

Joseph Smith, Jr. Monument

South Royalton, Vermont, United States of America

Joseph Smith, Jr. was born on December 23, 1805 in the township of Sharon, Vermont, the fifth of eleven children to be born to Joseph Smith, Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith. He was responsible for translating the Book of Mormon, ushering in the restoration of the gospel to the Earth, and was described as having, “done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”¹ In 1884, Elder Junius F. Wells along with Spencer Clawson visited the area of the Prophet’s birth and Elder Wells conceived the idea to erect a monument to him.²

Under the direction of President Joseph F. Smith, Elder Wells oversaw the construction of a cottage and a granite monument to honor the Prophet Joseph Smith. The monument is a 40-ton, 38½-foot tall monument, one foot representing each year of the Prophet’s life. The monument was dedicated by Joseph F. Smith on December 23, 1905, exactly one-hundred years after the birth of Joseph Smith, Jr. George Albert Smith reported on the event in April Conference, 1906. After the monument was dedicated, Elder Wells remained to oversee the area and gave the following report in August of 1906:

*I am nearing the end of my task here, and shall be glad to get through and back home again. The place looks very well now that the grades are made, and the grass is beginning to come up. Many people call; every day, from half-dozen to half a hundred. This testimony in stone is doing its work, removing prejudice and awakening an interest in our cause and people. It will, in years to come, be a place where many Saints will rejoice to come for their summer vacation.*³

The monument contains two inscriptions. One side reads “Sacred to the memory of JOSEPH SMITH THE PROPHET, Born here, 23rd December, 1805. Martyred, Carthage, Illinois, 27th



The Joseph Smith, Jr. Monument
erected by Junius F. Wells
Photo Courtesy of Alexander L. Baugh

June, 1844.”

The other side reads as follows:

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH SMITH

In the Spring of the years of our Lord 1820 The Father and Son appeared to him in a glorious vision, called him by name and instructed him. Thereafter heavenly angels visited him and revealed the principles of the Gospel, restored the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in its fullness and perfection.

The engraved plates of the Book of Mormon were given him by the angel Moroni. These he translated by the gift and power of God. He organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the sixth day of April, 1830 with six members. He devoted his life to the establishment of this Church and sealed his testimony with his blood. In his ministry he was constantly supported by his brother Hyrum Smith, who suffered martyrdom with him.



Over a million converts to this testimony have been made throughout the world; and this monument has been erected in his honor to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of his birth by members of the Church which he organized. They love and revere him as a prophet of God, and call his name blessed forever and ever, Amen.

One-hundred-years later, the monument continues to stand today and remains a testimony to Joseph Smith, Jr., Prophet of the Restoration.

SOURCES

¹ Doctrine & Covenants 135:3.

² Susa Young Gates, "Memorial Monument Dedication", *Improvement Era*, (February 1906).

³ *Improvement Era*, Volume 11, No. 12, (October 1906).

ERECTING THE JOSEPH SMITH, JR. MONUMENT¹

"Many people do not understand what a great task it was to get this monument in position. The shaft itself weighs somewhere near forty-three tons. It is erected upon high ground, and had to be carried five and a half miles from the railroad upon a specially prepared wagon, the wagon weighing eight tons, the tires of the wheels being twenty inches wide. The country road could not bear the great weight of the immense blocks of stone of which the monument is constructed, and a track of oak planks was laid upon the ground and the big wagon was rolled upon that. When the first effort was made to haul it, twenty of the best horses in that country could not move the wagon.

Afterwards, by means of block and tackle, it was successfully moved, although sometimes only

a few yards, or a few rods a day, until the monument was gradually taken to its destination. The people of that country said to Brother Wells, 'You will not be able to get it into position because of storms and snow; the roads will be so slippery that you cannot haul it.' Brother Wells said to them (evidencing the faith of his lineage) 'We will get there, the Lord will open the way.' So the storms held off until the monument was in place, the cottage roofed, and the doors and windows roughed in, then it began to snow. The people of that country refer to this two months of pleasant weather, at a time when ordinarily they have snow, as Wells' weather, in compliment to the man who had faith in our Heavenly Father in carrying out the purpose undertaken.

