



The Universe

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12,000 expected

Smith reunion planned

By **MENDY SIMPSON**
Staff Writer

Between 800 and 1,000 descendants of Lucy Mack and Joseph Smith Sr. are expected to attend a reunion at BYU, according to a family representative.

Aug. 6 through 9 will be the dates of the sixth biennial Joseph Smith Sr. family reunion, said Buddy Youngreen, executive secretary of the Joseph Smith Sr. family organization.

Youngreen said the reunion will only be open to family members. "There are an estimated 12,000 descendants around the world.

"We have had between 300 and 600 family members attend in the past," he said. This year the family "expects 800 to 1,000 since it is in Provo."

Reunion activities will include a reception for family members to get acquainted, a luau by the Helaman Halls pool, slide presentations, musical entertainment and guest lecturers, Youngreen said.

Lecturers will include Dr. Richard L. Anderson, Dr. Truman Madsen, Dr. Hugh Nibley, Dr. Paul M. Edward and Patriarch Lynn E. Smith, Youngreen said. "All material will be limited to historical subjects not theological," he said.

Edward and Smith are from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), Youngreen

said. Smith is the great-grandson of Joseph Smith Jr. and Edward is the second great-grandson of Joseph Smith Jr. Edward also is the vice president of the Iowa-based Graceland College, which is owned by the RLDS Church.

According to Youngreen, past reunions have been held in Independence, Mo., Salt Lake City, Kirtland, Ohio, and Nauvoo, Ill. "Most of the descendants are in the West, but they have traveled east for the reunions to include other family members," he said.

Youngreen said he decided to "stage a reunion" after spending several years doing research about Joseph and Emma Smith. He used the research for the basis of a play completed in 1977.

After meeting many descendants of Joseph Smith Sr., Youngreen told a friend it is "a shame the descendants of the martyrs don't even know each other.

"Afterwards, I knew I should do it. From that point I approached all the Smiths I knew and asked them what they thought of such a thing," Youngreen said.

At the first Joseph Smith Family Reunion "126 years after the first split, family members exchanged addresses and phone numbers in Nauvoo, Ill.," he said.

"The division in 1846 was a geographical split. The theological difference transpired through the years," Youngreen said.

400 descendants attend Smith family reunion at Y

By MENDY SIMPSON
Staff Writer

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith were represented as 400 of their descendants attended a family reunion Aug. 6 through Aug. 9 at BYU.

The reunion was the sixth biennial reunion held for the family, according to Buddy Youngreen, executive secretary of the Joseph Smith Sr. family organization.

Most of the reunion events were held in campus buildings that are historically related to the Smith family. Registration was held in the Smith Family Living Center. Most of the lectures, business and music events were held in the Joseph Smith Building Auditorium.

The events held in the JSB auditorium were accompanied by a panoramic backdrop of church history paintings by C.C. Christensen. The paintings are owned by the BYU art department, according to Youngreen, and were displayed as a service to the family.

Historic displays relating to Smith history were on display in the JSB during the reunion.

The reunion ended with the Smith Family attending a missionary devotional titled, "The Prophet Joseph Smith," given by Elder Mark E. Peterson of the LDS Council of the Twelve at the Missionary Training Center.

After the devotional, the family toured the Samuel Harrison Smith Building at the MTC. Samuel Smith was the focus of this year's reunion, according to family organization committee member Gracia Denning of Whitefish, Mont.

"Since Samuel Smith was the first missionary, it is fitting we go to the MTC," she said.

The weekend's agenda included presentations by family members, guest lecturers and entertainment including music and a luau Aug. 7 at the Helaman Halls patio and pool.

Lecturers included Truman Madsen, Robert J. Matthews and Hugh Nibley. "All lecture material was limited to historical subjects, not theological," Youngreen said.

Smith family members attending the reunion were from various religious denominations including The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, according to Mrs. Denning, although the majority of those in attendance were members of the LDS Church.

Mrs. Denning also said family members had come from all over the United States. The greatest distance traveled was from Georgia.

