



Smith

Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith
FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Spring 2016

NAUVOO REUNION: 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF CEMETERY DEDICATION

The 2016 Reunion marks 25 years since the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery was improved, beautified, and dedicated. It also means that for the last 25 years, Smith family members have helped pay for cemetery maintenance and upkeep.

What a blessing it is for us to care for this hallowed ground and honor our

beloved ancestors. Each year many thousands visit our sacred family cemetery.

Meet your Smith family cousins this year in Nauvoo for a wonderful reunion that includes socializing, presentations, historical insights, sightseeing, service projects, food, and fun!

Register online at www.reunion.JosephSmithSr.org

REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

- History and background of the Smith Family Cemetery by Lachlan Mackay, Karl Anderson, and Daniel Larsen.
- Placing headstone for Lewis Bidamon grave.
- Martyrdom - at Carthage Jail by Susan Easton Black Durrant.
- Family service project at cemetery.
- Family picnic between the cemetery and the Red Brick Store overlooking the beautiful Mississippi River.

SHARE YOUR TREASURE - SHARE YOUR STORY

This year we would like to collect pictures of family treasures and heirlooms that we can share through slides and post online. By sharing these treasures, we will gain additional knowledge of our family history.

As you send these pictures, please explain important information about the item and how it came to you. This would be the ideal way to send it. If there are concerns about safety and protection, we can post photos of treasures anonymously.

Quoting Doctrine & Covenants 21:1, noted LDS Historian Marlin K. Jensen said, "Behold, there shall be a record kept. There are many ways to keep that record, and one of the ways is to preserve a place, a

building, an artifact that represents history."

He noted that an artifact can be powerful "because it is tangible, tactile, something that can be lived and experienced."

Quoting Alma, who taught that records "enlarged the memory of this people," Jensen explained that it can also deepen and solidify our faith.

To share an heirloom with the family or ask questions, contact Frances Orton (ortonfrances@gmail.com).

"There's something very fundamental about reflecting back on where we've been in

God's economy of things," he said. "If we have the stability of history, if we can enter into the peace of the Lord, the rest of the Lord, that can come from a knowledge that our history is secure and solid."



Emma received a lock of Joseph's hair during a reburial at the Homestead. It is possible Mary Fielding also received this lock of Hyrum's hair [hair at the top of the book] at the same time.

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SACRED GROUND: HISTORY OF THE SMITH FAMILY NAUVOO CEMETERY, PART II

For many years, the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery was almost forgotten. Few graves were marked, all Smith family was gone from Nauvoo by 1879, rising waters threatened to submerge gravesites, and communication between descendants had faded.

SMITH DESCENDANTS UNITE TO OVERSEE CEMETERY

The Homestead property is owned by Community of Christ (formerly RLDS Church); however, the Smith family has helped maintain the cemetery since 1991.

"It wouldn't have come about," Anina Luff said, "if we hadn't known each other through the [Joseph Smith Sr.] reunions." Luff took her children to the first reunion in 1972 in Nauvoo. She said it was relaxed, they compared noses and "threw rocks in the river."

As family connections grew, so did interest in the cemetery. Cousins talked about increasing access to the

UNMARKED GRAVES

As family and close friends were buried in the Homestead yard beginning in 1844, "none of these graves were marked except by lilacs which Emma planted nearby."¹ Even the location of Father and Mother Smith became lost. Caring for the yard became challenging as Joseph III, Alexander, Julia, and David Hyrum moved from Nauvoo. In 1867 Emma wrote Joseph III:

"Joseph, I should like if you are willing to extend that fence so as to enclose the graves of your two little brothers. I have got twenty five dollars that no one has any right to but myself... I feel anxious to apply that money on that graveyard, after I have done that... I think I can ask our Smith relatives to help mark Fathers and Mothers graves if no more."

Although no action took place at this time, this letter became significant many years after Emma's death. Joseph, Alexander, and Julia buried their beloved mother on May 2, 1879, and Joseph III erected a tombstone for Emma.

Lewis Bidamon was the last to be buried in the Homestead ground in 1891, and by 1900, tenants occupied the property. Four gravestones and a scraggly lilac bush were the only

evidence of a graveyard.

ENCROACHING WATERS THREATEN CEMETERY

In the 1920s, the Keokuk and Hamilton Power Company built a dam south of Nauvoo that created Cooper Lake. By 1927 the water measured 20 feet from the Nauvoo House. RLDS Church President Frederick M. Smith feared that the next flood or snowmelt could completely cover the martyrs' graves.

