

# Samuel H. Smith

## Faithful Brother of Joseph and Hyrum

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*Samuel's faithful devotion to the gospel, his loyalty to family, and his physical strength made him an invaluable support to the early Church. This year marks the 200th anniversary of his birth.*



**W**ho was Samuel H. Smith? His younger brother Don Carlos said of him, “He is as faithful as the sun!”<sup>1</sup>

His mother, Lucy Mack Smith, said that none of her sons had a greater gift of healing than Samuel.<sup>2</sup> When she called on her husband and sons in 1835 for a priesthood blessing, Samuel was voice as they blessed Lucy to be healed from an eye inflammation that had caused partial blindness. “When they took their hands off my head,” wrote Lucy, “I opened my eyes and read two lines in the Book of Mormon.”<sup>3</sup>

His daughter Mary revealed another dimension of Samuel when she wrote, “My father was an industrious, hard-working man, who never shirked any task. While working on the farm, he worked every day and part of every moonlight night.”<sup>4</sup>

These accounts, written by three people who knew and loved Samuel, help us see into his life and character. Samuel's charge, though temporal in many ways, was essential, and Samuel embraced it willingly. He became

the hands that helped his father care for the farm when his prophet-brother Joseph, with Hyrum at his side, was working to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was Samuel who helped chop the wood, plow the land, and harvest the crops in 1829 so that Joseph was free to translate the gold plates. It was Samuel who, as an early missionary during the years 1831–32, walked more than 4,000 miles through the

Midwest and New England distributing copies of the Book of Mormon. It was Samuel who often helped his parents move as Joseph led the Saints from Ohio to Missouri to Illinois. And, in the end, it was Samuel who helped load the bodies of his martyred brothers, Joseph and Hyrum, into the wagons that carried them to Nauvoo. This was the pattern of Samuel's life.

Joseph Smith Sr., a noble and loving father and the Church's first patriarch, alluded to this pattern in a blessing to Samuel when he said, “Thou hast been faithful in all thy days, and ministered comfort to thy father's family. . . . Thou hast labored much and toiled hard. . . . The just shall rise up and call thee a perfect man.”<sup>5</sup>

**Above: The Smith log home in Manchester Township, New York. Right: The three Smith brothers who died as a result of the events on June 27, 1844, in Carthage, Illinois—Hyrum, Joseph, and Samuel.**

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ABOVE LEFT, PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND







**Above: Regular family prayer and scripture study were an important part of life in the Smith home.**

**Right: In June 1829, Samuel became one of the Eight Witnesses who bore written testimony of the reality of the gold plates.**

#### **Sixth in a Family of Eleven**

Samuel was born on March 13, 1808, in Tunbridge, Vermont, into the righteous but struggling farm family of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith.<sup>6</sup> He likely understood little of the series of crop failures that caused his family to leave Vermont in 1816 and move to Palmyra, New York, where they arrived “destitute of friends, home, or employment.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Samuel’s father worked hard and eventually bought 100 acres of land two miles south of Palmyra, in Manchester Township. Perhaps Samuel even helped his father and older brothers build the “snug, comfortable though humble” log cabin into which the family moved in the fall of 1818.<sup>8</sup>

Here, as Samuel grew up, he learned to work hard from his father and brothers by clearing timber-covered land for farming; helping with the plowing, planting, and harvesting; and gathering sap from hundreds of sugar maple trees to make molasses.

Samuel certainly became aware of the religious fervor that dominated upstate

New York, since his family sold food from a cart at various religious revivals. This religious excitement affected the Smith family. Fourteen-year-old Joseph struggled to know which church to join. But after reading James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,” Joseph knew what he must do. One beautiful morning in the spring of 1820, Joseph went into a grove of trees and prayed to know which church to join. God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him, and Christ told him not to join any of the churches. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:5–20.) Joseph’s family accepted his account of the First Vision and supported him in his work of translating the gold plates that would become the Book of Mormon.

