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The First Presidency

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Abstract: A short history of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints up through 1886.

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"What thou seest, write in a book." REV. 1:11.

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THE FIRST PRESIDENCY.

The First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, consisting of Three, was first organized in Kirtland, Ohio, March 18, 1833, according to a revelation given through Joseph Smith a few days previous (March 8, 1833). On that occasion Sidney Rigdon was ordained to be first and Frederick G. Williams second counselor to President Joseph Smith, who himself had been called of God to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be the first Elder of the Church; and he had already been acknowledged as the president of the High Priesthood at a conference held in Amherst, Lorain County, Ohio, Jan. 25, 1832, and also at a general council, held at Independence, Jackson County, Mo., April 26, 1832.

At an important conference held at Far West, Mo., Nov. 7, 1837, Frederick G. Williams was rejected as a counselor to President Smith, charges having previously been made against him at the conference held in Kirtland September 3, 1837; and Hyrum Smith, by unanimous vote, was appointed in his stead. Hyrum filled this position with honor and ability, until after his father Patriarch Joseph

Smith, senior, died in September, 1840, when he, in a revelation given through Joseph Smith, at Nauvoo Jan. 19, 1841, was called to take the office of Patriarch to the Church, as his father's successor. William Law was called in the same revelation to take Hyrum Smith's place in the First Presidency as second counselor to President Smith. William Law occupied this position until April 18, 1844, when he, together with a number of other apostates, was excommunicated from the Church.

About two months later Joseph the Prophet was martyred in Carthage, after which the Twelve Apostles constituted the presiding quorum of the Church until Dec. 5, 1847, when a council of that quorum was held near Council Bluffs, Iowa, at which Brigham Young was chosen President of the Church, with Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as his counselors. These transactions were ratified by the Church at a conference held in the Log Tabernacle at Council Bluffs, Iowa, Dec. 27, 1847, and at the General Conference held in Great Salt Lake Valley October 8, 1848.

Willard Richards died of dropsy, in Great Salt Lake City, March 11,

1854, and Jedediah M. Grant was called to fill the vacancy thus created, at the general conference April 6, 1854.

President Jedediah M. Grant died at Great Salt Lake City, Dec. 1, 1856, and his place was filled, Jan. 4, 1857, by the appointment of Daniel H. Wells, who occupied the position of second counselor until President Young's death.

Heber C. Kimball died June 22, 1868, in Salt Lake City, and his place in the First Presidency was filled by the appointment of George A. Smith, who occupied this position until his death, which occurred in Salt Lake City Sept. 1, 1875. John W. Young was set apart as first counselor in his stead Oct. 8, 1876.

After President Young's death, Aug. 29, 1877, the Twelve again assumed the responsibility as presiding quorum of the Church, and retained

it for three years, or until the October conference, 1880, when the First Presidency was organized for the third time in the history of the Church by the appointment of John Taylor as President, with George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith as his counselors.

By the foregoing it will be seen that three Apostles, namely, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and John Taylor, have filled the exalted position of Presidents of the Church; five (Sidney Rigdon, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith, John W. Young and George Q. Cannon) have acted as first counselors, and seven (Frederick G. Williams, Hyrum Smith, William Law, Willard Richards, Jedediah M. Grant, Daniel H. Wells and Joseph F. Smith) as second counselors in the First Presidency, since the first organization of that quorum in 1833.

THE KIRTLAND TEMPLE.

On May 4, 1833, a conference of High Priests assembled in Kirtland, Ohio, to take into consideration the necessity of building a school-house, for the accommodation of the Elders, who should come together to receive instruction, preparatory for their missions and ministry; according to a revelation on that subject, given March 8, 1833. By unanimous voice of the conference, Hyrum Smith, Jared Carter and Reynolds Cahoon were appointed a committee to obtain subscriptions for the purpose of erecting such a building.

Shortly afterwards the committee wrote an epistle to all the Saints, calling upon them "to make every possible exertion to aid temporally as

well as spiritually" to build this House of the Lord. To this call the faithful members of the Church cheerfully responded.

In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph in June, 1833, the Lord says:

"Verily, I say unto you, it is my will that you should build an house. If you keep my commandments, you shall have power to build it; if you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness. Now here is wisdom and the mind of the Lord: let the house be built, not after the manner of the world, for I give not unto you, that ye shall live after the manner of the world; therefore let it be built after the manner which I shall show