

9.
PALMYRA (NY) MASONIC RECORDS,
1827-1828

“Return of the Mount Moriah Lodge No. 112 held in the Town of Palmyra in the County of Wayne and State of New York from June 4th AL 5827 [1827] to June 4th AL 5828 [1828],” Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, Chancellor Livingston Library, New York, New York.

EDITORIAL NOTE

This record lists a “Hiram Smith” as one of the members of the Mount Moriah Masonic Lodge No. 112 of Palmyra, New York, for the years 1827-28. Concerning this source, Richard L. Anderson has written: “Hyrum indeed appears on the Palmyra report covering the period to June 4, 1828, just a year before he became a Book of Mormon witness. He is one of fifty-nine members, and is not named as newly initiated that year. This means that normal Masonic procedures of unanimity had admitted him on grounds that his character would honor that organization” (R. L. Anderson 1981, 145). Although it is not altogether certain that the “Hiram Smith” listed in this record is Hyrum Smith, the son of Joseph Smith, Sr., Anderson is probably correct.

The presence of another Hiram Smith in Manchester at the same time brings Anderson’s assumption into question. A Hiram Smith is listed as the overseer of Manchester road district 30 for the years 1829, 1834, and 1837 (Manchester Town Records, Manchester Town Hall, Manchester, New York). This same Hiram Smith signed Philastus Hurlbut’s general Manchester affidavit (I.A.11, MANCHESTER RESIDENTS GROUP STATEMENT, 3 NOV 1833), and was most likely the person whom Theophilus Short sued on 22 February 1830 (see III.L.19, NATHAN PIERCE DOCKET BOOK, 1830). This other Hiram Smith does not appear in the 1830 census of Manchester, which probably indicates that he was not the head of a household and was perhaps enumerated with his father.¹

Despite these reservations, several sources confirm the fact that Hyrum

1. Of the nine other Smiths listed in the 1830 Manchester census, Shubel Smith (with three sons in their twenties) is the only one who qualifies as the possible father of Hiram Smith.

did belong to Palmyra's Mount Moriah Lodge, No. 112. The Nauvoo (Illinois) Masonic records state that Hyrum Smith's membership was transferred into that lodge from Palmyra's Mount Moriah Lodge (see Hogan 1971). Heber C. Kimball also mentioned that "Hyrum Smith received the first three degrees of masonry in Ontario County, New York" (Whitney 1945, 11). Because Palmyra became part of Wayne County in 1823, Kimball's statement may point to a pre-1823 initiation date for Hyrum.

Presently, there is no reliable record for Hyrum's initiation and membership in the Palmyra lodge. Indeed, no other Hiram Smith is listed in any of the extant Mount Moriah Lodge returns between 1821, the earliest Hyrum could have joined (one had to be at least twenty-one), and 1827. Mervin Hogan has suggested that Hyrum joined in 1823, but gives no evidence for this assertion (Hogan 1971, 8). Perhaps Hogan was led to this conclusion because the records of the Palmyra lodge are missing for June 1820-June 1821 and December 1822-December 1823; if so, 1821 would be another possibility. If Hyrum was initiated during one of these gaps in the records, his absence from the remaining records suggests that he failed to attend meetings on a regular basis.

Records which perhaps contain the date of Hyrum's initiation may yet be discovered. While at Rochester, New York, in 1932, M. Wilford Poulson interviewed Sanford H. Van Alstine (1872-1933), a Palmyra historian who had moved to Rochester about 1906, and Poulson recorded in his notebook that Van Alstine "has a complete copy of the minutes of the Masonik lodge at Palmyra from about 1804 to 1827" (M. Wilford Poulson Collection, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; see also T. Cook 1930, 110, 112). To date, I have been unable to locate these records.

According to William H. McIntosh, "A lodge of Masons known as the *Mount Moriah Lodge, No. 112*, was early instituted at Palmyra, and prospered till the Morgan excitement, when their charter was surrendered to the Grand Lodge" (McIntosh 1877, 143). In August 1827 Palmyra Baptists took measures forbidding members to join any Masonic lodge ("Book of Records for the first Baptist Church in Palmyra 1813," 1813-28, Baptist Historical Society, Rochester, New York). The record of the return for the year 1827 indicates that the Palmyra lodge was struggling financially, perhaps from the gradual withdrawal of support, and could not pay its dues to the Grand Lodge: "And we further State that our Dues have not been remitted, and in consequence of the embarased situation of the Lodge we are not able to pay them, and pray that the Grand Lodge might remit them." However, that the Mount Moriah Lodge continued to issue returns to the Grand Lodge,

Return of Mount Moriah Lodge No 112 held in the town of Palmyra in the County of Mayne and State of New York from June 4th A.D. 1827 to June 4th A.D. 1828