Regular family prayer and scripture study were a part of life in the Smith family. Samuel’s brother William wrote, “I well remember father used to carry his spectacles in his vest pocket, and when we boys saw him feel for his specs, we knew that was a signal to get ready for prayer.”<sup>9</sup>

During this time, when Samuel and his siblings gathered for family prayers, they would listen to Joseph “describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, their manner of traveling, [and] the animals which they rode.” These family devotionals brought “the sweetest union and happiness” into the Smith home and “tranquility reigned.”<sup>10</sup> But outside of the Smith home, as ministers and neighbors learned of Joseph’s visions, many treated the Smiths with “contempt” and “a great deal of prejudice” (Joseph Smith—History 1:21–22).

### The Third Person Baptized

By September 1827, Samuel was 19 years old, six feet tall, and endowed with “great strength, far exceeding that of ordinary men, enabl[ing] him to do an unusual amount of work.”<sup>11</sup>

This was the month Joseph received the plates from their burial place in the Hill Cumorah. Immediately, enemies tried to steal them. To protect the plates, Joseph and his wife, Emma, moved to Harmony, Pennsylvania, and lived near Emma’s parents.

Samuel made the 135-mile trip between Palmyra and Harmony numerous times. On one of these visits, Samuel served temporarily as scribe for Joseph.<sup>12</sup> In early April 1829 Samuel brought school-teacher Oliver Cowdery from Palmyra, and Oliver became Joseph’s full-time scribe.

During Samuel’s visits, Joseph continued to teach him the gospel; Samuel “was not, however, very easily persuaded of these things.” So in May 1829 he did as Joseph had done and retired to the woods to pray. After fervent prayer, he “obtained revelation” that Joseph’s teachings were true. Oliver Cowdery, who had been baptized along with Joseph Smith on May 15, baptized Samuel on May 25.<sup>13</sup>

After Joseph finished translating the Book of Mormon in June 1829, Samuel became one of the Eight Witnesses in Palmyra who bore written testimony of the plates, saying, “We did handle [them] with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon.”<sup>14</sup>

After the Book of Mormon was published in early 1830, the Church was organized in Fayette, New York, on April 6. Samuel was among the six charter members. He was also ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood.

### Missions and Marriage

When Samuel asked how he could best serve in the newly organized church, his answer came in a revelation: “Thy calling is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church; and thou are not as yet called to preach before the world” (D&C 23:4).

Two months later the Prophet called his younger brother to serve as a missionary to neighboring villages (see page 48).

As a result of the work of Samuel and others, future Church leaders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball

came in contact with copies of the Book of Mormon left by Samuel and were baptized.

While still on his mission, Samuel felt strongly that his parents needed him. He returned to Manchester, traveling 21 miles after sunset. Samuel’s father had been imprisoned for a small debt, a common practice at the time. Samuel brought food to his father and comforted him. When Samuel returned home, he moved the

family to Waterloo, New York, near Fayette, where Joseph Sr. joined them after his 30-day confinement.

Once settled, the Smiths continued their tradition of evening devotionals, which soon included nearly 20 people. One evening two young boys came in and quietly asked Samuel if he could pray soon because they had to be home by eight. Samuel kindly suggested to the group that he pray immediately, which he did. The boys came every evening thereafter.<sup>15</sup>

By the summer of 1833, the Saints had gathered in Kirtland, Ohio (see D&C 37). Samuel had served four missions (see page 48). That summer Mary Bailey and her friend Agnes Coolbrith arrived in Kirtland. They were among those

EIGHT WITNESSES VIEW THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES BY DALE KILBOURN





Samuel and Orson Hyde had baptized in Boston. The young ladies boarded with the Smiths, as others had. Samuel and the refined and educated Mary began courting and married on August 12, 1834. During this time, Samuel “cultivate[d] the soil he loved,”<sup>16</sup> labored on the temple, and served as an active member of the high council, where he was known “for the mingled qualities of justice and mercy.”<sup>17</sup>

Daughters Susannah and Mary were born in October 1835 and in March 1837, respectively. Between the births of Samuel’s daughters, the Kirtland Temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836. Samuel, as head of the high council, stood among those in the tiered pulpits reserved for the Prophet and Melchizedek Priesthood officers.

Yet during this time of spiritual outpouring, crisis came as many banks throughout the country collapsed in 1837. The Church-owned Kirtland Safety Society was among them. Nearly all the Saints lost money, including Samuel. Some of the most prominent members apostatized. Samuel, however, remained faithful.

