History of Four Mormon Landmarks in Western New York: The Joseph Smith Farm, Hill Cumorah, the Martin Harris Farm, and the Peter Whitmer, Sr., Farm

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A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Church History and Doctrine
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Rand Hugh Packer
August 1975
This thesis, by Rand Hugh Packer, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Church History and Doctrine of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the early part of 1907 and with little recognition or fanfare, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints quietly assumed repossession of the Joseph Smith farm. George Albert Smith had privately purchased the farm from its owner for $16,000. Over seventy years had passed since the early Mormons had left New York and after this lifetime away from her historical birthplace, the Church again returned to the original home of the prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith, Jr.

This farm, as well as other historic sites important to the Restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, were to find their way back to the Mormon Church in the early 1900's, and this was largely accomplished by the missionary efforts of Willard Washington Bean and his family. In 1915, Bean was asked by the Church to fill a mission as caretaker of the recently acquired Joseph Smith home. They encountered much opposition and prejudice as they sought to make friends in the area. Over a period of twenty-four years the Beans saw much initial hatred melt into friendship. As this happened he was able to transfer to the Church legal ownership of the Hill Cumorah. The history of
this hill holds special significance to all Latter-day Saints because so much of LDS history and historic theology take place at the hill. Not only are two Book of Mormon nations, Nephites and Jaredites, involved directly with the hill, but from its western slope the Prophet Joseph Smith received from Moroni the gold record which was translated into the Book of Mormon.

The Peter Whitmer, Sr. farm was another landmark to rejoin the Church and mainly because of the friendship Willard Bean established with its owner. This farm, where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officially became a church, is the area where many events pertaining to the restoration happened. According to Joseph Smith, much of The Book of Mormon was translated there, miracles occurred, important revelations were given, and the first general conferences were held there.

The Martin Harris farm, nestled in the richness of Palmyra farmland, provided money for the printing of The Book of Mormon and was owned by a man of singular importance in LDS Church History. As one of the three witnesses to The Book of Mormon, Martin Harris and his farm are a major force in the work of the restoration.

In the early 1800's, as the restored gospel grew and spread under the merciless hands of persecution The Church was forced to leave these historic landmarks in New York and the account of regaining these valuable sites is a miracle worthy of preserving. Each year thousands of visitors pay
homage to these landmarks. In 1973 over 200,000 visitors visited the Hill Cumorah and represented various religious faiths and many different countries. The stories of these historic sites are told to all that visit them and are a vital part of LDS Church History. The history of these sites and how the Church regained possession of them is of great worth historically and needs to be written and preserved.
Fig. 1 Map of the Mormon Hearth
Fig. 2 Aerial Picture of the Mormon Hearth
Chapter 2

PALMYRA INTOLERANCE

"BEWARE OF THE MORMONS--$5000 OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL ANTI-MORMON LEAGUE."¹ Such was the greeting card received by the Willard W. Bean family as they began their mission in western New York. Religious intolerance is nothing new to the restored Church. The Gosepl was reestablished in a fiery bed of hatred, and it existed as the hot coals of intolerance followed The Church from state to state. A hundred years later the Church attempted to smother this hateful flame as Mormonism returned to the sacred place of its beginning.

After Joseph Smith testified that he had seen the Father and the Son, The Church grew and spread rapidly. The people in western New York could no longer claim the majority of membership of this unique faith, nor did they want to. As persecution forced the Saints to run in search of religious liberty, western New York drilled into their thinking an embarrassment for even being associated with such a radical sect. They reeked with shame that their community had provided a birthplace for such fanaticism. This attitude

¹Willard Washington Bean, Scrapbook, microfilm Brigham Young University Library, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Bean, Scrapbook).
enhanced by four generations of hatred, produced a brick wall for friendliness as the Church embarked on a mission to reestablish itself in its beginning place and regain the historic areas so significant to every Mormon.

By the early part of 1915 the work had set in motion the happenings whereby the Church could again reestablish its influence among the people of western New York. Apostle George Albert Smith had purchased the Joseph Smith farm in 1907 from an old gentleman named William Avery Chapman. To combat this hatred and to improve the image of the Church in this hotbed of ill feelings, the Church leaders called a man who was adequate in handling adversity not only with scripture, but if needs be, with "the laying on of hands": Willard Washington Bean. Prior to receiving this call, Elder Bean had established an admirable reputation as an athlete and boxer. He claimed credit for having given the great Jack Dempsey his first boxing lessons. His approach to life was to earn him the nicknames "Fighting Parson" and "Mormon Cyclone" among western New Yorkers.²

Bean was advised by the First Presidency of the Church to take his time in having the Joseph Smith farm transferred to the Church, thereby avoiding any negative publicity. But the "Mormon Cyclone" never enjoyed being pushed into a corner by his opponents. In his own words,

But when they began to abuse the Mormon people my fighting blood came to the surface and I didn't hesitate to transfer it over to the church. It was then that the Mormon Church was getting a foothold that might well become a problem and disgrace to the community. But I met the issue by negotiating for a slice of the Hill Cumorah.3

As caretaker of this farm, the prophet called the family of Willard Washington Bean to kindle the spark of restoration again in New York. The "scripture-bashing boxer" from Richfield was exactly what was needed to handle the very difficult mission.

When Brother Bean received his call, President Joseph F. Smith warned him that he would meet great opposition and, more specifically, that Palmyra was the most prejudiced town in the world. The prophet cautioned him not to be too hasty to do missionary work.4 Bean was quite used to prejudice and had experienced much of it during his mission to the Southern States. But Sister Bean, who had not been conditioned to anti-Mormon sentiment, quickly learned what religious intolerance was. Sister Bean recalls that as they visited the Hill Cumorah for the first time, they were chased away by a man with a shotgun.5

Religious bigotry and hatred lead in turn to vicious tactics. Shortly after the Bean's arrival in Palmyra in 1915, Sister Bean was due to give birth to her first child.

3Ibid., p. 31. 4Ibid., p. 24.
5Rebecca P. Bean to fireside group, October, 1964, tape recording, Palmyra Bean Packer Collection, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Bean tape recording).
For several weeks they tried to arrange for a nurse to assist in the childbirth, but when it became known that the Beans were Mormons, nobody would assist them in any way. And then, in answer to prayer, a lady showed up at the Smith farm a few days before the delivery and stayed for three weeks until Sister Bean could manage on her own. Because the nurse's brother had been to Salt Lake City and had told her all about it, she had learned that the gossip she heard about the Mormons was false.\(^6\)

Apparently Sister Bean's joy at the birth of her new daughter had overshadowed her antipathy for the area, because she named the new daughter Palmyra. According to Elder Bean the local townspeople, though at first thinking it strange to name a child after a town, soon found themselves wondering why they had not thought of the idea first.

Shortly after the birth of Palmyra, while Brother Bean was away on business for the Church, a group of local people, among whom were a minister and five school teachers, congregated outside the Beans' front door. Somewhat fearful, Sister Bean invited the group to come in. Once inside they demanded to hear the story of "Ole Joe Smith," but as soon as she started telling them the Prophet's story they began screaming and shouting at her. Sister Bean was in tears and recalls having prayed fervently for assistance. As she did so, the room filled with a calm and the hecklers

\(^6\)Ibid.
were silenced. Thereupon Sister Bean related the Joseph
Smith story without interruption and then the would-be per-
secutors left quietly.\(^7\)

Calumny, with her one-thousand tongues, soon set in
motion those rumors patently associated with Mormonism.
When people noticed that Sister Bean was younger than her
rigorous husband, the gossip was soon everywhere. Polygamy
became the war cry of the local opposition, especially
among the women's circles.\(^8\) And now that the fires of per-
secution duplicated those the Prophet Joseph had experienced
one hundred years before, the "Fighting Parson" was forced
to put on his gloves. Having sparred with the opposition
long enough, he was now ready to take the offensive.

During a visit to the local library, Bean discovered
an entire shelf of anti-Mormon writings. But when he raised
an objection to the King's Daughter's Committee, whose per-
mission was required before a book could be placed in the
library, he soon found out why there were no Mormon works on
the shelves: the committee chairman, Miss Eaton, who was
the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, would not allow any
such books to poison the minds of the citizens' children.\(^9\)
This was one abuse that Brother Bean would not tolerate. As
a result, when his mission was completed, all books dealing
with Mormonism required his official approval before they

\(^7\)Ibid. \(^8\)Bean, Autobiography, p. 24.
\(^9\)Ibid., p. 47.
could be placed on the library shelf.\textsuperscript{10}

Because there was no LDS Chapel in the vicinity of Palmyra, "Parson Bean" attended the Protestant churches in a systematic rotation. Each Sunday he would attend a different church. Then, at the invitation of Mr. Johnson, the Baptist Bible-class teacher, Bean became a regular attender. Each Sunday Mr. Johnson would have Elder Bean sum up the lesson by quoting scriptures to support what had been taught. Bean prepared a chart on the life of Christ to replace the inadequate chart that they had obtained from an interchurch publisher. But just as Bean was befriending the Baptists, the church deacons began collecting financial pledges from the membership. And because the main support came from two old maids who had inherited their millionaire father's estate and who refused to contribute until the Mormon "polygamist" was expelled from the Bible class, the roving Mormon elder stopped attending that church.\textsuperscript{11}

Dr. Chase of the Presbyterian church quickly took advantage of the dismissal and invited "Parson Bean" to attend his class. Bean did so for several weeks, and when Dr. Chase was called away for a few weeks, the class requested that the Mormon elder be their teacher. However, Reverend Thomas Tighe, who presided at the church, would not stand to have a Mormon preaching in his church.\textsuperscript{12} In spite

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 25.  
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 26.
of the persistent clerical opposition wherever he went, Bean enjoyed good associations with Methodists and Reformed congregations.

At about the same time Pliny T. Sexton, a banker sponsoring free weekly shows for the youth, invited the "Mormon Cyclone" to speak on physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development. Bean juggled, boxed, and exhibited his muscular abilities during his talk and made a big hit with the kids. But, as usual, this new success was followed by yet another barrage of slander.\(^{13}\) Because of Willard Bean's popularity with the youth, the four churches started a movement to drive him out. Once, while the Beans were eating supper, three men approached the Smith farm and informed Bean that they had been sent by the people of Palmyra to tell him that he must leave. The boxer's blunt response was that his family would not leave and that nobody would run them out. Then, rolling up his sleeves, he said, "I'll take you on one at a time or all together, suit yourself." The three men excused themselves promptly.\(^{14}\)

In the meantime the four churches had sent Reverend Nutting to Indiana to acquire anti-Mormon literature. But when the false propaganda was distributed, mainly throughout the business district, it met with little success: the Palmyra residents were beginning to tire of the persecution. When the pamphlets failed to halt the Mormon cause, the

\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 24. \(^{14}\)Bean, tape recording.
National Reform Association of Pittsburg sent several highly prepared agitators against Mormonism: Reverend James S. Martin, LL.D., Reverend James A. Dodge, and Attorney Alexander. Holding public meetings in the various churches of Palmyra and Rochester, they decried every supposed doctrine of the Restored Church. Reverend Dodge challenged the "Mormon Cyclone" to a public debate, and Bean quickly accepted. Other challenges for public debate were issued and Bean accepted all of them. The newspapers jumped on the bandwagon, informing the public of each debate but seldom of its outcome. Few dared to debate publicly with Mormonism's walking set of scriptures. Following Reverend Dodge's challenge, the newspapers reported that he had been called away for three weeks by the National Reform Association's Antipolygamy Department and that he did not want to debate unless it was with an apostle from Utah. His proposed debate topic had been "Resolved: That the Teachings and Doctrines of the Mormon Church are treasonable and disloyal to the United States." That debate was never held.

However, the most radical of the new breed imported to challenge the Saints was the incomparable Mrs. Lulu Love-land Shepherd. Formerly she had lived in Salt Lake City, and at some time she had trained herself to shed great tears at will. She excelled in castigating the name and character of Willard W. Bean and he believed she was set on destroying

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15Bean, Autobiography, p. 28. 16Bean, Scrapbook.
him and anything related to Mormonism. While speaking at a women's group meeting she was accompanied by a man whom, she reported, she had hired as her personal bodyguard to protect her from the Mormons. She claimed to have had a dream in which a Mormon, standing over her was just bringing down a huge, broad-bladed axe to sever her head when she awoke screaming. It didn't take long for that colorful story to circulate. The "Fighting Parson's" response was recorded in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle:

I hereby challenge Mrs. Lulu Loveland Shepherd or any other anti-Mormon propagandist to meet me in public discussion at any time, and place, and any number of evenings, Subject: Are the Mormons a Menace to Our Country?
I think the good people of Rochester have been imposed upon long enough. Inasmuch as she used my name and that of my family recklessly in her public lectures I feel it my privilege and duty to present the other side.

This challenge—as with most others—went unaccepted.

Next the intolerants turned to politics, charging that politically controlled Utah had more draft exemptions for theology students than did any other state. The National Anti-Mormon League asked New York's Provost General Crowder to talk to the government to see if they would reduce the number of exemption cards issued to draft-aged young men from Utah.

During the Bean family's mission (which was extended from five years to twenty-four years), the initial prejudice

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17 Bean, Autobiography, p. 28. 18 Bean, Scrapbook.
and intolerance cooled. The Bean family had become active participants in Palmyra community affairs. Brother Bean had served as a board member in the Parent-Teachers Association, as president of the Lion's Club in Palmyra and Rochester, as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, as a scout committeeman, and as a member of the Civic and Business Organization. Many who had sought to drive him out of the country in 1915 honored him at farewell banquets in 1939. During his stay he had purchased for the Church the Peter Whitmer, Sr., farm, the Martin Harris farm, and the Hill Cumorah. And although Palmyra residents have not yet warmed up to the idea of joining the LDS Church their acceptance of the Mormon people and ideas and recognition of the LDS landmarks are largely the fruit of Willard Bean's labor.
Chapter 3

HILL CUMORAH

Hills have always figured prominently throughout history. LDS history is not exceptional in that respect. In fact, the message of Mormonism was literally derived from a special hill in the state of New York. This hill has had many names. Scientists have called it a hogback or drumlin. Anti-Mormons have labeled it Gold Bible Hill. Non-Mormons please themselves with the label Mormon Hill, and Orson Pratt called Cumorah and the "Hill of God."¹

Mormon theology states that in A.D. 400 an ancient American prophet named Moroni deposited in the hill an abridged record written on gold plates giving an account of America's early inhabitants. Some believe the hill was under the protecting watch of the resurrected Moroni for the next several hundred years, and that in the early nineteenth century it yielded that record to a prophet of God. Mormons believe that record to be a scriptural account that contributes great knowledge and insight to an understanding of God and the teachings revealed by Jesus Christ.

