

Joseph Smith in Harmony



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The time Joseph Smith spent around Harmony, Pennsylvania, was eventful and inspiring, and a newly restored historic site helps capture it all.

In December 1827, the Prophet Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, moved from Palmyra, New York, to northeastern Pennsylvania, taking with them the golden plates, which Joseph had recently obtained from the angel Moroni. In Pennsylvania, Joseph embarked on the translation of the Book of Mormon, and he also received several revelations and angelic visitations during this period. Paramount among these sacred events was the restoration of priesthood authority and keys that prepared and enabled Joseph to organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

On September 19, President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will dedicate the Priesthood Restoration Site in northeastern Pennsylvania, USA. Located along the Susquehanna River, the restored setting, known in scripture as Harmony, re-creates Joseph and Emma's first home, as well as the nearby home of Emma's parents. It also features a visitors' center, which is incorporated into a new meetinghouse, and walking paths in the woods and down to the riverbank. Visitors to this historic site will learn the compelling story of the young Prophet Joseph, who was seeking to do God's will and struggling in the face of challenges and opposition. At Harmony, Joseph learned line upon line what it would mean to be a prophet of God in the latter days.

Emma Hale and Harmony

Joseph Smith first arrived in Harmony in the autumn of 1825. Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote that earlier that year "a man by the name of Josiah Stool [Stowell] came

*Joseph and Emma's home
as it appeared circa 1880*

from Chenango County, New York, to get Joseph to assist him in digging for a silver mine. He came for Joseph from having heard, that [Joseph] was in possession of certain means, by which he could discern things, that could not be seen by the natural eye.”¹

Stowell was a prominent resident of South Bainbridge, New York, and for a man of his standing to be searching for buried treasure was not at all unusual, since it was a common folk practice of the time. By 1825, young Joseph had a reputation in Manchester and Palmyra for his activities as a treasure seer, or someone who used a seer stone to locate gold or other valuable objects buried in the earth.² Thus, it was no surprise that Stowell specifically sought out Joseph’s services.

In November of 1825, Joseph the Prophet, his father (Joseph Sr.), and other men signed an agreement with Stowell, and the crew boarded at the farm of Isaac and Elizabeth Hale.³ There Joseph first met the Hales’ 21-year-old daughter, Emma. Joseph eventually convinced Stowell to abandon his search for the mine, but rather than returning home, Joseph moved to South Bainbridge to work on Stowell’s farm. Despite the demands of his work and the 28-mile distance from South Bainbridge to Harmony, the young suitor made time to call on Emma as often as possible. He also faced the disdain and outright rejection of Emma’s father, who said Joseph “was a stranger [perhaps because he came from New York], and followed a business that I could not approve,” apparently a reference to Joseph’s involvement with the search for the mine.⁴

Emma Hale, 17 months older than Joseph, had been born on July 10, 1804, the seventh of nine children of Isaac and Elizabeth Lewis Hale, on their 130-acre (53 ha) farm in Harmony Township. The farm consisted of a large orchard of apples and pears, a substantial garden, and groves of maple trees used for producing sugar. Isaac also owned a herd of sheep and hunted large game, tanning hides and smoking meat, which he exported downriver.⁵

As a young woman, Emma learned to work hard. She was attractive, tall, intelligent, and well educated. She had a quick mind with “uncommon ability . . . and judgement.”⁶ She was also devoutly religious. It was no wonder that Joseph Smith became smitten with her.⁷



Joseph and Emma Elope

When Emma visited her sister in Colesville and the Stowell family in South Bainbridge in January 1827, Joseph, then living nearby with the Joseph Knight family, called on her and convinced her to marry him despite her father’s objections. Years later she said, “I had no intention of marrying when I left home.” However, “preferring to marry him to any other man I knew, I consented.”⁸

Emma and Joseph went to the home of Zechariah Tarble, justice of the peace in South Bainbridge, and were married on January 18, 1827. Afterward, Stowell took them to Manchester, where they lived with Joseph’s family while Joseph helped on the Smith farm and awaited his fourth and final prearranged appointment with the angel Moroni.