"The reunion has been so impressive," said Bruce Dyson of Rancho Mirage, Calif. According to Mrs. Dyson, she and her husband are not members of either the LDS or RLDS Churches. She knew little of the Smith history. She said she found the historic and religious information and explanations interesting.

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According to Youngreen, the next reunion will be at Graceland College in Lamona, Iowa, the first weekend in August, 1983. Graceland College is owned by the RLDS Church.

Community Notes

Joseph, Lucy Smith Family Plan Meet

Aug. 6, 7, 8 and 9 are the dates scheduled for the sixth biennial reunion of the several thousand descendants of Joseph Smith Sr., and his wife, Lucy Mack Smith.

All descendants are invited to the reunion, which will be at Brigham Young University, with registration Thursday, Aug. 6, in the Joseph F. Smith Family Living Center.

On Friday and Saturday, Aug. 7 and 8, meetings will be in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. On Friday night there will be poolside luau.

Other events will be a Saturday evening banquet and a Sunday morning memorial tribute to the children of Lucy and Joseph Smith Sr. The memorial will be in the Samuel H. Smith Building at the Missionary Training Center.

A baby sitting service will be provided. Plenty of free time has been scheduled to allow attendees to see such interesting sights as the Monte L. Bean Wildlife Museum, the Harris Fine Arts Center, the rare book and manuscript collection in the Harold B. Lee Library, the Marriott Center.



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ENSIGN

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

A four-day family reunion, the sixth for several thousand descendants of Lucy Mack and Joseph Smith, Sr., is scheduled for August 6-9 at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. It follows those held in Nauvoo (1972 and 1979), Independence (1973), Salt Lake City (1975), and Kirtland, Ohio (1977).

All descendants are invited whether they have attended a previous reunion or not, according to Buddy Youngreen, executive secretary for the family reunion. Further information and registration forms are available by writing Buddy Youngreen, 1564 N. Moonriver Drive #9, Provo, Utah 84601, and enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope

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Orson Hyde dedicates the Holy Land, 1841

The Smiths are all Buddy's friends

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Outsider unites descendants of Prophet Joseph

BY JENEVIVE WHALQUIST
Church News contributor

PROVO, UTAH

The most amazing thing about Buddy Youngreen is that he's not a Smith — not by lineage, anyway. But he has five large file cabinets full of Smith memorabilia and research. He's the executive secretary of the Joseph Smith Sr. Family Organization. And he put together the first reunion of this diversified and far-flung family in 1972 and has organized each of the five succeeding reunions.

His home is a way station for Smith family members. "We'll have 20 members drop in some morning, and might have another 10 drop in for the afternoon," says his wife, Toni.

The Youngreens' home resembles a Smith Family Museum. The walls are lined with photographs, oil paintings and water colors depicting Joseph Smith, his family and their environment.

Buddy has also collected first editions and family Bibles wherever he can find them. This choicest find is a Smith family Bible he purchased from a great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Smith. Buddy gave her six years to consider selling the Bible to him, during which time he advised her on care and preservation of the precious volume. The book now rests in a temperature-controlled chamber where it is protected from dust and air pollution.

Buddy Youngreen has published several scholarly articles about the Smiths, has written a play — "Yesterday and Forever" — about the relationship between Joseph and Emma, and has traveled around the country presenting more than 500 lectures and firesides on Smith-related subjects, including narrated slide presentations with musical backgrounds.

Small wonder the Smith family voted to adopt the Youngreens at the 1972 reunion. "Joseph Smith Jr. adopted twin boys," said Lynn E. Smith, patriarch of the Reorganized LDS Church. "I see no reason why we couldn't adopt Buddy and Toni." His suggestion was put to the vote and the Smiths at the reunion reacted unanimously in the Youngreens' favor.

What has driven this young man to spend much of the last 15 years researching the Joseph Smith family?