Even if one excludes its significance to the LDS Church, this little knob of a hill has a remarkable history. One of the earliest accounts of the Hill Cumorah, taken from the Ontario County Directory of 1867, describes an old Seneca legend. The Senecas claim to have originated by breaking out of the earth from a high hill near Ga-nun-de-gwa waters (Canandaigua Lake). Since that time they have been called the Great Hill People by other Indian tribes. It was here that they were saved from a large serpent that had surrounded the hill and terrorized the people trapped on it. Some had attempted to escape but were devoured. Two children did escape, however, and they were told by an angel how to kill the serpent. When they did so, the serpent rolled down the hill, destroying much timber. In time the children grew and began to repopulate the region. This might be the same hill that Joseph Smith saw in vision in 1823.

Nathaniel Gorham and Oliver Phelps contracted to buy 6 million acres in western New York for $1,000,000 and at the same time purchased by treaty from the Indians in Buffalo 2.6 million acres that entailed the eastern portion of the purchase.

The Phelps and Gorham purchase was ready for white settlement, so the owners quickly hired a husky young man

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named Nathaniel Sanborn, who with his new wife, Hannah Gould, led a group of teamsters to the area with beef and dairy cattle. Others brought farming equipment and household effects to make the colonization as comfortable as possible. In spite of the several streams, rivers, and hills, the group arrived at Canandaigua in time to prepare for an Indian welcome and pow-wow in which the majority of Indian chiefs disposed of their lands by signing a treaty.\(^4\)

Following an Indian massacre on the north fork of the Susquehannah River in Pennsylvania, the survivors appointed Captain John Swift and John Jenkins to find a more hospitable environment. Having heard of the Gorham-Phelps tract, they traveled to Canandaigua and gained permission to colonize the area.\(^5\) Canandaigua itself, however, had already been settled, so the Jenkins-Swift settlers moved northward and bought the area that includes Palmyra and Macedon.\(^6\)

The Smith family were among those that heard of this available land in western New York and moved there in the early 1800s. Until then Cumorah had been just another hogback, lost among 250 others of similar appearance throughout the state.\(^7\) In 1823, however, this hill became important to


\(^5\)Ibid.

\(^6\)Wayne County Journal [Palmyra, New York], March 25, 1875, p. 3.

young Joseph Smith, Jr. He records that in a vision he saw on the hill the hiding place of an ancient record and that after returning to the hill four years in succession he received the record at the hands of an angel named Moroni.

The physical appearance of the hill at this time is not entirely conclusive although the bulk of the evidence indicates that it was at least partially forested. The earliest picture of the hill is the following sketch pub-

![Fig. 3 The Hill Cumorah. The earliest known artist's sketch of the Hill Cumorah, published in J. W. Barber and Henry Howe's Historical Collections of the State of New York (1841). Also in Milton V. Backman's Joseph Smith's First Vision (1971), p. 13.](image)

lished in 1841. The sketch indicates that tall trees were indigenous to the hill\(^8\) and that many had been cut down to

provide farming land.

A history of Wayne County, New York mentions that a traveler in the 1800s would have seen the following:

Everywhere all was new, fresh, and natural. It is difficult for any who did not see it to realize the condition of this country pending its occupation by settlers. Standing upon high vantage ground, the eye rested upon an extended view of forest. Upon the hill and on the flat the trees showed no opening.\(^9\)

An early study mentions that at the Prophet's first visit the hill was covered with timber but that the trees were subsequently removed, leaving only decayed stumps and land for cultivation, the east side being the first to be cultivated.\(^10\)

Oliver Cowdery also makes mention of the physical appearance of the hill when he visited it in 1830.

The north end rose suddenly from the plain, forming a promontory without timber, but covered with grass. As you passed to the south you soon came to scattering timber, the surface having been cleared by art or by wind, and a short distance further left you surrounded with the common forest of the country. It is necessary to observe, that even the part cleared was only occupied for pasturage, its steep ascent and narrow summit not admitting the plow of the husbandman, with any degree of ease or profit.\(^11\)

By 1880 the surface of the Hill Cumorah was scarred with ditches, tunnels, and holes; and when 1888 arrived,

\(^9\)History of Wayne County (Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign, and Everts, 1877), p. 28. On microfilm in BYU Library.


\(^11\)The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland], October 1835, pp. 195-196.
both sides at the north end of the hill had been plowed to the top.\textsuperscript{12} Only a few trees remained.\textsuperscript{13} When Joseph Smith Black visited the hill in 1888, he recorded that the east side had been plowed to the summit (with exception of a large elm tree on the north end) and that there was corn growing on the west side one-third of the way to the top.\textsuperscript{14}

Evidently the hill was named Cumorah in these latter days during an incident that occurred when David Whitmer was traveling with the Prophet from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Fayette, New York. According to this account,

When I was returning to Fayette with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old fashioned, wooden spring seat, and Joseph behind us; when traveling along in a clear, open place, a very pleasant nice looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, "Good morning, it is very warm," at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation and by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, "No, I'm going to Cumorah." This name was somewhat new to me, and I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked round inquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.\textsuperscript{15}

In all probability, this is the first account following the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12}E. Cecil McGavin, Cumorah's Gold Bible (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), p. 49.
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Andrew Jenson, Autobiography of Andrew Jenson (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), p. 169.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Joseph Smith Black Journal, Brigham Young University Special Collection, p. 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Interview by Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith with David Whitmer, Deseret Evening News [Salt Lake City], November 16, 1878.
\end{itemize}
restoration in which the word Cumorah is used. But the name became much more common following the publication of The Book of Mormon, when the events of the Restoration became better known.

The exact place at which the plates were deposited is not known. Joseph specified only that they were deposited on the west slope a little from the top, but tradition and folklore have tried to pinpoint the exact spot. On the west side of the hill near the top, overlooking the road to Manchester, is a rose bush planted by someone to mark the supposed spot. Another tradition says that the plates were buried approximately where the "R" is located in the hedge spelling CUMORAH near the top. Pictures appeared in the local newspapers and Deseret News showing a hole near the top of Cumorah believed to be the resting place for the plates before Joseph obtained them. However, the only sure evidence would have had to come from the Prophet himself, and he has described the spot only generally.

Also of interest is Brigham Young's account of what Oliver Cowdery told him about returning the plates to the hill.

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... Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they were there the sword of Laban hung up on the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates, it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and Christ." I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well as we understand coming to this meeting, enjoying the day, and by and by we separate and go away forgetting most of what is said, but remembering some things. So is it with other circumstances in life. I relate this to you, and I want you to understand it. I take this liberty of referring to those things so that they will not be forgotten and lost. Carlos Smith was a young man of as much veracity as any young man we had, and he was a witness to these things. Samuel Smith saw some things, Hyrum saw a good many things, but Joseph was the leader.19

The Book of Mormon narrative indicates that Mormon "hid up" all the records that were handed down to him except for the few plates he gave to his son Moroni.20 The experience reported by Brigham Young is congruent with the words of Mormon, and there are other testimonies supporting the


20The Book of Mormon, Mormon 6:7.
existence of a large repository that housed the Nephite history. In 1856, Heber C. Kimball said that Joseph and others went into the Hill Cumorah and saw more records than ten men could carry and that the records were stacked on top of each other and on the tables. \(^{21}\) Orson Pratt testified that The Book of Mormon plates were hidden in a place separate from the large repository housing all the records of Ancient America and that angels guarded the repository. \(^{22}\)

The possibility that this large room of records exists is further reinforced by the following quote taken from the Contributor:

\[\ldots\text{The grand repository of all the numerous records of the ancient nations of the western continent was located in another department of the Hill and its contents put under the charge of holy angels.}\] \(^{23}\)

However, these testimonies could have derived from the same source as Brigham Young's.

It took little time for the glittering story of gold from Cumorah to circulate throughout the area. Soon an engineering firm called the Rochester Company was digging tunnels and trenches in search of the metal plates. It was not long before this and similar schemes had defaced

\(^{21}\)Journal of Discourses (Liverpool: 1878), vol. 4, p. 105.

\(^{22}\)Orson Pratt, "Cumorah," The Contributor, III, (September 1882), 357.

\(^{23}\)Ibid.
While visiting the hill in 1873, Edward Stevenson was told that some sizable flat stones comprising the stone box that had contained the plates had rolled down to near the bottom of Cumorah. He was also shown a large hole dug in the east side of the hill by the Rochester Company that had yielded nothing and therefore must have puzzled the treasure seekers who placed explicit faith in mineral rods that verified their hopes for gold. By 1880 many of the smaller holes had been covered by tall grass. But the search continued into the twentieth century, and in 1923 Reverend Charles E. Driver of the Methodist Church, Reverend Fay C. Martin of the Church of God, and Melvin Lawton, the church song leader claimed to have uncovered two bronze plates written in Greek, which they claimed, disproved Joseph Smith's gold-plate story. But no one became very excited.

It is strange that the birthplace of Mormonism should harbor such deep hatred and prejudice against the Church. Bean felt that the people whose homes were in the vicinity of the grove in which Joseph Smith had his sacred experience were embarrassed. And apparently that embarrassment had festered into open hatred.

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24 Edward Stevenson, Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City, 1893), pp. 28-29.
25 Ibid., p. 29.
26 Ibid., p. 33.
It is with faith and courage that "Parson" Bean entered his twenty-four-year mission to establish a livable atmosphere for the Church and acquire important Church sites in the Palmyra area.

In negotiating for a portion of Hill Cumorah the "Fighting Parson" established a friendship with a Mr. James Inglis. The Inglis farm was located on the highway that passed the Hill Cumorah. His ninety-seven acres went half way up the west side of the hill and consisted of the entire flat at the base of the hill, which Bean thought would be of import if the Church secured possession of the hill itself. And then one day, while Brother Bean was sitting with Mr. Inglis on his front porch facing the hill, the old gentleman said, "Let me sell you my farm. You will then be able to say you own part of the hill at least." The price seemed reasonable, but by the time Bean had gained permission from the Church authorities, the old farmer had let his wife persuade him not to sell. However, when confronted, Inglis asserted that he was still master of his own house and said he would sell the farm to the Church if Bean would agree to buy all the equipment, horses, cows, and so forth along with it. They jockeyed for prices, and finally came to an agreement, and the LDS Church had its first partial possession of its sacred hill.28

Following World War I, Pliny T. Sexton called Brother

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28 Bean, Autobiography, part II, p. 32.
Bean concerning the possible sale of Cumorah. At the time Sexton had forty-eight pieces of property and was having difficulty finding tenants to run them. Knowing of the Church's desire to own the hill and operating under his own philosophy that anything related to early Mormon history should be worth a king's ransom, he offered it for $100,000. Parson Bean quickly reminded Sexton that the Church had existed for one hundred years without possession of Cumorah and still seemed to be doing all right without it.29 After communicating with Salt Lake concerning the possibilities of buying the hill Bean received the following letter of caution concerning the purchase of the hill.

Dear Brother:

Your interesting letter was received and we read it to the Presidency at our meeting yesterday. We were asked to have you keep us posted in respect to the matter of the Hill Cumorah, and advise us of any developments in connection therewith, but we should not appear too anxious about it. If we use caution and the Lord wants us to have possession of the Hill, it will be so over-ruled. Or, on the other hand, no matter how anxious and how hard we may try, unless the matter is over-ruled in our favor, we will not succeed.

We are always glad to hear from you. Hope you will write often and keep us advised as to the progress of the work under your direction.

Your brethren in the Gospel,
THE PRESIDING BISHOPRIC
C. W. Nibley30

The Church gained possession of the hill as the following events transpired. Mr. Sexton's health began to fail and he

29Ibid., p. 33.

30The Presiding Bishopric to Willard W. Bean, Sept. 23, 1924, in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection.
was confined to his bedroom. And before he died he had the gospel preached to him. Bean purposely planned his street meetings directly below the bedroom window of the ailing Sexton. In spite of Sexton's deafness, Brother Bean repeated the message of the restored gospel to him loudly several times before he died. Sexton's nurse said that he told her he had never heard such a clear interpretation of the scriptures as he had heard from below his bedroom window.\footnote{Bean, Autobiography, II, p. 34.}

After the death of Sexton, who left no immediate kin, Cumorah fell into the hands of his niece and her husband, a German Count named Hans Giese. Together with an adopted niece named Ray and a host of other heirs, they pledged themselves never to sell "Mormon Hill" to the Church for any price. Their lawyer, C. C. Congdon, who just happened to be a good friend of Elder Bean reported this development. Sexton's niece left to tour Europe but came back very ill and died soon thereafter. Following the event, the man who had served as Sexton's chief cashier for fifty years and who was strongly opposed to the Church's acquiring the Hill Cumorah passed away. Thus, the opposition group was headed by the adopted niece, Ray. But the nearly one hundred remaining heirs were by this time anxious for any money they could obtain for the hill, and they agreed among themselves to sell the hill for seventy-five thousand dollars.

Bean would not even consider it. More than one-half
the heirs wanted to come down to fifty thousand dollars, but several were against it. Finally, the niece became quite ill and, not having use for the hill, offered it for sale to any interested party. With the help of C. C. Congdon, Bean drew up a deal that included not only the 170-acre hill farm, but also the Tripp farm on the east of the hill, the 220-acre Bennett farm on the south of the hill, and a $38,000 Grange Hall in Palmyra.32

An interesting event occurred while Bean was negotiating for permission and price. Bean sent a letter to the First Presidency explaining his actions concerning Cumorah, and seeking their advice. Two days later he received a telegram as follows:

See lawyer of Sexton estate and get definite offer for Hill Cumorah alone if possible; if not, with adjacent properties, put it in writing, put up forfeit, and let us hear from you at earliest convenience.33

The telegram was dated the same day as Brother Bean's letter asking their permission to do something he had already done. Upon learning of this, the First Presidency wrote Brother Bean the following letter.

