

NOTES

ON THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS



Greetings

On [1 January 1836](#), Joseph expressed his feelings of gratitude for his life, the lives of family members, and the blessings his family had received the previous year. We too have looked back at the previous year and are grateful for what it brought, including the publication of the fourth volume in our Documents series, covering April 1834–September 1835; the publication of the minutes of the Council of Fifty; and the addition of hundreds of documents to our website. We also look forward to a productive 2017, with new books, web content, conference presentations, and other activities quickly filling up the year's schedule.

We hope you likewise can reflect on the past with gratitude and look to the future with excitement. We also hope that you will take a few minutes to read our newest newsletter and explore some of the resources the articles discuss.

We appreciate your continued support of the Joseph Smith Papers and would like to hear from you. So we can better understand your interests and provide the information you're looking for, we invite you to complete a [five-minute survey](#). We'll implement the feedback in our subsequent newsletters.

Sincerely,

Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, and Matthew C. Godfrey
General Editors

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How Much Do You Know about Joseph Smith's Childhood?

By Melissa Garrison

Recalling her son Joseph's early years, [Lucy Mack Smith once noted](#) that "nothing occurred during his early life, excepting those trivial circumstances which are common to that state of human existence." Although little was recorded about Joseph Smith's apparently unremarkable childhood, the records available do offer an interesting glimpse into the young prophet's formative years.

1. Joseph was born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805. Aside from two years in New Hampshire, the Smith family spent much of Joseph's early years moving throughout Vermont in search of fertile ground. But after three consecutive years of crop failure, culminating in the harsh and lengthy frosts of 1816—the result of a volcanic eruption in current-day Indonesia—Joseph's father, Joseph Smith Sr. decided to relocate the family further south to Palmyra, New York. Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, narrated the decision to relocate and the journey to New York in [her history](#).

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Revelations in Context: An Inside Look at Early Saints' Perspectives

In late July 1836, Joseph Smith Jr., Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, and Hyrum Smith started traveling from Kirtland, Ohio, to the eastern United States. In the weeks before their departure, worries about the temporal affairs of the Church weighed heavily on Joseph's mind. In Missouri, the Saints held on to the titles to lands they had been driven from in Jackson County as a sign of their commitment to building Zion, but they had no foreseeable way to return. At the same time, the Church was weighed down with debts after the construction of the Kirtland Temple. What could be done?

These concerns likely continued to occupy Joseph Smith's thoughts as his small group traveled to New York City and Boston. According to a later account, Joseph and other leaders had been told about a hidden treasure in Salem, Massachusetts, and hoped to find it. Both the hope for financial relief and worry over Zion were key parts of the context for a revelation the Prophet received in Salem on August 6, 1836.

So begins "[More Treasures Than One](#)," an article in the new *Revelations in Context* compilation.

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Gain Powerful Insight from New Study Companion for the Doctrine and Covenants

The Joseph Smith Papers recently released a historical study aid for the Doctrine and Covenants. Available as an e-book only, *Joseph Smith's Revelations: A Doctrine and Covenants Study Companion from the Joseph Smith Papers* is a compilation of most of the earliest versions of Joseph Smith's revelations now found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Helpful to both scholar and Latter-day Saint alike, this study companion provides valuable insight into Joseph Smith's role as a revelator and into many of the texts that form the bedrock of Latter-day Saint history.

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Delve into Relief Society Documents Added to Church Historian's Press Website

Shortly after Joseph Smith established the Female Relief Society in 1842, he directed its members to not only [save souls but also bring relief to the poor](#). Caring for the poor, sick, and needy is the focus of many of the documents in [The First Fifty Years of Relief Society](#), published by the Church Historian's Press in February 2016. The documents, which are accompanied by historical introductions and footnotes, are incrementally being added to the press's website, with several more sections just released.

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We Want to Hear from You

So we can learn more about you and your preferences, please complete this [five-minute survey](#). We'll use your feedback to provide content that is targeted toward your interests. As an additional incentive, everyone who completes the survey will have the opportunity to enter a drawing to **win e-book versions of all three volumes in the *Journals* series of *The Joseph Smith Papers***.

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