

Joseph Smith III

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Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion 2014

Lach Mackay: Through small snippets of DNA that connect us I believe it is shared stories that unite us as a family. So I am simply going to tell the stories this morning. These stories come from Joseph Smith the III and I will share parts of them in his own words. Joseph Smith the III from his memoirs dictated late in life and that's important to remember. His memoirs are the basis of most of the stories I am going to tell today.

Just a brief overview: Joseph Smith III was born in Kirtland, Ohio in 1832 in the N.K. Whitney Store. You can see an image of it on the screen. Joseph Smith III was Joseph and Emma's oldest surviving son. He was widowed twice and married three times. He had 17 children, the third of whom would later succeed him as Prophets/Presidents of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the third of whom did that 98 years after his father the Prophet had. It helped that Joseph Smith III was in that office for 54 years.

Joseph Smith III was in his 70's when his last child was born.

One of my favorite Joseph Smith III stories took place just outside the homestead. Joseph and Emma's first Nauvoo home. They moved into this structure 175 years ago in May. It was much smaller than what you see in the photograph. It was a two story, two room, block house or log structure. The well you see a picture of was there when Joseph and Emma arrived but it was not very deep and the water wasn't very good and so they blast to deepen it. Joseph Smith III is a little boy a little too interested in that process. He is on the other side of this door in this image. There is an explosion and Joseph Smith III steps out quickly to survey the damage. A 15 to 20 pound rock is in the air with other debris and it comes down and brushes the brim of his hat as it comes past and lands at his feet. I occasionally I like to pause and ponder what the world would have been like if he had been a step faster. Then to think about the importance of every step we take. In this case, the hundreds of thousands of lives that would have been different had he not survived that incident. If you think too hard and too long about the importance of every step and the impact on future generations than you might get paralyzed and you cannot move at all.

Joseph Smith III said, "Workmen were blasting into the stone...One of the charges exploded and threw a stone weighing 15 to 20 pounds into the air. As it fell, it brushed the brim of my hat as I stood on the stone step... [This is how we knew as Bob referenced it yesterday, how we knew the Homestead should have a stone step that courtesy of your generosity it just went back in last month.] Had I been standing a few steps farther out from the house I would have been killed."

In Nauvoo they created something called the Nauvoo Legend. Part of the Illinois State Militia. They also had Bailey's Boys Troops, a boy's version of the Nauvoo Legend which was 400 to 500 to 600 people strong. I want to show this picture because it shows what we think is the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith double Log Cabin. That is what the iDig folks were looking for over the last few years. This is an 1845 or so Robert Campbell watercolor. This image is Joseph Smith standing on the top of what had been or was going to be Porter Rockwell's barber shop. How ironic is that. Porter had very long hair eventually. So this was being built but unfinished in June of 44. They laid planks over the top of it and

used it as a speaker's platform. This is Joseph addressing the Nauvoo Legend June 18. Governor Ford of Illinois addresses the citizens of Nauvoo from that same platform June 27. We think we found late in the dig in June the footing for Porter Rockwell's building. I would love to put that platform back up and invite you to come and stand on top and reenactment some of these speeches. Joseph Smith III said that he was in some of Bailey's Boys Troops for a very short time and then he dropped out. Here is why, "Though the organization existed for some time I drifted out of the younger portion, probably in difference to mother's wishes."

Some of the church leaders following Joseph Smith following his death decided to start heading west they are giving a young Joseph Smith III gifts to remember them by. Brigham Young gives young Joseph a pistol and Joseph's young cousin George A. Smith gives him a really big Bowie knife which he thought Emma would appreciate for the kitchen. Apparently Bowie knives are not kitchen knives so he traded with one of the Huntington Boys for a large cherry rolling pin that he gave to Emma.

N. K. Whitney, Bishop Whitney, who had owned a store in Kirtland, Ohio and who worked out the Red Brick store in Nauvoo, knew of those other gifts – the gun and the knife. He called young Joseph in and said, "Son, I want to help you understand that the pen is mightier than the sword. I am going to give you my writing desk" and he did. You see it in the photograph today. Joseph Smith III later gave it to his brother David. It came down through Lynn or Lorene Smith eventually. It came back to us just a few years ago so you can see it in the Red Brick Store.

