

# NOTES

ON THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS



## Welcome



Thank you for subscribing to our newsletter, *Notes on the Joseph Smith Papers*.

This newsletter, which will be published twice a year, will keep you informed of the latest research and other efforts of the Joseph Smith Papers, including announcements, discoveries from the documents, and staff news.

We are pleased to see the project moving forward in both print and digital form. Our next volume, *Documents, Volume 3*, containing 88 documents from February 1833 to March 1834, is now available in stores and online. We also recently began releasing our print volumes as e-books; not only is our newest release now available in this format, but also volumes 1 and 2 of the Journals series, with more coming soon. Every quarter, we update our website, [www.josephsmithpapers.org](http://www.josephsmithpapers.org), with new documents, finding aids, and reference material, and we just released our updated website, with features such as improved search capabilities and a more responsive design for mobile devices. Read on to learn more and find out what else is happening at the Joseph Smith Papers.

We hope you will find this newsletter insightful and that it will help you start or continue your research on the life of Joseph Smith and the early days of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Sincerely,  
Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow  
General Editors

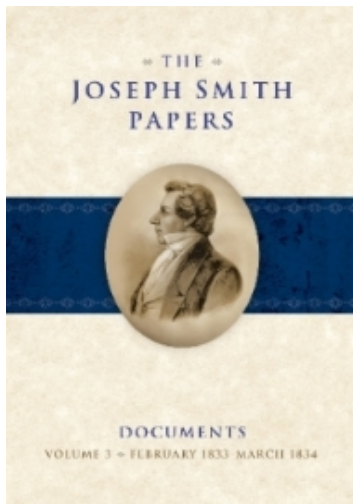
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## **Documents, Volume 3 on Shelves December 2014**



## **Now Available**

"A triumph of meticulous scholarship"

We are excited to announce the completion of the third volume in our Documents series. The volume, which spans February 1833 to March 1834, is now [available for purchase](#).

Accompanied by extensive historical annotation, the documents in this volume have been transcribed to the highest standards of documentary editing. Together, they illustrate the challenges Joseph Smith faced in leading a church that stretched across the country, as well as his unfolding vision of expanding the church and establishing Zion. Covering topics ranging from heavenly visitations to violent opposition, these documents provide a deeper understanding of Joseph Smith's life and the religious movement he started.

One reviewer called the volume "a triumph of meticulous scholarship," adding that "this project remains the gold standard in the field of historical documentary editing" (Thomas P. Slaughter, Arthur R. Miller Professor of History, University of Rochester).

An [e-book](#) of the volume was also released.

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## JosephSmithPapers.org Gets New Look and Feel



This week the Joseph Smith Papers Project released its updated website. Along with a fresh look, the site includes the following improvements:

- More responsive design for tablet and phone users, intuitive navigation, and improved readability.
- Improved search capabilities, including more accurate relevance sorting; increased speed; suggested search as you type; and filters for person, place, topic, genre, and date.
- New “Published Volumes” section with an individual page for each published volume that includes a downloadable table of contents, videos, and reviews.
- More than 100 new photographs and illustrations, highlighting people, places, and documents.
- Quick access to our growing video library, including dozens of videos contextualizing Joseph Smith and his papers.

The project will continue to update the site’s content each quarter with more documents, transcripts, and additions to the reference pages. Go to [josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org) to see the changes and access new content.



## Library Exhibit Showcases Joseph Smith Documents

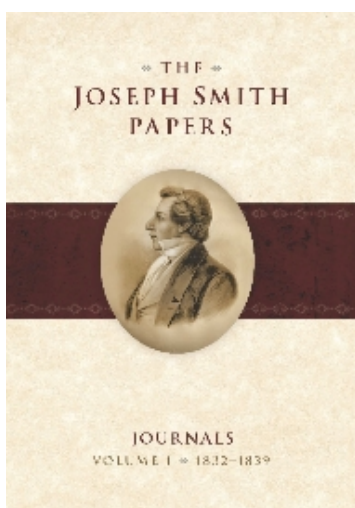
Several documents from Joseph Smith’s lifetime are currently on display in a new exhibit in Salt Lake City. “Foundations of Faith: Treasures from the Historical Collections of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” opened at the Church History Library on 4 September 2014 and is expected to remain at the library for several years.

Many of the most significant documents found on the Joseph Smith Papers website are featured at the exhibit, including the [first edition of the Book of Mormon \(1830\)](#); the [first British edition of the Book of](#)

[Mormon \(1841\)](#); the [Book of Commandments \(1833\)](#); the [first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants \(1835\)](#); Joseph Smith's [earliest journal \(1832–1834\)](#); his [20 March 1839 letter to the church](#) from jail in Liberty, Missouri; Emma Smith's [Collection of Sacred Hymns \(1835\)](#); the published [prayer of dedication for the Kirtland, Ohio, temple](#), given 27 March 1836; and the [Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book](#) (1842–1844).

Joseph Smith Papers associate managing historian [Robin Scott Jensen](#) and volume editor [Alex D. Smith](#) were interviewed for the [online exhibit](#), where the documents and artifacts can be viewed alongside supplemental articles, images, and videos to enhance visitors' understanding.

Read more about the exhibit in a recent [news release](#).



## Introducing Our E-book Edition

The Joseph Smith Papers is pleased to announce that Journals, volumes 1 and 2, and the third volume of the Documents series are now available as e-books through [Amazon](#) and [Deseret Bookshelf](#).

These volumes mark the beginning of an entire e-book collection; other volumes will be available in this format in the coming months.

