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## The Smith Family Moves to Palmyra/"Whence This Stranger?"

Author(s): Sharon Price Anderson

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## The Smith Family Moves to Palmyra



At the time the Smith family moved from Vermont to Palmyra, the Mohawk Turnpike was the principle road that went west from New England to Buffalo, New York. Turnpikes were so called because a log or pike blocked the road. Once a toll was paid, the blockade was turned out of the way so travelers could proceed. The Mohawk Turnpike was named after one of the five Indian nations who between AD 1090 and 1450 formed the Iroquois Confederation in what later became western New York.

Joseph, Sr. hired a man named Caleb Howard to bring Lucy and their eight children from Norwich to Palmyra, but Howard proved to be unscrupulous. Once they were on their journey, he spent the money paid to him in drinking and gambling. When the company was joined by the Gates family, Mr. Howard would not allow young Joseph to ride. Instead, he made the lad walk so that Mr. Gates' daughters could accompany him in the wagon. In note "A" of Joseph's 1838 recital of the first vision, he told how on their way from Utica, New York the driver of the last sleigh knocked him down and left him behind. A stranger, however, came along, picked him up, and carried him to the town of Palmyra.<sup>9</sup>

## Whence This Stranger?

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In woodlands where  
buckskin moccasins  
slipped silently through forests  
of the moose and deer,  
People of the Flint  
hunted muskrat, beaver before  
the white man came. Where  
keepers of the Eastern Door,  
confederate Iroquois, heard  
the partridge drum its wings,  
frontier-bound travelers  
pay the toll, turn the pike,  
ply the Mohawk Trail.

The Smiths move west as well.  
Three years ago doctors  
scraped infected bone  
from Joseph's leg. The  
ten-year-old still limps.  
Passage prepaid,  
he cripples his way  
through cold and snow,  
while Gates girls ride  
where he should have been.

Past Utica he awaits  
the company's last sleigh  
whose driver knocks him down,  
leaves him wallowing  
in weariness and blood.

But a form appears,  
picks up the lad,  
removing him from danger.  
He who will someday lift  
weak, wayfaring strangers  
is carried to Palmyra.

Who rescues the boy  
from death and pain?  
Where does he go?  
What is his name?

*Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let  
thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me  
(Psalms 40:11).*