Shortly after midnight on September 22, hoping to acquire the golden plates without arousing the notice of thieves and ruffians who had previously threatened them, Joseph and Emma borrowed a wagon and drove to the Hill Cumorah, where the plates were hidden. While Joseph proceeded to the designated location and received the plates from Moroni, Emma knelt in prayer and waited. Joseph hid the plates in the woods and then returned home with Emma. Joseph later retrieved the plates when he felt it was safe to do so.⁹

News that Joseph had the plates spread quickly. Although he wanted to begin translating them right away, the persistent attempts by mobs to find the plates and the constant threats against Joseph made this impossible. Earlier that summer, Isaac Hale had invited Joseph and Emma to move to Harmony, which they had planned to do. The threats led them to make the move soon after retrieving the plates so the Prophet could work without interference.¹⁰

1. Joseph and Emma Smith Home: Joseph and Emma moved into a small frame home on 13½ acres, which they eventually purchased from Emma's father, Isaac Hale. Here Joseph translated most of the Book of Mormon, including the lost 116 manuscript pages, received a number of early revelations, and may have worked on his revision of the Bible.

2. Isaac and Elizabeth Hale Home: Isaac and Elizabeth Hale built a large frame home on their 130-acre farm between 1809 and 1812. Isaac settled the property in 1788, and Emma was born here in 1804 in the family's earlier log home. Joseph and Emma lived briefly in this frame home before settling into a home built by Emma's brother Jesse and his family.

3. Woods: The Smiths had a large sugar maple grove on the northern end of their property where Joseph kept the golden plates safely hidden and could find seclusion. On May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver Cowdery "repaired to the woods" to pray and received the visitation of John the Baptist, who restored priesthood keys.

4. Historic Photo (see p. 52): This photograph taken circa 1880 shows the southeastern view from Oquaga Road. (Arrow on map shows photographer's vantage point.)

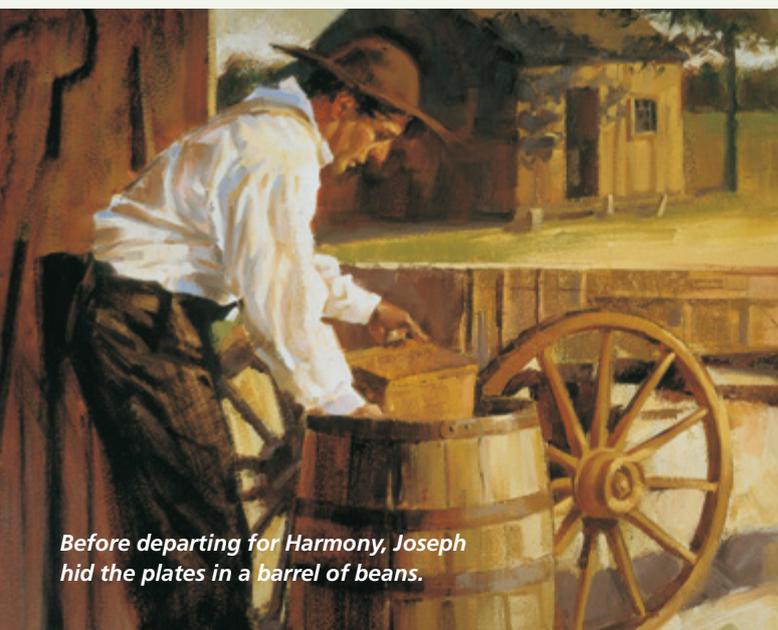
5. Susquehanna River: The Hale and Smith farms were located on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Joseph and Oliver Cowdery baptized each other here on May 15, 1829, in fulfillment of John the Baptist's command "to go and be baptized" (Joseph Smith—History 1:70).

6. Cemetery: Joseph and Emma could look out their window and see the stone marking the grave of their infant son in the small cemetery on the McKune property next door. Emma's parents were later buried here, as well as other Hale relatives.

7. Purported Site of Spanish Mine: Joseph and his father, Joseph Smith Sr., came to Harmony in 1825 to work for Josiah Stowell Sr., excavating what he believed was a lost Spanish silver mine. The Smiths and the other workmen boarded on the Hale farm nearby for a few weeks, during which time young Joseph began courting Emma Hale.



