
Emer Harris

1781–1869

D&C 75:30

In 1830 Emer was presented the first bound copy of the Book of Mormon by his brother Martin Harris in the E. B. Grandin bookstore. Emer read the Book of Mormon and was baptized on February 10, 1831, in Windham, Pennsylvania, by Hyrum Smith. Soon after making his baptismal covenant, Emer packed up his possessions and moved to Ohio to be with the Saints of God.

In June 1831, he was ordained an elder. About five months later, on October 25, 1831, he was ordained a high priest. Emer said of that ordination, “He was determined to be for God & none else & with his assistance to do his will.”¹ Two days later, on October 27, 1831, he was appointed a “scribe for Joseph Smith, while they are employed writing and copying the fullness of the scriptures.”²

On January 25, 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation calling Emer Harris and Simeon Carter to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ (see D&C 75:30). When Simeon Carter joined his brother Jared Carter on a mission, Emer served the appointed mission with his brother Martin and wrote, “Brother Martin is with me & has been the grater part of the time since we left Kirtland. We have traveled mutch & Preached mutch. Eighty two have been baptised and many more have believed. We find no end to the call for our labours.”³ The *Evening and Morning Star* newspaper in Independence, Missouri, reported, “Brothers Martin and Emer Harris have baptized 100 persons at Chenango point, New

¹ Minutes, 25–26 October 1831, 11. Joseph Smith Papers.

² LoRene Whitney, “Emer Harris Life Story,” February 16, 2002. FamilySearch.

³ Madge Harris Tuckett and Belle Harris Wilson, *The Martin Harris Story with Biographies of Emer Harris and Dennison Lott Harris* (Provo, UT: Vintage Books, 1983), 121.

York (south of Oneida Lake), within a few weeks.”⁴ They also organized a branch of seventy converts in Springville, Pennsylvania.

By summer of 1833, Emer had returned to Ohio. In December 1833, he purchased a farm in Florence Township, Ohio. By spring of 1836, he had sold his farm and moved his family to Kirtland. In the “City of the Saints,” Emer worked as a carpenter and a joiner on the Kirtland Temple, creating the window sash.

When troubles erupted in Kirtland, Emer moved his family to northern Missouri. He arrived at his destination in October 1838—the very month that Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous extermination order. When attempting to flee the state of Missouri, seeking safety for himself and his family, Emer was stopped by an armed mob. They searched his wagon, looking for valuables. Among his “meager possessions was a chest containing copies of the Book of Mormon. Emer had fitted the books under a false bottom, lined with Fuller’s cloth, in case they were searched by the mobs.”⁵

By the time Emer reached Quincy, Illinois, his health had failed. It took him nearly a year in Quincy to recover before moving his family upriver to Nauvoo. In the city of the Latter-day Saints, Emer labored on the Nauvoo Temple using the same tools he had used on the Kirtland Temple. Before finishing his work, he was forced to cross the Mississippi River to Iowa to escape the menacing mobs. Emer traversed the loess hills of Iowa to reach Council Bluffs, where he remained for about six years.

In 1848 he received a patriarchal blessing from John Smith. In the blessing, he was told, “Thou has not fainted in times of disease and persecution when every evil thing has [been] spoken against the church of the Living God. Thou hast endured in faith. The Lord is well pleased with thee because of the integrity of thy heart.”⁶

In 1852 Emer left Iowa to journey to the Salt Lake Valley. He settled first in Ogden and then in Provo. On October 8, 1853, in Provo, he was ordained a patriarch. Of his blessings, John Henry Smith said, “When old Father Emer Harris came to bless me as a child, no matter what the ailment might be, I never had the least doubt but that health would be my portion.”⁷ On September 2, 1855, Emer was appointed to preside over the high priests in Provo.

⁴ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (February 1833), 70.

⁵ Tuckett and Wilson, *Martin Harris Story*, 127.

⁶ Patriarchal Blessing Book Index, 9:303. Church History Library.

⁷ John Henry Smith, “Unquestioned Integrity,” in Brian H. Stuy, comp., *Collected Discourses* (Burbank, CA and Woodland Hills, UT: B.H.S. Publishers, 1987–92), 183.

In 1862 Brigham Young, recognizing the health concerns of Emer, advised him to move to southern Utah. Emer followed his advice but did not like the hot weather in southern Utah. In 1867 he moved to northern Utah. He died two years later in 1869 in Logan at the home of his son Alma Harris at age eighty-eight.