We were very glad to learn that you had secured an option on the Hill Cumorah Farm and other property before receiving word from us to do so. We had already noticed the singular coincidence of your writing to us the very same day and possibly the same hour that we were writing to you.34

32Ibid. 33Ibid., pp. 35. 34Letter of the First Presidency to Willard W. Bean, March 6, 1928, in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection.
In the following general conference Brother Anthony W. Ivins said it was providential that the Church had acquired the Hill Cumorah.

By April 1928, the Church had possession of over eight hundred acres of land in the cradle of Mormonism. They could now climb their sacred Hill Cumorah without being ridiculed and chased off. Parson Bean tried his hand at forestry in hopes of restoring the appearance of the hill to the condition it enjoyed when the Prophet Joseph knew it. The existing timber remaining after the 1880s had been cut down by a relative of Mr. Sexton, a brother-in-law named John Sampson. John had been a complete failure economically, and so with the help of Admiral William T. Sampson, Sexton equipped the farm at Cumorah to provide John an opportunity for a new start. John was quite successful until the commercial timber on the hill ran out, but then he reverted to drunkenness and, shortly thereafter, died.36

Bean persuaded the State Conservation Department at Albany to donate sixty-eight thousand evergreen and hardwood trees, the only expense being the transportation of the trees to Cumorah.37 With the seedlings planted, the hill began its rejuvenation. Today Cumorah is forested.

Hill Cumorah is now crowned with a bronze statue of

36 Deseret News, Church Section [Salt Lake City], January 23, 1943, p. 3.
37 Bean, Autobiography, II, p. 36.
Moroni, the prophet who knew it best. Its name is spelled out distinctly in hedge for all to recognize. Every year thousands watch as Cumorah's story is told and retold: "The lovely Hill Cumorah! O Cumorah! The hill of ancient Seers and Prophets! The Hill of God! Sanctified by holy angels' feet!"  

ANGEL MORONI MONUMENT

On July 2, 1935, the form of Moroni again reappeared on the crest of Cumorah, this time never to leave. Standing on a monument of Georgia granite, Moroni was unveiled as four trumpets sounded the hymn "An Angel from on High."

The crowning testimony of the angel's visit to the hill was the work of the talented Norwegian sculptor Torlief S. Knaphus. He made seven different sketches of the proposed statue of Moroni as he searched for a worthy representation of the last Nephite prophet. Then, before presenting the Church leaders with his sketches, Mr. Knaphus said he spent an evening of quiet solitude on Ensign Peak praying for the Lord's forgiveness and desiring to know which of the sketches was acceptable to the Lord. Mr. Knaphus related that a finger of light surrounded with brightness pointed to a particular sketch. A voice instructed him that that was the correct sketch. When the sculptor inquired how he should confront the Brethren with this choice (inasmuch

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38 Pratt, p. 419.
as they were the ones making the decision, he was instructed that they would choose the one the Lord had chosen. The Brethren did choose the specified sketch. When Brother Knaphus shared this experience with Willard and Rebecca Bean in New York, Sister Bean inquired if it had been Moroni who guided his choice and gave him instruction as to the proper sketch. Brother Knaphus's reply: "That's my secret." 39

The monument was accurately measured on April 16, 1970. The statue of Moroni measures 10'4", the granite shaft measures 25'4", and the steps measured 1'3". With 2'4" of foundation the overall height of the monument is 39'3". 40

The monument itself contains many symbolic messages. At the base of the monument four bronze plaques portray events relevant to the coming forth of The Book of Mormon. On the north is a representation of John the Apostle prophesying of Moroni's future appearance bringing the everlasting gospel. On the west plaque Moroni delivers the gold plates to the boy prophet. The south plaque contains the testimony of the three witnesses. The east plaque states the message of the eight witnesses. 41

39 Fireside talk by Rebecca Bean recorded on tape in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection.


The lines of light of the monument's center shaft make it appear as three shafts, the middle one representing the president of the Church and the other two representing his counselors. Above the panel is a design of twelve conventional lights representing the twelve apostles as special witnesses. Similar ornamentation on the corners symbolizes the Seven Presidents of Seventy, who stand as lights to the four corners of the earth. The ornamentation on the corners below depicts the Presiding Bishopric, who officiate in
temporal affairs.\footnote{42}

The crowning figure of Moroni is slightly angled so as to directly face the Sacred Grove. After the monument had been erected, some desired to align it with the axis of the hills, but Willard Bean and others opposed it and no change was ever made.\footnote{43} By 1935 the pendulum of non-Mormon sentiment in western New York had swung away from the original hatred. But still the Church leaders were very skeptical about the safety of such a monument and the desirability of having local residents participate in the dedicatory services. Willard Bean's autobiography affords an interesting perspective on this event:

When I suggested to our Church Authorities that we were ready for a monument on top of the Hill Cumorah they hesitated and questioned the advisability, fearing that it might be desecrated and marred by souvenir hunters. After convincing them that the people would be proud of it and treat it as their very own. When they planned a monument and asked for bids, they had me measure the distance around the hill and planned to erect a 12 ft. cyclone fence to keep out despoilers. But they had not been as close touch with the changing sentiment as I was, and the complete cooperation of the better element of the community. We didn't build a fence and thereby saved about $4000. The monument was erected on schedule time, and plans were being worked out for the dedication. I suggested that we give one session a local tinge by having a prominent speaker from Wayne County, likewise one from Ontario County, to make a talk. The Authorities again hesitated lest it would be a waste of time, fearing that it would take one of the brethren a half hour to explain away things

\footnotetext{42}{Explanation of the Monument written by Torlief Knaphus in the John D. Giles Collection, Box 6, Envelope 11 in the C.H.D. archives.}

\footnotetext{43}{Interview with Sister Ross M. Richards in Salt Lake City, August 1, 1974.}
they might say. But I rather insisted guaranteeing that they would say nothing but praise for our people. They consented. I contacted Judge S. N. Sawyer, of Wayne County, one of the most influential men in Western New York, and he cheerfully consented if the Dr. would give his consent, and he was quite feeble at that time. But he promised even if the Doctor forbade him talking, he would dictate something to his secretary, and the Mayor would read it. It was his intention to make a short speech of welcome, even contrary to Doctor's orders. I introduced him to our Authorities and his daughter and I helped him onto the platform. But after he got started he caught the inspiration and gave a wonderful talk, eulogistic of our people, and how he changed his mind toward our people since the Bean family came to Palmyra. When our Church authorities returned they lost no time in having his talk come out in the Deseret News. Judge Thompson, considered the most influential man in Ontario County, being a splendid orator, gave a splendid talk, also eulogistic but had not had the personal contact with our people as had Judge Sawyer. I had only met him at a banquet at Clifton Springs, and once in Judge Sawyers office. I was better acquainted with Judge Fitch at Canandaigua, but the mayor of Canandaigua advised me to get Judge Thompson as he was just at that time was before the public and was rapidly coming into prominence as Judge Sawyer's successor. Appellate Court Judge of Western New York.

With the monument finally erected, President Heber J. Grant gave the dedicatory prayer and since July 21, 1935, the glistening statue of Moroni has heralded the return of the angel in 1823.

HILL CUMORAH PAGEANT

Most of nature's edifices are closed books concerning their past. Not so with a common drumlin in western New York. Annually (with exception of the war years) since 1937

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Cumorah has trumpeted its message to hundreds of thousands, reconstructing through drama and music the message it guarded for 1,400 years.

Like most great things, the pageant developed from humble beginnings. Most likely it received its initial impetus on July 24, 1917, when members and missionaries participated in a gathering and social at the Joseph Smith farm and the Sacred Grove.45

Thereafter, periodic gatherings, mostly of missionaries, assembled at the Hill Cumorah. An extensive missionary effort in 1923 enacted by the Eastern States Mission president, B. H. Roberts, called for the missionaries to migrate to Cumorah, preaching the gospel as they went. With a vast array of pennants and slogans they climaxed their conference at meetings or "episodes" beside the Hill Cumorah in the Sacred Grove. Prominent throughout the program were flags among which was a Cumorah-Ramah flag to honor the two Book of Mormon nations. Half of the flag was colored light blue with gold letters spelling out Cumorah. The other half of the flag was colored deep purple with the word Ramah spelled in gold letters.46 This event was attended by approximately a thousand non-Mormons.47


46 Program of the First General Conference of the Eastern States Mission, in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection, Provo, Utah.

Prior to the 1937 pageant a program of the Restoration had been presented on Echo Hill (commonly known as East Hill), directly behind the Joseph Smith Home. Willard Bean's son, Alvin Pliney Bean, played the part of Joseph Smith in this production.48

As the feeling increased that a production of Mormon origin would have a place in the future, John W. Stonely wrote and presented a pageant in the Sacred Grove in 1928, and in a roped-off area of the Joseph Smith farm in 1929 and 1930.

Following the dedication of the Angel Moroni Monument in 1935, Professor E. H. Eastmond of Brigham Young University wrote and produced a pageant, entitled "The Restoration," that was presented in the Brooklyn ward.49 As the pageant fever increased, President Don B. Colton of the Eastern States Mission asked Oliver R. Smith and Meryl Dunn Jones, missionaries, to prepare yet another pageant script. They entitled their production "Truth From the Earth," and with a cast of seventy members presented it on July 25, 1936, to an audience of 5,000 people. The audience sat on the hillside of Cumorah and watched the Restoration message unfold at the foot of the hill. Cumorah's first pageant was history.50

Following the first pageant, President Colton organized a committee consisting of Roscoe Grover. Dr. H. Wayne

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49 Improvement Era, op. cit., p. 27.
50 Ibid.
Driggs, and Ira J. Markham and authorized them to publicize the Eastern States Mission. Thus, one of their tasks was to improve the publicity value of the Hill Cumorah. And their immediate recommendation was to have a yearly pageant at the Hill Cumorah. This recommendation became their responsibility: they were assigned to write, prepare, and present the yearly pageant. Professor Eastmond, who had long "dreamed" of presenting a pageant at the hill, supplied the costumes from Brigham Young University, and Dr. Driggs entitled the production "America's Witness for Christ."

Dr. Harold I. Hansen, then a new missionary in the Eastern States, was selected to train the missionaries who would present the pageant. Using a cast of 123, Dr. Hansen presented the pageant to over 10,000 people as a preliminary to what has become a colossal drama resounding through the summer air of July each year.51

Since that first production (with the exception of the World War II years), Dr. Hansen has produced each pageant. On special leave from BYU each summer, he has made the Hill Cumorah Pageant his life. And it has changed countless other lives. That it is now an integral part of contemporary western New York is expressed in the following article from the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle:

It is a tribute to the spiritual texture of the Rochester area that a religious pageant can outdraw

51 Deseret News, Church Section [Salt Lake City], Jan. 1, 1966, p. 15.
the most ballyhooed sports or professional entertainment event. We turn to the annual Mormon Pageant at the Hill Cumorah . . . as a case in point.

If history repeats, up to one hundred thousand people will see the dramatization of events recorded in The Book of Mormon. . . .

The spectacle is a production in the deepest sense of the word. The same words—lighting, sound, costumes, stage crews, cues, music—that bounce around back stage in the professional theater are familiar to pageant officials. But there is a difference. That of motive: Therein lies the key to the magnetic quality of the pageant. Its basic purpose is to deliver a message keyed to a better life.52

The pageant was not without its setbacks, however. But they have been overcome. Each year the Hansens said they were plagued with trouble and sorrow at pageant time. As a result, they sought a special blessing from Harold B. Lee. In that blessing he told them, "The adversary will do everything in his power to try to make it impossible for this pageant to go on." "And," Sister Hansen remarks, "we have felt it in our lives."53

Cumorah: subject of ridicule, nourished with the blood of two extinct nations, traversed by holy prophets as well as by godless money diggers. No longer does Cumorah sleep, as do the other drumlins in western New York. In western New York, July is Pageant month and is welcomed enthusiastically. That enthusiasm is expressed in the following article from Palmyra's local newspaper:

Pageant time 1963, and with it comes the opportunity to express our "thanks" to the hundreds of Mormons and

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52 The Instructor, May 1967, Vol. 102, centerfold.
their thousands of visitors who convene in our community to conduct and witness the annual spectacle.

Thank you for the dignity and prominence you have given Palmyra in carrying the message of your faith throughout the world, citing our community as the birthplace of the Mormon Movement.

And further, for the courtesy you show us individually in respecting our streets, our business establishments, and our homes.

We admire your principles and your strict observance of church tenets.

We're glad to see you here! 54

54_The Instructor_, op. cit.
Chapter 4

THE JOSEPH SMITH FARM

After years of hard work in the soil and the uncertain weather of Vermont, the Joseph Smith, Sr., family had received little reward. And now the fresh land and attractive growing season of New York were available. In 1816 the Smiths had begun to establish themselves in western New York. Their permanence was uncertain until, probably in the spring or summer of 1818, the Smiths settled on a 100-acre plot of land in Farmington and, with the help of Alvin and Hyrum, began clearing the land. Lucy Smith records, "In a year, we made nearly all of the first payment, erected a log house, and commenced clearing. I believe something like thirty acres of land were made ready for cultivating the first year."\(^1\) Evidently this new land had been sold under the direction of land agents. The following quote gives insight into its earlier history:

Originally, Township No. 11, Lot 1, the land on which the Smith family located, had been given by Phelps and Gorham to their wives, Rebecca Gorham and Mary Phelps, and from these women had been conveyed in 1790 to Israel Chapman. Four years after Chapman secured the land, he sold about 5700 acres to William Bacon for 616, or two shillings an acre. In the same year

\(^{1}\)Lucy Smith, History of Joseph Smith; ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), p. 64.
that Bacon obtained the property, he sold this lot and 7,600 additional acres for eleven shillings an acre to Thomas Morris and James Wadsworth. These men in turn sold this 300-acre lot and nine other lots of similar size to Nicholas Evertson of New York City in 1795 for 2,400, or sixteen shillings per acre. It was during this thirty years in which the Evertson family retained the land that the Smiths initiated payments on the farm.  

As Lucy Smith mentioned, as soon as they had gained access to the land, they constructed a log cabin. One early author states that he, "First seen the family in 1819 in a rude log house, with but a small clearing around the house." An anti-Mormon writer named Pomroy Tucker, who was a resident of early Palmyra, said, "In 1818 they [the Smith family] settled upon a nearly wild or unimproved piece of land, mostly covered with standing timber, situated about two miles south of Palmyra." He also mentioned that the cabin was a "small one-story, smokey log house" with two rooms on the ground floor and two divisions in the garret and that the Smiths later added a bedroom wing constructed of sawed slabs.

