



2015

## From the Editor

John W. Welch

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### Recommended Citation

Welch, John W. (2015) "From the Editor," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 54 : Iss. 3 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol54/iss3/2>

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## From the Editor



Dear Readers,

Ten years ago, people around the world marked the bicentennial of Joseph Smith's birth. In June 2005, a two-day conference was convened at the Library of Congress, which I attended with my wife, pictured above; two major biographies were published; and a handy resource of crucial primary sources about the key events of the Restoration (*Opening the Heavens*) was published. Since then, eleven volumes of the Joseph Smith Papers have appeared. Dozens of groundbreaking studies have been published, many in *BYU Studies*, about Joseph Smith's first vision and his many legal encounters. Monumental works on the translation of the Book of Mormon have been produced. Thus it is with great pleasure that we bring out at this time another strong issue featuring new information and important insights about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Much is known about Joseph Smith that was not known ten years ago, and there is still more to come.

More than ever before, people are agreeing that the innovative and spiritual achievements of Joseph Smith are difficult to discount. As Josiah Quincy, a prominent nineteenth-century American, mused in 1883, the Mormon prophet's "powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen" would long be remembered (*BYU Studies* 39, no. 4, p. 71). Recently, Christian theologian Stephen H. Webb stated, "He was unmatched in the nineteenth century in his capacity for spiritual wonder and his talent in synthesizing so many aspects of Christianity that

had fallen into fragmentation and disuse” (*America: The National Catholic Review*, online).

One role of *BYU Studies* for over half a century has been to meticulously analyze documents, to publish new insights, and to appreciate with awe all that Joseph Smith accomplished under extreme adverse conditions, basically in only fifteen years (1829–44). Is there anything really like what he did, except perhaps in the rare cases of a few incontrovertible geniuses? And even there, the comparisons with Joseph Smith do not generate complete comparables.

In previous volumes of *BYU Studies*, Joseph Smith has been profitably compared with Herman Melville, Søren Kierkegaard, John Calvin, and others. Here in this issue, he is compared with John Milton in a pair of enlightening essays, each drawing attention to similarities and differences from intriguingly different perspectives. These comparisons sharpen awareness of important features in the life of Joseph Smith and his place in the world that would otherwise likely go unnoticed.

This issue presents an array of rigorous book reviews and a substantial study about horses in pre-Columbian America, but a majority of its pages are dedicated to the most definitive analysis to date of the demise of the Kirtland Safety Society in 1837. This story is more complicated than even extensive historical studies have previously grasped. This article, presented in four parts, is necessarily long, but its exhaustive documentation rewards diligent readers. This complicated scenario shows Joseph Smith and his faithful brethren using competent lawyers, accomplishing the construction and financing of the Kirtland Temple, repaying virtually all of their debts, and facing pernicious opposition. The opposition, especially of one Grandison Newell, is now documented beyond doubt, showing how he unscrupulously became the eventual owner of the Kirtland Temple. Evidence surrounding crucial junctures such as these allows people to focus with confidence on the inward values of Joseph’s theological, humanitarian, spiritual, and prophetic contributions.

While much of this data remains to be diligently processed, understood, and integrated, millions shall know Brother Joseph again, better than ever before, aided by the great outpouring of scholarship about the Prophet in the past decade.