



Type: Magazine Article

Presiding Patriarchs

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Source: *The Historical Record*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (August 1886)

Published by: Andrew Jenson

Page(s): 89–92

Abstract: A short history of the office of Presiding Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, up until 1886.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Devoted Exclusively to Historical, Biographical, Chrono-
logical and Statistical Matters.

"What thou seest, write in a book." REV. 1:11.

No. 8.

AUGUST, 1886.

VOL. V.

PRESIDING PATRIARCHS.

Joseph Smith, sen., father of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was the first Presiding Patriarch of the Church. He was ordained to that high and holy calling, Dec. 18, 1833, at Kirtland, Ohio, under the hands of the Prophet Joseph, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams. Father Smith continued as Patriarch until his death, which occurred at Nauvoo, Ill., September 14, 1840. On January 19, 1841, in an important revelation given through the Prophet Joseph, Hyrum Smith, Father Smith's eldest living son, who then acted as second counselor in the First Presidency, was called to succeed his father as Patriarch. He received the office Jan. 24, 1841, and kept it until his martyrdom in Carthage Jail, Ill., June 27, 1844. His brother William Smith, who was also a member of the quorum of Twelve Apostles, succeeded him by virtue of his birthright, or age, but he apostatised and was finally excommunicated from the Church, Oct. 12, 1845, at Nauvoo, Ill. John Smith, brother of the late Joseph Smith, sen., who had previously been ordained a Patriarch in Nauvoo, was ordained and sustained

as the Presiding Patriarch of the Church, January 1, 1849, in Great Salt Lake City. Uncle John Smith, as he was familiarly called, died May 23, 1854, in Great Salt Lake City, and on June 28th, following, John Smith, son of the martyred Hyrum Smith, was chosen Patriarch of the Church in his place. He was ordained Feb. 18, 1855, and is the present incumbent of the office, which is the only hereditary office in the Church.

JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.,

The first Presiding Patriarch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and father of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Essex County, Mass.; he was the second of the seven sons of Asahel and Mary Smith. Asahel was born in Topsfield, March 7, 1744; he was the youngest son of Samuel and Priscilla Smith. Samuel was born January 26, 1714, in Topsfield; he was the eldest son of Samuel and Rebecca Smith. Samuel was born in Topsfield, January 26, 1666, and was the son of Robert and Mary Smith, who emigrated from Old England.

Joseph Smith sen. removed with his father to Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont, in 1791, and assisted in clearing a large farm of a heavy

growth of timber. He married Lucy, daughter of Solomon and Lydia Mack, on Jan. 24, 1796, by whom he had 10 children, namely:

Alvin Smith, born	Feb. 11,	1798.
Hyrum,	“ Feb. 9,	1800.
Sophronia,	“ May 16,	1803.
Joseph	“ Dec. 23,	1805.
Sam'l Harrison,	“ March 13,	1808.
Ephraim,	“ March 13,	1810.
William,	“ March 13,	1811.
Catherine,	“ July 28,	1812.
Don Carlos,	“ March 25,	1816.
Lucy,	“ July 18,	1824.

At his marriage he owned a handsome farm in Tunbridge. In 1802 he rented it and engaged in mercantile business, and soon after embarked in a venture of ginseng to send to China, and was swindled out of the entire proceeds by the shipmaster and agent; he was consequently obliged to sell his farm and all of his effects to pay his debts.

About the year 1816 he moved to Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, bought a farm and cleared 200 acres, which he lost in consequence of not being able to pay the last instalment of the purchase money at the time it was due. This was the case with a great number of farmers in New York who had cleared land under similar contracts. He afterwards moved to Manchester, Ontario County, New York, procured a comfortable home with 16 acres of land, where he lived until he removed to Kirtland, Ohio.

He was the first person who received his son Joseph's testimony after he had seen the angel, and exhorted him to be faithful and diligent to the message he had received. He was baptized April 6, 1830.

