

## From LDS.org Website

### ***The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New England***

30 August 2000

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has its roots in New England. Many of the early Church leaders were born here and numerous church members today can trace their ancestry to the region. Church founder Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont in 1805; his successor in Church leadership, Brigham Young, was born in Whitingham, Vermont four years earlier. In April of 1830, Joseph Smith officially established the Church in Fayette, New York.

Subsequently, the earliest Latter-day Saint growth and missionary activity was in New England. For instance, missionaries in Massachusetts arrived in Boston June 22, 1832 and experienced immediate success, the first converts joining the Church within a few days of their arrival. By the end of the year, they had organized two small congregations in the city.

Joseph Smith himself visited Massachusetts in 1836, preaching publicly for most of a month. In 1838, Brigham Young (later to become the Church's second president) preached in the area. By February 1843, some 14 branches had been organized in the Boston area. By 1845, the Boston area hosted what was likely the largest congregation of Church members in the eastern United States, with nearly 400.

In June of 1844, Joseph Smith was assassinated in Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Latter-day Saints were building a vibrant community on the banks of the Mississippi River. Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff (who would years later become the Church's third president) were in the home of Salem, Massachusetts Church leader Nathaniel Felt when they received the news. That home still stands in central Salem.

Following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints around the world began a mass migration across the North American continent for refuge in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

Those Church members who had not previously left New England for the Midwest mostly departed now. Thousands of others immigrating from Europe disembarked in Boston and New York. One man's journal records the warm welcome the emigrants received:

"Landed at Boston Constitution Wharf. Ladies came to visit us and sent oranges for the children. [Gave] New Testament to all heads of families and many little cards and books to the children."

Thereafter, and for much of the remainder of the nineteenth century, Church membership in New England was minimal, with no organized Church presence.

The re-establishment of the church in the Boston area began in 1891, when a group of eight Latter-day Saint students came to Cambridge to study at Harvard, MIT and other prominent institutions.

Many of the early converts to the Church in New England eventually became prominent in the faith. The roster of those who either hailed from New England or have served there in prominent capacities reads like a Who's Who of Church leadership: Joseph Smith (1st President), Brigham Young (2nd President), John Taylor (3rd President), Wilford Woodruff (4th President), Thomas Marsh, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Robert D. Hales (Apostles), B.H. Roberts and Truman Madsen (eminent scholars).

Today there are more than 116,000 Latter-day Saints in New England. It was announced September 20, 1995 that a temple would be built in Boston. Following its dedication, it will be the 100th operating temple of the Church.

## ***Church Opening 100th Temple Has 168-Year-Old Ties To Massachusetts***

30 August 2000

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints-currently celebrating the completion of the Boston Massachusetts Temple as its 100th temple-can trace its early beginnings and founder's roots to Massachusetts. Approximately 16,000 of the Church's nearly 11 million members worldwide reside in the state where early leaders nurtured a fledgling church.

Topsfield, Ipswich and Rowley, Massachusetts were home to ancestors of Joseph Smith, founder and first President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Several generations in the families of his parents, Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack, lived there from 1640 to 1790.

In Salem, Massachusetts, an eight-year-old Joseph Smith lived with an uncle who cared for him following a debilitating leg operation. Salem's fresh sea breezes aided Joseph's recovery.

The first two Massachusetts congregations or "branches" of the Church were established in 1832 by Orson Hyde and Samuel H. Smith, two of the Church's first missionaries. This was two years after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. In that same year, Joseph Smith and Bishop Newell K. Whitney preached in Boston during a brief visit.

Brigham Young and his brother Joseph taught and baptized 17 individuals in Boston on a trip to Bradford, Massachusetts where the Church held a conference in 1835. Young later succeeded Joseph Smith as the leader of the Church upon Joseph's death. He is best known for guiding the persecuted Latter-day Saints across the frozen Mississippi River into unsettled Iowa territory, across Iowa and Nebraska, and on their historic trek to the remote Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

The old Masonic hall in Salem, Massachusetts was used by Erastus Snow, an early missionary who established the Church in Salem in 1841. Accepting a mission assignment to Salem in 1841 was a great trial of faith for Snow who was completing a mission for the Church in Pennsylvania and New Jersey when he received the assignment. He had been hoping to join the main body of members in Nauvoo, Illinois. Snow and his companion found lodging in Salem, wrote and published an eight-page pamphlet, and preached in the rented Masonic hall four nights a week. In spite of opposition, interest grew and by February 1843 there were 110 members in Salem. One of these new members joined the Church after serving as the moderator of public debates between Snow and a local minister who had published a series of attacks against the Church.

The first branch of the Church in Boston was organized in 1842, meeting in the building still standing at 82 Commercial Street near Boston's Quincy market. At the same time Erastus Snow was preaching in Salem, the Church sent Freeman Nickerson to proselytize in Boston. He arranged with the Boston Free Discussion Society to present his views. A Boston merchant who attended the presentation, Abijah Tewkesbury, joined the Church. He was among 30 others who Nickerson had baptized by March 1842. Tewkesbury offered the shipping office of his store at 82 Commercial Street as a meeting place for the new Boston Branch.

Boylston Hall, on the southwest corner of Boylston and Washington in downtown Boston, was the site of a three-day conference held in 1843 for branches organized in central and eastern Massachusetts, and southern New Hampshire. These branches included congregations in Boston, Salem, New Bedford, Lowell, Wendell, New Salem, Northbridge, Cape Cod, Leverett, Georgetown, Gilsum, and Millbury. Reporting on the conference, a Boston Bee writer concluded:

It will be seen from the above that in the short space of about 15 months, a society that was only known among us by reports, now actually numbers near one thousand in this vicinity, and their preachers seem imbued with a spirit and determination to carry everything before them. In fact, they all seem to have the Bible at the end of their tongue. . . . I have given you a true sketch of the movements of this new and curious sect in this vicinity. My motto is, live and let live, If the Mormons can be put down by scripture and reason, let them go. But let us never attempt to put them down by persecution and religious bigotry. (Boston Bee, 9 February 1843.)

On a bench in Boston's Old North Station, Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, another Church leader and future President of the Church, waited for their train to Salem

on the afternoon of 27 June 1844. As they waited, an armed mob in Carthage, Illinois, shot and killed Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. They learned of the martyrdom in the home of Salem Branch President Nathaniel Felt and returned immediately to Boston.

Behind the Massachusetts State House on Beacon Hill, where the auditorium entrance of the Suffolk University Law School is today, was the 57 Temple Street home of Sister Vose, a Church member in 1844. This is where Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, after reading the confirmed account of the martyrdom in the newspapers, asked if they might retire to one of the bedrooms. Woodruff recorded, "Brother Young took the bed and I the armchair, and then we veiled our faces and gave vent to our grief." The following day, they convened a meeting of the Boston members to discuss the impact of Joseph Smith's death on the Church. This meeting was held on Washington Street, opposite Boylston Hall.

More than a century-and-a-half later, Latter-day Saints in Massachusetts find themselves with cause to celebrate and remember the devotion of early Church members and leaders. In 1995, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley announced a temple would be constructed in the Boston area, making the blessings of the temple more accessible to members in New England. Latter-day Saint temples are considered "Houses of the Lord" where the teachings of Jesus Christ are reaffirmed through marriage, baptism, and other sacred ordinances that unite families for eternity.