

Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion Independence, Missouri July 31, - August 3, 2014

By Frances Orton

Monday, July 28, 2014, the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion bus group left Provo at 8:10 am and headed to Salt Lake City. A traffic accident on I-15 delayed the bus as did the bus making a wrong turn. The second group met the bus at the Sons of Utah Pioneer's parking lot settled at the mouth of Millcreek Canyon. After everyone was loaded on the bus, the trek across Wyoming began.

The group left with an opening prayer, Steve went over the bus tour packet with everyone. We also had *Richard Moore discuss some things about church history and offered perspective with the history. He encouraged the tour to enjoy this reunion as an opportunity to love everyone.

I spent some time going over the history of the reunions and sharing some of the planning miracles that happened.

During the travels the group experienced several fun activities and stories along with introductions. Earlier in the summer Frances Orton was able to work through Dennis Lyman with History of the Saints and arranged and a preview of a historical documentary on Lucy Mack Smith First Mother of the Restoration. The full documentary aired in September. This was a wonderful opportunity and great way to begin the reunion trip.



The lunch stop was in Rock Springs, Wyoming and dinner in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

After driving our first day of 595 miles across Wyoming the night was spent in Ogallala, Nebraska.

Tuesday, July 29, the day began early leaving at 8:00 am. Beginning early was typical each day during the reunion. Shortly after getting on the road we entered the Central Time Zone.

Throughout the day on the bus we heard from Richard Moore. He even asked some questions of the family and then shared several things he came across in his research. Afterward several people on the bus shared various insights and stories and songs. This was a great time to get to know each other while viewing the beautiful countryside.



Richard Moore



The bus stopped for lunch at the Westgate Mall in Lincoln, NE. This gave a large group the chance to spread out and find something to enjoy for their meal.

In the late afternoon, a break was made at LDS Kansas City Temple. This opportunity gave the family a chance to stretch their legs and get a photo.



The family finished watching the Emma movie as the bus pulled into the reunion hotel location at the Fairfield Inn, Independence, MO after traveling 490 miles during the day.

Wednesday, July 30, this day mixed family history and fun. The bus group left after beginning with prayer and drove to Lambert's Café located between Springfield and Branson Missouri on the corner of Highway 65 and CC.

The schedule was running on the slow side. Lambert's doesn't make reservations but we had given them a heads up for the time we expected to arrive. Part of the family met the bus there. Before the bus pulled into the parking lot the loud speaker was directing the Smith Family Group to specific doors. Family members, Daniel & Kris Patrick were already there and had been in contact with the bus. They went to the specified door and let them know we would be right there and then the bus arrived and we were able to go right inside.

As the bus group filed through the door they were divided up into smaller groups then taken inside and seated. This is the area that collected the family as they got off the bus, walked across the parking lot, and went inside the restaurant.

The Lambert's website explains: *"Why We Love It: Grammar problems aside (Thrown rolls? Really?), we can't help but appreciate the gusto with which Lambert's employees toss bread at us. And it's not just a wimpy little lob; they pitch those rolls clear across the dining room. Sometimes you just need to loosen up and appreciate a silly tradition. And the roll is... quite good. Super hot, super soft, fluffy, melt-in-your-mouth bread."*



After lunch Kim Smith traveled on the bus and shared her story. Kim gave the family a question and answer period and it was a lot of fun.

Arriving in the pouring rain cut into plans to walk Branson and do a little shopping. When the bus parked at the Hughes Brothers Show for a matinee the group was escorted in together through a side entrance and directed to our reserved seating.



The group was brought inside the theater first and led to our own section for the show



Hughes Brothers Theater as the family filed into the studio

The program was a lot of fun. It was nice to see such a great variety of musical talent. After the show the family was ready to rest. Once the bus arrived back to Independence we had traveled 428 miles.

Thursday, July 31, after our morning prayer we headed out at 8:00 am for Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman.



The Smith Family as they started gathering in Far West



Richard Moore bringing the history at the time the Smith's first came to Far West



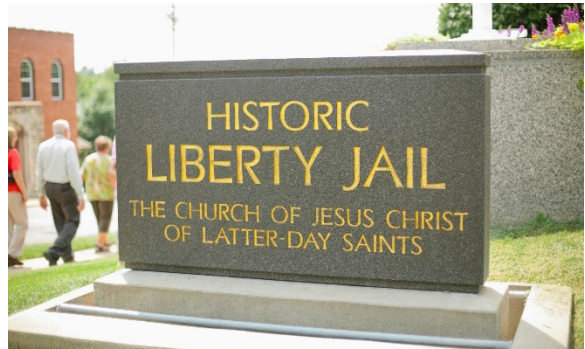
Family photo at Far West

The next stop was at Adam-ondi-Ahman. Again we heard from Richard Moore and learned more about this wonderful area.