The prophet's brother William states that they were to pay yearly installments of $100 each, and Lucy indicated

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3 Wilford Wood Collection at Woods Cross, Utah in Section 8-1-M-1-12.
that in the first year they had made "nearly all of the first payment."  

An unidentifiable newspaper article on microfilm at the Brigham Young University Library mentions that after some time it was discovered that the cabin was not on the land originally contracted by Father Smith. Arrangements were then made with a Lemuel Durfee to purchase the land on which the cabin was erected. A small payment was made on it, and Joseph paid the interest on the balance working for Mr. Durfee during the harvest. This is the only evidence of this event that the writer could find.

The Smith family, numbering eleven following the birth of Lucy in 1821, embarked upon the construction of a new frame house. Mother Smith records that the responsibility of construction fell mainly upon Alvin. She states,

> We were still making arrangements to build us a comfortable house, the management and control of which evolved chiefly upon Alvin. And when Nov. 1822 arrived, the frame was raised, and all the materials necessary for its speedy completion were procured. This opened to Alvin's mind the pleasing prospect of seeing his father and mother once more comfortable and happy. He would say, "I am going to have a nice pleasant room for father and mother to sit in, and everything arranged for their comfort, and they shall not work any more as they have done."

Mother Smith stated that the frame was raised by

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6 Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 64.

7 Willard W. Bean Scrapbook in Brigham Young University Library on microfilm.

8 Lucy Smith, op. cit., pp. 86-87.
November 1822 and that all the materials needed to complete the home were quickly acquired. However, some uncertainty has arisen as to when the frame house was completed and whether it was the log house or the frame home in which Joseph received the visitation of Moroni. Available evidence is insufficient for a clear determination of which home this event happened, so the writer will present his findings concerning both points of view.

Lucy records that on November 15, 1824, Alvin became very sick. It has since been verified that Mother Smith was in error: Alvin's death actually occurred one year earlier, in 1823, as verified by his tombstone located in the General John Swift Memorial Cemetery in Palmyra, New York. Of Alvin's death, Lucy records,

On the fifteenth of Nov. 1824 [1823], about ten o'clock in the morning, Alvin was taken very sick with the bilious colic. He came to the house in much distress, and requested his father to go immediately for a physician. He accordingly went, and got one by the name of Greenwood, who, on arriving, immediately administered to the patient a heavy dose of calomel. I will here notice, that this Dr. Greenwood was not the physician commonly employed by the family; he was brought in consequence of the family physician's absence. And on this account, as I suppose, Alvin at first refused to take the medicine, but by much persuasion he was prevailed on to do so. This dose of calomel lodged in his stomach, and all the medicine which was freely administered by four very skillful physicians could not remove it.

On the third day of his sickness, Dr. M'Intyre, whose services were usually employed by the family, as he was considered very skillful, was brought, and with him four other eminent physicians. But it was all in vain, their exertions proved unavailing, just as Alvin had said would be the case--he told them the calomel was still lodged in the same place, after some
exertion had been made to carry it off, and that it must take his life.⁹

In one of Alvin's last requests, to his younger brother Hyrum, he said, "I have done all I could to make our dear parents comfortable. I want you to go on and finish the house, and take care of them in their old age, and do not any more let them work hard, as they are now in old age."¹⁰ This, in combination with the fact that Joseph first talked with Moroni on the evening of September 21, 1823 (two months before Alvin's death), infers that the Smiths were not living in the frame house. Evidently the house was not complete by the fall of 1825, for Lucy states, "A short time before the house was completed a man by the name of Josiah Stoal came from Chenango County, New York."¹¹

Oliver Cowdery strongly implies as he recounts Joseph's experience with Moroni on September 21, 1823, that there were others present in the room or in the close vicinity. He explains,

At length the family retired, and [Joseph] as usual, went his way, though in silence, where others might have rested their weary frames "locked fast in sleep's embrace," but repose had fled, and accustomed slumber had spread her refreshing hand over others beside him--he continued still to pray--his heart, though once hard and obdurate, was softened, and that mind which had often flitted, like the "wild bird of passage," had settled upon a determined basis not to be decoyed or driven from its purpose.

In this situation hours passed unnumbered--how many or how few I know not, neither is he able to

⁹Ibid., pp. 87-88. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 87.
¹¹Ibid., p. 91.
inform me; but suppose it must have been eleven or twelve and perhaps later, as the noise and bustle of the family, in retiring, had long since ceased. While continuing in prayer for a manifestation in some way that his sins were forgiven, endeavoring to exercise faith in the scriptures, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room. Indeed, to use his own description, the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming and unquenchable fire. This sudden appearance of a light so bright, as must naturally be expected, occasioned a shock or sensation, visible to the extremities of the body. It was, however, followed with a calmness and serenity of mind, and an overwhelming rapture of joy that surpassed understanding, and in a moment a personage stood before him.\(^\text{12}\)

Oliver Cowdery strongly infers crowded conditions—possibly because they were yet living in the log house.

Other historians have taken the stand that with the frame of the house being raised by November of 1822 and all the supplies acquired for completion, that certainly it would have been in a livable condition by the fall of 1823 and that because of the crowded conditions the Smiths would have moved in as soon as the walls and roof were completed and then finished the house as they were able.

The prophet's frequent mention of "my room" and "father's house" in his recitals of Moroni's visit have caused many to think in terms of the frame house.

Concerning Moroni's visit, Joseph records,

When on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication

\(^{12}\text{Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], February, 1835, p. 79.}\)
to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before Him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had done. While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.  

Joseph had received a vision once before while alone, and on this particular night he retired in "confidence [of] obtaining a divine manifestation, as I had previously done." Moroni appeared while Joseph was "in the act of calling upon God," and it seems improbable that Joseph would engage in such a spiritual plea unless he was by himself—in a bedroom that only the newly constructed frame home could have provided. However later revelations received by the Prophet Joseph were in the company of other individuals so this conclusion is questionable.

The only possible evidence the writer could find indicating that the Smiths might have been living in the frame house at Alvin's death was a document signed by Willard and Rebecca Bean explaining an interview Bean had with an old doctor. It reads as follows:

May 2, 1917
I called on Dr. Pratt at Manchester who had just past his 95th birthday. He said he was Dr. Pratt the 2nd. His son was Dr. Pratt the 3rd. His father who knew Joseph Smith was Dr. Pratt the 1st. His father was the Smith doctor for a time and was present and

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assisted in the operation on Alvin just before his death. He took sick suddenly and suffered intense agony. They sent for another to diagnose the trouble. When they opened him up they observed a ruptured intestine. Country doctors knew little or nothing about appendicitis in those days. He died after briefly suffering agony.

Dr. Pratt said he went with his father quite often and sat in the buggy while his father went into the patients home. He said the Smith family had moved into their new house shortly before Alvin's death. He also said he was with his father when the Mormons baptized some converts in the old mill pond in Crooked Brook that had been constructed to back up the water to furnish power for a small saw mill.14

The validity of Dr. Pratt's testimony must be questioned because of Dr. Pratt's age at the time of the interview and his age at the time when Alvin died. However, it is possible that "Dr. Pratt the first" told his son of these events.

The writer did check a medical directory of Wayne County and could find no Dr. Pratt listed during the early 1800's. The directory is incomplete, however, because there was no evidence of a Dr. Greenwood mentioned by Lucy Smith in her history.15

Regardless of where Moroni visited Joseph Smith, the Smiths, with the help of a carpenter named Mr. Stoddard, were able to finish the frame home sufficiently to live there comfortably. But they enjoyed this comfort for only a short time, until opposing forces contrived to have the Smiths

14 Wilford Wood Collection, 1-P-D-12 #5.

15"An Historical Sketch of the Wayne County Medical Society with Brief Notices of the Living and Pioneer Members." By Resolution of the Society, 1900, in BYU Library, microfilm.
ejected and to inherit the fruits of the hard working Smith family.

Prior to Christmas day, 1825, while Father Smith was away on business, procuring money for the $100 annual payment for their land, Mother Smith was approached by three men, one of whom was the Mr. Stoddard who had helped the Smiths finish their home. They claimed to have purchased the farm --and had actually done so (by misrepresenting the Smiths to the land agent, claiming that they had all but abandoned the land). With the help of a Dr. Robinson, however, the character of the Smith family was reestablished and the three land thieves were persuaded to return the deed if Hyrum could give to them $1,000 by ten o'clock the following Saturday morning. Mr. Lemuel Durfee, Sr., was contacted who ordered them to contact his son whom Mother Smith labels a "high sheriff." She further stated that

... the agent sent immediately for Mr. Stoddard and his friends, and they came without delay; but in order to make difficulty, they contended that it was after ten o'clock; however, not being able to sustain themselves upon this ground, they handed over the deed to Mr. Durfee, the high sheriff, who now became the possessor of the farm.16

Lemuel Durfee, Sr., then purchased the land for $1,135 on December 20, 1825, and received the deed from his son Lemuel Durfee, Jr. Then he leased the property to the Smith family until December 20, 1828, when they moved in with Hyrum's

16 Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 97.
family on a farm adjacent and south of their original property. 17

Since the initial removal of the Smith family from Manchester, the farm has been in the possession of nine different owners (see Appendix C). Not until June 10, 1907, did the Church again receive possession of this property. The deed was turned over to George Albert Smith for the sum of $16,000, and he in turn deeded the property to the Church on December 7, 1916 for $1.

Fig. 5 Joseph Smith Home as it appeared when Willard Bean arrived in 1915. (Palmyra Bean Packer Collection, Provo, Utah)

A year earlier, in February 1915, 18 the Church had called Willard W. Bean and his family to live and be caretaker of the Joseph Smith farm. In a letter from George

Albert Smith the Bean's were told the following:

Our desire is that you should have a good living while you are doing missionary work, and the farm should pay interest on the investment which it has done up to now. . . . There is timber on the place so that you can cut all the wood that is necessary for fuel, and we can make arrangements to purchase whatever fall seeding has been done.19

The original plot of land purchased by the Smiths had been 100 acres. While under the ownership of W. A. Chapman, the farm was enlarged by the addition of 37 acres on the west in the town of Macedon; and during Bean's occupancy, he was to add another 16 acres on the north in the town of Palmyra, making a total of 153 acres.20

Quickly the Joseph Smith farm became the Church headquarters of the East. Missionaries, travelers, and guests sought refuge and lodging from the hospitable Bean family. In a letter to the Presiding Bishopric dated August 23, 1919, Brother Bean expresses his concern over having so many people lodging and feeding at the Smith home, especially those who seem to use the farm as a "rest sanitorium or rendezvous." Sister Bean's burden had become difficult, and the food bill was overextended. A one-year record showed that more than 450 meals had been served to visitors.21

The visitors to the farm continued to increase, and the inconvenience soon changed to precious blessings and

19 Willard W. Bean paper in the CHD archives.
21 Bean paper.
fond friendships as the Beans made all welcome. And now, after thousands of visitors and years of age, the Smith home was due for renovation. It had become necessary to limit the number of visitors going through the home at one time for fear that the floor would collapse. The constant crowds had made the old wooden floor sag, which in turn made the roof dip. Consequently, on December 1, 1965, work crews took advantage of the slow tourism of winter and remodeled and strengthened the existing home. The original log floor joists were braced with steel beams running at ninety degree angels under the originals. The original joists (18"-thick hemlock planks) were completely removed, then relaid and refinished. The walls and ceiling were restored as nearly as possible to their original condition, and the asphalt shingles were replaced with wooden ones. The addition built at the rear of the home, after the Smiths had departed, was torn down and replaced by a caretaker's cottage that was attached to the house by a breezeway.  

The work of refurnishing the house was assigned to Florence Jacobsen, who was assisted by Given Wilcox, an authority on antiques. They concluded that all the doors in the house were original, and they also found bits of china 160 years old that had been uncovered by a bulldozer at the rear of the house.  

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22 Deseret News, Church Section [Salt Lake City], March 5, 1960, p. 10.

23 Deseret News, Church Section [Salt Lake City], Sept. 10, 1966, p. 9.
Engineers found the home to be 6" out of plumb and the floor 5 1/2" below level.\textsuperscript{24}

Today the Joseph Smith home is comfortable. And it has done far better than simply to provide comfort for Alvin's aged parents. Thousands have found physical comfort and assistance within its walls, and yet other thousands have felt the comfort of just walking through the same house where once the Prophet and his family walked.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 10.
Chapter 5

THE SACRED GROVE

Few places in Church History hold the quiet solitude as does the little group of trees located just west of the Joseph Smith home. So sacred is its significance that it has become known to Mormons and non-Mormons alike as the Sacred Grove. The event that solemnized the otherwise very normal plat of forest is best described in the Prophet

Joseph Smith's own words.

So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God.¹

The Prophet goes on to relate the grand appearance of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and the conversation between Jesus Christ and the boy prophet. It is interesting that the Prophet Joseph says that he retired to the place where he "previously designed to go," suggesting that the forested area was not new to him and that he had been

there for some reason before this time. This can be further substantiated by an early account of the First Vision recorded by the editor of the Pittsburg Gazette in an interview with Joseph Smith. Joseph told the editor,

I immediately went out into the woods where my father had a clearing, and went to the stump where I had struck my axe when I had quit work, and I kneeled down and prayed.  

Willard Bean suggests that Joseph passed through a wooded lot that his father and brothers had been clearing to a thicket where he could be alone.

There is little doubt that most (if not all) the land in the area of the Smith farm was heavily forested. Lucy Smith records that one of their first tasks on their new land was to clear it for cultivation and that in the first year they prepared around thirty acres and built a log cabin.  

Regardless of whether Joseph had been clearing land or chopping firewood, he was familiar with the place in which he prayed.

The writer could find no documented or historical evidence verifying that this special little grove of trees is indeed the exact spot in which the prophet received his first vision. A newspaper article dated September 1906 reports a visit to the Joseph Smith home by Joseph F. Smith,  

2 New York Spectator, September 23, 1843 (Bean Scrapbook #12).
his wife, Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Nibley, and their two daughters. It is reported that they spent most of the time in the home and in the grove at the rear of the house. The article then states, "In the rear of the house is the grove containing a large maple under which the first prophet of Mormonism prayed." This is the only evidence pointing to another grove, but the writer could find no evidence that a grove ever existed behind the house. When Willard Bean and his family arrived in 1915, the only trees behind the house were those in the apple orchard believed to have been planted by the Smiths. It is the writer's opinion that the reporter of the news article was in error when he stated that the grove was behind the home.