Here is what Joseph Smith III said, "I seem to feel at the time that his intentions (meaning Bishop Whitney's) was to foster within me a spirit of peace rather than one of conflict... At all events, these were the effect they produced upon me, for I did not imbibe the spirit of war and had little use for its dangerous weapons." - (Joseph Smith III)

Just a few notes on Lewis Bidamon Joseph III's step-father. Lewis was not a religious man. He said he "believed in one God who has neither partners nor clerks." So the idea of any Priests who would intercede and any prophets leadership not comfortable for Lewis.

One of my favorite stories is when Lewis is courting Emma. He comes calling and Emma and little Joseph III are in the bedroom window up above and they look down and see him. Lewis was a really fancy dresser, dapper is often described as. He sees Emma up above and takes off his top hat and does a really stiff and formal bow and when he comes back up he runs into a clothes line and knocks off his toupee and she still married him.

This next statement is something that is historically not accurate but I believe to be true. Throughout their married life together Emma was known as the widow Smith and Lewis was known as the husband of Widow Smith. I think he enjoyed being connected to that celebrity.

Emma and Lewis eventually set up young Joseph III as a store keeper in what had been his father's store. So at age 15 they each put up some money and put him in business in the Red Brick Store.

That is probably my least favorite picture of Joseph Smith III. He is holding a daguerreotype photo and the person in that photograph is wearing the beads that Emma Smith is always wearing. So we think that that might be a photo of Emma in the hand of Joseph Smith III.

Here is how store keeping went for Joseph Smith III. "Concerning the stock of goods at the store and its manager, (meaning himself) it was soon discovered that the latter had no faculty for selling. I supposed the prices marked were the ones at which the goods should really be sold. I used no sliding scale of prices. I asked no more than they were marked but would sell for no less." That a really interesting insight into Joseph the III's personality as a young person and a store keeper.

As he grew up he bumped into in Nauvoo a young lady Emmaline Griswold. It is kind of the stereotypical story. He sees her and tells his brother that that's the woman he going to marry. He jumps out and even throws his coat out across a puddle for her to walk across. They are in the not too distant future married so there you see an image of Emmaline Griswold Smith.

Joseph Smith III describes the wedding, "[Reverend Waldenmeyer] used to delight in relating how I forestalled him when he leaned forward to kiss the bride after pronouncing the ceremony. Quickly intervening I remarked, "After me if you please." That kiss which I placed upon the lips of my bride upon this occasion was the second I had ever given her, the first being at her mother's gate as a seal of our troth, on the evening she consented to be my wife."

By the 1860's Nauvoo was almost entirely an immigrant city. Almost everybody there some kind of Germanic people – Germany, Austria, Swiss. Joseph Smith III had been elected Justice of the Peace. He believed that there were people trying to take advantage of those immigrants because of their lack of familiarity of our language and customs. He would often do their legal work for free to protect them.

Here is how he (Joseph Smith III) remembered that, "I drew their deeds, their mortgages, their contracts, and when they were brought before me in civil suits I managed in many instances to secure settlement out of court whereby they were saved much trouble and expense. For all these services I had freely lowered the costs and fees when any were too poor to pay or could ill afford to, and in many cases made no charge at all...It did not suit me to see industrious citizens oppressed because of their lack of familiarity with our language or customs."