Adam-ondi-Ahman

In the afternoon, the family toured Liberty Jail. What a touching moment this was for the Smith Family to reflect on all the sacrifice experienced by our ancestors.



A glimpse of the past viewed by the family



A photo of the Liberty Jail before it was restored



A view of an entrance into Liberty Jail



Thursday Evening, everyone gathered at the Stone Church. Everyone enjoyed a chance to mingle and visit during registration and before our Greeting Meeting. Mary Lou Little opened the meeting with a beautiful prayer.



Steve Orton began the meeting by introducing Dan Larsen



Gorgeous views of Stone Church as the family started the meeting



Dan Larsen and Frances Orton sitting on the stand and Ronald Porter at the piano during the opening of the evening meeting



John Huefner leading the music and standing by cardboard cutouts of I to r: Alexander Hale Smith, Joseph Smith III, and Fred M Smith with the leis



Dan Larsen

Dan Larsen welcomed the family with a fun observation, “This is one of the few occasions where we haven’t had to travel very far. We want to thank everybody for coming.”

“The first reunion was in 1972 and the second reunion was in Independence in 1973. I have been fortunate enough to be to every one of them and was elected to the Executive Board of Smith Family Foundation from the beginning with Karl Anderson and several others.”

Karl Anderson isn’t able to be here to this reunion but he sent a message:

Greetings from Kirtland,

I will never forget the great spirit that was present at the Kirtland Temple as we all met there three years ago. I have felt that a great spirit has been present each time we meet together. I regret that Joyce and I will not be able to be with you. Circumstances beyond our control prevent us from being there. We want to assure you of our love, support, and

prayers that you will have a memorable time together and remember Smith ancestors who sacrificed everything for all of us who could have the blessings we enjoy. Let us continually remember the examples of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. Although they lacked worldly possessions and had great trial they still placed the Lord first.

The wanted the same for their posterity. In Kirtland when other consecrated their worldly possessions Joseph Smith Sr. said that he had nothing to consecrate to the Lord of the things of the earth. But he felt to consecrate himself and his family. Let us make these words of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith’s consecrations the pattern for us.

May God bless you as you meet together this week.

Sincerely, Karl and Joyce Anderson

Dan then said, “I look forward to being here the next three days and visiting and interacting with everybody. Thank you all.”



Family member Lach MacKay is director of Community of Christ historic sites

Lach MacKay presented a letter written from Community of Christ Emeritus President Wallace B. Smith.

As one of the co-chairs of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Foundation I would like to extend my greetings to those of

you gathered here in Independence for a few days for family reunion activities.

Unfortunately, recent eye surgery prevents me from extending those greeting in person.

This is always a time of pleasure and fellowship as we greet friends and relations we haven't seen since the last gathering or in some cases meet relatives or acquaintances that are entirely new to us. Whichever the case may be I am glad you are here.

I hope that the Independence contingent will make you all feel welcome. My prayer is that as we come together in friendship and kinship the good spirit of our Lord Jesus will bless our every endeavor.

Wallace B. Smith



Bob Smith represented the Samuel Smith Family

Bob reported,

“The Samuel Smith family has been busy. We have been digging dirt. Specifically we have been digging dirt in Nauvoo. All of us have a wonderful opportunity because of the generosity of Community of Christ specifically the Joseph Smith Historical Site which has allowed us to dig for the last three years at the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith home site. We did it. We dug that area up.

Some highlights:

- We had probably 800 volunteers.
- You can see everything about iDig on the web.
- Each year we have a different color shirt.
- The first year we had a bunch of BYU students in a joint effort with the family and

the Joseph Smith Historic Site working together.

- This next year will be digging in the Samuel H. Smith site.



Phillip Beam represented the Joseph Jr. Family

Last year members of the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family were invited to participate in special memorial hosted by the City of Oakland for honoring notable humanitarians of California and around the world to champion the world civil rights. The bronze memorial is the largest memorial in the Western United States and covers the length of half a city block weighing over 60 thousand pounds. It is located in the City of Oakland at the Henry J. Keiser Memorial Park in the center of the town.