In August, 1830, in company with his son Don Carlos, he took a mission to St. Lawrence County, New York, touching on his route at several of the Canadian ports, where he distributed a few copies of the Book of Mormon, visited his father, brothers and sisters residing in St. Lawrence County, bore testimony to the truth, which resulted eventually in all the family coming into the Church, ex-

cepting his brother Jesse and sister Susan.

He removed with his family to Kirtland in 1831, was ordained Patriarch and president of the High Priesthood, under the hands of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, on December 18, 1833, and was a member of the first High Council, organized in Kirtland, Ohio, Feb. 17, 1834.

In 1836 he traveled in company with his brother John 2,400 miles in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont and New Hampshire, visiting the branches of the Church in those States, and bestowing Patriarchal blessings on several hundred persons, preaching the gospel to all who would hear, and baptizing many. They arrived at Kirtland October 2, 1836.

During the persecutions in Kirtland, in 1837, he was made a prisoner, but fortunately obtained his liberty, and after a very tedious journey in the spring and summer of 1838, he arrived at Far West, Missouri. After his sons Hyrum and Joseph were thrown into the Missouri jails by the mob, he fled from under the exterminating order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, and made his escape in midwinter to Quincy, Illinois, from whence he removed to Commerce in the spring of 1839, and thus became one of the founders of Nauvoo.

The exposures he suffered brought on consumption, of which he died September 14, 1840, aged 69 years, two months and two days. He was 6 feet 2 inches high, was very straight, and remarkably well proportioned. His ordinary weight was about 200 pounds, and he was very strong and active. In his younger days he was famed as a wrestler, and, Jacob like, he never wrestled with but one man whom he could not throw. He was one of the most benevolent of men, opening his house to all who were destitute. While at Quincy, Illinois, he fed hundreds of the poor Saints who were flying from the Missouri persecutions, although he had arrived there penniless himself.

HYRUM SMITH,

The second Presiding Patriarch of the Church. (See page 71.)

WILLIAM SMITH,

The third Presiding Patriarch of the Church. (See page 44.)

JOHN SMITH,

The fourth Presiding Patriarch of the Church, was born in Derryfield (now Manchester), Rockingham Co., New Hampshire, July 16, 1781. He was a son of Asahel and Mary Smith (formerly Mary Duty) and uncle to the Prophet Joseph. In 1815 he married Clarissa Lyman, by whom he had three children—George Albert, Caroline and John Lyman.

The subject of Joseph Smith's mission was introduced to John Smith by his brother Joseph, the Prophet's father, which resulted in his baptism January 9, 1832, at a time of sickness near to death, and when the ice had to be cut to reach the water; but from that time he gained health and strength, although he had been given up by the doctors to die of consumption. He was at the same time ordained an Elder.

In 1833, he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and in 1838 to Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, and thence to Adamondi-Ahman, in Daviess County, where he presided over that branch of the Church until expelled by the mob in 1839, and arrived in Illinois on the 28th of February of that year. He located at Green Plains, six miles from Warsaw, where he put in a crop of corn, split rails, and performed much hard labor unsuited to his health and years, but obliged to be done for the support of his family. In June he moved to Commerce (since Nauvoo), and on October 5th was appointed to preside over the Church in Iowa. On the 12th he moved to Lee County, to fulfil that mission.

In October, 1843, he moved to Macedonia, Hancock County, Illinois, having been appointed to preside over the Saints in that place. In January, 1844, he was ordained a Patriarch,

and in November, of that year, was driven by mobbers from Macedonia to Nauvoo, where he continued to administer Patriarchal blessings, to the joy of thousands, until February 9, 1846, when he was compelled by the mob violence of the free and sovereign State of Illinois to again leave his home and cross the Mississippi River with his family, in search of a peaceful location far off amid savages and deserts, in the valleys of the mountains.

After passing a dreary winter on the right bank of the Missouri, at Winter Quarters, he again took up the weary ox train march on the 9th of June, 1847, and reached Great Salt Lake Valley September 23rd, where he presided over the Church in the mountains until January 1, 1849, when he was ordained Presiding Patriarch over the Church, under the hands of Presidents Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball.