### Suffering in Missouri

In March 1838, as the Saints were continuing to gather to Missouri, Samuel and Mary settled on a 160-acre tract

in Marrowbone, Daviess County. Samuel began again to clear the land. Here Mary gave birth in August 1838 to a son, named Samuel Harrison Bailey Smith. When violence against the Saints escalated, Samuel went to Far West to get a wagon to move his family. While he was gone, a mob carried Mary and her newborn son on a featherbed out into the rain. They put toddlers Susannah and Mary on the bed with them and then burned the house to the ground. Soon after, a neighbor furnished a wagon, horses, and a boy to take them to Far West to find Samuel. After a day and a half in the pouring rain, they met up with Samuel, who was returning home. They went on to Far West, where Samuel’s mother cared for them. Samuel’s gentle wife, Mary, however, never fully recovered.<sup>18</sup>

In late October 1838, Samuel, as part of the local Latter-day Saint militia, fought in the battle of Crooked River. Afterward, the Missourians pursued the militia. Brigham Young counseled them to flee to Quincy, Illinois, which they did.<sup>19</sup> They arrived in early 1839. They were among the first of the Saints to live in Quincy, about 50 miles south of Nauvoo. Mary and the children met up with Samuel here. When his parents arrived at the Mississippi River after an exhausting journey through Missouri,

## THE MISSIONS OF SAMUEL H. SMITH

Samuel Smith’s missionary efforts were extraordinary, making him “one of the foremost builders in the early years of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

Though Samuel was not always as eloquent as his brothers or his companions,<sup>2</sup> his testimony was strong. He said, “How could I doubt anything that I knew to be true?”<sup>3</sup> In a blessing given by his father, Samuel was promised that his testimony would be received by thousands.<sup>4</sup> This blessing was fulfilled through Samuel’s six missions.<sup>5</sup>

1. Spring and summer 1830: Samuel served alone in the neighboring communities around Palmyra, New York.<sup>6</sup>
2. January 31, 1831, to April 1831: Samuel Smith and Orson Pratt preached the gospel in the vicinity of Kirtland, Ohio. In April they baptized about 50 people, many previously of the Campbellite faith.<sup>7</sup>
3. June 4, 1831, to mid-November 1831: Samuel, who had recently been ordained a high priest, was one of many elders called to Independence, Missouri (see D&C 52:1–2, 30; 57:1–3). He and his missionary companion, Reynolds Cahoon, had powerful missionary experiences. They returned to Kirtland on September 28 but were immediately asked to serve briefly in southern Ohio.
4. November 16, 1831, to late December 1831: Samuel Smith and

William McLellin served in eastern Ohio (see D&C 66:7–8). William recorded that Samuel laid his hands upon a badly scalded child and the burn was healed “in so much that it did not even so much as blister.”<sup>8</sup> This mission ended abruptly after 40 days because William had murmured in his heart (see D&C 75:6–8).

5. February 1, 1832, to December 22, 1832: Samuel Smith and Orson Hyde were called to serve in New England (see D&C 75:13). Their efforts resulted in about 60 baptisms and the establishment of four branches.
6. April 1841 to November 1841: Scott County, Illinois (see page 49).

### NOTES

1. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* (1951), 166.
2. See *Millennial Star*, Nov. 26, 1864, 774.
3. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s Brothers: Nauvoo and After,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1979, 31.
4. Quoted in Ruby K. Smith, *Mary Bailey* (1954), 42.
5. A letter dated June 25, 1836, from Don Carlos Smith to his wife, Agnes, suggests the possibility of an additional mission. Samuel and Don Carlos (and perhaps another named Wilber) may have been called to serve a mission together in Boston. See Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 56.
6. See *History of the Church*, 7:218.
7. See Kyle R. Walker, *United by Faith: The Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family* (2005), 213–14.
8. See *The Journals of William E. McLellin: 1831–1836*, ed. Jan Shipps and John W. Welch (1994), 66. Spelling and punctuation modernized.



Samuel crossed the river, arranged for them to ride a ferry to Quincy, and then gave them his rented house.

