“Since these truths revealed through him are the ones which shall go forth to every nation before the Second Coming, it is little wonder that we find Moroni saying to Joseph Smith that his ‘name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.’ [Joseph Smith—History 1:33.]

“Nor is it any wonder when we later find the Lord saying to the Prophet: ‘The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

“While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.’ (D&C 122:1–2.)



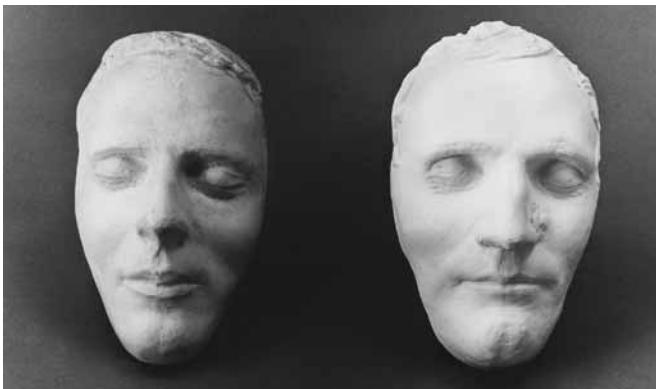
The mob at Carthage Jail

“The ends of the earth are now beginning to inquire after the name of Joseph Smith, and many people in many nations are rejoicing in the gospel restored through his instrumentality” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 6).

Soon after the Prophet’s martyrdom, Elder John Taylor, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, testified, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). People of all dispensations are affected by the work of the Restoration the Lord performed through that mighty prophet of this last dispensation. All who inquire earnestly and honestly can know that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of the living God.

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, explained: “We do not worship the Prophet. We worship God our Eternal Father, and the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But we acknowledge him, we proclaim him, we respect him, we reverence him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring to the earth the ancient truths of the divine gospel, together with the priesthood through which the authority of God is exercised in the affairs of his church

and for the blessing of his people” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 65).



Photograph by Don O. Thorpe, courtesy of the Willford C. Wood Foundation

Death masks of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum. On 28 June 1844, the bodies of the martyrs were taken to the Nauvoo Mansion, accompanied by Willard Richards, Samuel Smith, and eight guards. A viewing was held that evening. It was common practice at that time for a plaster cast to be made of the facial features of prominent persons. The Church Historical Department possesses the original molds.

“HE IS THE GREAT PROPHET OF THIS DISPENSATION”



Painting by Dan Weggeland

The Prophet Joseph Smith

President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed gratitude for the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“How great indeed is our debt to him. His life began in Vermont and ended in Illinois, and marvelous were the things that happened between that simple beginning and tragic ending. It was he who brought us a true knowledge of God, the

Eternal Father, and His Risen Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. During the short time of his great vision he learned more concerning the nature of Deity than all of those who through centuries had argued the matter in learned councils and scholarly forums. He brought us the marvelous Book of Mormon as another witness for the living reality of the Son of God. To him, from those who held it anciently, came the priesthood, the power, the gift, the authority, the keys to speak and act in the name of God. He gave us the organization of the Church and its great and sacred mission. Through him were restored the keys of the holy temples, that men and women might enter into eternal covenants with God and that the great work for the dead might be accomplished to open the way for eternal blessings. . . .

“He was the instrument in the hands of the Almighty. He was the servant acting under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ in bringing to pass this great latter-day work.

“We stand in reverence before him. He is the great prophet of this dispensation. He stands at the head of this great and mighty work which is spreading across the earth. He is our prophet, our revelator, our seer, our friend. Let us not forget him. . . . God be thanked for the Prophet Joseph” (“A Season for Gratitude,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1997, 2).