

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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Edited by  
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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JOSEPH I. BENTLEY

## SMITH, JOSEPH, III

See: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

## SMITH, JOSEPH, SR.

Joseph Smith, Sr. (1771–1840), father of the Prophet Joseph SMITH, believed in the religious experiences of his son and supported him from the time of his FIRST VISION. He later received significant callings in the newly formed Church. Joseph, Sr., died following the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from Missouri and was considered a martyr for the cause.

Joseph Smith, Sr., was born in Topsfield, Massachusetts, July 12, 1771, the third of eleven children born to Asael and Mary Duty Smith (see SMITH FAMILY ANCESTORS). As a young man, he moved with his parents to Tunbridge, Vermont, where he met Lucy Mack (see Lucy Mack SMITH). They were married January 24, 1796, in Tunbridge (see SMITH FAMILY).

The couple began married life as part owners in the Asael Smith farm and received a \$1,000 wedding present from Lucy's brother Stephen and his business partner, John Mudget. Joseph and

Lucy's finances declined, however, after they opened a mercantile store in Randolph and invested in ginseng, a root that grew wild in Vermont and was prized in China as a medicine. A failed exporting venture required them to sell their farm and sacrifice their wedding gift to pay their debts. Now tenants instead of landowners, they moved from one rented farm to another in Vermont and New Hampshire. After three successive crop failures in Norwich, Vermont, they moved to Palmyra, New York, in 1816.

Like his father, Joseph, Sr., was a religious man, but, remained aloof from conventional religion. From 1811 to 1819 he had seven dreams that reflected his yearnings for redemption and may have prepared him to believe in his son Joseph's VISIONS, despite the fierce opposition that they aroused among others who heard of them.

The Smiths purchased a 100-acre farm in Manchester, New York, soon after their arrival from Vermont in 1816, but lost it in 1825 when they were unable to make the final yearly payment of \$100. In an effort to raise the money, Joseph, Sr., and his son Joseph joined Josiah Stowell in a venture to dig for purported treasure in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Critics of the Smith family have used this incident as evidence of their interest in money digging. While the practice of seeking buried treasure was common at that time in the Northeast and Joseph, Sr., may have participated in searching for it, his digging for Stowell was a desperate attempt to earn money to meet a mortgage payment. After they lost their farm, the Smiths again became tenant farmers.

In 1829 a revelation to Joseph SMITH, Jr., called his father to participate in the "marvelous work" about to be accomplished (D&C 4), and soon thereafter, Joseph, Sr., became one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon and saw and held the GOLD PLATES (see BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES). He was present when the Church was organized on April 6, 1830, and was baptized on the same day (see ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, 1830). He was ordained the first PATRIARCH TO THE CHURCH in 1833 and in that office gave blessings of comfort and inspiration throughout the remainder of his life. In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834 he was called also as a member of the high council.

Joseph, Sr., and Lucy moved with the Church from New York to Ohio, Missouri, and finally Nauvoo, Illinois. They operated a farm in Kirtland, Ohio, and a boardinghouse in Far West, Missouri.

In 1839, they assisted hundreds of Saints fleeing from Missouri to Quincy, Illinois (*see* MISSOURI CONFLICT).

Father Smith, as Church members came to call him, suffered more than his share of life's vicissitudes. In 1830 he was arrested in New York and spent a month in jail because of a \$14 debt. In Ohio in 1837 he was charged with riot in connection with a confrontation with apostates in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE. He also suffered a serious illness in Ohio and was healed through a blessing given him by Joseph, Jr.

During the Missouri persecutions in the fall of 1838, Joseph, Sr., again became ill. He made the forced exodus from Missouri to Illinois in 1839 in cold and rain, and illness continued to plague him in Nauvoo, where he died on September 14, 1840. Before his death, he called his children to his bedside to give them final blessings. He assured his son Joseph that he would live to finish his work. In his final moments, Smith said he saw Alvin, a son who had died nearly seventeen years earlier.

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A. GARY ANDERSON

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## SMITH, JOSEPH, VISIONS OF

See: Visions of Joseph Smith

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## SMITH, JOSEPH F.

Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), sixth PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1901–1918), led the Church in the first two decades of the twentieth century and helped it win increasing respect in American society. He was a son of Hyrum SMITH and Mary Fielding SMITH and a nephew of the Prophet Joseph SMITH.

Joseph Fielding Smith (his full name) was born in Far West, Missouri, on November 13,



Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was ordained an apostle and counselor to Brigham Young at age 27 in 1866. He served in the First Presidency with Presidents Taylor, Woodruff, and Snow. He became the sixth President of the Church in October 1901, serving for a combined total of 52 years. He was an authority on Church doctrine. Selections from his sermons and writings are collected in *Gospel Doctrine*, a standard reference work. From an ambrotype, processed by Nelson Wadsworth.

1838, during one of the most strife-torn years in the Church's history. He was named after his uncle, the Prophet, and a maternal uncle, Joseph Fielding. Less than two weeks earlier, Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been arrested by the Missouri militia during the Battle of Far West (*see* MISSOURI CONFLICT). Mary Fielding, a Canadian convert to the Church who married Hyrum after the death of Jerusha Barden Smith, was severely ill when she gave birth to Joseph, her firstborn. Fortunately, Mary's sister Mercy Fielding Thompson, already nursing a five-month-old daughter, was able to nurse Joseph. One day soon after his birth, hostile men entered the house and ransacked the family's valuables. In the commotion, they threw bedding on the baby Joseph, and he nearly suffocated.

In January 1839, Mary and her two-month-old son visited Hyrum in LIBERTY JAIL and in Febru-