In the spring, Samuel and Don Carlos accepted an offer from a local resident to farm land near Macomb, about 60 miles from Quincy. Both families lived on the farm.<sup>20</sup> This would have been a blessing to Mary. Agnes, Mary's friend from Boston and wife of Don Carlos, had also suffered a mob attack in Missouri. Agnes likely provided comfort to Mary, who had not spoken above a whisper since her attack in Missouri."<sup>21</sup>

### Life in Nauvoo and Plymouth

At some point, Samuel and his family moved to Nauvoo. Samuel's daughter Mary remembered happy times. "Father would seat himself in the middle of the room. . . . The first on his lap got a kiss; so we would continue until we had all obtained the coveted kiss. . . . When we were all well tired out and quite sleepy . . . Father would take my brother [Samuel]—who was the youngest—in his lap, and sing him to sleep."<sup>22</sup>

Sadly, Samuel's beloved wife, Mary, died in January 1841 at age 32 after giving birth to Lucy Bailey Smith. Infant Lucy died a few weeks later. Samuel was left without his wife, and the three children, all under age six, were left without a mother.

For a while, Samuel continued his church and civic activities in Nauvoo, where he served in a bishopric, in the city government, and as a captain in the Nauvoo Legion.

In 1841 he was called to serve a mission to Scott County, Illinois. There, on April 29, he married Levira Clark, a Latter-day Saint from Livonia, New York, whom he likely knew from his earlier missions. The children came to live with Levira, who remained at her parents' home in Scott County until Samuel finished his mission in the fall.<sup>23</sup> It seems likely he visited his family often during his mission, since he served in the area.

Samuel and his family returned to Nauvoo, where he resumed some of his former church and civic activities. In the fall of 1842, when his brother William needed help, Samuel moved his family, which now included a



**Copies of the Book of Mormon left by Samuel (top) in New York led to the baptism of future Church leaders Brigham Young (middle) and Heber C. Kimball (bottom).**





***Above: Samuel rode to Carthage at great speed. The mob shot at him, a bullet passing through the top of his hat. Samuel, however, was an excellent horseman and outran them.***

***Right: Samuel helped load the bodies of his brothers Joseph and Hyrum into two wagons, and then he drove the wagon carrying Joseph to Nauvoo.***

baby named Levira Annette, to Plymouth, about 40 miles from Nauvoo. Here Samuel and Levira helped maintain William's inn while William represented Hancock County in the Illinois Legislature until 1843.

When William returned, Samuel acquired a farm north of Plymouth. Again he cleared timber, built fences, and farmed, preaching the gospel when he had the opportunity.<sup>24</sup> Another child, Louisa, was born in August and, sadly, died as an infant.

During this time Samuel made several trips to Nauvoo. On December 17, 1843, about seven months before he died, he attended a prayer meeting in the upper room of the Prophet's red brick store. At this time, Samuel and others made eternal covenants as they received their temple ordinances. Certainly this was a blessing in his life since he would not live to see the temple finished in Nauvoo.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Samuel Rides to Carthage**

On June 27, 1844, while still living in Plymouth, Samuel learned that his brothers

Joseph and Hyrum, who were in Carthage Jail with John Taylor and Willard Richards, were in danger. Samuel headed toward Carthage with a 14-year-old boy driving a wagon. On the way they met a mob, which attacked when they learned Samuel was Joseph Smith's brother. The boy headed to Carthage with the wagon, and Samuel escaped into the woods "after severe fatigue, and much danger."<sup>26</sup>

He made his way home and "acquired a horse noted for its speed."<sup>27</sup> His six-year-old daughter, Mary, remembers this moment: "My father came into the house in much excitement, and said . . . 'I think I can break through the mob and get to Carthage' and immediately he mounted the horse and was gone."<sup>28</sup>

As he neared the town, a man and woman escaping in a buggy told him his brothers had been killed. Samuel rode on at great speed. Some of the mob, expecting his return, had hidden in a thicket. They chased Samuel, shooting at him. A bullet passed through the top of his hat, but Samuel, an excellent horseman, outran them.

Samuel was the first Latter-day Saint to arrive at the jail,<sup>29</sup> but by then Joseph and Hyrum were already dead. The violence was over, the mob had retreated, and Samuel had a piercing pain in his side.