Stephen Douglas had been a dear friend of the Latter-day Saints in 1840's Nauvoo. He was a Supreme Court Justice at the time in Illinois and a judge. Joseph went in front of him for at least one extradition hearing. Stephen had dinner with Joseph and Emma back in the Smith home – the Homestead. I would guess that his defense of us had nothing to do with the fact that he wanted our votes. Probably just kind hearted – not so sure on that. Years later Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln were running for US Senate. They had a series of debates or campaign speeches. Stephen Douglas was speaking at Carthage, Illinois on the courthouse lawn. This is 1858. Joseph III went to listen because he really admired this man. He had fought to protect his father and us so Joseph III went to support him. Stephen Douglas got up to speak and as he talked he apparently was so drunk that he couldn't talk. He went up slurring and it was really awful and embarrassing. They quickly asked him to sit down. About 10 days later, young Joseph III goes to listen to his opponent. Somebody he was not familiar with. The guy stood up to speak and he was under a bowery [tree branches on a platform] and he wouldn't fit so he was all hunched over trying to talk to thousands of people. Joseph III said it was such a pathetic sight and kind of squeaky voice and really sad. So, the guy took off his top hat and stuck his head through the branches of the bowery so all you could see was a head floating above. Everybody started rolling with laughter. They climbed up and pulled down the branches. The guy put on his top hat and stood up to his full height and started speaking. By the time he was done Joseph III was converted for the remainder of his life a Republican because of Lincoln's strong anti-slavery position. So here is what Joseph III said about that:

“In a few moments his oratory and argument held us spellbound. I forgot the man, forgot that aching sense of pity or shame that had burned in my bosom, and by the time the lecture was over, I was completely and altogether a Lincoln man, with a political conscience more firmly fixed than ever in its opposition of slavery and its evils.”

On the topic of slavery, remember that Joseph the III is elected the Justice of the Peace in 1857 in Nauvoo. He starts serving in 1858 and in that role he would have people come to him and demand that he would help capture runaway slaves. He refused to do so. At least in one occasion was threatened with the law for not carrying out his duty.

Here is Joseph Smith III’s response, “The United States courts and the courts of this State combined could not make laws fast enough or binding enough to make a slave catcher out of me.”

After he joins with the Reorganization in 1860, the locals in Hancock County are a little concerned. They have visions of a repeat of the 1840’s and the Nauvoo Legion and on and on. They start to panic and begin township by township to pass resolutions forbidding Joseph Smith III to preach or pray in Hancock County. They actually deliver one of them but it is not signed. Nobody would put their name to it. He was furious. Here is what he said about that:

“This feeling of prejudice against me because of my religion aroused my indignation. I was a pioneer of the country...No citizen could truthfully charge me with criminal conduct of any kind...And yet, to think that one so prominent as the mayor should appose me and hold me up to public scorn, and that too, in articles to which he had not the decency to sign his own name!”

Civil War breaks out and a number of Nauvoo residents end up involved. Nauvoo had a quota. They had to come up with x number of men to serve. Joseph III went to a recruiting rally. He was standing in the back. The person that was giving the speeches to try and get people to sign up was doing a really sad job. It just wasn’t working and nobody signed up. Then somebody noticed a young Joseph Smith III standing in the back of the room. They knew that he was a new minister and preacher. They thought, well maybe he will have better luck. They started calling on him from up front to come up and give it a try. Eventually I can kind of see them chanting his name – Joseph, Joseph. He goes up front and he starts speaking and remember he was viciously opposed to slavery and strongly supportive of the union cause and was pretty passionate. By the time he was done something like 17 men had enlisted. Then he went home and started thinking about what he had done. He wasn’t so sure that as a President of a religious organization that he should be encouraging men to go off to war was the right move. He invited his followers to start praying about that. What should we do as a people when it comes to war. How do we handle this? Here is what Joseph Smith III concluded:

“As ordained ministers in a church whose rules and government and doctrine did not warrant the shedding of human blood except it became necessary in defense of our families or ourselves, we felt it should be contemplated only as a last resort. In spite of this firm conviction our spirits stirred deeply to the call of patriotic duty.” He goes on to talk about how deeply and he is very committed to the cause of the union. “We laid the matter before our fellow church members and the question was discussed with much the same solemnity that doubtless characterized the puritans, Quakers, Shakers, or other denominations whose tenants forbade the shedding of blood. Prayers for guidance were fervently offered to the Lord. When the answer came it was clear, definite, and unmistakable. Do not enlist. Enlisting makes an individual involuntary action whereby you will be responsible for the blood you might

shed while in service. Wait. If drafted the responsibility is lifted. Do not shirk any duty the service requires for through the conscription becomes a National sin instead of a personal one.”

