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# 1839

## January 1, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Personal Life**—Joseph Smith’s history proclaimed the irony that he was imprisoned in a land of liberty due to his worship of God.

♦ *History of the Church*, 3:244–45

## January 16, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Writings**—From Liberty Jail Joseph Smith dictated a letter signed by himself, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith to Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young. The letter counseled them that even if they took their families out of the state of Missouri, they must return “and leave as before designed on the 26 of April” on a mission to England. In the letter, Joseph, Sidney, and Hyrum also nominated George A. Smith and Lyman Sherman to replace Orson Hyde and Thomas B. Marsh in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Hyde and Marsh had left the Church during the Missouri difficulties. George A. Smith was ordained an Apostle in April 1839, but Lyman Sherman died eleven days after this letter was written. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 423–25; D&C 118:4–5

## January 31, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Personal Life**—Joseph Smith’s history records: “I sent the poor brethren [in Far West, Missouri] a hundred dollar bill from jail, to assist them in their distressed situation.” ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:254

## About February 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Legal Events**—All six inmates in Liberty Jail petitioned Judge Joel Turnham for a writ of habeas corpus. Only Sidney Rigdon’s was granted. They were all returned to jail; Rigdon was released that

## Jan. 19, 1839

Paul Cézanne,  
French painter,  
was born.

night and was pursued but succeeded in arriving in Illinois. ♦ LDS Church Archives, Joseph Smith Legal Papers series

### February 7, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Legal Events**—After much rude treatment in jail and lack of due respect from the law, Joseph Smith considered escaping from Liberty Jail and received a confirmation that he and the brethren could go that night if they all assented. Lyman Wight objected, however, so they delayed the attempt. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:257

### February 8, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Legal Events**—After Joseph Smith's failed escape attempt, local citizens gathered outside of Liberty Jail and threatened to kill him and his fellow inmates. Joseph prophesied that they would be kept safe. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:257–58

### March 15, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Visions and Revelations**—While in prison, Joseph Smith predicted his own release in a letter and sent a petition to the judges of the Missouri supreme court. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:277–81, 285–86

**Writings**—From Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith dictated a letter to Presendia Huntington Buell, who had tried to visit the prisoners but was refused entrance. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 426–28

### March 20, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Visions and Revelations**—From jail Joseph Smith dictated a letter to the Saints who had found refuge in Quincy, Illinois, and elsewhere, after they had been driven from Missouri. The letter included what is now known as Doctrine and Covenants 121, 122, and 123. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:289–303; D&C 121–23; *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 429–47; Jessee and Welch, *BYU Studies* 39.3: 125–45

### March 21, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Writings**—Joseph Smith wrote a letter to his wife, Emma, living in Quincy, Illinois. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 448–53

### March 22, 1839

Liberty, Missouri

**Writings**—Joseph Smith sent a letter to landowner Isaac Galland informing him of the Church's desire to purchase land in the Commerce, Illinois, vicinity, thus saving the Church from fragmentation. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 454–62; Cook, *BYU Studies* 19.3: 261–84

### Feb. 11, 1839

Josiah Willard Gibbs, American engineer, mathematician, and scientist, was born. He laid the basis for a large part of modern-day science and invented vector analysis.

### Feb. 24, 1839

William Otis received a patent for the steam shovel.

### Mar. 9, 1839

Phoebe Knapp, American hymn writer who composed melodies for over five hundred Protestant hymns, was born.

### Mar. 23, 1839

The first recorded use of OK ("o.k. —all correct") was published in the *Boston Morning Post*.

**1839**

The world's first commercial electric telegraph line came into operation alongside the Great Western Railway line from Paddington station to West Drayton.

