PALMYRA/MANCHESTER, NEW YORK

The Palmyra/Manchester area of New York is significant to the LDS Church because the Joseph Smith, Sr., family settled there in 1816, and the hill Cumorah, from which came the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, is nearby. Many events in early Church history occurred in the vicinity, including Joseph Smith’s FIRST VISION, and also the visits of the ANGEL MORONI leading to the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon in Palmyra. A number of persons, including Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and E. B. Grandin, prominent in the early scenes of the Church, also lived in the vicinity. Four revelations now published in the Doctrine and Covenants were received in the area (see D&C 2, 19, 22, 23).

The Joseph Smith, Sr., family arrived in the village of Palmyra, New York, in 1816 from their home in Norwich, Vermont. By the fall of 1817 they made a down payment on a 100-acre farm two miles south of the village in the adjoining township of Farmington (which became Manchester in 1822). During the winter of 1817–1818, they began the construction of a log house, which was completed by the fall of 1818 (Enders, p. 16). A 1982 archaeological dig revealed the exact location of the log cabin on the southern edge of Palmyra township (Berge, pp. 24–26).

In the early spring of 1820, Joseph Smith, Jr., sought the Lord in prayer and experienced the First Vision, in a grove of trees near the home, and three years later, on the evening of September 21–22, 1823, the angel Moroni visited him in the log cabin and gave him instructions about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The hill Cumorah where Joseph first viewed the gold plates and received annual visits from Moroni is about three miles to the southeast, on the Canandaigua Road.

From 1822 to 1826 the Smiths built a frame house in Manchester; and in January 1827 Joseph and his new bride, Emma Hale Smith, came to that home to work on the farm. Attempts to steal the gold plates required their being concealed both under the hearthstone of the house and in the cooper’s shop.

The Book of Mormon was printed by Egbert B. Grandin in his Palmyra Bookstore, with Martin Harris’s mortgaged farm guaranteeing that the printing costs would be met. With the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, at Fayette, the Manchester/Palmyra area was identified as one of three branches.

The Church still has interest in the area, maintaining VISITORS CENTERS in the Grandin printing shop and bookstore; at the Smith farm and SACRED GROVE; and also at the hill Cumorah, where an appropriate monument and building have been erected, and where an annual pageant is held. A portion of the Martin Harris farm is also owned by the Church. Members of the Smith family and others prominent in the early history of the Church are buried in the cemeteries of the area.

[See also History of the Church, c. 1820–1831; New York: Early LDS Sites in.]

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LARRY C. PORTER

PAPYRI, JOSEPH SMITH

The term “Joseph Smith papyri” refers narrowly to twelve extant pieces of the Egyptian papyrus that the Prophet Joseph Smith acquired from Michael H. Chandler in July 1835. Located in the Church Archives, these fragments range in size from 7.5 in. x 12.5 in. to 6.5 in. x 4.5 in. Facsimile No. 1 in the BOOK OF ABRAHAM came from one of these fragments. Broadly, the term also refers to Facsimiles Nos. 2 and 3 in the same book and to papers and all the Egyptian materials of the KIRTLAND period of Church history containing small sections of copied papyrus text. The discovery and transmission of the mummies and papyri are discussed in BOOK OF ABRAHAM: ORIGIN.

The origin of the ancient writings is fascinating to trace. In 1798 Napoleon’s Egyptian conquest reawakened Europe to Egypt’s treasures. One Italian collector, Antonio Lebolo, excavated in Egypt between 1817 and 1821. In 1820 he worked at
Thebes, near El Gourna; Chandler said that Lebolo’s mummies came from there (Todd, pp. 45, 130). About 1822 Lebolo returned to Italy, where he died on February 19, 1830. In 1831 his son Pietro investigated why shipping merchant Albano Oblasser had not reimbursed him for eleven mummies. In 1833 Pietro authorized Francesco Bertola, in Philadelphia, to sell eleven mummies that Oblasser had sent to a partnership in New York (Peterson, pp. 145–47).

How Chandler obtained his possessions is not known. It is known that Lebolo mummies and papyri were exhibited in Philadelphia (April–May 1833) and Baltimore. By September 1833, six had been shown in Harrisburg and one had been publicly dissected in Philadelphia. In June of 1835, four mummies and papyri were exhibited at Cleveland, twenty miles southwest of Kirtland (Todd, pp. 108–143).

