

**Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion
Smith Family Lilac Story**



Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Reunion Smith Lilac History

By Frances Orton

In recent years, we have honored our ancestors' sacrifices with a family service project. A couple of years ago, as the planning for this reunion began, I desired to honor Joseph (Murdock) Smith with a memorial at the John Johnson farm where he died as a baby. Little Joseph is buried somewhere in Hiram in an unmarked grave. The hope is that the Smith family will someday find where he is buried to place a proper memorial.

This year's lilac bush project led to the desire for a memorial and the inability to place a marker without knowing where little Joseph is buried. The lilac bush has always been a special plant to Joseph Smith Sr. The journal of Samuel H. Smith's daughter, Mary Bailey Norman, gives an account of Father Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith's grave being buried at the larger lilac bush. It was also mentioned that Samuel and Mary Bailey Smith are at the two smaller ones. Mary Bailey Norman said, "*Joseph, Hyrum, and Samuel put the lilac bush that Father Smith loved so well at the head of his grave.*"

Hyrum also had earlier planted lilacs at his home in Kirkland, Ohio. He and Jerusha loved the lilac. In 1838 his home was purchased by Charles Dixon, who had been converted to Mormonism in Canada and moved to Kirtland in 1837. Shortly after the purchase, he also left for Missouri. However, most of his family lived in the house until 1862. The Dixon family left for the Salt Lake Valley in the spring of that year.

Christopher Dixon, son of Charles Dixon, brought with him on the journey a starting root of the Persian Lilac Tree from Hyrum Smith's home. He planted the lilac root at his little home in Payson, where it grew very large.



Christopher Dixon home in Payson, Utah



When two of Christopher's daughters married and built a home of their own in Payson, they took starts from their father's lilac tree. All of these lilac trees are still blooming each spring beautifully.

You can read more about Christopher Dixon's wife, Elizabeth Humphry Dixon, by going to the Payson Historical Society Page: <http://paysonhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2020/07/>.

One of their daughters told how it was her job to water and care for the lilac bulb every day as she crossed the plains. The lilacs planted by Mary Fielding Smith's cottage at This Is The Place Heritage Park come from the bush transplanted from Hyrum and Jerusha Smith's Kirtland home where they moved.

August 2011, in Kirtland, the family provided service at a girl's camp near the John Johnson Home in Hiram, Ohio. The service rendered provided markers representing women who lived in Hiram, Ohio. The Pioneer Trail Girl's Camp now bears the names of Emma and her daughter Julia, as well as Jerusha Barden Smith [Hyrum's first wife] among the campsites. The dining hall was named after Lucy Mack Smith.

Family cousin, Gilda Sundeen, felt planting a lilac bush might be a lovely family tribute. As I discussed the lilac

bush planted at Mary Fielding Smith's home* during a Joseph Smith Sr. Family Organization Committee Meeting - Darcy Kennedy said, "You should take the lilac back to Kirtland."

*Saturday, July 29, 2000, issue of the Church News printed by Salt Lake City's Deseret News. This article talked about ceremonially planting a lilac bush. "The young bush is a cutting that descends from a lilac bush that grew in front of the Hyrum Smith [and his deceased wife Jerusha's] home in Kirtland, Ohio. As Hyrum's family moved first to Missouri, then to Nauvoo, cuttings from the bush went with them. Finally, Mary Fielding Smith brought cuttings to the Salt Lake Valley, and descendants have nurtured them for more than 150 years."

The news article also said, "The lilac bush and trees were planted in the yard of Mary Fielding Smith's reconstructed 1848 cabin at the memorial grove site. Some of the adobe brick composing the cabin is from the original home, which stood in the Millcreek area of the Salt Lake Valley at about 2700 South and just above 1100 East."

Once that idea was given, it wouldn't stop. Joy Ercanbrack arranged with Marged Kirkpatrick, who is over reunions at "This Is The Place Memorial Park," to have a group meet and remove some clippings and starts from the lilac bush to carry back "home" to Ohio.



