

Asael Smith Headstone – Potsdam, New York

Saturday, July 28, 2012



Written by Frances Orton

As mentioned by Julie Maddox in the Spring 2012 Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Newsletter, *“Ben Pykles, LDS Church Historical Curator, had visited friends who live on the Union Cemetery Road. When he saw the damaged headstone, he searched out family members who might be able to preserve the stone. No recent family members with ownership could be located, and eventually contact was made with the Joseph Smith Sr. Family Association.”*

Frances Orton with the Joseph Smith Sr. Family Association communicated with Bruce Winters and other board members of the Union Cemetery to begin the work to preserve Asael’s Headstone. Bruce Winters had made some contact with Mr. Steven Olsen. Steve Olsen is from the LDS Church Historic Sites and he has overseen the operations and provided leadership for the Church History Library, Church Archives, Museum of Church History and Art, and Church Historic Sites. Steve Olsen gave advice by phone and recommended cemetery headstone preservation should be handled through their family organizations.

James Long and his wife Meghan made a trip from St. Louis, Missouri to Potsdam, New York and took

measurements of the stone in January of 2012. They spoke in person to Bruce Winters with the cemetery to make sure the family’s plan was feasible.



Measuring the original headstone January 06, 2012

Julie Maddox also said, *“The headstone was cracked, weathered, and had fallen at the base. The stone couldn’t be removed from the cemetery, so it was cleaned properly on site and then inserted into a newer stone to hold it upright; James Long, a Smith cousin who works for Hallmark Stone, oversaw the cleaning and preparation of the old headstone and placement of the new stone.”*

Vivian Adams, who serves as The Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association Historical Outreach contact went through all the recorded statements from Asael and helped determine the quote used on the headstone. She also assisted getting dates correct. The headstone had his burial date listed instead of the date he died.

The family engraved Asael's statement on the back of the stone, *“It has been borne in upon my soul that one of my descendants will promulgate a work to revolutionize the world of religious faith.”*

Saturday, July 28, 2012, James Long, who brought the stone from his home in St. Louis, began the finish work chipping the stone early in the morning at the home of wonderful hosts, Jeffrey and Kelly Francom. A little later the stone was taken to the cemetery for all the finish work.

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James Long had to take out smaller chunks of stone a little at a time



Steve Orton and Daniel Patrick talking about the program



James Long taking out the extra stone to place the old stone



Meghan Long glues the old headstone into place while James prepares the equipment to lift the headstone out of the truck



Irene Burnett discussing events with Janet and Dick Hann. The Hann's son oversaw a cleaning and mending Eagle Scout Project of the Smith Headstones here many, many years ago.



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James Long preparing the four feet deep foundation for the headstone which will enable it up to endure the harsh winter conditions of northern New York.



Steven Orton, Janet Hann, Irene Burnett, and Dick Hann



Janet Hann, Steve Orton, President Lee Atkin, Dick Hann, J.C. Sorensen, Jeffrey Francom, Jacob Francom, and Kelly Francom, Daniel Patrick



Potsdam Branch President Lee Atkin and Steve Orton



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Dick Hann, Jeremy Patrick, President Lee Atkin, Jeffrey Francom, Daniel C. Patrick, and Meghan Long putting the dolly together



The group being very careful trying not to disturb the old headstones around Asael's



Dick Hann and Branch President Lee Atkin working together



President Lee Atkin, Daniel C. Patrick, Dick Hann, and Jeffrey Francom carrying the hoist base to the Asael grave site



Daniel C. Patrick, Meghan Long, President Lee Atkin, Dick Hann, and Jeffrey Francom putting the foundation base of the headstone hoist



Victor Winters with Union Cemetery Board over saw all the efforts of the family and the Potsdam Branch

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Daniel C. Patrick, Steve Orton, James Long, and Dick Hann



Daniel C. Patrick, J.C. Sorensen, James Long, Dick Hann, and Meghan Long



Meghan Long, Dick Hann, James Long, and J.C. Sorensen prepare the ground which was very soft with wood to keep the hoist from sinking while moving the heavy stone



J.C. Sorensen, Daniel C. Patrick, Meghan Long, James Long, and Steve Orton



J.C. Sorensen, Meghan Long, James Long, Dick Hann, and Daniel C. Patrick



J.C. Sorensen, Meghan Long, James Long, Daniel C. Patrick, Dick Hann, and Steve Orton

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Meghan Long, Steve Orton, James Long, Daniel C. Patrick, J.C. Sorensen, Dick Hann, and Janet Hann



Daniel C. Patrick, Steve Orton, James Long, and Jeffrey Francom



James Long placing the new Asael Smith headstone encasing the old one



The new Asael Smith headstone encasing the old one



In the back: Daniel C. Patrick and Jeffrey Francom
Working with the headstone: Steve Orton, Dick Hann, and James Long



James and Meghan Long with the Asael Smith Headstone

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A view of the new headstone from the street



Members of the Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association along with members of the Potsdam Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints gather around the new headstone. Pictured are Jeff Francom, Kelly Francom, Megan Long, James Long, Daniel Patrick, Steve Orton, Frances Orton, Kris Patrick, Irene Burnett, Janet Hann, Dick Hann, and J.C. Sorensen.

A group of the Potsdam Branch and some Smith Family met and prepared to honor Asael Smith. It took several hours to get the stone ready to place. The commemoration program wasn't long. The group began with a hymn and opening prayer. Daniel C. Patrick gave a talk about Asael Smith and ended his message with a thought written by Asael on April 10, 1799 to his family, *"And I wish to leave you everything that I have in this world but my faults, and them I take with me to the grave."*

A message for the rededication of the Asael Smith Headstone was sent from Elder Ballard and read by Frances Orton:

"I wish I could be there with you today as you replace the headstone of our beloved and revered

ancestor, Asael Smith. He is the grandfather of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of my ancestor, Hyrum Smith. Asael's name is particularly important to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was prompted to prophesy the words that are placed on the headstone as follows, "It has been born in upon my soul that one of my descendants will promulgate a work to revolutionize the world of religious thought."

It is a privilege for the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association to be able to preserve his headstone and pay tribute to this faithful forefather, a truly great man. He directly influenced his grandson, the Prophet Joseph. Joseph once said, "Love of liberty was diffused into my soul by my grandfathers "while they dandled me on their knees."

Asael fought for our liberty in the Revolutionary War. In the summer of 1776, he joined a regiment to defend New York's northern frontier. In his prime of life, Asael Smith gave this counsel to his family, "Bless God that you live in a land of liberty....See God's providence in the appointment of the Federal Constitution and hold both Union and Order as a precious jewel."

Asael left a great legacy to his family and the Church. He consistently set an example of honesty and integrity in the face of adversity. His writings reveal a deep faith in Jesus Christ and His resurrection. An unwavering concern for his fellowmen is evidenced in his strong anti-slavery beliefs. In the last message to his family, he exhorted them to "Search the scriptures." These are qualities that would serve us well to emulate.

Thank you for coming and participating in honoring Asael Smith. To him the Smith family will forever be grateful."

Steve Orton rededicated the headstone. Music was sung and a closing prayer given.

Because of the many donations from the Smith family this work was accomplished. In addition to the financial donations all time and travel expenses were donated by those participating.