



Annual Smith reunion on tap

The 10th Biennial Reunion of the Joseph Smith, Sr. family will take place Aug. 3-6, according to Buddy Youngreen, president of the organization.

Most of the activities will take place at Temple Square Assembly Hall in Salt Lake City, with a rooftop banquet in the new LDS Church Office Building and a picnic at Brighton.

All descendents of Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith, Jr., Samuel Harrison Smith, William Smith, Katherine Smith, Don Carlos Smith and Lucy Smith are invited to attend.

Anyone wishing more information may contact Buddy Youngreen at 703 N. 945 W., Orem, 84057.

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Meet the remarkable 'Buddy' who brought the Smiths together

by Paul Skousen / Utah Editor

YES, miracles DO happen!
It was once said of the descendants of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith, "Nothing short of a miracle could ever bring this divided family back together again."

Well, the miracle is alive, well and doing fine, thank you.

That's because the most unique family in all of Church history—with most of the descendants through Joseph and Hyrum Smith—is back together again! And they just completed their tenth family reunion since 1972.

How did this happen?

Ask each family member and you'll get the same answer: the divisive feelings of bitterness that kept them apart for almost 130 years are finally being healed by a very special non-family member.

Even President Harold B. Lee fondly called him an important "no-Buddy."

Recalls Buddy Youngreen, the instigator of the Smith Family Reunions: "President Lee said I was just what my name implied, a 'Buddy' to the family. In fact he

said the best thing about me was that I was a 'no-Buddy!' That if I made a mistake on the reunion it would be my fault and wouldn't reflect badly on the Church or the family!"

But no mistakes here!

The reunions have grown in popularity with each gathering. More than 500 attended this year's gathering in Salt Lake City in early August. The next reunion in Sharon, Vermont—the Prophet Joseph's birthplace—in 1991 already has Buddy busy pulling in reservations and RSVP's.

So just how does a non-Joseph Smith, Sr., descendant



A 'no-Buddy':
Buddy Youngreen

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'Nothing short of a miracle could ever bring this family back together'

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reunite a family torn apart by problems as big as Church history?

Explained Buddy: "My first contact with the Smith family came well over 25 years ago while I was living in Southern California. I became interested in writing a play about Joseph Smith and Emma Hale, his wife, and felt it was necessary to research the people I wanted to write in the play. And I felt the best information I could get would be from actual members of the families. So I set about to meet all of the living descendants of Joseph and Emma that I could. That quest led me across several states and through several years."

While he found deep wounds in the family, Buddy said he found a river of family love that ran much deeper.

The idea of a reunion was first met with reluctance but finally captivated the two families that have, for years, been driving forces in the LDS and RLDS churches.

But isn't there heated debate over religion and Church history?

Replied Buddy: "Not officially." While some talk does take place among some individuals, a hard and fast rule was laid down at the outset: "No theological discussion allowed at the reunion!"

Today, the Smith family embraces Buddy and his wife Toni as close family members.

Added Buddy: "In 1972, Patriarch Lynn E. Smith of the Reorganized Church stood up before the assembly and said that his great grandparents had adopted twins. So he proposed that the family adopt me, which they did by a raise of hands. So we're Smiths."

Buddy makes his livelihood as a playwright, director and producer. Yet still he finds the time to further the work of the Smith family by acting as the Joseph Smith Sr. Family Association President.

"I can feel Joseph's spirit with his family," Buddy said. "I've interviewed over 300 of them, they trust me and love me, and I love them."

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Photo courtesy of Nevin Skousen Photography

Family line: Descendants of Joseph Smith gather for a massive family portrait in the Assembly Hall on Temple Square to mark the 10th family reunion

COVER STORY

The Smiths come home



Star-Dej Sentinel photos — Paul Skouvan / Ed Karst

...And a 'no-Buddy' united them

THE story behind the story of the Joseph Smith Sr. clan coming together is that a non-Smith made it happen. Buddy Youngreen (far left, above) met on Temple Square this month with 500 Smith descendants, including Elder Eldred G. Smith and Gracia Jones, the "first" of the Prophet's family to join the Church. **See 10-12**



Box for the gold plates

A WOODEN tool box, belonging to the Prophet Joseph Smith's brother Alvin and later used to hold the gold plates, is one of many historical items still possessed by the Smith family descendants. **See page 11**

Smith Myths: Time to finally set record straight on Emma

■ **Myth:** Joseph Fielding Smith was in line for the presidency of the Reorganized Church.

■ **Truth:** Joseph Fielding Smith, as a descendant of Hyrum, was never in line for such a job. The RLDS presidency succession has followed Joseph, Jr.'s line.

■ **Myth:** Emma and Joseph Smith III started the RLDS Church.

■ **Truth:** What would become the RLDS Church was started in 1852 with nine apostles. It really struggled for a while until Joseph III was asked to join. Emma supported Joseph III in his membership, but didn't coerce him. After a period, the independent LDS Branches that were scattered throughout the midwest began to affiliate with RLDS.

■ **Myth:** Emma was a nag, a shrew, a dragging anchor and burden to Joseph.

■ **Truth:** Emma and Joseph were deeply in love and cared greatly for each other, aching when they were apart, rejoicing when they were together. Joseph loved Emma very much, and Emma loved Joseph.

They were sealed and received the highest ordinances of the priesthood. Emma and Joseph had 11 children, two of whom were adopted and six of their family died as infants.

She was subservient to the demands of his schedule and missionary pursuits, she followed him everywhere with nary a complaint, and was an ever-caring and patient wife and mother.