Don Blanchard digging underneath the lilac being held back by Steve & Frances Orton, and Debbie Nelson helping gather clippings



Laura & Don Blanchard, Frances Orton, and Joy Ercanbrack brought water for the plant, with Debbie Nelson helping.



The bush was held back by Joy Ercanbrack and Steve & Frances Orton while Don Blanchard was digging the start out of the ground.



Don & Laura Blanchard, Frances & Steve Orton, Joy Ercanbrack, Debbie and Kimberly Nelson at Mary Fielding Smith's reconstructed 1848 cabin at the memorial gravesite of "This Is The Place Memorial Park," in Salt Lake City, Utah - July 1, 2011

The lilacs were nurtured by Don & Laura Blanchard, Steve & Frances Orton, and Debbie Nelson. Eventually, Debbie Nelson's neighbor, Laurie Paul Smith (no relation), became involved and cared for the starts from the Orton's and Nelson's homes. She named the plants, prayed for the plants, and sang to the plants. The lilacs began to flourish and sprout new leaves.

Laurie Paul Smith began to worry the lilacs wouldn't make it through the heatwave back East. Marged Kirkpatrick and *This Is The Place Memorial Park* was approached again and asked for additional starts. This time Debbie Nelson and Laurie Paul Smith met at the park.

When they arrived at Mary Fielding Smith's home, some men were ready to paint. As it worked out, the men were wondering how to move some of the lilac bush away from the house so they could paint the outside of the home. Laurie named the plants - "Alfred" and "Richard" after the two men Laurie calls "angels sent from God" who helped them. Everyone worked together, and new plants were ready for their journey back to Ohio.

Laurie suggested that the family check and see if a lilac could be planted in Winter Quarters. I called Bob Smith (Omaha), and he was able to get approval for the Smith Family to plant a lilac bush at the Visitor's Center, remembering Smith's lived here also.

The Smith Lilac from Nauvoo

Steve and I discussed the lilac plants' struggle with Dan Larson at the Joseph Smith Jr. Family Reunion in Independence, Missouri (July 7- 10, 2011). Dan mentioned he had planted starts from the Smith lilac bushes from Nauvoo at his home and other places. Dan explained he could get a large portion of the plant with the ball root. His lilac plants have been cared for by Emma and their family for several decades.



Dan Larsen during the reunion in Kirtland



The Smith Family Lilac with the Mississippi River in the background



Troy Oney getting a start for Ohio from the Smith Family Cemetery.



Amanda and Troy Oney cared for the Nauvoo lilac and drove to Ohio with the lilac being taken care of in the trailer tub.

Dan's daughter, Amanda Oney, and her husband, Troy, drove to Nauvoo for part of a Smith Family lilac plant to be taken to the Joseph Smith Sr. Family Reunion in Ohio.



Lilacs by the Mansion House – photo by Joseph Smith Historic Sites



Outside the Nauvoo House – photo contributed by Lach Mackay



Looking toward the Nauvoo House – photo by Joseph Smith Historic Sites



Outside the Spring house -- photo contributed by Lach Mackay



Lilacs at the Smith Family Cemetery – photo contributed by Lach Mackay

Planting a Smith Lilac at Winter Quarters

All the events at Winter Quarters were arranged by a family member (Omaha), Bob Smith. The family met out in front of the visitor's center at 4:30 and walked to the location Winter Quarters Visitor's Center Director, Elder Watson, chose for the lilac bush. This site looks over the cemetery, the temple, and the visitor's center. Elder Watson was kind at a little service and allowed the children and anyone else who wanted to turn a shovel full of dirt and help plant the lilac bush.



Winter Quarters Visitor's Center Director Elder Watson spoke about being grateful for the opportunity to plant this lilac bush overlooking the temple, the sacred ground of the cemetery, and the Winter Quarters Visitor's Center.



Jonathan Burke was the first one to dig the hole for the lilac.



Alyssa Burke enjoyed her turn with the lilac digging.



Sterling Orton tries his hand at digging.