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## A Damaged Record: The Cornerstone Copy of the Nauvoo Revelation

*Alex D. Smith*

In many ways Joseph Smith's 19 January 1841 revelation was *the* Nauvoo revelation. The lengthy instruction reorganized church leadership following church members' expulsion from Missouri, commanded the building of the Nauvoo House and the temple, and formally established Nauvoo as the new gathering place for the Saints. Church members living in Nauvoo were intimately familiar with the text of this revelation, which was read repeatedly in public discourse and provided the guiding focus for their labors throughout their residence in Illinois.

The two earliest surviving versions of the revelation (currently section 124 in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Doctrine and Covenants) are the manuscript deposited by Joseph Smith in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House and church clerk [Robert B. Thompson](#)'s copy in the [opening pages of the Book of the Law of the Lord](#). Although the cornerstone copy, housed in the Revelations Collection at the LDS Church

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History Library, contains an archival note claiming that it is the “original manuscript of Section 124,” Thompson’s copy was probably created earlier. Thompson recorded the revelation in the Book of the Law of the Lord sometime between the reception of the revelation on 19 January and 7 April of the same year, when [John C. Bennett](#) read the revelation from the Book of the Law of the Lord at the general conference of the church. The pages of the cornerstone manuscript also contain a copy of a short revelation dated 20 March 1841. This suggests that this copy of the 19 January revelation was written sometime between 20 March and 2 October, when the manuscript was deposited in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House.

Both copies of the revelation are clean and relatively free from editorial marks, cancellations, and insertions, indicating that neither is the original inscription of the revelation but that both were based on some other, more original, draft. In addition to the 20 March revelation, the cornerstone copy contains yet another brief text—a note about the events of the cornerstone ceremony itself. The note appears to be written in the same hand and possibly at the same time as the two accompanying revelations. If so, that would suggest that the cornerstone copy of the revelation was created specifically for the deposit, presumably shortly before the 2 October event.

The [29 December 1841 entry](#) in Joseph Smith’s personal journal provides an inventory of the items he deposited in the Nauvoo House cornerstone during the ceremony. These items of significant historical value included a first edition of the Book of Mormon, the latest issue of the church’s *Times and Seasons* newspaper, and most important, the original handwritten manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Years later, when Emma Smith’s second husband, Lewis Bidamon, opened the cornerstone, it was discovered that, tragically, the contents had been severely damaged by moisture. While the copy of the 19 January revelation deposited there is relatively intact compared to the Book of Mormon manuscript, there is unfortunately some loss of text because of missing fragments from the pages. Further, most of the text is extremely faint from the damage, and even with modern image-enhancing technology, some of it is faded beyond legibility. Sadly, this includes portions of the note recorded on the last page of the manuscript regarding the ceremony—information not published or recorded elsewhere.

The cornerstone manuscript of the 19 January 1841 revelation may not be the earliest surviving copy of the revelation, and the extent of the damage it sustained over the years has rendered the text problematic for transcription and textual comparison efforts. It is, however, an interesting and important document because of its role in a milestone event in Nauvoo and its own subsequent history.

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## Project Welcomes New Historians



The Joseph Smith Papers Project recently added three historians to our team.



[David W. Grua](#) received a PhD in American History from Texas Christian University. He has published scholarly articles on Mormon and Native American history in *Western Historical Quarterly*, *Journal of Mormon History*, *Federal History*, and other peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He has also presented papers at the annual conferences of the Western History Association, the Mormon History Association, and other professional venues. He previously worked as a historian for the Church History Museum and, as a student at Brigham Young University, as a research assistant for the Joseph Smith Papers, where he contributed to volumes one and two of the Journals series.



[Elizabeth A. Kuehn](#), formerly a research assistant with the project, is a PhD candidate in early modern European history at the University of California, Irvine, and holds an MA in European and women's history from Purdue University. She has presented at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association and at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. Before joining the project, she was an instructor in the history department and religious studies program at the University of California, Irvine.



[Spencer W. McBride](#) holds a PhD in history from Louisiana State University, where he was named the T. Harry Williams Fellow and served as the assistant book review editor for the *Journal of the Early Republic*. His research interests include the intersections of religion and politics in early America, and he has presented on this topic at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association and several other conferences. Before joining the Joseph Smith Papers, he was an instructor of history at Louisiana State University.

Read more about the staff of the Joseph Smith Papers on our [Project Team](#) page.

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## New Content on Joseph Smith Papers Website



The Joseph Smith Papers Project announces the addition of the following new content to its website, [josephsmithpapers.org](http://josephsmithpapers.org):

- Transcript of the [1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants](#).

- Nearly two hundred [documents dating from April through September 1840](#), including priesthood licenses and land sales for what would become Nauvoo, Illinois.
- Images for Parley P. Pratt's [Late Persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints](#). This is the second edition of Pratt's [History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri upon the Mormons](#).
- [Introduction](#) to the Draft Notes to the Manuscript History of the Church.
- Four suggested [lesson plans](#) for using the Joseph Smith Papers in the classroom.
- New and updated reference material, including source citations for fifteen [biographical descriptions](#) and sixteen new and updated [glossary entries](#).

Also recently added are more than two hundred [documents from January through March 1840](#), images for the [Book of the Law of the Lord](#), and updates to the [Calendar of Documents](#). In the coming months more documents from the Documents, Journals, Histories, Revelations and Translations, Legal and Business Records, and Administrative Records series will be added. Eventually the website will contain images and/or transcripts of all extant and available Joseph Smith papers.

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