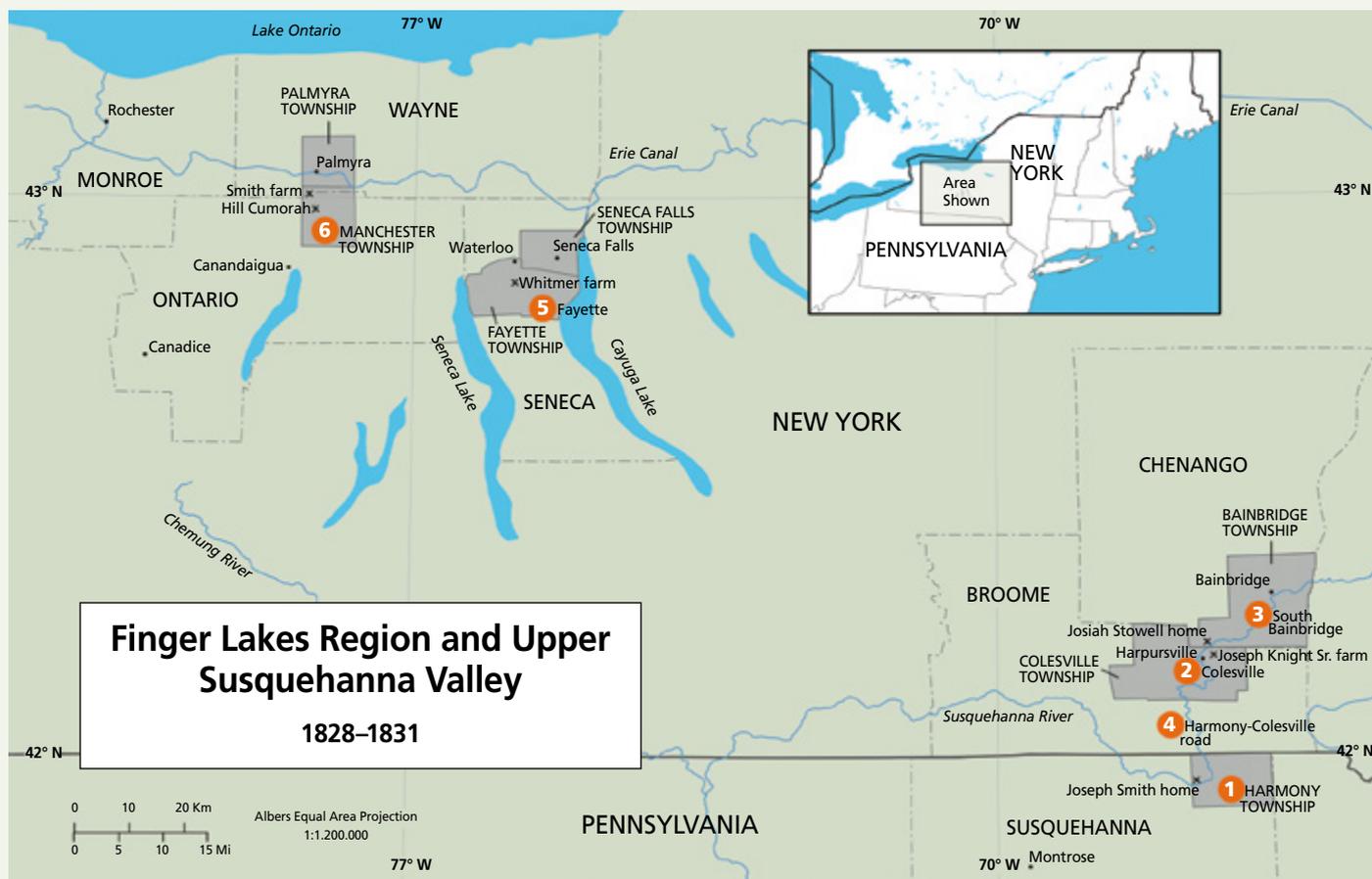
LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY LIBRARY. MAP COURTESY OF THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS (RESEARCH BY MARK L. STAKER, JENNIFER L. LUND, AND BENJAMIN PYKLES); CARTOGRAPHY BY JONATHAN WEST), JOSEPH SMITH HIDING THE GOLD PLATES (VA. BARREL, BY SAMI LAWLOR)



Before departing for Harmony, Joseph hid the plates in a barrel of beans.