The wall features special busts of California humanitarians and one depicted is a Smith cousin, Ina Coolbrith (1811 – 1876, born Josephine Donna Smith) daughter of Don Carlos Smith & Agnes Coolbrith (10th child of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack). Your cousin, Ina, was an internationally beloved poet from California and the very first librarian of the Oakland Public Library system. She was also the first person asked to write a commencement speech for the University of California, and did so twice. She was held in the highest esteem by many famous writers of her time, including Mark Twain, and Joaquin Miller, Jack London, her mentee, called her his “literary mother”, and Isadora Duncan, whom Coolbrith mentored as well, recalled in her memoirs “the beauty and fire of the poet’s eyes.”

Then Phillip Beam shared a report that Mike Kennedy wanted everyone to know some of the features available on the genealogy website. For the complete report click here.



Daniel Adams spoke next giving a report on the Senior Family

“I love being part of this and getting to know people. I think that the Smith family is such a beautiful family. That our ancestors were such great and marvelous people and contributed so much to our country and to us. It is our obligation to learn who they are and to learn about them because they make us who we are.”

“When Joseph and Hyrum were released out of Liberty Jail and the people were driven out of Clay and Davies Counties and they had to go to Nauvoo. The last place the Joseph and Hyrum rode up to was on Spring Hill in Adam-ondi-Ahman and they turned around and looked at their beautiful town already starting to be overgrown with grass and weeds. Joseph wrote in his journal, “It grieved my heart so to see it thus.” They turned their backs never to see Adam-ondi-Ahman again. They rode on to Nauvoo for a brief respite before the great Martyrdom.”

“We have such a beautiful opportunity coming together in many ways including in 2020 to see the 200th anniversary of great miracles and great things that were done by great people.”

Daniel encouraged the family to, “Imbue those great values to our friends and neighbors.”



Steve and Frances Orton gave an overview of the history of the reunions

Steve then focused on the reunion that coincided with the new cemetery and some discussion was given to various family activities like the Smith Tree Event at Heber Valley Camp and the Asael Smith Headstone.



Anina Luff



Anina Luff welcomed the family by saying, “It is wonderful to see you all here in our beloved Stone Church where many, many years of wonderful memories still linger.”

“I am only going to mention a few things about two or three reunions and they are really a lot more personal than they are historical.” Anina reflected.

As Anina was being driven from the airport to their host family’s home at the 1975 reunion in Salt Lake she remembered looking from the back seat into Dr. Don Smith’s rearview mirror. “Looking back at me in wire rimmed glasses were the gentle, wise, brown eyes of my grand dad, Fred M. Smith. A shock, but a pleasant one. I hadn’t seen those eyes in 29 years.” While Anina shared her memories many there had their eyes filled with tears.

She reminded us that, “We have done well in honoring our family for no one is really gone from us

if their names are spoken often and with love.” **You can read more of her talk here.**



Kim Smith and Bryan Davis singing the Old, Old Path

Kim Smith stood to introduce the musical number. “It’s a sweet blessing to be able to sing this song in the Stone Church. It is a beautiful song called the Old, Old Path. Written by two granddaughters of Joseph and Emma Smith. My great aunt Bitia and her cousin Audentia. It is a song that speaks of sticking to the old paths and old ways which is the good way. The path that leads to the Savior. I call this hymn a binding hymn because no matter who you are or what faith you belong to when you gather together and sing this song it binds your hearts into one. It is that beautiful and it is that precious. We are happy to share with you three verses from this song today.”



Joy Ercanbrack introduced the theme and recognized those who attended the Independence reunion in 1973

Joy expressed love and gratitude for the family members who live in Independence. She reminded us that, “This weekend is another anniversary our family celebrates, it’s been 183 years since some of our family was in Independence at the dedication to the temple site.”

Joy said, “I get the chance to talk a little about the theme for our reunion this year and that is, ‘Walking in Their Shoes.’ We have all heard the proverb, Don’t Judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes.”

So, here we are descendants of that first group of Smith’s and we are all united here again gathered in Missouri. What do you think we can learn from being able to walk around in their shoes and the places they stepped?

