

An aerial map of the Aaronic Priesthood Restoration Area. The map shows a road running diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. To the left of the road, there is a large white house with a red roof labeled 'ISAAC & ELIZABETH HALE HOME'. Below it is a smaller red barn-like house labeled 'JOSEPH & EMMA SMITH HOME'. Further down the road is a small monument labeled 'AARONIC PRIESTHOOD RESTORATION MONUMENT'. To the right of the road, there is a large blue building with a steeple labeled 'VISITOR'S CENTER'. Below it is a cemetery labeled 'McKUNE CEMETERY' with several tombstones. The background is filled with green trees and a blue river labeled 'SUSQUEHANNA RIVER' at the bottom left.

AARONIC PRIESTHOOD  
RESTORATION AREA

ISAAC & ELIZABETH  
HALE HOME

JOSEPH & EMMA  
SMITH HOME

AARONIC PRIESTHOOD  
RESTORATION MONUMENT

VISITOR'S  
CENTER

McKUNE  
CEMETERY

*It was blessed. In the very place where the  
priesthood of God began to be restored—the  
priesthood that blesses the lives of millions  
of people around the world—God blessed me  
with a reassurance that the holy  
priesthood is once again upon the earth.*

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER



# In the VERY PLACE

*It was hot and humid, and I could hardly work. I needed a priesthood blessing.*

By Gary L. Boatright Jr.

In June 2015, I had the opportunity to work at the Priesthood Restoration Site in Pennsylvania, USA. I don't remember specifically what I was asked to do when I first got there, but I remember being hot and dripping in sweat. Living in the western United States, I'm used to hot summer days—but not humid ones. As I worked, sweat poured from my head, my clothes were sticking to me, and I felt myself getting weaker by the minute. But, knowing I had five days of work ahead of me, I pushed on.

By lunchtime, I was physically exhausted, but I knew something else was happening to me. I was nauseated and probably dehydrated. I'd been working all morning, sweating like I never had before, and I hadn't had anything to drink since breakfast. I walked to a cooler, pulled out a couple of water bottles, and drank. I could feel my body thanking me for the long-overdue water, but the refreshing feeling was short-lived. "Maybe I need more," I thought, so I pulled a third bottle out and drank more water. Big mistake! As I finished off the last bottle, I immediately felt worse. I went into the Smith home and found a bench where I could lie down. Closing my eyes, I prayed that I would feel better.

Fortunately, the lunch hour gave me a short break, even though I didn't want anything to eat. We returned to the site with everyone rested, fed, and ready for more work—except for me. I began to question myself: "Why did you come?" Then I heard someone ask, "Do you want a blessing?"

Realizing that I wasn't going to get better on my own, I replied, "I do." We walked into the reconstructed Smith home. I sat on a chair, and the men in our group gathered around me. As I felt the weight of their hands on my head, an overwhelming sense of gratitude filled my heart. The Spirit whispered to me, "You are in a holy place."

My thoughts went to the building I was in. In this space, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated a significant portion of the Book of Mormon. In this space, the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery discussed the need for baptism for the remission of sins. In this space, these two young men, seeking inspiration from God, decided to go to the nearby woods to pray for guidance and revelation.

Heavenly Father not only heard their prayer but also immediately answered it.

Joseph Smith recalled:

"While we were thus employed, praying





Joseph and Emma Smith home

*As I felt the weight of their hands on my head, an overwhelming sense of gratitude filled my heart. The Spirit whispered to me, "You are in a holy place."*

and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

*"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministring of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness"* (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69).

God sent John the Baptist, who conferred priesthood authority and commanded the two to baptize each other. This event was the first of many in which priesthood authority and keys would be restored to the earth by heavenly messengers.

As my friends said, "Amen," I realized that what I had just experienced had happened because of a conversation between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in that very same

space in May 1829. I don't remember what was said in the blessing. I wasn't immediately healed. But I do know that I was blessed. In the very place where the priesthood of God began to be restored—the priesthood that blesses the lives of millions of people around the world—God blessed me with a reassurance that the holy priesthood is once again upon the earth. With this reassurance came a strengthened testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, translated by His prophet Joseph Smith Jr.

I know that this site is more than the two reconstructed homes. It's more than the exhibits in the visitors' center. It's more than the Church's investment of time and money to make it an official historic site. It is the place where the priesthood of God began to be restored—the priesthood that blesses the lives of millions of people around the world. **NE**

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