Todd Ercanbrack



Sister Terry Latey



Kristie Huefner



Judy Rigby



Gathering to plant the Smith lilac



The family watching the event



Jessica Burke



L to R: Joy Ercanbrack, Missionary (in back), Debbie Nelson, Frances Orton, Megan Huefner at the shovel, Don Lee, and Steven Orton



Bob Park



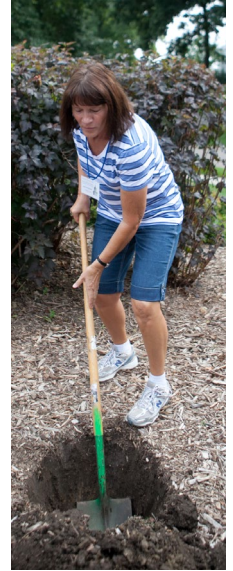
John W Smith and Renee Park



Gracia Jones



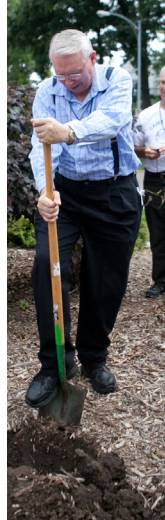
Shayla Daniels



Lois Shopland



Steve & Frances Orton



Don Lee



Kimberly and Debbie Nelson



Elwin Jones



Bowen Call



Ennyd Pomerleau



Austin Hodges, Debbie Nelson, Don Lee, Jessica Burke, and Jonathan Burke planting the lilac. Debbie brought a banana to plant with the lilac and a rock from "This Is The Place Heritage Park" so the lilac would have a piece of Salt Lake to be with it



Elder William Naylor, Elder John Watson & Sister Barbara Watson, and Sister Jane Hales of the Winter Quarters Visitor's Center helped the family immensely.



(Omaha) Bob Smith, with longtime friend Elder Watson, stands in front of Emma's quilt, which belongs to Bob



Winter Quarters Temple



2011 Winter Quarters Temple – Joseph Smith Sr Family Picture
After planting the lilac

Smith Lilac Planting at the Kirtland Cemetery

David and Gilda Sundeen brought some lilacs from Michigan. On the evening of Friday, August 5, they planted a Bloomerang Purple Lilac, which blooms twice a year at the Kirtland Cemetery by the marker for Mary Duty Smith, Jerusha Barden Smith, Mary Smith, and the Infant Twins of Joseph and Emma Smith. The family offered a prayer and then sang a song. After the planting, the family walked over to the dedication reenactment.



View of the temple from the cemetery



Bob Berryhill helped Gilda and David Sundeen plant the lilac at the cemetery.



Watering the lilac



Planted lilac by Smith family cemetery marker

On Sunday, August 7, the family met at the cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony by the Smith family marker and the new lilac bush. A sign was placed by the lilac bush explaining the Smiths' feelings for the lilac.



David Adams (holding sign) read the lilac marker tribute to the family.



Larry Eyre offered a family prayer.

Smith Lilac Planting at the Pioneer Trail Girl's Camp Hiram, Ohio by John Johnson Farm – August 6, 2011