Joy continued, “You know a long time ago I got to work in Washington DC in the Capital there. There are grooves in the steps and we have seen it in some of our buildings too. Grooves in the steps where they can’t quite pour cement over them to make it even again. There is just a dip or indentation where all the feet have stepped year after year and I have always wondered how this could be the footprint of some noble person I am stepping in right now. It is kind of exciting to think of some of the places we will be. First of all, this beautiful Stone Church and it is neat to know it holds memories for some of you more modern Smith’s – right? We also because of Anina’s work get to see the log cabin where her granddaddy, Fred M lived and I am looking forward to that and other places on our tours tomorrow. I am thankful for the opportunity to walk in the shoes of our ancestors.”

Joy explained, “I believe that empathy is a character trait of mother Lucy Mack Smith. She is a lady who went through quite a few trials but as you read her history there is a mention of the trial and then a mention of the people who are in pain. So talking about Alvin’s death she writes more specifically about little Lucy calling, “Oh Amby, Amby I am so sad” that her brother had died. At Alvin’s death again she talks about Alvin’s fiancé. She even said this, “There is one that felt grief more deeply than the rest. A lovely young woman who was engaged to be married to my son.” I have wondered how Lucy developed that empathy and maybe it’s as she took care of her older sister Lovina until she died. She always wrote with gratitude of her daughters and adoration of her daughter’s in law. At the time of Joseph and Hyrum’s death and of Samuel who followed her concern was more for William than the rest of the family. She had said how she had all the family and hers around to comfort her and William was all on his own on a mission in New York. I would like to copy her grace and her empathy for her imagining the difficulties of other people. Rather than recalling so many sad times I think that they be happy and rejoicing in heaven as we get to be

together here making new and happier experiences and remembering the happier things that bonded their family too.”

“All families fall on hard times,” Joy told us, “and for the Smith’s that seems more like the rule rather than the exception but no matter how hard the trial or difficulty in life your family should be your soft place to fall. So as I talk about the theme of walking in their shoes we are going to honor some of our cousins who have done a great job of that and who have made a soft and comforting place for us to come to the reunions year after year. More specifically we want to honor some of those who were at the first reunion forty years ago. That is a badge to be worn with honor not a mark of your age – right? So I have made some notes and talked to a few of you so I hope I get everyone.”



The pillows made to honor those attending the 1973 reunion in Independence

These pillows were made by cousins and quilted on the way to the reunion in Independence more specifically my mom Renee and her sister Geri who worked hard on the bus to make the quilt. Quilts are both symbolic and functional. What do you think they are functional for – this is an easy one?

Love, warmth, wrap a baby, comfort.

They are also symbolic in what ways?

Love, the hands that made it.

This particular block is called the Missouri Star and I thought that was fitting since we are honoring people who were here 40 years ago and are back today. Let’s talk about some of those who were here. First on my list is Dan Larsen who welcomed us here tonight, his brother and sister, Fred, Anina Luff, and Stephen Larsen, Lach Mackay, Eric Larsen, Andrea Black, Daniel Patrick, Frances Orton, Bob Smith, and Amanda Oney.



From left to right, those who attended the 1973 Smith Reunion in Independence: Bob Smith, Daniel Patrick, Frances Orton, Eric Larsen, Amanda Oney, Lach Mackay, Fred Larsen, Anina Luff, Dan Larsen, and Andrea Black.

Joy closed with, “This pillow represents our family who is a soft place to fall. We have a pillow for each of you. Can I just say on behalf of everyone how much we dearly love you. We are so grateful to have this time to reunite in Independence. I hope that when the reunions are planned we don’t wait another 40 years to come back here. Thank you.”

Ron Black offered the closing prayer.

*Richard G. Moore grew up in Salem, Utah. After serving as a missionary in Japan he graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor’s degree in American History. Richard also received a master’s degree in history from BYU and his doctorate in education from the University of the Pacific. He has been a speaker for Know Your Religion and Education Week. He has served in numerous callings in the LDS Church, including bishop (twice). Bro. Moore retired last month after working for 38 years in the Church Educational System as a seminary teacher in Arizona and Utah, a CES Coordinator and Institute Director in Pleasant Hill, California, an instructor at the Orem Institute of Religion, and an instructor for the Ancient Scripture Department at Brigham Young University. Bro. Moore is the author of nearly a dozen published articles and four books, including 12 Keys to Developing Spiritual Maturity and A Comparative Look at Mormonism and the Community of Christ. Richard and his wife, Lani, have three children and six grandchildren.