**April 4, 1839**

Liberty, Missouri

**Writings**—Joseph Smith wrote a letter from Liberty Jail to his wife. “My dear Emma,” he wrote, “I think of you and the children continually, if I could tell you my tale, I think you would say it was altogether enough for once, to grattify the malice of hell that I have suffered.” ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 463–69

**April 6, 1839**

Liberty, Missouri

**Travels**—Joseph Smith traveled with other prisoners by a dangerous route from Liberty to Gallatin, Daviess County. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:308–9

**April 8, 1839**

Daviess County, Missouri

**Travels**—Joseph Smith arrived in Daviess County on Monday after being transferred from Liberty Jail and was turned over to Sheriff William Morgan and his guard. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:309

**April 9, 1839**

Gallatin, Missouri

**Legal Events**—Joseph Smith's trial commenced before a drunken grand jury and judge. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:309–10

**April 10, 1839**

Gallatin, Missouri

**Legal Events**—Joseph Smith spent the day in court as witnesses were examined. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:310

**April 11, 1839**

Gallatin, Missouri

**Visions and Revelations**—During the night, Joseph Smith saw in a vision a means of escape from his own unjust imprisonment and that Brother Stephen Markham, a witness for the defense, must flee for his life. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:316

**April 12, 1839**

Millport, Missouri

**Travels**—Joseph Smith and other prisoners left the home of Judge Josiah Morin en route to Boone County with an escort of five guards. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:319; Baugh, *Mormon Historical Studies* 2.1: 59–82

**About April 16, 1839**

Gallatin, Missouri

**Travels**—While traveling to Boone County under the guard of Sheriff William Morgan and four other men, Joseph Smith and his company were encouraged to escape from the guards, who then all became drunk. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:320–21

**April 22, 1839**

Quincy, Illinois

**Travels**—Joseph Smith arrived at Quincy after escaping from his unjust imprisonment in Missouri. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:327–32

**April 25, 1839**

Iowa

**Travels**—Joseph Smith went to Iowa with a committee of the Church to select a place for the relocation of the Saints from Missouri. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:336

**May 10, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois

**Personal Life**—Joseph Smith moved his family into a small log house purchased from Hugh White. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:349, 375

**May 21, 1839**

Montrose, Iowa

**Travels**—With the First Presidency and several others, Joseph Smith rode out on a land excursion to view the territory for many miles in the regions round about Montrose. ♦ *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 1:333

**June 1, 1839**

Quincy, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith held a conference and taught that bishops are the authorities God appointed to take care of the poor. ♦ *Watson, Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 42

**1839**

Mississippi became the first state to allow women to own property.



Nauvoo, Illinois.

**June 22, 1839**

Louis Daguerre received a patent for his camera, which became commercially available by September.

**June 11, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois

**Writings**—Joseph Smith began dictating his personal history to James Mulholland. ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:375

**June 23, 1839**

McDonough County, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—While visiting his brother Don Carlos, Joseph Smith preached to a congregation so eager to hear “that a part of them stood out in the rain during the sermon.” ♦ *History of the Church*, 3:378

**July 2, 1839**

Montrose, Iowa

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith counseled with and blessed the Twelve Apostles and certain of the Seventies before their missions to Great Britain. ♦ Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal*, 106

**July 6, 1839**

Daviess County, Missouri

**Legal Events**—*State of Missouri v. Joseph Smith et al.* William Morgan, Sheriff of Daviess County, Missouri, filed a statement that on July 6, Joseph Smith and the others escaped without the “connivance, consent or negligence” of Morgan and the other officers. ♦ LDS Church Archives, Joseph Smith Legal Papers series

**July 7, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith attended a farewell meeting for members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who were about to leave on missions to Great Britain. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:1–3

**July 8, 1839**

John D. Rockefeller, American industrialist and philanthropist, was born.

**About July 9, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Over the course of a few days, Joseph Smith spent time with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles selecting hymns for a new hymnbook. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:3

**July 21, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois

**Personal Life**—Joseph Smith and the Saints did not hold their Sunday meetings because of rain and sickness. However, elders of the Church healed many of the sick through the power of God. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:3

**July 22, 1839**

Commerce, Illinois, to Montrose, Iowa

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, and others miraculously healed the Saints of illnesses that had taken

hold on both sides of the Mississippi River; this day is known as a great day of healing in Church history. ♦ McConkie, *Remembering Joseph*, 123–24; Wilford Woodruff Journal, 1:347–48; Esplin, *BYU Studies* 15.4: 425–34; Ament, *Joseph Smith's Prophetic Gifts*, 78