Jonathan Burke



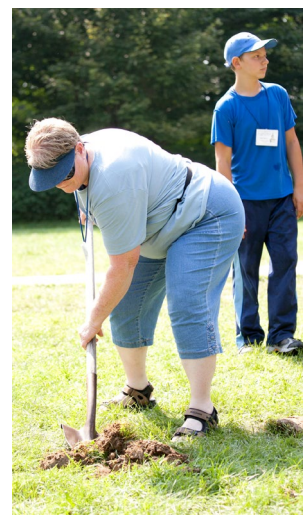
Joy Ercanbrack



Cleo Huefner



Tia Orton



Renee Park



Dan Larsen



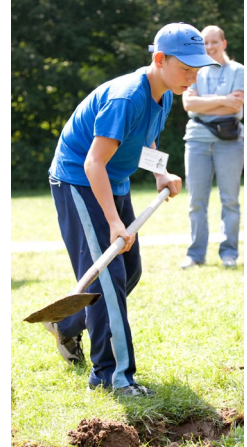
AnnaLisa Maddox



Linda Bjork



Michael Kennedy



Sam Bjork



Gilbert Isom



Gilda Sundeen



Rosemarie Larsen



Ivor Jones



Debbie Nelson



Rosemary Isom



Laura Blanchard



Anna Bjork



Steven Orton



Chris Rasmussen



Carlos Adams, Keziah & Marie Adams



Laura Davis



Matthew Alligood



Patrice Griffin Eyr



The lilac planting begins



Dan Larsen and Troy Oney preparing the Nauvoo Smith Family Cemetery Lilac and the soil at the campground



Dan Larsen, Troy Oney, and Debbie Nelson planting the lilac

This was a wonderful opportunity to bring two plants together, cared for by family members, to honor Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith, who had a love for the lilac. After the lilacs were together, a sweet feeling overcame all involved to see Emma's lilac and Jerusha's/Mary Fielding's lilac standing by each other. Our roots again joined together.



Troy Oney cared for and drove the Lilac from Nauvoo.



Debbie Nelson cared for and drove the Lilac from Salt Lake City.



Don Lee read the Lilac marker to the family.



Smith family lilacs together again:

LtoR: Don Lee, Amanda & Troy Oney, Joy Ercanbrack, Kimberly Nelson, Dan Larsen, Frances Orton, Rosemarie Larsen, and Debbie Nelson



The sign marking the Smith Family Lilacs



Rosemarie Larsen shared thoughts about the Lilac and family gatherings



2011 John Johnson Home – Joseph Smith Sr Family Reunion Picture

Solomon Mack Graves in Gilsum, New Hampshire

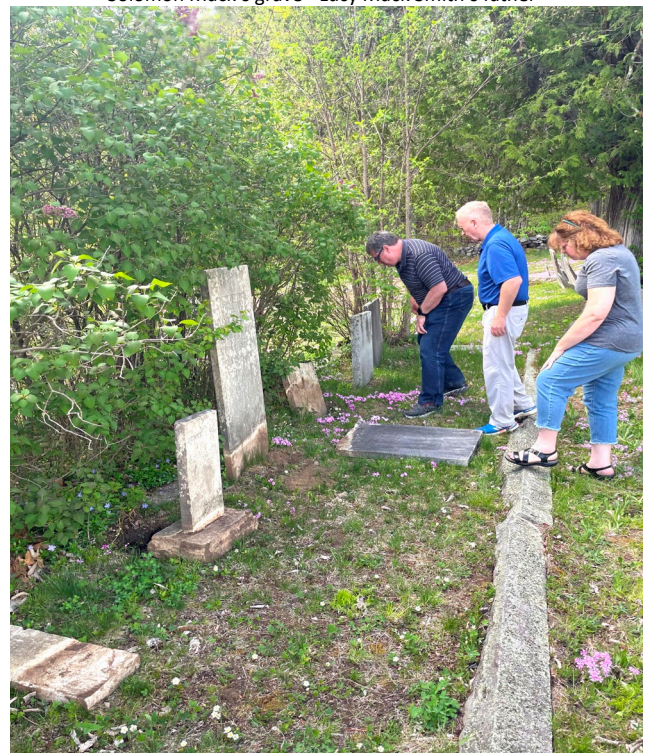
Solomon Mack, Lucy Mack Smith's father, is buried here - along with Solomon II, her brother and six other Mack family graves. This visit and update to the lilac history was after the Smith Family Memorial Dedication in Topsfield, Massachusetts in May 2022



Solomon Mack's grave - Lucy Mack Smith's father



Photo taken May 15, 2022



Richard Nelson, Steve Orton, and Elizabeth Nelson visit the graves of the Mack family - May 15, 2022



Upper side of Mack Family Graves taken earlier in 2021



Lower side of Mack Family Graves



Lilac at Mack Graves – May 15, 2022