Return to Harmony

In November 1827, Emma's brother Alva arrived in Manchester with a wagon to take the couple to Harmony. Joseph later wrote that he and Emma were "very poor and the persecution so heavy upon us that there was no probability that we would ever be otherwise." But the hand of the Lord was soon evident. "We found a friend in a Gentleman by the name of Martin Harris, who came to us and gave me fifty dollars to assist us in our affliction." As Joseph and Emma prepared to leave with Alva, Joseph and Alva each placed a heavy club in the wagon for defense,



1. Harmony: Joseph and Emma Smith made their home in Harmony Township from December 1827 until early September 1830, when they left permanently and moved to Fayette Township, New York, because of increasing opposition in Harmony.

2. Colesville: Joseph first came to Colesville in 1826 when he took a job as a day laborer working for Joseph Knight Sr. The Knight family were among his earliest supporters and converts. Joseph preached

here often, and a large branch was established in the area. Many were baptized on the Knight farm, including Emma. The Colesville Branch moved to Ohio together in April 1831.

3. South Bainbridge: Joseph Smith continued working for Josiah Stowell Sr. on his farm at South Bainbridge in 1825–26. Joseph and Emma married here in 1827.

4. Road between Harmony and Colesville: While traveling between Colesville and Harmony,

Joseph and Oliver Cowdery received a visitation from Peter, James, and John, who restored priesthood keys, including “the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:20; see also D&C 27:12). Neither the exact location nor the exact date of this event is known.

5. Fayette: Joseph and Emma, accompanied by Oliver Cowdery, moved temporarily to the home of Peter and Mary Whitmer in June 1829 to finish the translation of the Book of Mormon.

6. Manchester: Immediately after their marriage, Joseph and Emma moved to the Smith family farm. After Joseph obtained the golden plates from the angel Moroni and pressures began to mount, they returned to Harmony to begin the translation. Family members often traveled the 130 miles between Manchester and Harmony.

and they hid the box containing the plates in a barrel, filled the barrel one-third full of beans, and sealed the lid. They arrived in Harmony in December.¹¹

Not long after, Emma’s father had the opportunity to hold the box containing the plates. However, when Joseph told him he could not open it to look at the plates, Isaac became frustrated and said that if he couldn’t see the plates, Joseph would have to take them away. Joseph then hid the plates in a nearby hillside. In February 1828, Joseph and Emma moved into a small home built by Emma’s brother Jesse on a modest farm divided from Isaac’s land.¹²

Book of Mormon Translation

After the couple settled into their new home, Joseph resumed translating, with Emma as his scribe. To Emma, the translation process was “a marvel and a wonder,” especially because her husband was so unlearned. Indeed, she related that Joseph “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictat[e] a book like the Book of Mormon.”¹³ Further, she said that Joseph “had such a limited knowledge of history at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, as Joseph labored diligently, he found that the Lord blessed him

with extraordinary capabilities. After returning from meals or other interruptions, for instance, Joseph would begin at once where he had left off “without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him.”¹⁵

Not all the details about the translation of the Book of Mormon are known, but Joseph and his scribes did mention his use of two instruments. One was the Urim and Thummim (called the “interpreters” in the Book of Mormon), which Joseph received with the plates and “which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow.” The other instrument was a seer stone that Joseph had found some years before. Both of these instruments helped him translate the plates “by the gift, and power of God.”¹⁶

Emma served as Joseph’s scribe for more than four months. She received a reprieve with the arrival of Martin Harris on April 12, 1828. By June 14, at least 116 pages had been translated. The work then paused because Joseph and Emma were expecting the birth of their first child any day, and Martin returned home, taking with him a portion of the manuscript to show his family in New York.