In January 1928, President Smith authorized a search for and safer

reburial of the martyrs' bodies. The RLDS Church placed the bodies of Hyrum, Joseph, and Emma in a cement container that would serve as a monument base, and on Friday, January 20, President Frederick M. Smith held a short ceremony.

The RLDS Church continued a push to "place a monument over the martyrs' graves," and they added a granite marker in 1951 "without ceremony."²

graveyard that was only open during RLDS Visitors Center tours. Many cousins felt as Dan Larsen, who said, "I was on a mission to get the cemetery opened to everybody that wanted to come to it, 24 hours a day."

Emma's 1867 letter about the cemetery became instrumental.

Wallace B. Smith, Dan Larsen, Eldred G. Smith, Karl Anderson, Spence Nilson, Leo Jardine, Donna Lee Frogley, and

The background image and call-outs are from Emma's 1867 letter. Courtesy, Community of Christ Archives.



M. Russell Ballard formed the Joseph and Hyrum Smith Family Foundation in 1990, tasking themselves with the responsibility to oversee the cemetery.

"This foundation partnered with the RLDS Church to enhance, enlarge, landscape, beautify, and increase accessibility to the grave site and to provide funding for the ongoing maintenance of the area. During the spring and summer of 1991, the foundation placed a new headstone on top of the flat granite marker [identifying Hyrum, Joseph, and Emma] and installed brick walks, lights, benches, a new fence, and new interpretive information."³

"More than 1,000 people ... attended the 1991 dedication." Elder M. Russell Ballard said he hoped that this would be "the beginning of wonderful times together as the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family." President Wallace B. Smith dedicated the cemetery and prayed that those who entered the cemetery would be "touched by the beauty and the serenity," and would be "assured of the promises of the resurrection."⁴

"Donna Lee Frogley, the great-great-great granddaughter of Hyrum, and Lois Smith Larsen, the great granddaughter of Joseph, placed a wreath on the grave."⁵

As cousins strengthened their connection, they sought to locate Father and Mother Smith's graves. In 2002, the LDS Church made ground-penetrating radar available to help identify these graves. Descendants then united, as Emma desired, to mark the graves with granite tombstones.

THE CEMETERY TODAY

The Joseph and Hyrum Smith Family Foundation expanded into the Joseph Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Foundation "welcoming all" descendants of Joseph Sr. and Lucy Smith.

This August the Smith Family Reunion will meet in Nauvoo, place a marker for Lewis Bidamon, and celebrate 25 years since the 1991 dedication. Truly, the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery continues to draw family together.

1. Gracia N. Jones, "Children of Joseph and Emma: Emma's Lost Infants." The Joseph Smith and Emma Hale Smith Historical Society. 11 June 2010. www.JosephSmithJr.org.
- 2, 3. Lachlan Mackay. "A Brief History of the Smith Family Nauvoo Cemetery." *Mormon Historical Studies*. Fall 2002. Vol. 3 No. 2.
- 4, 5. Sheridan R. Sheffield, "Cemetery Dedication a Fulfillment of Dreams," *Church News* 61, no. 32 (10 August 1991): 3, 6.



Watch our first Smith Family Podcast: **The Connecticut Valley Covenant** at JosephSmithSr.org. Look for more to come.

Find a Piece of History
May 30-June 25, 2016



www.iDigNauvoo.com

Help Us Reach Our Cousins!

Your \$25 donation helps--

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- Explore projects that teach about our ancestors.
- Maintain and update our family database (www.JosephSmithSr.org).

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Address

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\$ \$25 Membership

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Please circle which grandchild of Joseph Sr. & Lucy Mack Smith you descend from:

| Hyrum | Joseph | Samuel | William | Katharine | Lucy |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------|---|--|---------------------|
| Lovina John Jerusha Sarah Joseph F. Martha Ann | Joseph III Alexander David H. | Samuel | Thelia Hyrum W. William E. Edison D. C. Louie | Elizabeth Lucy Solomon Don Carlos | Florence Charles |





Celebrating 25 Years
Smith Family Cemetery



JOSEPH SR.
&
LUCY MACK
SMITH
FAMILY
REUNION



AUGUST
4th - 7th
2016



NAUVOO
ILLINOIS

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