Samuel helped Willard Richards take the two bodies and the severely wounded John Taylor to a nearby hotel owned by Artois Hamilton. That night Willard wrote a letter to Emma telling her that Joseph and Hyrum were dead. Samuel's signature appears alongside that of Willard Richards and John Taylor.<sup>30</sup>

The next day, Samuel, Willard, and Artois took the bodies of Joseph and Hyrum in two wagons to the Mansion House in Nauvoo. Samuel drove the wagon carrying the body of his brother Joseph. A guard of eight men accompanied them.<sup>31</sup>

After Lucy viewed the bodies, Samuel said, "Mother, I have had a dreadful distress in my side ever since I was chased by the mob."<sup>32</sup>

Though Samuel was in pain and Levira was only weeks away from delivering a baby, the family moved into a two-story frame house opposite the Mansion House. Samuel's health continued to decline. On July 30, just 34 days after Joseph and Hyrum

died, Samuel died. His young daughter Mary remembered how "silence gave way to sobs"<sup>33</sup> after their father passed away. His cause of death was listed as bilious fever.<sup>34</sup>

Levira, "a mild, quiet" woman,<sup>35</sup> left Susannah, Mary, and Samuel with Hyrum's widow, Mary Fielding Smith, and took her toddler to her parents. Twenty-one days after Samuel died, Lucy J. C. Smith was born and died soon after. Levira was ill and was unable to return to Nauvoo for some time.

### "Equal to Thy Brethren"

Samuel's obituary in the *Times and Seasons* said: "If ever there lived a good man upon the earth, Samuel H. Smith was that person. His labors in the church from first to last, . . . [and his] many saintly traits of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, shall be given of him hereafter as a man of God."<sup>36</sup>

Samuel H. Smith willingly gave everything, including his life, to help build the kingdom of God. He did not "exaggerate either his importance or his experiences."<sup>37</sup> His life attests to the truth that "by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). With a pure heart, Samuel tended to the needs of his wife, children, parents, and siblings. Because of Samuel, the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum had more freedom to fulfill their missions relative to the Restoration of the gospel. In that, the words of a blessing from Father Smith were fulfilled: "Thou shall hear [the Lord's] voice [saying] Samuel, Samuel. Thou shalt be equal to thy brethren."<sup>38</sup> ■

### NOTES

1. Quoted in Ruby K. Smith, *Mary Bailey* (1954), 56.
2. See Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 96.
3. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 331.
4. Quoted in Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 83.
5. Quoted in Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 41.
6. The Smiths were also the parents of Alvin, Hyrum, Sophronia, Joseph Jr., William, Katharine, Don Carlos, Lucy, and two infant sons who died at birth. See "The First Family of the Restoration," *Ensign*, Dec. 2005, 7–9.
7. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 87.
8. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 87.
9. *Deseret Evening News*, Jan. 20, 1894, 11.
10. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 112.
11. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, July 25, 1844, 5.
12. See *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jesse, 3 vols. (1989–94), 1:10.
13. *History of the Church*, 1:44. Some sources list Samuel's baptism as May 15.
14. "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," Book of Mormon.
15. See *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 246.
16. Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 83.
17. B. H. Roberts, *New Witness for God*, 3 vols. (1909), 2:294.
18. See Kyle R. Walker, *United by Faith: The Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family* (2005), 225.
19. For the story of their escape, see *History of the Church*, 7:219–20.
20. See Walker, *United by Faith*, 227.
21. See Walker, *United by Faith*, 225.
22. Quoted in Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 87.
23. See Journal History, July 30, 1849.
24. See *History of the Church*, 7:221.
25. See Journal History, Dec. 17, 1843.
26. B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (1965), 450.
27. Walker, *United by Faith*, 230.
28. Quoted in Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 90.
29. See *History of the Church*, 7:110–11.
30. See *History of the Church*, 6:624–25.
31. See Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (2002), 400–401.
32. Quoted in *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 459.
33. Quoted in Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 91.
34. See Walker, *United by Faith*, 234–35.
35. See Ruby Smith, *Mary Bailey*, 92.
36. Quoted in *History of the Church*, 7:222.
37. Walker, *United by Faith*, 220.
38. Quoted in Walker, *United by Faith*, 223.



DEATH OF A PROPHET, BY GARY E. SMITH