Joseph and Emma’s First Child Dies

Emma gave birth to their first child—a boy—on June 15, but the baby died shortly after birth.¹⁷ Emma herself became gravely ill. For two weeks she lay near death while Joseph cared for her. At last Emma began to recover, and she urged Joseph to check on the manuscript. Nearly three weeks had passed since Martin had left, but he had not returned or sent word. Leaving Emma in the care of her mother, Joseph went to New York to inquire about the manuscript.¹⁸

Joseph discovered to his horror that Martin Harris had lost the manuscript. The young prophet, awash in his anguish, returned to Harmony empty-handed. These were some of his darkest days. Severely chastised by the Lord (see D&C 3), Joseph was required to return the golden plates to Moroni even though he had not finished the translation.

Book of Mormon Translation Resumes

Joseph humbled himself before the Lord and learned an important truth: even though he had “transgressed the commandments and the laws of God” and “feared man

more than God,” God was merciful. If Joseph repented, he was “still chosen” and “again called to the work.”¹⁹ Moroni returned the ancient record on September 22, 1828. Over the next several months, however, the work progressed slowly until the Lord provided a new scribe in the form of Oliver Cowdery. Oliver, a schoolteacher, had been boarding with Joseph’s parents when he learned of Joseph’s work. After receiving a heavenly manifestation of the truthfulness of Joseph’s visions, Oliver set out for Harmony in the company of Joseph’s brother Samuel. Oliver arrived at the Prophet’s home on April 5, 1829.²⁰ Two days later, Oliver began his role as scribe while Joseph translated.

SCRIPTURES IN HARMONY, PENNSYLVANIA

The Lord blessed Joseph Smith with a rich outpouring of the gifts of translation and revelation while he lived at Harmony. Joseph translated most of the Book of Mormon here and received 15 revelations now included in the Doctrine and Covenants. He may have also begun his first efforts at a new translation, or revision, of the Old Testament. Joseph’s brief stay at Harmony resulted in more scripture than any other period of his life.

Book of Mormon

- 116 Lost Manuscript Pages
- Probably Mosiah–Moroni

Doctrine and Covenants

- Section 3, July 1828
- Section 4, February 1829
- Section 5, March 1829
- Section 6, April 1829
- Section 7, April 1829
- Section 8, April 1829
- Section 9, April 1829
- Section 10, April 1829

Pearl of Great Price

- Probably Moses 1¹
- Section 11, May 1829
- Section 12, May 1829
- Section 13, May 1829²
- Section 24, July 1830
- Section 25, July 1830
- Section 26, July 1830
- Section 27, August and September 1830

NOTES

1. A location is not identified in the manuscript heading for the visions of Moses. The Prophet was living in Harmony in June 1830 when this revelation was received, but he also visited at Manchester, Fayette, and Colesville. See *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2013), 152.
2. This account of Joseph and Oliver’s ordination to the Aaronic Priesthood was included for the first time in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. It presents the words of John the Baptist as included in Joseph’s history (see Joseph Smith—History 1:69).



On May 15, 1829, Joseph and Oliver received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist.

Aaronic Priesthood Restoration

By May, Joseph and Oliver reached a passage in the Book of Mormon that prompted them to pray regarding the authority to baptize. On May 15, as Oliver later noted, they “repaired to the woods . . . and called upon the name of the Lord.”²¹

Their prayer was answered by a glorious angelic visitation from John the Baptist, who conferred upon them the Priesthood of Aaron and commanded them to be baptized (see D&C 13). The two men subsequently “repaired to the water, even to the Susquehanna River, and were baptized.”²² Joseph and Oliver later received keys associated with the Melchizedek Priesthood somewhere along the Susquehanna River between Harmony and Colesville. We know little about this most sacred event other than the reference in scripture to the general location (see D&C 128:20).

At least initially, persecution forced Joseph and Oliver “to keep secret the circumstances” of their having received the priesthood and been baptized.²³

Leaving Harmony

Joseph and Oliver continued their work in Harmony, but opposition in the area had become quite intense, and Oliver wrote to David Whitmer (whom he had met in Palmyra in the autumn of 1828), asking if the Whitmer family could help them. Peter Whitmer Sr., David’s father, agreed to help, and early in June, David arrived in a wagon to move Joseph and Oliver to the Whitmer home in Fayette

Township, New York, where they could finish the translation. Uprooted once again, Joseph and Oliver left with David, and Emma followed shortly thereafter.²⁴