Another thing was called to our attention, which interested those who lived there, the railroad men were afraid to carry the heavy stone across the railroad bridge over White river, so it was unloaded from the railroad car onto the wagon, and then it was found the wagon bridge would have to be strengthened. Investigation showed that the bed of the stream was quicksand. Brother Wells, therefore, had planks placed on the quicksand to sustain the heavy timbers required to strengthen the bridge, and by that means they were able to accomplish what they desired. Thus roads and bridges were made, and the people cheerfully assisted in the work. The block and tackle referred to had to be fastened to trees along the road and those who lived in that section permitted their trees to be used for that purpose, although it either barked or uprooted them.

One place on the road was an especially bad obstacle; it was very marshy; and Brother Wells went to the Road Supervisor and asked if he could have it filled up. He smilingly replied that it was a noted landmark in the country, and it would be impossible to fix it, the oldest inhabitant unpleasantly remembers that disagreeable mudhole, 'but,' he said, 'it is the only way you can go, and I am afraid we can not do anything to help you.' The same evening they got there with the monument



shaft, a hay-press sunk in the mire, and they could scarcely get it out. That night our Heavenly Father was petitioned to assist, for the great rock had to be taken over that bog next day. During the night the temperature dropped 30 degrees, the mud was frozen solid, and it proved to be about the best piece of road they encountered on the trip.”

SOURCE

¹ George Albert Smith, *Conference Report*, (April 1906), 54 - 55.

DEDICATORY PRAYER OF THE JOSEPH SMITH, JR. MONUMENT¹

“Our Father, who art in heaven! Hallowed be thy most holy name. We, thy servants and handmaidens representing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have gathered here to dedicate this monument to the memory of thy servant, Joseph Smith, the great Prophet and Seer of the nineteenth century, who was born into the world near this spot, on the 23rd day of December, 1805—one hundred years ago.

It was from him that we received the everlasting gospel, revealed to him by the Eternal Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son.

With hearts full of gratitude to thee for the light and truth of thy gospel, the authority of the holy priesthood, and the ordinances of salvation for the living and for the dead, revealed through thy servant Joseph Smith; in loving remembrance of him, and grateful for the privilege of being present on this occasion, we dedicate to thee the ground on which stands this monument, that it may be sacred and most holy. We dedicate the foundation, typical of the foundation thou hast laid, of apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ, thy Son, as the chief corner stone. We dedicate the base, as typifying the rock of revelation on which thy Church is built. We dedicate the die, with its inscriptions, as appropriate

to the whole design. We dedicate the capstone as a sign of the glorious crown that thy servant Joseph has secured unto himself through his integrity to thy cause, and of that similar reward which shall grace the head of each of his faithful followers. We dedicate the spire, as a token of the inspired man of God whom thou didst make indeed a polished shaft in thine hand, reflecting the light of heaven, even thy glorious light, unto the children of men.

We dedicate the whole monument, as signifying the finished work of human redemption. And we now earnestly invoke upon it thy blessing, O Lord, and ask thy divine approval, acceptance and protection, that it may stand as a lasting testimony to the world, of the love and devotion of thy people, of the opening of the last dispensation, and the coming of the Son of man. May it be preserved from the ravages of time, the disintegrating action of the elements, from upheavals of the earth’s surface, and from the violence of human malice or caprice. May it be surrounded by the influence of the spirit of peace, and remain a joy to thy people who may behold it, and a silent witness for thee to all who may look upon it.

And may the light of the gospel, restored to the earth through thy servant, the Prophet Joseph Smith, shine forth to every land and nation, until all people shall come to the knowledge of thy truth, and the name of thy chosen minister be known for good, and not for evil, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Bless those who have contributed of their means for the erection of this monument. And remember in loving kindness all thy people. Deal out blessing, prosperity, and continued happiness upon our glorious country and all her people. Bless and preserve our nation, and guide those who direct her affairs in all their exalted stations. Give the judicial, lawmaking and executive branches of our government adequate wisdom, that her integrity may be preserved, and that her glorious institutions, the just liberties of her people, and the rights of all her citizens may be preserved and perpetuated.