Apparently the present grove west of the Smith home had been acknowledged by Mormon and non-Mormon tradition as the site of the First Vision. Mr. Chapman, owner of the farm prior to George Albert Smith, perpetuated his father's wish that no axe be used in the grove except to remove dead timber. The elder Chapman petitioned his son to respect the small area of trees, intimating that it was in this grove of trees that the fourteen-year-old boy prophet awakened the heavens.

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4Edmonston Scrapbook (collection of newspaper articles on film in the Brigham Young University Library).

Fig. 6 View of apple orchard believed to have been planted by the Smiths, and the Sacred Grove in the distance (Albany: Fellowcrafts Shop, 1920).

George E. Anderson recalls this conversation with W. A. Chapman in the early 1900s.

"Mr. Chapman, I would like to speak with you about this farm. I do not understand how that grove has remained standing all these years. You must have about 200 acres of land, all under cultivation except where the grove is located."

Mr. C.: "I can explain that. Years ago my father sent for me and wished me to come at once. I found father very sick. He said, 'I want to speak to you about the farm. I do not think I will live long, and the farm will go to you. I want you to take good care of the grove. I have never used an ax in the grove, except to remove dead timber. I think it should be preserved, for that is where Joseph Smith, the 'Mormon' prophet, had his first vision.' Father died soon after this conversation, and I have done as he wished. I have never used an ax in the grove except to remove dead timber. I have now sold it to the Smith family of Utah, and they have employed me as caretaker."
first instructions to me were to take good care of the
grove, to keep it cleared of under-brush, so that it
would not be destroyed by fire."^6

According to Mr. Chapman, his father tells him that
the farm will go to him after the elder Chapman dies. On
July 14, 1881, Seth Chapman deeded the farm to his son,
William Avery Chapman (see Appendix C), so the conversation
between Seth Chapman and his son had to occur prior to 1881.
The writer concluded that the present stand of trees, known
as the Sacred Grove, was considered the grove where Joseph
said he had his first vision as early as 1881 and possibly
into the 1860s when Seth Chapman acquired the farm.

When Willard Bean arrived at the farm in 1915, he
found a copper tablet attached to a tree at the edge of the
grove. The tablet was 14 1/4" x 10" and 1/8" thick, and
unprofessionally inscribed on it were the following words in
English and Latin:

GO PRAY--AGAIN I COME
HINC LUCEM ET POCULA SACRA

James E. Talmage interpreted the Latin to read, "Here [or
hence] light and sacred vessels [literally, cups]." Willard
Bean states that he took the tablet and nailed it to a large
maple located centrally within the grove, the place where
Dr. Talmage first saw it in August 1920. A month later
Dr. Talmage received a letter from President E. Frank Birch,
President of the Tintic Stake that explained the origin of

^6Ibid.
the tablet and read as follows,

Dear Brother Talmage:

On consulting my missionary journal and refreshing my memory, I am able to state that on December 15th, 1910, at Ambridge, Penn., Elder William Larse Jensen, of Ovid, Idaho, introduced to me a man by the name of Carl Lynn, as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This gentleman, Carl Lynn, told me, at that time, that he had prepared and placed in the Sacred Grove, at Palmyra, N.Y., a copper plate with engravings in English and Latin, part of which read: "Go Pray. Again I Come". Mr. Lynn showed me what he claimed to be a facsimile of the plate bearing the inscription.

These particular events may have helped establish that grove as the grove and may even have helped establish the spot within the grove where the Prophet is supposed to have knelt. But both traditions are historically unverified.

It is quite well substantiated that a few of the present trees within the grove could have been growing at the time of the First Vision. Cores cut from two of the largest trees in the grove indicate that they could have been young saplings in Joseph Smith's day. In 1962 one of the trees, having been leveled by lightning, had a marker by it dating it as 292 years old.

John D. Giles indicated that originally a plat was

made of the grove after the Smiths had cleared the land. The plat listed the grove as covering approximately 6.4 acres. Originally the grove was nearly square, but now it is slightly longer from north to south.  

On June 6, 1944, a special project was undertaken as part of the Joseph Smith Martyrdom Centennial Commemoration to survey the trees, shrubs, flowers, and vines within the grove. Under the supervision of adults and trained personnel, members of Troop #61 of the Palmyra Branch, Garnagwa District, of the Finger Lakes Council of the Boy Scouts of America spent their Tuesday evenings all that summer searching and classifying vegetation within the grove. All were Aaronic Priesthood boys in good standing. Each Tuesday evening a short meeting was held, and the survey took the balance of the time. The survey indicated that beech trees were the predominate variety, the oldest trees being five sugar or rock maples. It is accepted belief that in that section of the country sugar maple trees reach maturity between 150 and 200 years of age. The largest tree was past maturity and was breaking from the top; the other four gave indication of being 150-200 years of age. The oldest beech trees were 45-50 feet tall. But because they grow rapidly, it is doubtful that any of them were present in the 1820's. The incomplete survey concluded that the grove contained

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10 John D. Giles, Box 6, Folder 10 in Church Historical Department in Salt Lake City.
fifteen varieties of trees, with seventeen varieties of shrubs, flowers, and vines. A record of the entire classification is recorded in the John D. Giles papers located in the Church Historical Department.¹¹

For many years visitors to the grove found themselves wading through mud in the corral west of the Smith's old barn. Then they followed an old cow trail that led to the Sacred Grove. In a letter dated May 12, 1949, Thorpe B. Isaacson recommended to President David O. McKay that a definite entrance be made to the grove to facilitate access to this important site. Soon the trail to the Grove was less hazardous.¹²

Just how and when this little group of trees became known as the Sacred Grove is difficult to determine. The Prophet Joseph's history merely states that he "retired to the woods."¹³ In the 1835 recital of the First Vision, Warren Cowdery records the prophet as saying "silent grove."¹⁴ One year earlier Edward Stevenson, while living in Pontiac, Michigan, also heard Joseph refer to the place as the "silent grove."¹⁵ In 1842 Orson Hyde states that the

¹¹Ibid. ¹²Ibid., Box 17, folder 2.
¹³Joseph Smith, op. cit., p. 4.
¹⁴Milton V. Backman, Jr., Joseph Smith's First Vision (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), Appendix B.
prophet "retired to a secret place, in a grove,"\textsuperscript{16} but nowhere could the writer find reference to a Sacred Grove by an original Church author. Even in 1888, when Stevenson and Jensen revisited the beginning sites of Mormonism, the words "Sacred Grove, are not mentioned. The earliest mention the writer could find is recorded January 6, 1906, in the Journal History of the Church.\textsuperscript{17} It is the writer's conclusion that at some time between 1888 and 1906 the small 6.4 acres of forest was christened the "Sacred Grove."

Though historically unverified the Sacred Grove maintains its dignity and reverence and is paid homage by thousands yearly who testify with emotional and spiritual feeling that the grove did harbor the boy prophet when he was visited by the Father and the Son.

\textsuperscript{16} Backman, op. cit., Appendix F.

\textsuperscript{17} Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, January 6, 1906, in the Church Historical Department.
Chapter 6

MARTIN HARRIS FARM

The noted Palmyra historian, Thomas L. Cook, concludes his sketch of the Martin Harris property in his book *Palmyra and Vicinity* with the following statement: "Thus, the old Martin Harris farm has been divided up and passed into the hands of strangers, and the original owners will soon be forgotten."

Martin Harris will forever be known in the history of the Restoration—either for his stubborn rejection of the Lord's counsel, which led to his losing the 116 manuscript pages of The Book of Mormon, or for his willingness to mortgage his farm to pay for the printing of The Book of Mormon.

At the age of nine, Martin Harris traveled with his parents, Nathan and Rhoda Harris, from Rhode Island to western New York. On February 3, 1794, Nathan Harris bought 600 acres from John Swift for fifty cents an acre. The tract was located approximately one mile north of the

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village of Palmyra. Of the 600 acres, Martin was to receive 320, and a portion of that was to be mortgaged to assist in the coming forth of The Book of Mormon.

Martin was later to marry his cousin, Lucy Harris; and shortly after he had gained possession of part of his father's farm, he erected a one-story white frame house\(^4\) and soon became a respected and prosperous farmer in the area. The Harris family with their three children were living comfortably as Mormonism touched their lives. Before Joseph obtained the gold record from Cumorah, Joseph's father had formed a warm acquaintance with Martin Harris. This acquaintance had opened an opportunity for the boy prophet to work in the fields of Mr. Harris for fifty cents a day, and Mr. Harris is reported to have said that he hoed corn next to him and that young Joseph was a good worker.\(^5\) Because he and Martin were close friends, Father Joseph felt inclined to tell Martin concerning the gold record that Joseph would one day receive to translate. Following this introduction, Martin became involved with Mormonism and every facet of his life in the future, temporal and spiritual, was to show the affect.

As the wave of Mormonism engulfed Martin Harris, he became intimately involved with the work of the Restoration.

\(^{3}\)Ibid., p. 13.  
\(^{4}\)Cook, op. cit., p. 206.  
His wife, Lucy, jealous of his time and challenging his integrity, demanded evidence of his efforts. Martin pleaded with the Prophet for permission from the Lord to take and show his wife the evidence of their inspired work, which totaled 116 pages of written translation from the plates. Finally permission was granted contingent upon his solemn oath to show them to only five specified individuals. For a time the Harris farm housed the precious manuscript; in fact, it is the last place the 116 pages were known to be. The fate and whereabouts were never determined, but according to Lucy Smith the majority of suspicion falls upon his wife, who often expressed her displeasure concerning Joseph Smith and his work. Because of this loss, Joseph said that he received a severe rebuke from the Lord. But later he was reendowed with his prophetic gift of translation, and he continued his work until June 1829. In the company of Martin Harris, the Prophet finally persuaded a printer by the name of E. B. Grandin to print The Book of Mormon, and on August 25, 1829, Joseph Smith contracted with E. B. Grandin to print 5,000 copies of the book for $3,000. To insure payment of the printing, Martin Harris had been required to mortgage his farm for $3,000 to Mr. Grandin three weeks earlier, on August 5. The contract specified that Martin Harris would pay Mr. Grandin $3,000 within eighteen months, or Mr. Grandin would sell the Harris farm at a public
auction with Harris retaining any profit made.\textsuperscript{6}

At about this same time Martin and Lucy separated. Some have thought it was a legal divorcement,\textsuperscript{7} but the writer could find no evidence of any legal transaction. Martin Harris had struggled with their marriage for a time previous to this evidenced by his giving part of his farm to his wife as early as 1825. It was reported by one newspaper that Martin gave his wife eighty acres on the north end of the farm and built a house for her there. An old dominion law prohibited a husband's deeding land to his wife, so Martin deeded the land to his brother, Peter, who on the same day deeded it to Lucy.\textsuperscript{8} Of the remaining acreage, 150 were mortgaged for the printing of The Book of Mormon.

When the spring of 1831 arrived, Mr. Grandin was anxious to receive his $3,000 and to meet this agreement. Martin Harris was forced to sell 152 acres privately to a Mr. Thomas Lakey. This transaction took place on April 1, 1831, and the terms of the agreement read as follows:

\begin{quote}
Articles of agreement made and concluded this first day of April in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-one, between Martin Harris of the first part, and Thomas Lakey of the other part, both of Palmyra, in the county of Wayne, and state of New York in manner and form following:

The said Martin Harris, for the consideration hereinafter mentioned, agrees to sell to the said Thomas Lakey the farm on which he now resides, containing by
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{6}Gunnell, op. cit., p. 38.

\textsuperscript{7}Improvement Era, May 1955, vol. 58, p. 345.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid.
estimation, one hundred and fifty acres, for the sum of twenty dollars for each acre, and forthwith to obtain a correct survey of all premises, and give a good warranty deed of same, and to give immediate possession of everything. Always excepting and reserving the privilege in the house till the first of May next.

The said Lakey to have all the wheat on the ground except 10 acres grown by Mr. Dyke, and one half of the said 10 acres shall belong to said Lakey after the said Dyke shall harvest the same and shock it up in the field.

In consideration whereof, the said Thomas Lakey agrees to pay to the said Martin Harris, one third of the purchase money on the first day of May next, and one third in the month of October next, and the remainder in the month of October in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-three. In consideration whereof the parties bind themselves in the penal sum of five hundred dollars, being damages assessed and agreed on by the parties. In witness whereof the parties have hereunto interchangeably set their hands and seals, the day and year first above mentioned.9

It seems apparent that Mr. Grandin desired his payment in gold and was not happy with the idea of waiting another eighteen months—as was hinted at in the agreement—to receive full payment. Then a providential series of events occurred.

When Martin Harris sold his farm to Thomas Lakey to raise money to print the Book of Mormon it had to be paid in gold. In 1831 John Graves came from England accompanied by his wife and daughter, Mrs. Christian Graves Grainger, a widow, who brought with her four children, one of whom, Jane, married William Troop and became the mother of George, Mary, Emily, and Belle Troop. Emily and Belle have since passed away. Mrs. Grainger also brought with her $3,000 in gold, wrapped in a belt and fastened around her waist. Mr. Graves purchased the farm from Mr. Lakey and paid the $3,000 which was passed on to pay for the printing of the Book of Mormon.10

When the Church moved to Kirtland, Martin followed,


10Cook, op. cit., p. 205.
exchanging his once secure livelihood for the insecure wanderings of the Saints. Thomas Cook records that in the late 1840s the original Harris home, a white frame structure, burned to the ground and was replaced on the same spot of ground by a two-story cobblestone house.

When the frame house burned, the owner, William Chapman, put his two teenage sons to work hauling lake washed stone from the shores of Lake Ontario. The rocks had to be of specific dimensions, and each stone was sized through a hole in a board before being loaded onto the wagon.\(^{11}\) The Palmyra historian, Thomas Cook, states that the round trip from the farm to Lake Ontario took about three days.\(^{12}\) The mason of the new rock home is believed to have been a Mr. Robert Johnson who, as he layed the stone, allowed nobody to watch. By so doing, he hoped to keep secret the skill and craft of his profession.\(^{13}\)

An undated newspaper article in the King's Daughter Library in Palmyra and on microfilm at the BYU Library gives the approximate date of the new cobblestone as 1849, and Willard Bean reports in his journal that part of the original foundation was used for the foundation of the new cobblestone house and that the old part was plainly visible.