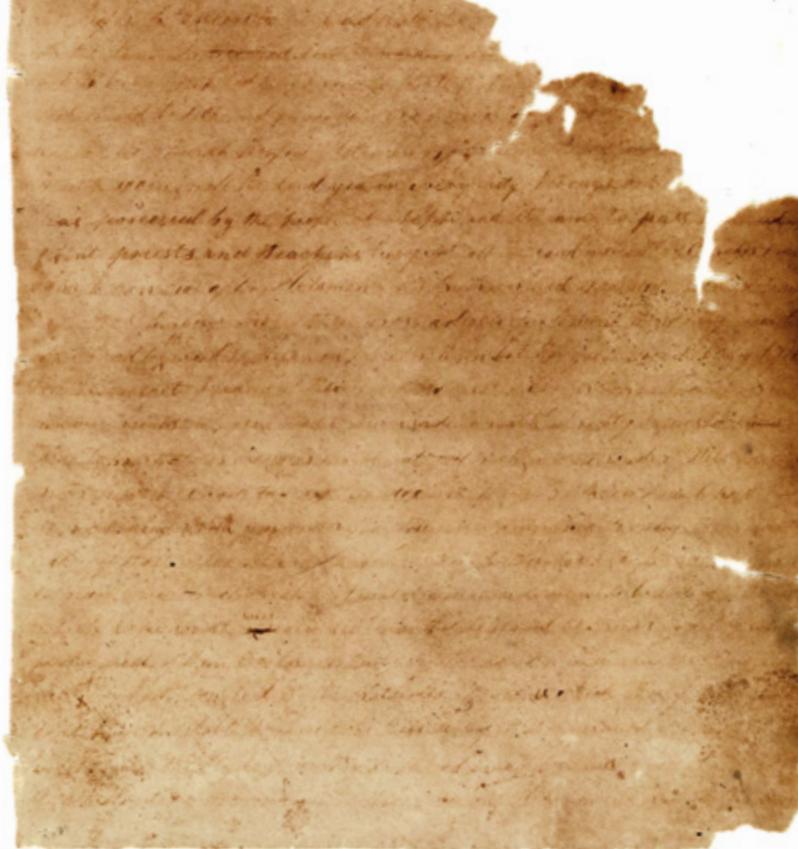
In those more supportive circumstances, Joseph was able to finish the translation. Joseph and others then arranged for the Book of Mormon to be printed, and he and Emma returned quietly to Harmony on Sunday morning, October 4, 1829. Fortunately, they found that opposition in the area had quieted considerably.²⁵ For the next 10 months, Joseph and Emma resided in their home at Harmony with only brief excursions away. The most memorable of these trips was to Fayette, where the Church was officially organized on April 6, 1830. Two months later, Joseph was arrested for “setting the country in an uproar by preaching the Book of Mormon.”²⁶ Although Joseph was acquitted at a trial in South Bainbridge, it was clear that opposition to Joseph’s work would only increase.

Around the time of the trial in July 1830, Joseph recorded, someone told Isaac Hale “falsehoods concerning me, of the most shameful nature, which turned the Old gentleman and his family so much against us, that they would no longer promise us protection, nor believe our doctrines.”²⁷ But Joseph also encountered opposition in Colesville, Fayette, and Manchester. He added to his home that summer as though he planned to stay in Harmony. The Lord, however, had something different for him.

Only weeks later, around mid-September, Joseph and Emma left Harmony to take care of Church responsibilities in New York. While there, Joseph Smith received a series of revelations calling missionaries to preach to the Lamanites on the western frontier (see D&C 28, 30, and 32), and Emma, expecting twins, directed all of her efforts toward helping make clothing for the missionaries. She became ill, and by the time she recovered, the Lord had called them to gather in Ohio. In January 1831, Joseph and Emma left for Ohio, never to return to Harmony.

