

Mormon Pond

Westman Islands, Iceland

Mormon Pond received its name from the many Icelanders who were baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the early days of the Church in Iceland. The “Monument to the Emigrants” was erected as a tribute to the faithful Icelandic pioneers who emigrated to Utah between 1854 and 1914.

The monument was dedicated on June 30, 2000, by Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Area President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. David A. Ashby, President of the Icelandic Association of Utah, Inc. presented the monument to the people of Iceland on behalf of the Icelandic Association of Utah. Sigrun Inga Sigurfeirsdottir, president of the city council, Vestmannaeyjar, accepted the gift on behalf of the people of Iceland.

The sculpture atop of the monument is an eight-foot-tall angel, titled the Messenger, by Gary Price. Each side panel has the name of each of the 410 emigrants, listed in both Icelandic and English. The monument also includes a biblical passage from Ezekiel 20:34. The center pedestal, also in both Icelandic and English, reads: “In Honor of the Icelanders that heard the call to build Zion and moved to Utah 1854 to 1914.”

In 1851, two natives of Iceland, Þórarinn Hafðiðason and Guðmundur Guðmundsson, were studying in Copenhagen, Denmark where they came in contact with two Mormon missionaries from Utah. After careful investigation, they joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Shortly thereafter, they returned to their native Iceland to spread their new faith.

In 1852, Guðmundur Guðmundsson described the valley where the Mormon Pond is located as “a beautiful little round valley, surrounded by nature’s own mountain walls. In the midst of this most picturesque valley was found a small grassy plain, as level as a floor, and containing something like 20 acres of land. We approached this place one at a time, in order to avoid being



The ‘Monument to Emigrants’ near Mormon Pond
Photo courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah

noticed by our opponents and persecutors. Here in nature’s pure embrace, with nothing but the blue canopy of heaven for our covering, we raised our hands and our voices ‘on high,’ and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus to bless and sanctify this lovely spot, surrounded by these romantic mountain walls.”¹

SOURCES

¹ Fred E. Woods, *Fire on Ice: The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at Home and Abroad*, (Religious Studies Center: Brigham Young University: 2005), 19.

Special thanks to the Icelandic Association of Utah for providing the above information.

GUÐMUNDUR GUÐMUNDSSON’S ACCOUNT OF ACCEPTING AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL

“Having found the fruits of the gospel

more sweet and desirable than any other fruit, I expected that every person would believe my testimony, especially my own relatives, but alas, when I arrived in Iceland I preached to my brothers and sisters in vain; they would not receive me, and as my pious parents had died, I felt myself left alone, like ‘Elijah of old in the cave.’ However, I soon found a few believing friends, who, notwithstanding strong opposition on the part of the priests, were ready to embrace the truth. I was often rebuked, spit upon and mocked by enemies, but being full of the love of God, I felt no anger or indignation against those who persecuted me...

“Immediately after we set our feet on the land, we noticed that we were not as welcome as we normally would have been if we hadn’t been “Mormons.” Our arrival was already announced over the whole land and . . . lies were made public in the country’s newspapers with warnings and proclamations from the country’s bishops and highest officials. . . . The people were strongly commanded not to receive us or listen to us speak. One of these proclamations was sent especially to the priests and the authorities on Vestman Island. We were then immediately summoned (to court) and were strongly forbidden to spread our teachings.”

SOURCES

¹ Fred E. Woods, *Fire on Ice: The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at Home and Abroad*, (Religious Studies Center: Brigham Young University, 2005), 14-15.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Address:

Westman Islands, Iceland

Hours of Operation:

Daylight to Dark

Admission:

Free

ADDITIONAL READING RESOURCES

Kate B. Carter, “The Gospel in Iceland,” *Improvement Era*, February 1951, Vol. 54, 88-90.

Fred E. Woods, *Fire on Ice: The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at Home and Abroad*, (Religious Studies Center: Brigham Young University: 2005).

Fred E. Woods, “Fire on Ice: The Conversion and Life of Gumundar Gumundsson,” *BYU Studies*, 2000, Vol. 39, No. 22, 56-72.

