

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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The home of Joseph and Emma Hale Smith in Harmony, Pennsylvania, from 1827 to 1830. The lower center portion is the original home, where Emma gave birth to their first child, Alvin, who died the same day, June 15, 1828. Here Joseph received at least fifteen revelations (D&C 3–13, 24–27) and translated the lost 116 pages and a large portion of the Book of Mormon.

township boundary was changed in 1853, placing the Church site in present-day Oakland Township. The site of the Hale residence lies about a mile and a half west of present-day Oakland, Pennsylvania, in Susquehanna County, along the north side of Route 171.

Today the Church owns about 288 acres at the Harmony location. On a small landscaped triangular plot located between the highway and a railroad right-of-way, a granite and bronze monument dedicated in 1960 commemorates the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. The exact location of the restoration is not known (*see* AARONIC PRIESTHOOD: RESTORATION).

The house owned by Joseph and Emma Smith burned in 1919. The buried foundation is just west of the monument. The graves of Isaac and Elizabeth Hale and of an infant son born to Joseph and Emma are close to Route 171, in a public cemetery located east of the Church property.

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HORACE H. CHRISTENSEN

HARRIS, MARTIN

Martin Harris (1783–1875), a New York farmer, was one of the Three Witnesses to the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. He also financed the first publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 at a cost of \$3,000 and later helped finance publication of the Book of Commandments.

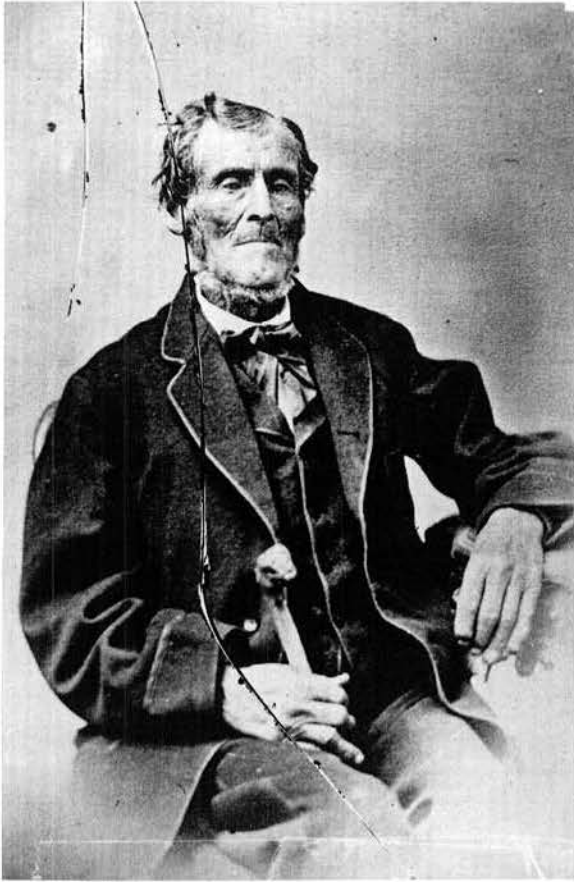
Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783, in Easton (now Saratoga), Washington County, New York, and died July 10, 1875, in Clarkston, Cache County, Utah. On March 27, 1808, he married his first cousin, Lucy Harris. At least six children were born to the couple. In the War of 1812, Private Harris was a teamster in the Battle of Buffalo. By May 1814, at the Battle of Puttneyville, he was first sergeant in the Thirty-ninth New York Militia. He returned home an honored war veteran. He inherited 150 acres and by 1828 owned a total of 320 acres. His wife characterized him as industrious, attentive to domestic concerns, and an excellent provider and father.

Harris stood about five feet, eight inches tall; had a light complexion, blue eyes, and brown hair; and wore a Greek-style beard off the edge of his jaw and chin. When formally dressed, he wore a favorite gray suit and a large, stiff hat. Non-Mormon contemporaries extolled Harris's sincerity, honesty, memory, generosity, neighborliness, shrewd business practices, and civic spirit.

Harris promoted construction of the Erie Canal through Palmyra along a route that passed not far from his house. Palmyra's citizens elected him road overseer for seven years, and he was a member of Palmyra's vigilance committee. A Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democrat, he was a believer in the value of homespun common sense. He favored gold and silver money and rejected paper currency. He distrusted banks, Federalists, and authoritarians. A Christian democratic activist, he admired ancient Greek culture and raised money for Greek Christians to fight the Turks.

Looking on himself as an unchurched Christian, Harris chose to follow God on his own. As a "restorationist," he looked for the return of biblical Christianity. He stated that "in the year 1818 . . . I was inspired of the Lord and taught of the Spirit that I should not join any church" (interview by Edward Stevenson, Sept. 4, 1870, Stevenson Microfilm Collection, Vol. 32, *HDC*).

Martin Harris met Joseph SMITH some time after 1816, when the Smith family moved to Pal-



Martin Harris (1783–1875) at about age eighty-seven. Harris gave financial support to Joseph Smith and for the publication of the Book of Mormon. He served as one of Joseph's scribes, became one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and testified of its truthfulness throughout his life. Charles W. Carter collection.

myra. By 1824, Joseph Smith, Sr., had told him about the angel Moroni's appearances and the golden plates, and in the fall of 1827, Martin consented to help publish the translation. He helped Joseph Smith protect the plates from thieves and financed the Prophet's move from Manchester to Harmony, Pennsylvania, when persecution intensified.

In February 1828, Harris visited Joseph Smith in Harmony and obtained a transcription and translation of characters from the plates. He took the two documents to "learned men" in Utica, Albany, and New York City, where Samuel Latham Mitchill and Charles Anthon examined the texts. Harris and Smith believed that these visits fulfilled a prophecy in Isaiah 29:11–14 concerning

a book to be translated by an unlearned man. Harris hoped that the scholars' comments would help win financial and religious support for the Book of Mormon in the community (see ANTHON TRANSCRIPT).