While Joseph and Emma lived at Harmony for only a brief time (about three years), their experiences in this valley were crucial to God’s plan for the unfolding restoration of His gospel. Here Joseph found the spiritual solitude and protection necessary to focus on his calling to translate

Photograph of a page of the original handwritten manuscript of the Book of Mormon (covering Alma 45:17–46:6)



the Book of Mormon. Through this period, the Lord helped Joseph further understand his divine role as prophet, seer, and revelator. Through revelation he came to understand that the Church of Christ would administer the gospel and its ordinances, gather Israel, and establish Zion in the latter days, preparatory to the Savior's Second Coming. None of these lessons came easily but involved struggle, sacrifice, and personal tragedy. Nevertheless, through these experiences the Lord revealed that a restoration of scripture, authority, and the Church was necessary to bring about the salvation of men. And Joseph Smith came to understand what it would mean to be the instrument by which God would restore the plan of salvation to earth and lay the foundations for the fulfillment of His latter-day work. ■

NOTES

- Lucy Mack Smith, "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," 95, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845.
- Martin Harris said that Joseph once found a lost object by looking at his seer stone inside a hat (see Joel Tiffany, ed., "Mormonism," *Tiffany's Monthly: Devoted to the Investigation of the Science of Mind*, Aug. 1859, 164). Joseph reportedly found the stone while he, his brother Alvin, and a neighbor were digging a well in 1822 (see Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* [1834], 241). As a prominent scholar has written, "In the early nineteenth century, treasure seekers turned increasingly to 'seer-stones' or 'peep-stones' as a more ready and reliable alternative to dreams" (Alan Taylor, "The Early Republic's Supernatural Economy: Treasure Seeking in the American Northeast, 1780–1830," *American Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1 [Spring 1986], 10).
- See "Appendix 1: Agreement of Josiah Stowell and Others, 1 November 1825," *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2013), 345–52.
- "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register*, May 1, 1834, 1. Joseph spent part of the year of 1826 at his parents' home in Manchester, New York, and made his annual visit to the Hill Cumorah to receive instructions from the angel Moroni on September 22 of that year. According to Martin Harris, "Joseph said the angel told him that he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them" (in *Tiffany's Monthly*, 169). By all indications, Joseph did not use the seer stone for treasure seeking after he received the plates in September 1827.
- See Isaac Hale Land Deed, Luzerne County Property Deeds, Willingborough Township, vol. 11, pp. 444–45 (recorded June 2, 1810); George Peck, *The Life and Times of Rev. George Peck, D.D.* (1874), 67–68.
- Oliver Cowdery, "Letter VIII," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1835, 201.
- See Lucy Mack Smith, "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 4, page 10, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845; Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate*, 201.
- Emma Smith, in "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saints' Herald*, Oct. 1, 1879, 289.
- See *Tiffany's Monthly*, 164–65; "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 5, pages 7–10, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845.
- See "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 5, pages 10–12, and book 6, pages 2–3, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845; *Tiffany's Monthly*, 170.
- "History Drafts, 1838–circa 1841," *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2012), 238; *Tiffany's Monthly, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 15.
- See *Susquehanna Register*, 1; "Agreement with Isaac Hale, 6 April 1829," *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, 32–34.
- Emma Smith, *Saints' Herald*, 290.
- Emma Smith, in Edmund C. Briggs, "A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856," *Journal of History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Oct. 1916), 454.
- Emma Smith, *Saints' Herald*, 290.
- "Church History," *Times and Seasons*, Mar. 1, 1842, 707; see also Russell M. Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," *Ensign*, July 1993, 62. For more information on the translation process, see lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation; Richard E. Turley Jr., Robin S. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Joseph the Seer," lds.org/go/seerE915.
- See Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania Cemetery Records, McKune Cemetery, 3, 5, 8, 13, 18, 20; "History, 1834–1836," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 28; "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 7, page 1, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845.
- "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," book 7, pages 1–2, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845.
- Doctrine and Covenants 3:6, 7, 10.
- See "History, circa Summer 1832," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 16; Oliver Cowdery, "Dear Brother," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, 14; "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," 143, josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845.
- Patriarchal Blessings, Book 1 (1835), 8–9, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
- Patriarchal Blessings, Book 1, 8–9.
- "History Drafts, 1838–circa 1841," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 296.
- See "History Drafts, 1838–circa 1841," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 306.
- See "Letter to Oliver Cowdery, 22 October 1829," *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, 94–97.
- "History Drafts, 1838–circa 1841," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 396.
- "History Drafts, 1838–circa 1841," *Histories, Volume 1: 1832–1844*, 434.