Names of Members	Amount of				Total
	Admission	Initiation	Queluoq.	Registatras	
Amos & Foote Master			50		
Dutton Birdsall S. M.			50		
John Howland J. M.			50		
Cornelius & Coleman Secy			50		
Robert M. Smith Treasurer			50		
David White Past Master			50		
William Minlow Past Master			50		
Belatiah Most Past Master			50		
Arnold Isaac			50		
Benson James			50		
Baker Joseph M.			50		
Bates Nathaniel			50		
Bingham Jeremiah			50		
Baldwin Thomas P.			50		
Billings Dandford M.			50		
Bingham George A.			50		
Baker Morton			50		
Baker Norman C.			50		
Capron William P.			50		
Cadwell Horace			50		
Carver Thomas			50		
Cook William B.			50		
Curtis John J.			50		
Daggett Levi			50		
Durfee Maryella			50		
Eddy Harvey			46		
Ferguson Alanson			46		
Flint Asher Jr.			42		
Hemingway Truman			50		
Hulsey William J.			50		
Hurd Lovell			50		
Hunt William			50		

Horton Caleb		50	
Gavin William		50	
Kellogg Erastus		50	
Lilly Asa		50	
McIntyre Alexander		50	
Muller Kingsley		50	
Moose James		25	
Robinson Andrew		50	
Smith David 1 st		50	
Sherman Stephen		50	
Smith Asa		50	
Smith Silas		50	
Spear Erastus		50	
Stimpson Thomas J		50	
Smith David 2 nd		50	
Sprague Michael P		50	
Sherman Jacob		50	
Smith Hiram		50	
Spear Lemuel		50	
Turner Avery M		50	
Thomas Benjamin		50	
Tucker Luther		50	
Tucker Pomeroy		50	
Widdif Martin M		50	
Whipple Mason		50	
Van Orstrand Cyril		50	
Van Orstrand Rufus B		50	
		33	28.62
Adjuring Members			
Fort Amos E	1 00	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	1.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Van Orstrand Rufus B	1 00	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	1.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Gavin William	1 00	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	1.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Ferguson Alanson	1 00	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	1.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Moose James	1 00	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	1.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Candidates Newly Initiated			

Palmyra Masonic Record, 1827-28, p. 2. Showing a "Hiram Smith" as a member who was charged 50 cents for quarterly dues. Courtesy Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, Chancellor Livingston Library, New York, NY.

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

apparently without the same financial difficulty (1830-31), is an indication of the lodge's continuance or that it had surrendered its charter only briefly.

While the Morgan excitement directly affected Hyrum's lodge, it remains uncertain about Hyrum's position on the matter. It is also unknown how Hyrum might have responded to the anti-Masonic politics during the U.S. presidential election of 1828, or how he may have personally interpreted the Book of Mormon's warning against "secret combinations" (Vogel 1989). In December 1830 Joseph warned his brother to "beware of the freemasons, [Alexander?] McIntyre heard that you were in Manchester and he got a warrant and went to your father's to distress the family but Harrison [Samuel Harrison Smith] overheard their talk and they said that they cared not for the debt, if they could obtain your body. They were there with carriages. Therefore beware of the Freemasons" (I.A.5, JOSEPH SMITH TO COLESVILLE SAINTS, 2 DEC 1830). In this regard, several names in the Palmyra return of 1827-28 are of interest, particularly the Smiths' physician, Alexander McIntyre; Judge Thomas P. Baldwin, before whom many of Hurlbut's witnesses appeared; William T. Hussy and Azel Vandruver, the men who claimed to be friends of Smith who tried to look at the plates (see III.J.8, POMEROY TUCKER ACCOUNT, 1867, 31); Levi Daggett, who sued Hyrum Smith in June 1830 and tried to have him arrested for an unpaid debt (see III.L.19, NATHAN PIERCE DOCKET BOOK, 1830); and Pomeroy Tucker.

Presently, there is no evidence for Masonic membership for anyone in the Smith family besides Hyrum prior to the Nauvoo period. Some have wondered if a "Joseph Smith" listed in the record of the Ontario Lodge, No. 23, which met in Canandaigua, was Joseph Smith, Sr. However, this is unlikely since this record, which covers the year 1818, indicates that this "Joseph Smith" was initiated on 26 December 1817 and that he lived in Canandaigua (see Membership Record of Ontario Lodge, No. 23, 27 December 1817-27 December 1818, Library and Museum of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, New York, New York),² while Joseph Sr. lived in Palmyra Village at this time and would have more likely attended the Palmyra lodge.

[See accompanying two-page photographic reproduction.]

2. Although the 1820 census does not list a Joseph Smith living in Canandaigua, it does list nine other Joseph Smiths in Ontario County. Evidently the Joseph Smith living in Canandaigua in 1818 moved before the 1820 enumeration and is perhaps one of these nine Joseph Smiths.

EARLY MORMON
DOCUMENTS

VOLUME III

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

DAN VOGEL

SIGNATURE BOOKS
SALT LAKE CITY

JACKET DESIGN BY SCOTT KNUDSEN

∞ *Early Mormon Documents*, Volume III, was printed on acid-free paper and was composed, printed, and bound in the United States.

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13 12 11 10 09 7 6 5 4 3 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Early Mormon documents / compiled and edited by Dan Vogel
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-56085-133-3 (v. 3)

1. Mormon Church—History—Sources. 2. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—History—Sources. 3. Smith, Joseph, 1805-1844—Family—History—Sources. I. Vogel, Dan

BX8611.E19 2000

289.3'09—dc20

94-40565

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<http://www.signaturebooks.com>