From April 12 to June 14, 1828, Martin Harris served as Joseph Smith's scribe, producing 116 manuscript pages. To gain family support, he persuaded Joseph to let him take the pages to Palmyra to show his family, and during a three-week period when he visited relatives, attended to business, and served jury duty, the 116 pages were stolen. It is reported that Lucy Harris said that she burned them. Ill and suffering the insecurity of progressive deafness, she reportedly feared that Palmyra's boycott of the Book of Mormon would lead to her and her husband's financial ruin. After the loss of the manuscript, Harris ceased his work as scribe.

In June 1829, Martin Harris, along with Joseph Smith, Oliver COWDERY, and David Whitmer, prayed and received no answer. Harris blamed himself for the failure and withdrew. The Prophet, Cowdery, and Whitmer prayed again and were shown the gold plates of the Book of Mormon by the angel Moroni. Subsequently, the angel appeared to Harris and Joseph Smith. In this vision, Harris heard the voice of God say that Joseph's translation was correct, and Jesus Christ commanded Harris to testify of what he had seen and heard. The testimony of the Three Witnesses is printed in the Book of Mormon (see BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES).

When translation of the book was completed, Joseph Smith had trouble finding a printer who would undertake publication. The printers feared that local opposition would hurt sales. A Palmyra printer, Egbert B. Grandin, finally agreed to print the Book of Mormon after Harris agreed to mortgage some of his farm for \$3,000 as security. On April 7, 1831, Harris sold part of his farm to pay the printing bill, though he may have had other reasons to part with this acreage than just to satisfy Grandin.

Martin Harris was present at the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, and was baptized that day by Oliver Cowdery. In May 1831 he led fifty converts from Palmyra to Kirtland, Ohio. Lucy and their children remained in Palmyra, resulting in two households and periodic trips for Harris between the two locations.

In the summer of 1831, Harris accompanied Joseph Smith and others to Missouri to purchase

property and designate the site for Zion, where the Saints were to gather. He was one of the first to be asked to live the “law of consecration,” a divinely revealed plan for equalizing the distribution of property and providing for the poor. That year, he also helped supervise and finance Church publications.

Returning east in 1832, Harris and his brother Emer served a mission together, baptizing one hundred persons at Chenango Point (now Binghamton), New York. In January 1833, Martin Harris was imprisoned briefly in Springville, Pennsylvania, in an attempt to stop him from preaching.

Returning to Kirtland in January 1834, Harris became a member of the first high council of the Church. Later that year, he volunteered to go to Jackson County, Missouri, with ZION’S CAMP to assist persecuted Mormons. On February 14, 1835, in accord with an earlier revelation (D&C 18:37–38), “the three witnesses” selected the first QUORUM OF TWELVE APOSTLES.

In 1836, Harris attended the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Later that summer Lucy Harris died. Harris married Caroline Young, Brigham YOUNG’S niece, on November 1, 1836. The couple had seven children.

During 1837, a time of intense conflict within the Church, Harris clashed with Sidney Rigdon and refused to join the Church-sponsored Kirtland Safety Society, which was issuing paper money. Harris was released from the high council on September 3, 1837, and was excommunicated during the last week of December 1837. Although evidence exists that Harris’s excommunication was never official, he accepted the action and subsequently applied for and was baptized on November 7, 1842.

When Brigham Young led the body of Latter-day Saints west, Harris went to England to bear witness of the Book of Mormon. The Strangites, a splinter group formed after Joseph Smith’s death (see SCHISMATIC GROUPS), paid his expenses, though he did not believe or preach Strangite doctrine. In 1829, Harris had prophesied that the Book of Mormon would be preached in England, and he was eager to preach there himself. Returning to Kirtland, he prospered and acted as a self-appointed guide-caretaker of the deserted Kirtland Temple, listing himself in the 1860 census as “Mormon preacher.”

Prior to 1856, LDS missionaries, some of whom had already gone to Utah, the Harris family,

and Brigham Young invited Martin and Caroline Harris to join the Saints in Utah. In the spring of 1856, Caroline and the children journeyed to Utah, but Harris remained in Kirtland until 1870. In 1860 he lived with George Harris, his son by Lucy. From 1865 to 1870, he supported himself by leasing ninety acres of land in Kirtland.

In 1869, efforts were renewed to bring Martin Harris to Utah. William H. Homer, Edward Stevenson, Brigham Young, and many other Latter-day Saints helped him financially to make the journey. Still active and vigorous at age eighty-seven, Martin Harris, accompanied by Edward Stevenson, arrived by train in Salt Lake City on August 30, 1870. He accepted rebaptism as evidence of his reaffirmation of faith on September 17, 1870, and, at Brigham Young’s invitation, publicly testified of the Book of Mormon. He moved to Harrisville, then to Smithfield, Utah (where he saw Caroline and their son Martin Harris, Jr.), and in 1874 to Clarkston, Utah, where he died on July 10, 1875, after once more bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon.

Martin Harris inspired a folk-hero tradition that has lasted down to the present. In 1983 the Church’s musical play *Martin Harris: The Man Who Knew* was produced in Clarkston. The play marked a fourth generation’s rehearsal of Martin Harris’s witness: “Yes, I did see the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written. I did see the angel, I did hear the voice of God, and I do know that Joseph Smith is a true Prophet of God, holding the keys of the Holy Priesthood” (“The Last Testimony of Martin Harris,” recorded by William H. Homer in a statement sworn before J. W. Robinson, Apr. 9, 1927, *HDC*).

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RHETT STEPHENS JAMES