He moved out of the Fort on to his city lot in February, 1849, and this was the only spot on which he had been privileged to cultivate a garden two years in succession during the last twenty-three years of his life.

In addition to a vast amount of varied and efficient aid to thousands in the way of salvation, during his long and faithful ministry, he administered 5,560 Patriarchal blessings, which were recorded in seven large and closely written books; and when he died in Great Salt Lake City, Utah, May 23, 1854, "he," writes the editor of the *Deseret News*, "closed the arduous duties of a well occupied probation, and passed to a position of rest, where his works will nobly follow and honor him, and where he will continue his able counsels for the prosperity and welfare of Zion."

JOHN SMITH,

The fifth Presiding Patriarch of the Church, is the eldest son of Hyrum and Jerusha Smith (formerly Jerusha Barden), and was born at Kirtland, Ohio, September 22, 1832. With his father's family he went to Mis-

souri in 1838, and with them removed to Illinois. After remaining a short time at Quincy, the family removed to Commerce (since Nauvoo), from which period he has shared in the various vicissitudes through which the Church has passed. He was baptized by John Taylor in 1841, and arrived in Great Salt Lake Valley in 1848. For several years he occupied himself in farming pursuits, and was at that time also very skilful in training wild horses and mules. After the death of his stepmother, Mary Fielding Smith, in 1852, the duties of providing for the family devolved mainly upon him.

In the spring of 1840 he was enrolled in a company of horsemen and, during the succeeding ten years, did much valuable military service in protecting the settlements against the attacks of marauding Indians. On the 25th of December, 1853, he married Miss Helen Maria Fisher, by whom he has had nine children— five sons and four daughters. After the death of the Presiding Patriarch, Father John Smith, he succeeded to the vacant office, and, February 18, 1855, was ordained and set apart to that calling, which he had inherited from his father Hyrum, but at his death was not old enough to officiate in. At the April Conference following his ordination he was unanimously sustained in this appointment.

In the spring of 1857 he accompanied President Brigham Young and party on a visit to Fort Limhi, a new settlement, located by the Saints near Salmon River, Oregon (now Idaho), and in the fall of 1859, he crossed the plains with a four mule train for the purpose of assisting his eldest sister and family to come to the Valley. After 32 days' travel he arrived at Florence, found his sister and took her, together with her two smallest children, through Iowa on a visit to Montrose. During the winter he also visited Nauvoo and other parts of Illi-

nois, where he found quite a number of his relatives and boyhood acquaintances. In February, 1860, he returned to Florence, where he assisted in fitting out emigrant trains for the plains, and in the following June he was called by Elder George Q. Cannon, who then acted as emigration agent on the frontiers, to lead a company to the mountains. With a company, consisting of 39 wagons and 359 souls, he arrived in Great Salt Lake City September 1, 1860.

At the general conference, held in April, 1862, he was called to take a mission to Scandinavia, on which he started on horseback May 17th, traveling part of the way in John R. Murdock's company, which went to the Missouri River after the poor. On the Sweetwater he had a severe attack of mountain fever and suffered considerably from this disease before reaching the States. When he arrived at Liverpool, England, his money was nearly gone, and he was obliged to borrow means to take him to Denmark. At Hamburg he met his cousin Jesse N. Smith, who then presided over the Scandinavian Mission, and in company with him arrived at Copenhagen in September, 1862. His health being feeble, he worked most of the time at the mission office in Copenhagen, and acquired, while there, a good knowledge of the Danish language. On April 13, 1864, he started for home and was, after the arrival at Liverpool, appointed president of a large company of Saints which crossed the Atlantic in the ship *Monarch of the Sea*, and arrived at New York June 3rd. He also led a company of emigrants across the plains, arriving in Great Salt Lake City, October 1st. Since that time he has been engaged in labors pertaining to his calling as Patriarch, traveling through the various settlements of the Saints, and attending to such other duties as circumstances have required.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD, a monthly periodical, devoted exclusively to historical, biographical, chronological and statistical matters, is published by ANDREW JENSON, Salt Lake City, Utah. Subscription price: \$1.25 per annum in advance.