We have a member of our congregation in Nauvoo who is in his late 80’s or early 90’s and he was 17 and he desperately wanted to enlist in World War II. His mom pulled out this statement from Joseph Smith III and showed it to him. He knew that he couldn’t enlist. He just couldn’t do it. So he went to the draft board and asked to be drafted. I am not so sure about that one.

Joseph Smith III on forgiveness. After Joseph Smith Jr’s death, Emma and sometimes with the help of Lewis Bidamon, and Joseph Smith III, ran the Nauvoo Mansion as a hotel. We often call it the Mansion House. You see an image of it here:

Emma is an inn keeper. At one point she took exception to the relationship between and male and female boarder and she evicted them. The man got mad and came back with a gun and threatened Emma. That made her really mad and then out the door they go. Joseph Smith III comes home and discovers what happened while he was gone. Lewis had been gone as well. Lewis hears of it and Joseph Smith III says, “I wasn’t yet at the age of my majority.” So he is not an adult yet. He knows he can’t do anything about it yet but Lewis finds out about it and takes off with a gun after the guy. It didn’t work out as Joseph III thought he ended up seeing him later just having a friendly chat. He is really angry over his threat to his mom. Then a series of circumstances happen that made it even worse. His brother was supposed to get a charter to run the ferry in Nauvoo and the Congressman gives it to someone else and says, “Oh, I am sure you can work with this guy.” Well, it’s the man who threatened his mom. This kind of built up and that anger in Joseph III turned into almost a malignancy. He hated this man in a way that I don’t think he had experienced hate before. Then Joseph III becomes a minister and he struggles with that. Every time he said, “I read the Lord’s Prayer he got to the part about forgiveness and it was like someone was digging him – it was getting him.” He knew he couldn’t continue to hold this hatred in his heart toward this man. So Joseph Smith III said, “I applied myself toward the task and over an extended period was able to finally forgive the man that threatened his mother. Here is what he said:

“The experience taught me a lesson. It forced upon my mind the necessity for many of the teaching of the Savior. I had a clearer understanding of what men were prone to feel of any unworthy nature...than I could have obtained had I not had this experience and learned to know what it was to hate a fellow being. The knowledge helped to make me humble, and to exercise sympathy and charity for others struggling under like feelings....hatred is a cruel, destructive, and unlovely thing, and wholly unbecoming a Christian.”

His wife Emmeline became ill. She was often in poor health. Following childbirth was ill and passed away. They hired a young women of Norwegian heritage to help in the home to help with the kids because Emmeline was so ill. So Bertha is living in the home helping. Once Emmeline dies some of the members of the Reorganization start to gossip and complain that there is a single women living in the prophet’s home. This is in spite the fact that a couple had moved in to chaperone. Joseph III gets upset that the people are saying these awful things. So to quiet the gossip he marries Bertha. So then, we start gossiping because he didn’t wait long enough before he married again. So when someone complained about it he said:

“Fault was particularly found with me because I did not wait the conventional year after the death of my first wife before taking my second. I had the extreme satisfaction of reminding him that gossipers had

not waited the conventional year before using malicious and too-busy tongues upon my affairs, and that I was forced to marry in defense of both a good woman and myself.”

He other Blair stated that another objection was that I had married a woman of foreign parentage. I simply told them that I had married my wife for myself and not for my neighbors or for the church and that if I found satisfaction they had no reason to be otherwise.” This seemed to settle the gossips.

Remember in 1860 people were signing resolutions forbidding the RLDS Church or forbidding Joseph Smith III from preaching or praying in Hancock County. By 1877, 300 or 400 Nauvoo residents signed a petition asking the Reorganization to move their headquarters to Nauvoo. I would like to think it was because the people knew we were such fine folks but I think they were struggling economically and they realized that having a church headquarters there would be helpful. Hundreds of them signed this petition. We didn't take them up on it. We ended up going to Lamoni, Iowa instead. Here is how Joseph III remembered that:

“It is difficult for me now, after the years which have gone by since that day, to give an adequate expression of my feelings at the time...I found my spirit swept with a wave of strong exultation...I confess to shedding some tears as I spoke...trying to express my appreciation to the city father's for extending that invitation.”