Following the acquisition of the Hill Cumorah, the

\(^{11}\)Mormonism Files located in King's Daughter Library in Palmyra, New York and on microfilm at BYU Library.

\(^{12}\)Cook, op. cit., p. 206.

\(^{13}\)Mormonism File, op. cit.
Martin Harris farm was still mortgaged. The last owner, Edward Jeffreys, saw to it that his two boys received their education, but as soon as they had done so they quickly left Mr. Jeffreys alone on the farm facing a $6,000 mortgage. Ironically the Church was able to pay off the mortgage for Mr. Jeffreys and gain possession of the farm, in much the same way as that by which the farm had been taken from Martin Harris in 1831.14

The Martin Harris farm played a unique role in early Mormondon. Obviously it was the catalyst in getting The Book of Mormon off the press and into the hands of the people. Though Martin may be critized for his vacillations as a Church member, the valuable farm that he willingly sacrificed stands as a tribute to him.

Chapter 7

PETER WHITMER, SR., FARM

As the ray of Mormonism flickered brighter over western New York even the most reputable and respected could not escape its influence. Residing in Seneca County were Peter Whitmer and his family. Fayette, originally known as Washington, was a small village nestled between the northern shores of Lake Cayuga and Lake Seneca. The Whitmers had acquired the fertile farm land in 1809, and had quickly gained the respect of the local citizens. By agreement they had purchased from a Samuel and Rebecca Miller some land which on April 14, 1819, would finally total about 100 acres.¹

Peter Whitmer and his wife, Mary Musselman, were the parents of eight children, and the elder Whitmer saw to it that his strict religious background entrenched itself in his children by way of the German Reformed Church.

The Whitmer's 100-acre farm soon blossomed as a result of their hard work. Then during the spring of 1829, after a communication from Oliver Cowdery, Peter and some of

his family traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. As the burden of persecution had once again been unloaded in the path of the Prophet, he requested help from the Whitmers, and shortly the site of translation of the gold record was changed from Harmony to Fayette. Once again spring arrived, and the Whitmer farm demanded Peter's attention. But this year David found himself unable to both prepare his farm and answer the Prophet's call. Then the Whitmers received some unexpected assistance.

During an interview in 1878, David Whitmer mentioned that on the day following the Prophet's request for assistance he went to the field to plow and found that seven acres had been plowed the night before and that the plow had been left in the furrow just as he would have left it. He also said that as he worked in the field he was able to accomplish in a few hours what normally took him two days. Similarly, Lucy Smith records,

The next morning, David took a wooden measure under his arm and went out to sow the plaster, which he had left, two days previous, in heaps near his sister's house, but, on coming to the place, he discovered that it was gone! He then ran to his sister, and inquired of her if she knew what had become of it. Being surprised she said, "Why do you ask me? Was it not all sown yesterday?"
"Not to my knowledge," answered David.

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3 Interview of Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith with David Whitmer, Sept. 7, 1878. Deseret News, [Salt Lake City], November 16, 1878.
"I am astonished at that," replied his sister, "for the children came to me in the forenoon, and begged of me to go out and see the men sow plaster in the field, saying, that they never saw anybody sow plaster so fast in their lives. I accordingly went, and saw three men at work in the field, as the children said, but, supposing that you had hired some help, on account of your hurry, I went immediately into the house, and gave the subject no further attention."  

Following this fortunate turn of events, David, planning to transport the Prophet to Waterloo, traveled to Harmony in a two-horse wagon. We learn from Mother Smith that this was the first meeting of Joseph Smith and David Whitmer.

David immediately set out for Pennsylvania, and arrived there in two days, without injuring his horses in the least, though the distance was one hundred and thirty-five miles. When he arrived, he was under the necessity of introducing himself to Joseph, as this was the first that they had ever met.

I will observe, that the only acquaintance which existed between the Smith and Whitmer families, was that formed by Mr. Smith and myself, when on our way from Manchester to Pennsylvania to visit Joseph, at which time we stopped with David over night and gave him a brief history of the Record.  

As the prophet's wife, Emma, stayed behind to settle the affairs at Harmony, Joseph and Oliver journeyed with David to the Whitmer residence in Waterloo, beginning the translation of the plates the day after they arrived. We are told by Lucy Smith that an angel would take responsibility of transporting the plates to Waterloo and that they

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5 Ibid., p. 149.
would be delivered to Joseph after his arrival.  

The miraculous events on the Whitmer farm that enabled David to assist the prophet were only the beginning of a long list of events important to the history of the Church. Shortly after Joseph and Oliver commenced translating at the Whitmer home, David testified that his mother, Mary Whitmer, was shown the plates by a heavenly personage as he turned the pages "leaf by leaf."  

Sometime in June 1829, as the translation was drawing to a close, Joseph declared that three special witnesses would have the privilege of viewing the plates; and he further specified that David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris had been appointed by the Lord to be those witnesses. During the day they retired with Joseph Smith to a grove of trees on or adjacent to the Whitmer farm and there obtained their witness and vision of the angel and gold record. Just where this sacred event took place is not accurately known. Joseph Smith records that they retired to a "piece of woods convenient to Mr. Whitmer's house."  

Willard Bean, in his study of the Peter Whitmer farm said that the woods were at the "other end of the farm" and that

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6 Ibid.

7 Millennial Star, [Liverpool], March 27, 1893, pp. 214-216.

the original woodlot consisted of almost fifty acres, twenty of which were located on the Whitmer farm. In his autobiography Bean concludes that it was in the northeast corner of the Whitmer farm that the three witnesses beheld the record and the angel, but the writer could not find his evidence for such a conclusion.

Once it became known that the Whitmers were involved with the work of the Restoration, their stature in the community declined rapidly. Whether by choice or because of persecution, they retired from public life at about the time the Church was organized. From the Fayette Town Records we learn that from 1826 until 1829 the Whitmer family took an active part in serving the public. Father Whitmer was the overseer of highways in 1826 and 1827, and Christian Whitmer was elected constable in 1828 and 1829. However, after 1829 there is no mention of their names in these records. It is also interesting to note that the annual town meeting of 1830, in which the officers were elected for Fayette community, was held at the home of Jacob Hendricks on April 6. It is reasonable to assume that the Whitmers would have been concerned about another meeting held that same day at their own home.

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9 Willard W. Bean Paper, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

10 Fayette Town Records, 1802-1845, on microfilm in Brigham Young University Library.
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Sometime prior to April 6, 1830, the prophet Joseph received what is now Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. This valuable revelation gave instruction concerning the Church organization and various duties for the officers and members. It also contained the instruction as to the specific day the Church was to be organized.

When April 6, 1830, arrived (the articles of incorporation having been previously drawn up), a group of forty to fifty people assembled in the log home of Peter Whitmer and by the signatures of Joseph Smith, Samuel Smith, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Peter Whitmer. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. Joseph and Oliver were ordained elders following the consent of the brethren. The sacrament was administered and passed for the first time, and the Holy Ghost was bestowed upon those who had been baptized. Joseph Smith records a great outpouring of the Spirit at this memorable meeting.

The writer was able to find one early source verifying the organization place and date. The following is a quote from the Geauga County Ohio Land Records:

This Endenture, made this fifth day of May in the year of Our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-four between John Johnson and Elsey Johnson, wife of the said John Johnson of the township of Kirtland, county of Geauga, and state of Ohio, of the one part and Joseph Smith Junior, President of the Church of Christ organized on the 6th of April in the year of Our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and thirty, in the Township of
Fayette, Seneca County, and State of New York, and was called the Church of the latter-day saints.\textsuperscript{11}

As the Church message and influence unfolded with the rest of New York's spring blossoms, it quickly attracted attention of both the humble adherent and the venomous persecutor. Within the year the Church migrated to Ohio, and the Peter Whitmer, Sr., farm remained as yet another silent sentinel of the Restoration.

The home in which the Church was organized has been the subject of much research, and there has been considerable discussion as to whether the event occurred in the present colonial style house now standing on the property or in a log cabin long since destroyed. The historical evidence available clearly indicates that the Church was organized in a log house. In 1860 Orson Pratt was to recollect concerning the General Conference held January 2, 1831. "In one small room of a log house nearly all of the Latter-day Saints . . . were collected together."\textsuperscript{12} Sidney Rigdon also verifies this when he states, "I recollect in the year of 1830 I met the whole Church of Christ in a little old log-house about 20 feet square, near Waterloo, N.Y., and we began to talk about the kingdom of God as if we had the world at our command."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11}Geauga County, Ohio Land Records, on microfilm in Brigham Young University Library, p. 478.

\textsuperscript{12}John D. Giles paper, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
Just where this original log house stood was partially answered in 1888, when Andrew Jenson, Edward Stevenson and Joseph S. Black visited the area. They interviewed two tenant farmers, Chester Reed and John Marshall, who remembered the Whitmer cabin. The investigators' conclusions were drawn from both interview and exploration.

The old Whitmer house, in which the Church was organized . . . was a one-and-a-half story log house. It was torn down many years ago, but the site on which it stood is well known and was pointed out to us. The old family well is still there; also several of the logs which once constituted a part of the building, lay along the fence half decayed.¹⁴

In a separate journal Stevenson records, "The old well still stands there, but only a little of the one-and-one-half story log house remains in ruins. We ate apples in the new house."¹⁵ Joseph S. Black's notebook gives yet another account of the same experience:

I am now sitting on a rotten log, which once formed part of the Whitmer house, in which the Church was organized. It was a double log house, 1 1/2 story and is now torn down, and some of the logs lie by the well, which is a little northwest from the house and is good yet. They have built a new house a little to the northeast of the old location on a little higher ground. The place where the old house stood is now covered with beautiful clover.¹⁶

Later visits to the Whitmer farm by W. F. Brim, Theodore T. Burton, and the trio of George Albert Smith, his wife, and German E. Ellsworth also confirm the spot identified by

¹⁵Ibid., p. 21. ¹⁶Ibid.
Fig. 7 Mrs. George Albert Smith and German Ellsworth stand on original Whitmer home site, 1907 (Improvement Era, April, 1970).

Some of the most recent evidence concerning the location of the cabin has been uncovered by Professor Dale Berge of Brigham Young University. Skilled in uncovering artifacts, Dr. Berge uncovered some 2,084 artifacts on the site of the Whitmer log cabin. A list and classification of these artifacts can be found in the article.¹⁷

In the same article Dr. Berge quotes a Mr. Deidrich Willes, Jr., who described the Whitmer cabin in 1880:

This home consisted of 40 logs notched at the corners, the floor made of hand-hewn timber, the cross beams and rafters covered with hand-sawn roof boards covered in turn with split shingle or bark, the fireplace open.\textsuperscript{18}

Prior to Dr. Berge's excavation, William Lee Powell (who farmed the land between 1941 and 1952) had discovered a rock foundation in a 20' x 30' alignment.\textsuperscript{19} All the evidence indicates that the Church was organized in the log cabin. And we know where the cabin stood.

It is evident that the present colonial style house on the farm was built sometime after the Whitmers left New York, and the indications are that it was built by the farm's third owner, John Deshler, sometime before 1852\textsuperscript{20} and after he had purchased it from Charles Stuart in April of 1831.\textsuperscript{21} Deshler purchased the farm for $2,200 and in 1870 sold it for $9,000. It is possible that the increased value is due to the construction of the present home, but it is also possible that the land value appreciated that much.

The Whitmer farm changed hands several times between Mr. Deshler's ownership and when the Church finally purchased it (see Appendix F). The persuasive friendliness of Willard Bean again proved to be the means by which the

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 200. \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 198.
\textsuperscript{20} Anderson, op. cit., p. 23.
\textsuperscript{21} Larry C. Porter, op. cit., Appendix F.
Church came to possession of yet another important historic site. In his own words he recounts the acquisition of the farm:

I had also contacted and formed the friendly acquaintance with an old gentleman named Manges who owned the Peter Whitmer farm. On one of my visits at his place I incidentally mentioned that I had recently purchased a farm which included a slice of "Mormon Hill", as it was generally known locally, he said he was thinking some of selling his farm and retiring, as he was now 72 years old, yet very spritely for a man of his age. I asked him what he considered it worth and he made me a price which was not exorbitant compared with the price farms were changing hands at that time. The Whitmer farm consists of 100 acres, all tillable. A very productive farm, I didn't appear over anxious but told him I would think the matter over. But I was more interested than I let on. It was here where much of the Book of Mormon plates were translated; a score or more revelations received by Joseph; the three witnesses saw the angel Moroni, who displayed the gold plates, Urim and Thummin, Liahona and Sword of Laban in the grove on the north-eastern corner of the farm etc. I put the matter up to the First Presidency and they wrote me to proceed to purchase the farm on the best terms I could arrange. So we took over another historical farm. The first Whitmer home was a log house 20 feet square, with garret. They also added a small leanto for a kitchen. But in 1826 they built the house now standing. The old house was left standing near the lane and later one of the sons lived in it. It is quite probable that the Church was organized in this log house, as it is a matter of history that because of its 20 x 20 room they held the first conference there, also held other meetings there. I might also mention that one or two meetings were held under a spreading elm tree near the lane.22

After the purchase, Bean noticed that the weather had decayed the existing porch and pillars of its colonial architecture and to restore it to its proper design, he promptly bought four pillars from an old building being wrecked in Water-

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22Willard W. Bean Autobiography in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection, Provo, Utah, Part II, p. 32.
Bean maintains that when Jenson visited the area in 1888 he failed to notice that there had once been a front porch with pillars on the original home.\footnote{Ibid.}

Over the years since the Church's repossession of the Whitmer farm, the farm's historic and sentimental significance to all Latter-day Saints has emerged. Bishop John Wells said in General Conference concerning the purchase of the Peter Whitmer farm,

Some may say, "Why purchase this property?" I am satisfied that the day will come when these historic places will be visited by tourists and Latter-day Saints in great numbers, who will stand in reverence in such hallowed spots.\footnote{Letter from Willard W. Bean to John D. Giles in the Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.}

\footnote{"The Peter Whitmer Farm," op. cit., p. 176.}
Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints revolves mainly around western New York, and the historic landmarks now owned by the Church there are vital to its history. It is a matter of record that western New York was a fertile field for religious revivals and intolerance for differing views were common. As the Church returned to western New York, Mormonism faced prejudice and hatred, but through the twenty-four year mission of the Willard Washington Bean family, great strides were accomplished in bandaging the wounds of the past between Mormons and non-Mormons.