And, O God, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, that thou wilt bless and sanctify all the land surrounding this spot, sacred to the memory of all thy people, it being the birthplace of thy servant Joseph. May it be hallowed by thy people. May thy blessing abide upon it, that it may be a blessed place, where thy people may visit from time to time and rejoice in contemplating thy goodness in that thou hast restored to the earth the fulness of the gospel of thy Son, with all the power and authority necessary to administer it and all its ordinances unto the inhabitants of the earth, for their salvation and the redemption of their dead.

And inasmuch as this little cottage has been erected, and provision made by which all the expenses thereof may be defrayed, we offer unto thee this building, and ask that thou wilt sanctify it, for we dedicate it unto thee, and consecrate it to the needs of those who shall come to visit here to contemplate, and to receive instruction, light and understanding concerning the great latter-day work. May no harm come to this little dwelling. May those who dwell here possess the spirit of light and truth in their hearts. May their souls burn with love for the salvation of the human family, and may they take great pains in administering unto those that shall come, for their comfort and enlightenment, that they may be assisted in their search for that which will exalt them and bring them back into thy presence.

We ask thee, also, heavenly Father, that thou wilt remember in thy mercy and in thy continued love thy servant, Junius F. Wells, who has borne this great labor and responsibility. May thy blessing and peace abide in him. We thank thee for him, for his integrity, for his persistent and intelligent labor in the accomplishment of this work. We pray for thy blessing to be upon him from this time henceforth and forever. Bless him with those things that are needful for life, and with thy Spirit, that he may continue to live in the light of thy countenance.

Wilt thou bless abundantly also those who have taken part in this labor—the laborers, those who have directed the work, and those who have

furnished the material and the skill with which this labor has been accomplished. We ask thy blessing upon them, holy Father, one and all. May they prosper in the land. May they be blessed of the Lord in their basket and in their store, in their outgoing and incoming, when they shall lie down and when they shall rise up. O God, put thy Spirit into their hearts, lead them in the path of righteousness, and prosper them in the labor of their hands.

We ask thee to bless the people of South Royalton, of Tunbridge and Sharon, and of the surrounding country. And this land, being the birthplace and the nursingplace of many of thy most faithful and renowned servants, who have made their mark in the world for the uplifting and benefit of mankind, O God, wilt thou let thy peace and blessing be upon this land. May it be prospered. May those who dwell here multiply and increase and replenish the earth. May all barrenness be removed from the soil, that it may be fruitful and prosperous from this time forward; that good men may gather here, and those born here find place and be happy, and enjoy themselves in the midst of these everlasting hills.

These mercies, holy Father, we humbly ask, and we rejoice in thy mercies and kindness unto us. We give honor, and glory, and praise and obedience unto thy most holy name, and ask thee to accept of this monument and of this little cottage, these services and all our efforts.

We rejoice in thy goodness. We praise and adore thee this day. We commend ourselves with this monument unto thee. Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, be ascribed unto God and the Lamb, now and forever. Amen.”

SOURCE

¹ *Improvement Era*, 1906, Vol. 11, No. 4, (February 1906).



VISITOR INFORMATION

Address:

357 LDS Lane
South Royalton, Vermont 05068

Hours of Operation:

November - April

- Monday through Saturday:
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

- Sunday:
1:30 PM to 5:00 PM

May - October

- Monday through Saturday:
9:00 AM to 7:00 PM

- Sunday:
1:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Admission:

Free

FURTHER READING RESOURCES

Darel P. Bartschi, "The Joseph Smith Memorial: A 1905 Tribute to the Prophet and His Work," *Ensign*, (February 1988), 7.

Susa Young Gates, "Memorial Monument Dedication," *Improvement Era*, (February-March 1906).

C. E. Grant, "Epochal Events at the Prophet's Birthplace," *Improvement Era*, 1961.

Junius F. Wells, "Birthplace of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Contributor*, 1895.