In early July 1835, Chandler visited Kirtland, where he met Joseph Smith and inquired “if he had a power by which he could translate the ancient Egyptian. Mr. Smith replied that he had” (P. Pratt, Millennial Star, July 1842). Chandler presented some hieroglyphics, which others supposedly had interpreted. Joseph Smith left and returned with a written English translation corresponding to the interpretation Chandler had already received. The Prophet displayed interest in the papyri, but Chandler would not break up his exhibit. Shortly thereafter, Church members purchased for $2,400 “four human figures . . . with two or more rolls of papyrus” (HC 2:235). Oliver Cowdery remembered that it was “two rolls . . . [with] two or three other small pieces,” the text written “with black, and a small part, red ink or paint” (Messenger and Advocate, Dec. 31, 1835). Within three days, Joseph Smith translated some “hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another, writings of Joseph of Egypt.” Joseph Smith spent from July 17 to 31 “continually . . . translating an alphabet . . . and arranging a grammar” of Egyptian (HC 2:236–38). On October 1, while he worked on the alphabet, the “principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham . . . unfolded” (HC 2:286). On November 17 he “exhibited the alphabet” (HC 2:316). He recorded “translating the Egyptian records” on October 7, November 19–20 (20th: “made rapid progress”),

Facsimile No. 1, an extant piece from some rolls of Egyptian papyrus that Joseph Smith acquired in 1835, illustrates some of the text in the book of Abraham, translated by Joseph Smith. The Prophet said the upper right bird figure represents the angel of the Lord, the prone man represents Abraham, and the upper left figure represents the idolatrous priest who attempted to sacrifice Abraham.

In 1837 a visitor wrote: “These records were torn, . . . some parts entirely lost, but Smith is to translate the whole by divine inspiration and that which is lost, like Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, can be interpreted as well as that which is preserved.” Joseph Smith let the mummies and papyri be moved to nearby towns, and in 1836 they were in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE. Despite care, the papyri had been damaged. Consequently, they were cut into pieces, and some were pasted on paper for preservation. By January 4, 1838, there were at least “two undivided thirds.” During 1838–1839, the papyri and mummies spent the winter in Quincy, Illinois, where they were exhibited, a practice that continued until 1856 (Todd, pp. 197–203).

In 1842 Joseph Smith worked to prepare the facsimiles for publication and, likely, wrote his “Explanations,” which are printed with them; on February 23, he instructed the printer on making the plate for Facsimile No. 1, which with its “Explanations” was printed in the March 1 issue of the Times and Seasons, with Abraham 1:1–2:18. On March 4 he instructed the printer on Facsimiles Nos. 2 and 3; on March 8–9 he did “translating” and “revising” (IHC 4:518, 543–48). The final installment of the Book of Abraham (2:19–5:21) and Facsimile No. 2 with its “Explanations” were printed in the March 15 issue; Facsimile No. 3 and its “Explanations” were printed May 16.

Although the papyrus rolls had been shortened, a visitor in February 1843 saw “a long roll of manuscript, [being told] it was the ‘writing of Abraham’” and was shown “another roll” (Todd, p. 245). After Joseph Smith’s death, the Egyptian artifacts were held principally by his mother, and then by Emma SMITH after Lucy’s death on May 14, 1856. On May 25, 1856, Emma sold “four Egyptian mummies with the records with them” to Mr. Abel Combs (IE, Jan. 1968, pp. 12–16). (Pioneers brought one fragment west.) Combs then sold two mummies with some papyri, which were sent to the St. Louis Museum (1856); they ended up in the Chicago Museum (1863), where they apparently burned in 1871. The fate of Combs’s two other mummies and papyri is unknown, but some papyri remained, for in 1918 Mrs. Alice Heusser of Brooklyn, a daughter of Combs’s housekeeper, approached the New York Metropol-

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JAY M. TODD

PARABLES

Parables are short didactic narratives that make use of characters, situations, and customs familiar to their audience. They are meant to convey a spiritual message, but the reader usually must infer the message from the story, which generally is a presentation of some aspect of daily life. Because they are stories, parables are sometimes more memorable and more interesting than direct exhortation. Parables are seen to have several layers of meaning and may be understood differently, depending on the sensitivity and spiritual preparation of the hearer. For Latter-day Saints, it is significant that through the Prophet Joseph SMITH the Lord offered some additional parables and used those given during Jesus’ ministry to enrich that part of the message of the restoration of the gospel that points to events of the latter days.

In the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST), Joseph Smith reworked some of the parables of Christ recorded in the synoptic gospels. In addition, he often referred to Christ’s par-