Joseph Smith III on history. Joseph Smith III was later giving to historical societies books about church history. Most of them were church publications. But he also in at least one case gave to the Chicago Historical Society a copy of John C. Bennett's book about the church. Bennett was a prominent leader for the First Presidency and Mayor of Nauvoo but then left and said not very nice things about us. Folks were complaining that Joseph III hadn't burned the book but had instead given it to a historical society. Here is Joseph III's take:

“I know well enough that the book and others like it are in existence, and I would not suppress a single portion of any evidence for or against the movement....Let the whole story be told, and every fact that can be found and proved brought to light. I am willing to let decision be made upon that basis. I am not afraid of the truth, nor of a book like that...” Which he clearly didn't consider the truth.

Joseph III on forgiveness again. You see in this image a picture of Thomas Sharp.

Thomas Sharp was the Editor of the Warsaw Signal a newspaper just down river from Nauvoo. If there is any one person most responsible for the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith it is Thomas Sharp. He called for the use of powder and ball to be rid of the Mormon problem. He probably was in the mob and probably didn't pull the trigger but incited the mob to attack in Carthage. Years later, 1890 or 91, Joseph III is in Carthage. The place where his father and uncle had been killed. He sees sitting in the shade of the courthouse in a wheelchair, Thomas Sharp. As he walks by he recognizes him and he says, “Good Morning.” That is the end of it. That is the extent of their conversation. When members of the Reorganization found out about it they got mad. “How dare you even speak to the man responsible for the death of your father? How could you do that? That going to put you in poor light in the eyes of old time saints.” Well, that made Joseph III mad. First they reminded him that he was an old time saint and he lived through that as well. Then he went on in an article called, Required to Forgive, in the Saints Herald our equivalent of the Ensign church publication. He went on to make it clear that he forgave

Thomas Sharp the man responsible for the death of his father. He said, "That if there is any judgment it's in the Lord's hands (because there had been a trial and Sharp was not convicted). Here is what he said,

"We remember that our blessed Lord, our living exemplar, when suffering from the cruel pangs inflicted upon him to his death, lifted his eyes and heart to his father, and said, "Forgive them, they know not what they do." Joseph III said that we were required to do the same thing. Any judgment is to be in the hereafter.

Bertha Madison was killed in Lamoni, Iowa in a wagon accident. Something spooked the horses and she was thrown and died sometime later. Joseph III was widowed yet again.

.At some point at Kirkland at one of our reunions or family camps or that one was probably a General Conference, he met a young women from Canada and they struck up a friendship. Later, he ended up in Canada again and that friendship grew and he eventually proposed and they married. Ada Clark, his third wife.

Ada Clark was much, much, much younger than Joseph Smith III. He was a little nervous how some of his family back home, that still lived in the home, were going to react to this new wife who was much younger. So he broke the news to them in kind of a funny way. He wrote to his daughter Audentia,

"I write to inform you that I have arranged to bring over from Queen Victoria's dominion a bundle of goods, wares, and Canadian products, properly labeled and directed to pass inspection at the Customs House. Provided that too many questions are not asked.

The principal piece will be labeled, Mrs. Ada Smith, before being stated over the border, and I hope to arrive with it...in my companionship unless blockaded in route."

To this point I have been sharing experiences of Joseph Smith III in his own words. I want to conclude with Joseph Smith III in the words of others.

His obituary from a Kansas City newspaper not a church paper,

"Joseph Smith III was the prophet, but first of all he was the Christian gentleman and the good citizen. As such he lived, as such died, as such he'll be remembered by all outside the household of his faith.

Kindly, cheerful, loyal to his own creed, tolerant of those of others, standing for modesty, simplicity, good citizenship, embodying in his private and public life all his virtues which adorn a character worthy of emulation – such is the revelation which Joseph Smith leaves to the world."

Joseph Smith III in his own words.