

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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father had buried the other plates, thus equating this New York hill with the Book of Mormon Cumorah. Because the New York site does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY, some Latter-day Saints have looked for other possible explanations and locations, including Mesoamerica. Although some have identified possible sites that may seem to fit better (Palmer), there are no conclusive connections between the Book of Mormon text and any specific site that has been suggested.

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DAVID A. PALMER

CUMORAH PAGEANT

America's Witness for Christ has been presented at the hill CUMORAH in upstate New York nearly every summer since 1937. Recognized as one of America's largest and most spectacular outdoor theatrical events, it attracts an annual audience of almost 100,000 visitors to its seven performances.

This tradition dates back to 1917, when B. H. Roberts and a group of missionaries went to the Joseph Smith farm outside Palmyra, New York, to celebrate PIONEER DAY. Commencing in 1922, the "Palmyra Celebration" became an annual missionary conference for the Eastern States Mission. In July 1935, as part of the dedicatory exercises for the Angel Moroni Monument, trumpeters at the crest of the hill heralded the commencement of the first production at Cumorah. The next year a pageant, "Truth from the Earth," was presented, and plans were announced to make a pageant at the hill Cumorah an annual event.

Two pageants were presented in 1937: a play about the Mormon pioneer handcart companies, *The Builders* by Oliver R. Smith, on July 24, and *America's Witness For Christ* by H. Wayne Driggs on July 23 and 25. The latter script, with occasional revisions, was then presented annually for fifty years (excluding 1943–47). Harold I. Hansen, a

missionary with theatrical training, was named codirector and thereafter continued as director for forty years, overseeing the installation of a sound system built by stereophonic sound pioneer Harvey Fletcher, the expansion of the all-volunteer cast and crew to almost six hundred participants, and the run extended to seven performances. In 1957 the pageant was recorded with original music by Crawford Gates.

On July 22, 1988, a new *America's Witness for Christ*, written by Orson Scott Card with music again by Crawford Gates, premiered. Its major theme—the reality of Christ's atonement, resurrection, and ministry to the Nephites—is boldly portrayed through events recorded in the Book of Mormon. The visual aspects of the pageant were also updated, with new stages, seating, properties, costumes, and special effects, and a recontoured and landscaped hill.

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GERALD S. ARGETSINGER

CURRICULUM

The Church provides a standard set of curricular materials to all of its units throughout the world. Some matters of basic curriculum had been formatted and distributed to the Church membership since the early days of the Church, but as the AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS were formed, such as the Sunday School, Primary, Relief Society, and the Young Men and Young Women, each developed its own curriculum to help teach members. Eventually it became desirable to coordinate curriculum materials among these auxiliary organizations to avoid undesirable duplication and to ensure the coverage of important topics at all age levels.

At present, over 200 topics are considered annually in the lesson manuals prepared for the courses included in the Church curriculum. These topics are in the general areas of gospel principles