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The Editor's Notebook

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Title The Editor's Notebook

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Abstract Introduction to the current issue.

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Hill Cumorah was literally the seedbed of the restoration of the gospel. Its soil held the most important artifact undergirding the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith—the gold plates. A divine messenger, the angel Moroni, came to Joseph Smith, revealing to him the existence and physical location of that sacred record. After it was in Joseph's possession, other divine influences inspired him to translate it. This marshaling of celestial powers to shepherd the Book of Mormon to its publication is palpably bound to the Hill Cumorah as the ancient repository of the text. In a real sense, the hill anchored the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. So compelling is the story of the appearance of the book, as well as the stories within it, both everlastingly tied to the hill, that they have inspired music and poetry, sculpture and pageant. These outcomes receive fresh attention in this issue.

As time has passed, the Hill Cumorah too has become an artifact of the restoration. As such, it enjoys a distinguished history, not just since the geologic age that first gave to the hill its characteristic shape, but especially since Moroni buried the plates there, conferring on the hill a sacred quality. This unusual quality became evident the moment that Joseph Smith first climbed its western slope to locate the plates. In the first of four studies that explore the last part of this history, Richard Holzapfel and Cameron Packer lead readers along the path of the earliest representations of the hill in visual form, representations that parallel in large measure the development of modern visual arts. Another story about the hill is, of course, how it came into the hands of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. David Boone rehearses Willard Bean's role in the church's acquisition of the properties that crisscrossed the hill in the early 20th century. Research by Martin Raish assembles early accounts of the hill as well as the lore, both negative and positive, that had begun to grow up, treating some material not studied heretofore. The fourth study, by Cameron Packer, takes up the tantalizing question about a cave inside the hill that some early church leaders reported visiting in a visionary state.

The Hill Cumorah Pageant has become a staple not only for church members but also for citizens of Palmyra and surrounding communities. Gerald Argetsinger's history of this event, written from the point of view of a longtime pageant administrator

and director, paints the rich portrait of how the pageant has come to its present form. In another account we encounter the engaging firsthand reminiscences of Crawford Gates, who composed the pageant's memorable music twice—in 1957 and 1988—as the pageant gradually took on its present shape. Rory Scanlon, who is currently responsible for designing and maintaining the costumes for the pageant, sketches out the processes by which he and his predecessors have made the pageant a visually stunning success. The last piece touching on the pageant is a chapter from an unpublished manuscript by the late Harold I. Hansen, a moving force within the pageant for four decades. The *Journal* thanks Mr. Hansen's daughter, Mrs. Betty Gibbons, for access to his first-person account of the challenges in restarting the pageant after World War II.

The artistic efforts inspired by the Hill Cumorah are many, and the three treatments of song, poetry, and sculpture only brush the surface of a growing artistic heritage. Roger Miller treats a few of the riches that lie in popular and devotional music, including a few Latter-day Saint hymns. Louise Helps selects 18 poems, the earliest one published in 1833, and deftly elucidates their content and messages. Allen Gerritsen unfolds in intimate detail the monumental effort of his grandfather Torleif Knaphus to sculpt the Angel Moroni Monument that has stood atop the Hill Cumorah since 1935.

In the first of two scientific studies, Michael Dorais spreads before readers the geologic processes that brought the Hill Cumorah into being, showing it to be a product of the last ice age and one of many such drumlins that ripple across northern New York State. John Clark, whose interests lie in the ancient American Olmec culture, uncovers what can be said about the archaeological record of pre-Columbian peoples in eastern Pennsylvania and New York, a record that is surprisingly sparse.

One hundred eighty-one years have passed since Joseph Smith first visited the Hill Cumorah on 22 September 1823. As this double issue of the *Journal* shows, during the intervening years the hill has drawn to itself artists and scholars, believers and detractors. In this issue, the authors offer to readers a broad, multidimensional view of how the hill has come to play an important role in the outlook of Latter-day Saints, particularly as that outlook ties to the Book of Mormon and its miraculous preservation.