Buddy leaned back in his den chair; his expressive hands were momentarily stilled by being clasped behind his head. "I graduated from BYU with a degree in dramatic



Photo by W. Claudell Johnson

Buddy and Toni Youngreen are collectors of Smith Family memorabilia, such as Bible purchased from descendant of Joseph Smith.

arts," he said. "To date, I've written and/or directed over a hundred productions throughout the West. But back in the days when I was an associate professor at the Pasadena Playhouse College of Theater Arts under Dr. Lowell Lees, I decided to write a play about Joseph Smith. From the first moment I started researching the Smith family in the Huntington Library, I was hooked."

Toni added, "I call it his 'magnificent obsession.' It's amazing that on this one subject Buddy has total recall. He's got every face, name, date, relationship and personal history neatly cataloged in his brain."

Research alone did not satisfy Buddy's desire to know the Smith family. "I heard that Ruth Derk, a great-great-granddaughter of the Prophet lived in Eagle Rock, near Pasadena," he said. "When I first saw her face, it was like meeting an old friend. I spent many hours with her, and then she gave me her mother's address (Earlita Inslee), and Earlita gave me names and addresses of other relatives."

Buddy eventually interviewed and

formed friendships with more than 300 Smith descendants in over 16 states. Without realizing it, he was beginning to build bridges between the long-divided and sometimes bitter segments of the vast Smith family.

"The first time the Reorganized Church had any impact on me was in 1967 when I stopped in Nauvoo (Ill.) on my return trip from a New York theater convention," he said. "I soon discovered that while most of the descendants of Hyrum and Samuel Smith headed west with Brigham Young, the families of Joseph Jr., his sister Katherine Smith Salisbury, and Lucy Smith Milliken, remained behind with the Prophet's widow, Emma."

Eventually many family members joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with a direct descendant of Joseph Jr.'s always presiding, beginning with Joseph Smith III.

While many Smith family members today belong either to the LDS or RLDS churches, there are also adherents to the Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, Buddhist, Church of England

and other faiths, as well as sprinkling of atheists, he said.

Therefore, when BYU Professor Clinton Larson suggested to Buddy the possibility of bringing the Smith family back together in a reunion, he knew that religion could not play a part in such a gathering. "It was heritage, history, genealogy and just the enjoyment of getting acquainted that this family needed to share," he realized. No religious doctrines allowed would have to be one of our first rules."

Since that time, Buddy has organized and directed five reunions. This year's will be in Provo Aug. 6-8. Family members wear color-coded name tags at the reunions to identify the original branch of their ancestry. Buddy's name tag is multi-colored and under the heading of "Descendant of" he writes, "All the Smiths!"

President Harold B. Lee recognized Buddy's opportune status as a neutral individual in the Smith family. Buddy said President Lee once remarked to him, "I believe you were chosen to do this work."

"Even your name is well suited to this position of leadership. You can be a buddy to all the Smiths because you have no obligations to family lines. And, at the same time, you're no-buddy. You're not an authority in any church, and so if you do make a mistake, it won't reflect on a particular organization."

"I prepared a multi-media presentation called 'The Seeds of Greatness' for the first reunion that introduced the family to their common progenitors," Buddy said. "And I also presented a filmed simulation of the Dec. 9, 1834, Christmas party

where Joseph Smith Sr., (portrayed by Francis Urry) gave patriarchal blessings to his children and their spouses. These blessings had a dramatic impact because the promises uttered so long ago applied directly to the current generations. Witnessing this film had great significance for family members because it helped them to envision their common heritage."

Buddy has overseen a re-enactment of the Kirtland Temple dedication within the Kirtland Temple itself. And he has presented one-man shows in which such prominent family members as Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Jr., and Emma Hale Smith have been personified. Buddy even brought his versatile theatrical troupe down from Jackson, Wyo., to entertain reunion participants one year.

Buddy's position as Smith Family executive secretary is an unsalaried one, but the Youngreens find themselves richly rewarded in spiritual ways.

"No activity that I've ever been involved with, outside of my relationship with my wife and two sons, and my testimony of the Savior, has ever given me such a feeling of fulfillment and significant endeavor as has my work with the Smith family," he said.