### July 28, 1839

Commerce, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Despite the great number of Saints still sick, the Sunday meeting was held as usual. Joseph Smith admonished the Saints to set their houses in order, so that by obedience the sick might be healed. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:4–5

### August 4, 1839

Commerce, Illinois

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith instructed the entire congregation of Saints in Commerce “concerning the necessity of being righteous, and clean at heart before the Lord.” ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:5

### About September 9, 1839

Commerce, Illinois

**Legal Events**—Joseph Smith spent much of his time attending to the settlement of the Saints in the Hotchkiss purchase in the northwest part of the city. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:7

### October 27, 1839

Commerce, Illinois

**Writings**—The high council voted that Joseph Smith's wife, Emma, select and publish an updated hymnbook for the Saints. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:17–18

### October 29, 1839

Commerce, Illinois

**Travels**—Joseph Smith left for Washington, D.C., seeking redress from the U.S. Congress for the grievances and losses of the Saints in Missouri. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:19

### November 1839

Commerce, Illinois.

**Writings**—While Joseph Smith traveled, the first issue of the Church newspaper *Times and Seasons* was published; it included one of Joseph's journal entries. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 470–82; *Times and Seasons* 1:2–9

### November 4, 1839

Springfield, Illinois

**Travels**—Joseph Smith and his company arrived in Springfield on their journey to Washington, D.C., and met up with William Law and a number of Saints coming from Canada. Robert D. Foster, a

### 1839

The New York Philharmonic was established.

### Aug. 28, 1839

William Smith, English geologist and cartographer who created the first nationwide geological map, died.

**1839**

The first pedal-driven bicycle was invented by Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick MacMillan.

physician, joined the company in Springfield and cared for Sidney Rigdon, who had fallen ill. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:20

**November 9, 1839**

Springfield, Illinois

**Writings**—Joseph Smith wrote a letter to his wife, Emma, telling her of Sidney Rigdon's illness. ♦ *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 485–88

**November 18, 1839**

Columbus, Ohio

**Travels**—Because of illness among the group traveling to petition the government, Joseph Smith and Judge Elias Higbee went on ahead in order to make better time by stagecoach to Washington, D.C. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:21

**Nov. 27, 1839**

The American Statistical Association was founded in Boston, Massachusetts.

**November 27, 1839**

En route to Washington, D.C.

**Travels**—Just before arriving in Washington, D.C., the horses on the stagecoach ran off at full speed while the coachman was getting a drink. Joseph Smith climbed outside the door of the coach and regained control of the horses after a two to three mile run, saving the passengers from injury. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:23–24

**November 28, 1839**

Washington, D.C.

**Legal Events**—Joseph Smith arrived in the capital to present the Saints' petition to the United States government seeking redress for losses in Missouri. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:24–38; Johnson, *BYU Studies* 26.2: 31–44

**December 1839**

Washington, D.C.

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Joseph Smith gave a public sermon on Latter-day Saint beliefs to an audience that included several members of Congress. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:78–79

**Dec. 5, 1839**

George A. Custer, American cavalry officer, was born.

**December 5, 1839**

Washington, D.C.

**Writings**—Joseph Smith sent a letter to his brother Hyrum in Nauvoo, Illinois, reporting his visit with U.S. President Martin Van Buren. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:39–42

**December 7, 1839**

Washington, D.C.

**Legal Events**—Joseph Smith consulted with the Illinois delegation about how to get the Church's petition for redress brought before Congress. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:43–44



**December 21, 1839**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Travels**—Joseph Smith arrived in Philadelphia by railway and “spent several days preaching and visiting from house to house, among the brethren and others.” ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:47

**December 23, 1839**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Ecclesiastical Duties**—Although a small branch had been organized already in Philadelphia, Joseph Smith established a more extensive organization there. ♦ *Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, 16

**December 30, 1839**

Monmouth, New Jersey

**Travels**—Joseph Smith left Philadelphia and spent a few days visiting a branch of the Church in New Jersey. ♦ *History of the Church*, 4:49

**1839**

Abd al-Kader, Algerian military and religious leader, proclaimed a Muslim holy war against the French.