

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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Edited by  
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure  
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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The decision to send out the Willie and Martin companies so late in the season was extremely reckless. In mid-November President Brigham Young angrily reproved those who had authorized the late start or who had not ordered the several parties back to Florence when they still had the opportunity, charging "ignorance," "mismanagement," and "misconduct." Though terrible, the suffering could have been far worse. Had the rescue effort not been launched immediately—well before the storm struck—the handcart companies would probably have been totally destroyed.

Six more handcart companies crossed the plains after 1856. To demonstrate that the idea was still viable, seventy missionaries made the trip in the opposite direction in the spring of 1857. Five companies, totaling 1,076 immigrants with 223 handcarts, crossed west with little difficulty: two in 1857, one in 1859, and two in 1860. In all, 2,962 immigrants walked to Utah with handcarts. About 250 died along the way—all but about 30 of those in the Willie and Martin companies.

For Latter-day Saints, the handcart story, particularly the account of the Willie and Martin companies, has darkened the collective memory of the westering saga. But that episode is also remembered for the unparalleled gallantry exhibited by so many, immigrants and rescuers alike. Of particular note is the superb performance of the women; their courage and mettle contributed enormously to the eventual survival of both companies. It was at once the most ill-advised and tragic, the most heroic, and arguably the proudest single event in the Mormon pioneer experience.

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HOWARD A. CHRISTY

## HARMONY, PENNSYLVANIA

Harmony, Pennsylvania, is an important HISTORICAL SITE of The Church of Jesus Christ of



*Handcart Company*, by C. C. A. Christensen (1900, oil on canvas, 25" × 38"). Two of the handcart pioneers, C. C. A. Christensen and his wife, sailed to the United States in 1857, made their way to Iowa City, purchased hickory handcarts, and set out on their walk to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Over thirty years later he painted this scene from the more than 1,300 mile journey. Church Museum of History and Art.

Latter-day Saints on the Susquehanna River in northeastern Pennsylvania. Significant events occurred there during the periodic residence of the Prophet Joseph SMITH from 1825 to 1830. Harmony was the home of Isaac Hale, father of Joseph Smith's wife, Emma Hale. Joseph Smith and his father boarded with Isaac Hale in 1825 while working on Josiah Stowell's mining project. In December 1827, Joseph and Emma moved to Harmony from Manchester, New York, to work on the translation of the PLATES of the BOOK OF MORMON. Eventually they bought a small farm and house, where most of the Book of Mormon was translated between April 7 and early June 1829. Nearby, on May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY received the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD from JOHN THE BAPTIST and were authorized to baptize each other. The first convert BAPTISM, that of Samuel H. Smith, took place there ten days later. Somewhere between Harmony and COLESVILLE, NEW YORK, PETER, JAMES, and JOHN restored the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. After the Church was organized in 1830, Joseph and Emma returned to Harmony and lived there through that summer. Fifteen REVELATIONS now found in the DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS were received in Harmony.

The Harmony in Church history refers to a township rather than the village of Harmony. The



The home of Joseph and Emma Hale Smith in Harmony, Pennsylvania, from 1827 to 1830. The lower center portion is the original home, where Emma gave birth to their first child, Alvin, who died the same day, June 15, 1828. Here Joseph received at least fifteen revelations (D&C 3–13, 24–27) and translated the lost 116 pages and a large portion of the Book of Mormon.

township boundary was changed in 1853, placing the Church site in present-day Oakland Township. The site of the Hale residence lies about a mile and a half west of present-day Oakland, Pennsylvania, in Susquehanna County, along the north side of Route 171.

Today the Church owns about 288 acres at the Harmony location. On a small landscaped triangular plot located between the highway and a railroad right-of-way, a granite and bronze monument dedicated in 1960 commemorates the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. The exact location of the restoration is not known (*see* AARONIC PRIESTHOOD: RESTORATION).

The house owned by Joseph and Emma Smith burned in 1919. The buried foundation is just west of the monument. The graves of Isaac and Elizabeth Hale and of an infant son born to Joseph and Emma are close to Route 171, in a public cemetery located east of the Church property.

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HORACE H. CHRISTENSEN

## HARRIS, MARTIN

Martin Harris (1783–1875), a New York farmer, was one of the Three Witnesses to the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. He also financed the first publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 at a cost of \$3,000 and later helped finance publication of the Book of Commandments.

Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783, in Easton (now Saratoga), Washington County, New York, and died July 10, 1875, in Clarkston, Cache County, Utah. On March 27, 1808, he married his first cousin, Lucy Harris. At least six children were born to the couple. In the War of 1812, Private Harris was a teamster in the Battle of Buffalo. By May 1814, at the Battle of Puttneyville, he was first sergeant in the Thirty-ninth New York Militia. He returned home an honored war veteran. He inherited 150 acres and by 1828 owned a total of 320 acres. His wife characterized him as industrious, attentive to domestic concerns, and an excellent provider and father.

Harris stood about five feet, eight inches tall; had a light complexion, blue eyes, and brown hair; and wore a Greek-style beard off the edge of his jaw and chin. When formally dressed, he wore a favorite gray suit and a large, stiff hat. Non-Mormon contemporaries extolled Harris's sincerity, honesty, memory, generosity, neighborliness, shrewd business practices, and civic spirit.

Harris promoted construction of the Erie Canal through Palmyra along a route that passed not far from his house. Palmyra's citizens elected him road overseer for seven years, and he was a member of Palmyra's vigilance committee. A Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democrat, he was a believer in the value of homespun common sense. He favored gold and silver money and rejected paper currency. He distrusted banks, Federalists, and authoritarians. A Christian democratic activist, he admired ancient Greek culture and raised money for Greek Christians to fight the Turks.

Looking on himself as an unchurched Christian, Harris chose to follow God on his own. As a "restorationist," he looked for the return of biblical Christianity. He stated that "in the year 1818 . . . I was inspired of the Lord and taught of the Spirit that I should not join any church" (interview by Edward Stevenson, Sept. 4, 1870, Stevenson Microfilm Collection, Vol. 32, *HDC*).

Martin Harris met Joseph SMITH some time after 1816, when the Smith family moved to Pal-