■ **Myth:** Emma denied the Church, was excommunicated and lost her temple blessings.

■ **Truth:** Emma's membership was never taken from her. She had a testimony of the "divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon."

A month before she died, she said "I was always



Heirlooms: Hyrum's clothes, box for gold plates

satisfied taht my husband was a prophet of God."

She was not replaced as general president of the Relief Society until after her death, although Eliza R. Snow did carry on the leadership responsibilities of the women's work in the Church in Utah. Sister Snow was called as general president of the Relief Society after Emma died.

■ **Myth:** Joseph said Emma would go to hell.

■ **Truth:** Benjamin Johnson records an incident on a Sunday morning, as he sat with the prophet in his parlor. Down the stairs came Emma and Joseph's children, cleaned, dressed and ready for church.

As Joseph embraced them, he said: "Oh, look at these children. How could I help loving the mother of such children. Why, I would go to hell for such a woman."

Memorabilia: What Smiths have in store

DESCENDANTS of Joseph and Hyrum Smith still hold a number of historically important personal artifacts. Among them:

- Hyrum's clothing worn when he was martyred: blood-stained, bullet-riddled shirt, trousers and vest;
- pocket watch kept in Hyrum's vest pocket, which stopped a ball after passing through his midsection;
- the wooden tool box belonging to Alvin and later given to Hyrum and used to hold the gold plates;
- Hyrum's sunglasses;
- family dinner bell, first used as the school bell;
- Joseph's gold finger ring;
- Joseph and Emma's personal family Bible;
- original oil and watercolor paintings, documents, letters, books and journals;
- family Bibles of Joseph, Hyrum and Sophronia;
- Joseph and Hyrum's Mormon Legion uniforms;
- Joseph's spectacles and cane, used to look fashionable, not because he needed them;
- Emma's riding whip.

This statement of undying love and devotion is hardly what some have misquoted it to be.

■ **Myth:** Emma refused to go west because she hated Brigham Young.

■ **Truth:** The personality clash between them was real enough but additionally, Emma had very real and necessary reasons for remaining in Nauvoo.

Emma saw herself as a guardian over the unmarked graves. She had a home in Nauvoo for the first time in her life she knew what her lot was in Illinois and she didn't know what it would be out west. She felt she had suffered.

Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, couldn't travel west and was in need of some help. Emma opened her home to Lucy, and was the one who took care of Lucy.



Lorena Normandeau



Brian Kennedy



Gracia Jones

Smith Firsts: Who have led the way

For decades, there were no known descendants of the Prophet Joseph in the LDS Church.

Slowly, and often in isolated cases away from the influence of the RLDS faith and other family members, the descendants have been baptized.

Today there are an estimated 70 of them, all but two are through the lines of the Prophet's son Alexander. Two are through Joseph Smith III.

Here are some of the LDS firsts among the Prophet's descendants:

■ **Oldest to join the LDS Church:** Elizabeth Horner Hahn, 79, the great-grand daughter of Joseph; she was baptized in September 1986.

■ **First missionary:** Lorena Horner Normandeau, granddaughter of Alexander Hale Smith; was called to Independence in 1984, at age 70.

■ **First male to serve a mission:** Brian Kennedy of Provo, Utah; to Washington, D.C. in 1987.

■ **First temple marriage:** Gracia Normandeau Denning Jones, of St. George, Utah, June 22, 1963.

■ **First to hold the priesthood:** Aaronic—Paul Denning, of Whitefish, Montana; Melchizedek—Michael Kennedy, of Provo, Utah.

■ **First to join the Church:** Alice Fredricka Smith in 1915, but one year later left the LDS Church and joined the RLDS Church. Since that time, Gracia Jones was the first to join the Church—March 17, 1956 at age 18.

Smith Facts: A few answers about them

Here are answers to some of the questions many LDS may be asking about this unique family:

■ **When was the first family get-together?**

In 1846, a Smith family party was held, but it took 126 years to finally hold a family reunion.

■ **How do RLDS members view the "Utah Saints?"**

From the LDS perspective, the Saints moved out into the desert and built a home for themselves, following the lead of the Prophet Brigham Young.

From the RLDS perspective, the Saints abandoned their inheritance and left the U.S., basically rejecting the flag and moving to Mexico (which the Utah territory was at that time) rather than fight for their rights.

■ **What happened to the LDS property abandoned during the Exodus?**

The courts have ruled those who have been paying the property taxes are the rightful owners now. In 1884, Joseph Smith III sued the RLDS church (of which he was president) for title to the Kirtland Temple. The RLDS won. Either way, Smith couldn't lose, and the court decision eliminated the LDS church from ever suing to regain it. In a similar suit, the Hedrikites won the Independence Temple site, on appeal.

■ **Have the Mark Hofmann forgeries affected the LDS-RLDS relationship?**

A document, purporting to be the recorded blessing given Joseph Smith III by his father, the Prophet Joseph, was "discovered" by Hofmann. The LDS Church obtained it and traded it to the RLDS for an original Book of Commandments. After the blessing was declared a forgery, the LDS Church returned the book, but the Hofmann forgery has not yet been returned.

■ **Who is the 'patriarch' of the Smith family?**

For the LDS, and possibly most of the family, it is Elder Eldred G. Smith, 82, LDS Church Patriarch Emeritus. He is a great grandson of Hyrum. For the RLDS, W. Wallace Smith, a grandson of Joseph and the fifth president of the RLDS Church from 1958-1978, died Aug. 4, 1989—while the Smith reunion was being held in Salt Lake City—at the age of 88.