

# THEY KNEW JOSEPH

What kind of a man was Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration? We can learn more about him by reading what those who met him and those who knew him well had to say about him.

## NON-MORMONS WHO MET JOSEPH

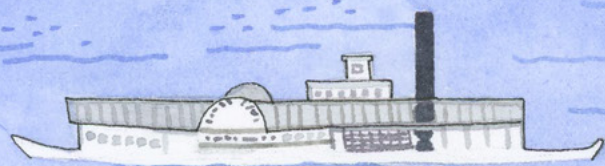
Many non-Mormons who met Joseph were impressed. For example, Josiah Quincy, a Harvard graduate and soon-to-be mayor of Boston, visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. He said Joseph was a “phenomenon to be explained,” a man born to lead, “of commanding appearance . . . whom it seemed natural to obey.” He said that future textbooks might refer to Joseph Smith as exerting “powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen.”<sup>1</sup>

## RECENT CONVERTS WHO MET HIM

Converts who met Joseph for the first time also expressed admiration. Five days after arriving in Nauvoo from England, William Clayton wrote home: “Last night many of us [were] in company with Brother Joseph, our hearts rejoiced to hear him speak of the things of the Kingdom, he is an affectionate man and as familiar as any of us. We feel to love him much and so will you.”<sup>2</sup>

Mary Alice Cannon Lambert, who was 14 when she arrived in Nauvoo, said, “Several of the leading brethren were there to meet the company of saints that had come on [the boat]. Among those brethren was the Prophet Joseph Smith. I knew him the instant my eyes rested upon him, and at that moment I received my testimony that he was a Prophet of God.”<sup>3</sup>

*You can read more about Joseph Smith in chapters 43 and 47 of Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith. The statements there will help you get to know the Prophet Joseph.*



## PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM WELL

John M. Bernhisel, an early member of the Church, was a doctor. He boarded in the Smiths' home for several months. He said Joseph Smith had "strong mental powers," lots of energy, "a profound knowledge of human nature," "calm judgment," "enlarged views," and a "love of justice." "He is kind and obliging, generous and benevolent, sociable and cheerful, and is possessed of a mind of a contemplative and reflective character. He is honest, frank, fearless and independent, and as free from [false appearances] as any man to be found."<sup>4</sup>

Howard Coray, one of Joseph's clerks, was impressed by the Prophet's ability to meet with all types of people—doctors, lawyers, priests, and others—who came to "ask hard questions." He wrote that Joseph "was always equal to the occasion. . . . I was truly gratified, at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready [prompt, prepared] manner in which he would answer their questions."<sup>5</sup>

Daniel D. McArthur, who later led a handcart company to the Salt Lake Valley, said, "My testimony is that he was a true Prophet of the living God; and the more I heard his sayings and saw his doings the more I was convinced that he had of a truth seen God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>



## PROPHETS WHO KNEW HIM

John Taylor, who became the third President of the Church, said, "If you were to ask Joseph what sort of . . . man Adam was, he would tell you at once; he would tell you his size and appearance and all about him. You might have asked him what sort of men Peter, James and John were, and he could have told you. Why? Because he had seen them."<sup>7</sup>

The Prophet's nephew, Joseph F. Smith, became the sixth President of the Church. He wrote that Joseph Smith "was brimming over with the noblest and purest of human nature, which often gave vent in innocent amusements—in playing ball, in wrestling with his brothers . . . and enjoying himself; . . . he was full of joy; he was full of gladness, he was full of love, and of every other noble attribute that makes men great and good, and at the same time simple and innocent; . . . he had power, by the grace of God, to comprehend the purposes of the Almighty too. That was the character of the Prophet Joseph Smith."<sup>8</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. Josiah Quincy, "Joseph Smith at Nauvoo," *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals*, 3rd ed. (1883), 376–400; see also Richard L. Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2003), 29–30.
2. Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," 33.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 496.
4. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 498–99.
5. Bushman, "The Character of Joseph Smith," 29.
6. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 496.
7. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 103.
8. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 499.