Since the prophets day, the Joseph Smith, Sr., farm and Sacred Grove has evolved into a vital tourist attraction. Evidence is still inconclusive on whether Moroni visited Joseph Smith in the old log cabin or the presently standing frame house. The logic for both views is interesting but inconclusive. The Sacred Grove remains sacred (to the Latter-day Saints) yet unproven as to the actual spot where Joseph Smith received his first vision.

Hill Cumorah looms enormous in significance for such a small drumlin and it is evident that in Joseph's day the
hill was mostly covered with trees. The trees later disappeared for various reasons, and then later reappeared as the Church gained possession of the hill and restored the tree cover. The monument at the hill and the yearly pageant have become an adopted part of the hill as a reoccurring witness to the events that transpired there in the 1820s.

Many historical events happened at the Peter Whitmer, Sr., farm and the Whitmer family showed great strength in the early days of the Restoration. It is conclusive that the present Whitmer home was built after the Church removed from Fayette, and probably before 1852, and that the original Whitmer home spoken of in the early history of the Church was a log cabin. Both research and scientific excavation have verified this conclusion.

Likewise, the Martin Harris home presently standing is not the one spoken of in the Church's history. The present Harris home was built on the foundation of the original Harris home which was destroyed by fire.

With the exception of the Joseph Smith, Sr., farm, all of these sites were brought back into the Church possession largely under the direction and influence of Willard W. Bean. The return of these sites to the Church exhibits providential help and direction which is as important now as the original events that transpired there.

There are still questions needing answers concerning these sites. The writer would suggest a systematic and conclusive survey of all contemporary journals and diaries up
through 1900 to obtain an accurate birthday for the Sacred Grove phraseology. The same procedure would be advised for all persons associated with the Joseph Smith family while in New York, particularly those that may have helped or had an interest in the Joseph Smith, Sr., frame house. A survey of construction items, sales, and records pertaining to the Smith home would be invaluable. Hidden land records and road surveys would be of great value in determining exact geography of sites in question.

It is the writer's conclusion that historic sites are a valuable possession of the Church and that the history of the Church is greatly verified and substantiated by historic sites. Many tourists gain better understanding and knowledge of the Church as they visit these sites. There affect upon people is immeasurable.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

EARLY HILL CUMORAH PAGEANT

SCRIPT, 1934
"The Morning Breaks" - duet

PROLOGUE

Reader:

Renowned as the birthplace of patriots,
And the home of brave heroes of yore,
Vermont thy name, And thy fair fame,
Are glorified now the more;
For amid thy stately mountains,
On Sharon's verdant sod,
There came to earth, in mortal birth
A prophet of our God.

All down through the ages
The power of darkness held sway,
Till on a bright morn a child was born,
To be a Seer of latter day.

A part of life his babyhood,
His mother's fond caress,
His father's love, a Home of youth
Where children came to bless.

His boyhood busy as a bee,
With honest effort oft he toiled,
Exelled in manly sports and fun,
From evil deeds his soul recoiled.

Then as his days of youth went by,
Confusion ruled the land,
Man in his folly broke God's law,
Departed from the plan.

Scene 1 "The Revival"
Four ministers in corners of stage, Joseph
in center holding Bible.

First Minister:
Come you that love the lord
And let your joys be known
Join in a song with sweet accord
And worship at his throne.
Second Minister:
Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew our God
But servants of the heavenly King
Clasp here the iron rod.

Third Minister:
Lo here, God rules on high
And all the earth surveys
He rides upon the stormy sky
And all your fear allays.

Fourth Minister:
This mighty God is ours
Our father and out love
He will send His heavenly powers
To carry us above.

*****

Reader:
Confusion reigned supreme
Within the youth's fair head,
Grave doubts their words inspired,
Lo here, lo there, they each one said.
At last from holy scripture
Directly sent from heaven,
To ease the tumult in his soul,
The answer he was given.

Joseph Smith reads: James 1:5
If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God
that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;
and it shall be given him.

"Joseph Smith's First Prayer" - ladies' duet

Scene 2  "The Vision of the Sacred Grove"
Joseph kneeling in grove.

Reader:
For answer then, a trusting youth,
From doubting world of conflict and disdain,
Came here in quest of wandering pilot's star,
Sought here in sylvan wood the torch of truth,
And wide Celestial ramparts stood ajar.

The Prince of Darkness from his dismal home,
Came in derision, seeking to O'ershade
The crimson shafts of revelation's light;
Then as the gates swung wide in Heaven's dome,
The Son of Morning slunk into the night.
And Radience that shamed Meridian sun,
Descended unto earth from Kolob far;
The Glory of the Lord shone round about,
And righteousness 'gainst error's conflict won,
And truth eternal vanquished fear and doubt.

Voice:
"Behold Thou, Joseph, My Beloved Son.
Below all things descended and arose
In triumph o'er adversity and pain,
And o'er the tempter endless victory won;
Forever and Eternal is His reign."

Reader:
"Where is the path, the seer then did emplore,
And where the rod of truth to guide my way,
Safe o'er the quicksands and the bog and sea,
That peril life's far journey to the shore
Of happiness eternal, and to Thee."

"Behold," Jehovah spake, "Let earth give ear,
All man-made dogmas to no harbor lead;
And craft devised by men alone, are bound
To drift unanchored in the tide of fear,
And founder on the rocks, and run aground."

"Lo all the creeds extant shall come to naught;
They are not mine, for they heard not my call,
They teach for doctrine the commands of men,
And 'gainst eternal truth have ever fought,
And shalt not know me when I come again."

"Thou, Joseph, art a seer divinely called,
And foreordained a valiant Messenger
To lead men back again into the fold,
A prophet and a warning harbinger,
My plan eternal shalt to man unfold."

Reader:
Then back again into the realms of light
Receded the glad Vision, and alone
The young Elias to a fallen world,
Proclaimed the doom of darkness and of night,
And Truth's triumphant banner was unfurled.

Speak, speak, Thou primal forest and proclaim
The summons of the ages unto man;
Let all thy stately monarchs in accord
Waft paens unto heaven and acclaim,
To earth the message of the Risen Lord.

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It took three years of work,
The sweat of honest toil,
With perseverance for the right,
Smoothed not by victor's spoil
It took strong will a "no" to say
When in temptation's grasp,
And strength to hold the iron rod
Until the lure was past.

It seemed misfortune stalked his way,
His well meant friends had flown,
Man's brotherhood seemed but a myth,
He was rejected, spurned, alone.

____________________

Script for Palmyra Pageant held in 1934, located in Palmyra Bean Packer Collection, Provo, Utah.
APPENDIX B

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE JOSEPH SMITH HOME AND FARM, MANCHESTER, NEW YORK
Re: Jos Smith Home Palmyra
Cumorah Stake
Property #505-4788

Legal Description:

ALL that certain plot, piece or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being in the Town of Manchester, County of Ontario and State of New York, being Lot number One of the subdivision of original Lot number One north of the center line in Township number Eleven in the second Range of Townships in the said County of Ontario, and bounded as follows, viz:

Beginning at the northwest corner of said original Lot number One, thence running easterly on the north line of said lot, forty-one chains and fifty links; thence southerly twenty-four chains and nine links; thence westerly, forty-one chains and sixty-three links to the west line of said original Lot number One; thence northerly, on said west line, twenty-four chains and eight links to the place of beginning: Containing ninety-nine and one-half acres, and being the same premises conveyed to William Avery Chapman, by Seth T. Chapman, by deed dated July 14th, 1881, and recorded in the office of the Clerk of the County of Ontario in Libr 171 of Deeds of page 132.

Legal Ownership Today:

Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a Corporation Sole.

Responsibility of Maintenance:

Building Operations and Maintenance

Joseph Smith home & farm: Agent: Caretaker-Western New York Historic Sites Maintenance Program: Caretaker & staff

Legal Description of Joseph Smith, Sr., farm. LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.
APPENDIX C

LAND RECORDS, JOSEPH SMITH, SR., FARM
LAND RECORDS, THE JOSEPH SMITH, SR., FARM
Manchester, New York

#1 State of Massachusetts and State of New York

Mutual Deed and Agreement.
Dated 16 December 1786.
Recorded 3 Jan. 1835 at 3 PM in Liber 56 of Deeds at page 449.

#2 State of Massachusetts to
Nathaniel Gorham
Oliver Phelps

Deed.
Dated 23 April 1788.
Recorded 20 June 1816 at 9 AM in Liber "C" of Miscellaneous Records at page 136.

#3 Rebecca Gorham, wife of Nathaniel Gorham,
Mary Phelps, wife of Oliver Phelps,
to
Israel Chapin

Deed
Dated 8 November 1790.
Recorded 20 September 1791.
in Liber 1 of Deeds at page 187.
Consideration 5 Shillings.

#4 Israel Chapin to
William Bacon

Warranty Deed.
Dated 24 June 1791.
Recorded 12 June 1794.
in Liber 2 of Deeds at page 267.
Consideration 616 Pounds.

#5 William Bacon to
Thomas Morris
James Wadsworth

Warranty Deed.
Dated 5 June 1794.
Recorded 22 December 1794.
in Liber 3 of Deeds at page 118.
Consideration 4400

#6 Thomas Morris
James Wadsworth to
Nicholas Evertson Esq.
Benjamin Kissam, Physician,
both of New York City

Deed with Covenants.
Dated 16 December 1795.
Recorded 25 Nov. 1813 at 10 A. M. in Liber 20 of Deeds at page 39.
Consideration 2400
Conveys the premises described in Abstract No. 5.

#7 Cornelia Kissam, widom & relict of
Benjamin Kissam

Release.
Dated 12 July 1805.
Recorded 25 Nov. 1813 at
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Eliza Evertson and David B. Ogden, the majority of the surviving executors and trustees appointed in and by the last Will and Testament of Nicholas Evertson, deceased, bearing date 12 April 1807, to Lemuel Durfee</td>
<td>Executor's Deed. Dated 20 December 1825. Recorded 4 Jan. 1826 at 2 P.M. in Liber 44 of Deeds at page 232. Consideration $1,135.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to
Absalom Weeks

Recorded 30 Sept. 1859 at
12 P.M. in Liber 118 of Deeds
at page 561.
Consideration $5,250.

#15 Absalom Weeks &
Ruth Weeks, his wife

to
Seth T. Chapman

Warranty Deed.
Dated 2 April 1860.
Recorded 4 April 1860 at
11 A.M. in Liber 119 of Deeds
at page 262.
Consideration $5,750.

#16 Seth T. Chapman

to
Charles W. Bennett

Warranty Deed.
Dated 28 January 1867.
Recorded 30 Jan. 1867 at
5 P.M. in Liber 138 of Deeds
at page 23.
Consideration $7,500.

#17 Charles W. Bennett &
Elvira Bennett, his wife

to
Clarissa Chapman

Warranty Deed.
Dated 28 January 1867.
Recorded 30 Jan. 1867 at
5 P.M. in Liber 138 of Deeds
at page 22.
Consideration $7,500.

#18 Clarissa Chapman
wife of Seth T. Chapman

to
Charles W. Bennett

Warranty Deed.
Dated 9 April 1875.
Recorded 20 April 1875 at
9 A.M. in Liber 157 of Deeds
at page 369.
Consideration $7,500.

#19 Charles W. Bennett &
Elvira Bennett, his wife

to
Seth T. Chapman

Warranty Deed.
Dated 9 April 1875.
Recorded 20 April 1875 at
9 A.M. in Liber 157 of Deeds
at page 370.
Consideration $7,500.

#20 Seth T. Chapman

to
William Avery Chapman

Warranty Deed.
Dated 14 July 1881.
Recorded 28 July 1881 at
11 A.M. in Liber 171 of Deeds
at page 132.

#21 William Avery Chapman

to
Seth T. Chapman

Life Lease.
Dated 14 July 1881.
Recorded 28 July 1881 at
11 A.M. in Liber 170 of Deeds
at page 507.

#22 Peter H. Storm &

Mortgage.
Ruth Storm, his wife,  
  to  
Joseph C. Lovett  
of Palmyra, N.Y.  

Dated 1 December 1845.  
Recorded 29 Dec. 1845 at  
8 A.M. in Liber 34 of Mort- 
gages at page 5.  
Given to secure the payment  
of the sum of $600.

#23 William Avery Chapman &  
Grace A. Chapman, his  
wife  
to  
George Albert Smith  

Warranty Deed. Full Covenant.  
Dated 10 June 1907.  
Acknowledged 10 June 1907.  
Recorded 11 June 1907 at  
10:45 A.M. in Liber 261 of  
Deeds at  
Consideration $16,000.

#24 George Albert Smith &  
Lucy E. W. Smith, his  
wife  
to  
Corporation of the Pre- 
siding Bishop of the  
Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints  

Deed. Covenant against  
Grantor.  
Dated 7 December 1916.  
Acknowledged 7 Dec. 1916.  
Recorded 17 Dec. 1918 at  
11:30 A.M. in Liber 308 of  
Deeds at page 174.  
Consideration $1.00.

Land Records of Joseph Smith, Sr., farm located in  
LDS Church Legal Department and cited in Larry Porter's  
Dissertation, "A Study of the Origin of the Church of Jesus  
Christ of Latter-day Saints in the State of New York and  
Pennsylvania 1816-1831," Brigham Young University Library,  
Provo, Utah, pp. 356-359.
APPENDIX D

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MARTIN HARRIS
FARM, PALMYRA, NEW YORK
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MARTIN HARRIS
FARM, PALMYRA, NEW YORK

Re: Martin Harris Home And Farm
   Cumorah Stake
   Property #505-4818

Legal Description:

That tract or parcel of land, situated in the Town of Palmyra
County of Wayne and State of New York, and bounded and de-
scribed as follows, viz.

