

MARTIN HARRIS AND THE RESTORED CHURCH

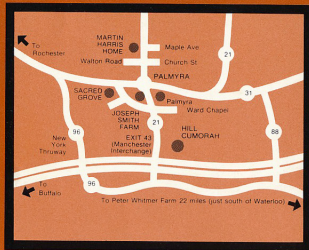
Martin Harris Farm
Palmyra, New York
A historic site of
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

While in the Finger Lakes region, visit:

- Hill Cumorah ■ Sacred Grove
- Joseph Smith Home ■ Peter Whitmer Home

Cumorah Mission
The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

1840 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, New York 14618



MARTIN HARRIS AND THE RESTORED CHURCH

The Martin Harris farm was mortgaged by its owner in 1830 to pay for the printing of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, a scriptural record of Christian people in ancient America. The book is used with the Bible by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was organized the same year it was published.

At present, the farm consists of 88 acres, although in Martin Harris' day it was nearly twice as large. It had been bought originally in 1794 by Martin Harris' father for 50¢ an acre.

Martin and his wife lived on this farm when they became acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and his work. Their home is no longer standing. In 1850 the present house was built of stone hauled from the shores of Lake Ontario, fifteen miles away.

Martin Harris was a prosperous, hard-working farmer who owned four farms and two homes at that time.

BEFRIENDED THE PROPHET

He was well acquainted with the members of the Smith family and had on occasion employed them on his farm. Unlike many who scoffed at Joseph Smith, Martin Harris was drawn to the Prophet. He knew of the youth's first vision and believed that Joseph had the plates of gold containing the Book of Mormon record. He gave friendly and moral support to the young Prophet.

Persecution became such that Joseph could find no peace in the Palmyra neighborhood. Martin Harris gave him \$50 to assist him in moving to Harmony, Pennsylvania, where the Prophet could translate the Book of Mormon without the annoyance of persecutors.

Martin Harris followed the Prophet to Harmony.

As with many people who wished to fortify faith with knowledge, Martin Harris desired to test the accuracy of the translation of the characters engraved on the plates.

The Prophet copied a series of characters on to a sheet of paper and gave them to Martin Harris, who journeyed to New York City. There he found two scholars, Professors Charles Anthon and Mitchell, who told him that the characters were definitely ancient and so far as they could tell, the translation was accurate. Later they repudiated their statements, but Martin Harris had heard what they said and came home convinced of the Prophet's divine gift of translation.

JOSEPH SMITH'S SCRIBE

He became a scribe for Joseph Smith and wrote 116 pages of the Book of Mormon at the Prophet's dictation. Against his own better judgment, Joseph allowed Martin Harris to take these pages to his home in Palmyra where Martin intended to show them to his wife in the hope of persuading her that Joseph was in truth what he claimed to be. The manuscript was stolen from him and never recovered.

Later when the translation was completed and ready for publication money was needed to pay the printing costs. Martin Harris gave the printer (Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra) a mortgage on his home and 150 acres of land for \$3,000 as a guarantee that the money would be paid.

A year later Martin Harris sold the home and the farm for \$3,000 to pay the printer. After he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, with the Latter-day Saints, the *Wayne Sentinel* commented:

"Mr. Harris was among the early settlers of this town and has ever borne the character of an honorable and upright man and an obliging

and benevolent neighbor. He has secured to himself by honest industry a respectable fortune and has left a large circle of acquaintances." Later in life, Martin Harris was proud to inform his listeners that he and Joseph Smith hoed corn together and that Joseph was "good to work and jovial."

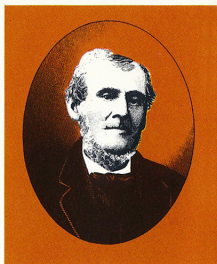
WITNESS TO THE GOLD PLATES

During the translation of the Book of Mormon, Martin Harris earnestly desired to see the gold plates. In the latter part of June, 1829, this desire was granted. Together with Oliver Cowdery, another scribe, and David Whitmer, in whose home much of the translation was accomplished, he was chosen to be one of three witnesses to view the plates.

He saw them and scrutinized the ancient hieroglyphics engraved upon them. Together with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer he signed a statement certifying "that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record...and we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates and that they have been shown unto us by the power of God and not of man."

Eight other men subsequently were shown the plates also. The testimonies of both groups are printed in each copy of the Book of Mormon. Martin Harris went to Utah with the Church and in later years died there.

The home and 88 acres of land were purchased by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on May 13, 1937 and are now maintained as a tribute to Martin Harris, a friend and benefactor of the Church, who bore his testimony for 46 years of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.



Above: Martin Harris home.
Left above: Martin Harris farm.
Left: Martin Harris.