Beginning at a white oak post standing in the Town line
between Palmyra and Macedon, at the northwest corner of the
land formerly of John S. Wright, (now deceased); thence north
5° East, twenty-four (24) chains and forty-five (45) links,
to a hub standing in the south line of the lands of the New
York Central Railroad Company; thence southeasterly, along
the southerly line of the lands of the said New York Central
Railroad Company, fifty-five (55) chains to the northeast
corner of land formerly owned by Darley Hogan; thence north
85° West, thirty (30) chains and sixty (60) links to a white
oak post; thence north 5° East, five (5) chains and fifty-
six (56) links to a large stone marked with a cross; thence
north 85° West, fifteen (15) chains and marked with a cross;
thence north 85° West, fifteen (15) chains and fifty (50)
links, to the place of beginning, containing, including the
highways embraced in said description, eighty-eight (88)
acres and six one hundredths of an acre (88.06) of land as
surveyed by Ira Lakey. The rights or easements of the public
in and to said highway embraced in said description, are
RESERVED AND EXCEPTED from the conveyance and covenants of
this deed.

EXCEPTION FROM THE LANDS ABOVE DESCRIBED, eighty-five hun-
dredths (.85) of an acre of land, conveyed to the New York
Central and Hudson River Railroad Company, by deed of Mrs.
E.M. Wigglesworth, bearing date September 16th 1873, and
recorded in the office of the clerk of the County of Wayne
in Book 111 of deeds at page 209, reference being had to
said deed for particular description of the strip of land
so conveyed.

ALSO EXCEPTING from the lands first above described, all that
portion thereof, conveyed by Ella M. Rogers to Charles F.
Griswold, by deed bearing date March 29, 1907, and recorded
in the office of the clerk of the County of Wayne in liber
220 of deeds at page .
The lands so conveyed and hereby excepted, are bounded and described as follows, Viz:

Commencing at a large stone marked with a cross in one of the southerly lines of the farm premises now owned by first party, which point is the northeasterly point of the extreme northerly point of lands now owned by second party, which lands were purchased by him of one John H. Wright; running thence southerly along said Griswold's east line, five chains and fifty-six links to an angle in said Griswold's line; thence running easterly along the northerly line of said lands of said Griswold, one chain and nineteen feet to a red cedar stake in the north line of lands owned by said Griswold; running thence northerly to a point in said Rogers' land which point is one chain and twenty-six feet easterly from the place of beginning; running thence westerly to the place of beginning, containing about three-fourths of an acre of land.

ALSO FURTHER EXCEPTING, from the lands first above described, a small triangular strip of land, lying between the southerly bounds of the lands of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company, and the highway formerly known as Limerick, now distinguished as Division street, and being the lands which were conveyed by Thomas Corlett, then owner of the farm first above described, to Olin J. Garlock, by Warranty Deed bearing date April 26, 1912, and recorded in the office of the clerk of the County of Wayne on April 27, 1912, in liber 225 of deeds at page 517. Reference being had to the said conveyance and the record thereof for particular description of the lands so excepted.

Legal Ownership Today:

The Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Corporation Sole.

Responsibility of Maintenance:

Building Operations and Maintenance

Agent: Caretaker-Western New York Historic Sites

Maintenance Program: Caretaker and staff

Legal Description of the Martin Harris farm, located in the LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.
APPENDIX E

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PETER
WHITMER, SR., FARM,
FAYETTE, NEW YORK
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PETER
WHITMER SR., FARM,
Fayette, New York

Re: Peter Whitmer Home & Farm
Cumorah Stake
Property #505-4834

Legal Description:
Parcel #1

ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND, situate in the Town of Fayette, County of Seneca and State of New York, being a part of Military Lot number thirteen in said town, and bounded on the north by lands formerly owned by Vincent Schott and Daniel Kelley; on the east by lands formerly owned by Vincent Schott and by John A. Kuney; on the south by the highway; and on the west by lands formerly owned by Daniel Kelley, containing about one hundred acres of land.

Parcel #2

ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND situate in the Town of Fayette, County of Seneca, State of New York, being a part of Military Lot 20, and bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a point marked by an iron pipe set where the west line of the Miller Road and the south line of the Aunkst Road intersect; thence south 21° 09' west 753.49 feet along the west line of Miller Road to an iron pipe; thence north 83° 17' west 2404.70 feet along an old fence and three line to an iron pipe set in the south line of Aunkst Road (being 24.75 feet from the centerline of said road); thence south 83° 15' 10" east 2566.73 feet along the south line of Aunkst Road to the point of beginning, containing 41.838 acres.

ALSO ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND bounded and described as follows: BEGINNING at a point in the center of Miller Road; said point being 584.34 feet southwesterly from the intersection of the centerlines of Miller and Aunkst Roads; thence south 82° 53' east and passing through an iron pipe at 25.55' and continuing on the same course for a total distance of 948.05 feet to a concrete post set in concrete; thence south 8° 43' 30" West 186.78 feet to an iron pipe; thence north 83° 00' 30" west 990.02 feet and passing through an iron pipe in the east line of Miller Road to the center of Miller Road; thence north 21° 09' east 194.70 feet along the center of Miller Road to the point of beginning, containing 4.065 acres.
The above described premises are more particularly shown on a map drawn on December 14, 1971 from notes of a survey completed on December 13, 1971, by Donald D. Shepherd, License No. 46564.

Legal Ownership Today:

Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Corporation Sole.

Responsibility of Maintenance:

Building Operations and Maintenance.

Peter Whitmer Home
   Agent: Caretaker-Western New York Historic Sites
   Maintenance Program: Caretaker and staff

Peter Whitmer Farm
   Agent: Susquehanna Stake
   Maintenance Program: Leased to Local Farmer

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Legal Description of the Peter Whitmer, Sr., farm located in the LDS Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.
APPENDIX F

LAND RECORDS, PETER WHITMER, SR., FARM

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LAND RECORDS, THE PETER WHITMER, SR., FARM
Fayette, New York

#1 Book of Filed Deeds
Book I page 213
Nov. 22, 1786
Jeremiah Bennet a private in the 2nd New York Regiment for his services in the War of The Revolution was sold to Joseph Wright of New York City, N.Y. for 15 pounds New York Currency.

#2 Book I page 212
Oct. 3, 1790
Joseph Wright of New York City for the sum of 27 pounds of New York Currency sells to Elkana Watson of the City of Albany, New York Lot 13 in the County of Montgomery, state of New York being 600 acres in the town of Romulus.

#3 Book I page 213
March 4, 1793
Elkanah Watson of the City of Albany State of New York and Jerome Loomis of Ontario Co. state of New York for the sum of $500 Lot 13 in the County of Herkimer, town of Romulus of 600 acres.

#4 Book B. page 190
Sept. 16, 1809
Jerome Loomis and Elizabeth Loomis his wife of Ontario Co. N.Y. and Samuel Miller, John Miller, Catherine Miller and Andrew Miller of Fayette Township in the county of Seneca state of New York being part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette County of Seneca 100 acres.

#5 Book M, page 430
April 14, 1819
Samuel Miller and Rebecca Miller his wife sells to Peter Witmer [sic] 1 undivided 4th part in Lot 13 of the town of Fayette of 100 acres.

#6 Book Q page 318
Aug. 6, 1823
John Miller of Ontario County state of New York and Peter Whitmer of Fayette for $400 being 1 undivided 4th part in
lot 13 of the town of Fayette of 100 acres. Being the same as conveyed by Jerome Loomis and Elizabeth Loomis his wife of Ontario County New York to Samuel Miller, John Miller, Catherine Miller and Andrew Miller and Moses Miller under date of Sept. 16 1806
At the end of the deed:--
I, Catherine Gamber (formerly Catherine Miller), the widow of William Gamber, my dower and right of dower in said premises dated Aug. 6 1823

#7 Book R page 124
Feb. 23, 1825
Andrew Miller of Hopewell, Ontario County state of New York and Peter Whitmore [sic] of Fayette being 1 undivided 4th part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette of 100 acres
Witnesses: - John Whitmer in Seneca Co.

#8 Book S page 1827
March 7, 1827
Moses Miller and Sally Miller of Hopewell, Ontario Co. N.Y. and Peter Whitmer of Fayette being 1 undivided 4th part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette being the same conveyed by Loomis to Miller.

#9 Book W page 318
April 1, 1831
Peter Whitmer and Mary Whitmer his wife of Fayette and Charles Stuart of Waterloo for $2200 being part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette County of Seneca State of New York Beginning at a stake in the south line of Said lot 106 rods from the South East corner thereof running thence North along the West line of 100 acres formerly sold to Nathaniel Merritt 37 chains and 75 links to the North West corner of said lot sold to Nathaniel Merritt. Thence South 89 degrees west along the south line of Christian Rathfon lot 26 chains and 50 links to the
south line of Lot 13 thence East along the South line 26 chains and 71 links to the place of Beginning.

Charles Stuart and Catherine Stuart his wife of Phelps, Ontario County in the state of New York and John Deshler late of Pennsylvania. for 2500 dollars part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette being 100 acres. Description same as above deed.

Reserving all the wheat of said parties of the first in the wheat crop and all loose logs thereon are to go with and are hereby conveyed to said party of the second part with said premises reserving to the tenant now there on his interest therein.
Signature of Priscilla taken in Bremer Co. Ia.
Signature of Walter Deshler and wf. Uranis Sally Ann Stuck wife of Moses Stuck taken in Lenawee County, Michigan. Signature of others taken in Seneca Co. N.Y.

William Hogan of Fayette and John Tubbs of Osceola, Tioga County Pennsylvania for $10,000 being part of Lot 13 in the town of Fayette of 100 acres. Being now occupied by said
William Hogan and for many years by the late John Deshler in his lifetime and known as the Mormon Farm.

#12 Book 87 page 561
Feb. 8, 1876

John Tubbs and his wife Diantha Tubbs of Osceola, Tioga Co. Pennsylvania and Jesse Snook of Waterloo being part of lot 13 in Fayette and conveyed by the heirs of John Deshler to William Hogan.

#13 Book 125 page 599
March 25, 1908

William Cory, Widower of Sommersville, New Jersey, Jesse Cory and his wife, Carrie Cory of Seneca Falls, Fred Cory of Seneca Falls and Jacob Christler of Fayette for 6500 dollars. being part of lot 13 in the town of Fayette and the same conveyed to Jesse Snook by John Tubbs and wife being the same of which Jesse Snook died seized and by will and testament devised to his sister Phebe Cory and her heirs as recorded in Book 115 at page 560.

#14 Book 131 page 423
April 1, 1912

Jacob Christler of Fayette and Joseph H. Manges of Waterloo Being part of Military lot 13 in Fayette of 100 acres. North by the lands formerly of Vincent Schott and Daniel Kelly East by the lands formerly of Vincent Schott and John A. Kuney South by the highway West by lands formerly of Joseph Seigfried and Daniel Kelly Note - in the margin written in lead pencil Peter Whitmer farm see W/318.

#15 Book 153 page 592
Sept. 25, 1926

Joseph H. Manges and Valara P. Manges his wife of Waterloo and Corporation of the presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a Corporation created and existing under the laws of the state
of Utah. being part of Military lot 13 in Fayette description same as above deed.

APPENDIX G

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED GROVE

MANCHESTER, NEW YORK
LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SACRED GROVE
Manchester, New York

Re: Sacred Grove Palmyra
Cumorah Stake
Property #505-4931

Legal Description:

ALL that tract or parcel of land, situate in the town of Macedon, County of Wayne, and State of New York, being a part of lands formerly owned by Daniel Smith, and bounded as follows, viz:

Parcel #1

On the north by lands formerly owned or occupied by Daniel Harmon, and Charles H. Chapman; on the east by lands formerly owned or occupied by Robert Gates and Seth T. Chapman; on the south by lands formerly owned or occupied by John Hennessey; and on the west by lands formerly owned or occupied by Bridget Mahana and Nathan Walsworth, containing thirty-nine (39) acres and twenty-three hundredths of an acre, be the same more or less, and being the same premises conveyed to William Avery Chapman by Seth T. Chapman, by deed dated July 14th, 1881, and recorded in Wayne County Clerk's Office in Liber 131 of Deeds at page 546.

The lands above described are located in the southeast corner of the town of Macedon.

Parcel #2

A CERTAIN LOT OF LAND on west side of highway called Stafford Street, said lot being cut off the south end of the Dixon farm and adjoining the Joseph Smith farm on the north.

This lot is more particularly described as follows: (Beginning at a square stone at the corner of the towns of Palmyra and Manchester, on the east side of the town of Macedon; thence south eighty-five degrees and twenty minutes east along the county line between the towns of Palmyra and Ontario, 1617 feet to the center of the highway; thence north one degree east along the center of the highway 436.92 feet to a point; thence north eighty-five degrees and twenty minutes west along the north line of the Dixon lot and a continuation of said line, 1590.34 feet to the town line between the towns of Palmyra and Macedon; thence south four degrees
and thirty minutes west along the town line 436.02 to the place of beginning containing 16.052 (sixteen and 52/1000) acres of land as surveyed by J. P. Redwood C. E. May 29, 1930.) Directions are magnetic and agree with direction appearing in the deed Haron M. Chapman et al to Henry Dixon dated March 13, 1871 and recorded March 14, 1871 at page 304 in Book 103 of deeds, Wayne County Clerk's Office.

Legal Ownership Today:

Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Corporation Sole.

Responsibility of Maintenance:

Building Operations and Maintenance

Agent: Caretaker-Western New York Historic Sites
Maintenance Program: Caretaker and staff

Rand Hugh Packer

Department of Church History and Doctrine

M.A. Degree, August 1975

ABSTRACT

As The Church returned to Western New York in the early 1900s there was much prejudice against Mormonism. The twenty-four year mission of the Willard Bean family was instrumental in establishing a friendly atmosphere in the Palmyra, New York area and in regaining four historic landmarks to the ownership of the Church.

It is still uncertain if the present Joseph Smith, Sr., home was completed enough for the family to live in by the time the Angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith. Since 1881 the Sacred Grove was considered the woods where Joseph Smith had his First Vision. The term "Sacred Grove" became widely used after January 1906. The Church has restored the trees on the Hill Cumorah, and it has become the site for a yearly reproduction of the history of Mormonism. The original Martin Harris home burned and was replaced by the present cobblestone house. The original Peter Whitmer, Sr., cabin, where The Church was organized, was destroyed and later the present house was built.

Thousands of tourists visit these historic landmarks every year.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

Leon R. Hartshorn, Committee Chairman

Milton V. Backman, Jr., Committee Member

Larry C. Porter, Acting Dept. Chairman