

# THE BRICK OF MORMON CHURCH HISTORY

1830 - 1847



STEVEN J. VANWAGENEN

**Illustrations by:**

Taylor VanWagenen, Matthew VanWagenen,  
Caden VanWagenen, & Spencer VanWagenen

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*Dedicated to the missionaries who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the VanWagenen family in 1844 (including Elder John Leach), to the 80,000+ missionaries serving today, and to those young men and women who will follow in their footsteps, including the VanWagenen boys, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with all the world.*

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# INTRODUCTION

The Brick of Mormon™ Church History is a selection of stories from the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This book is an attempt to bring to life a few of the many stories of men and women who possessed and demonstrated faith, courage, testimony, and spiritual strength during the early days of the Church. We are blessed because of their examples and sacrifice, and will be further blessed as we learn about them and follow in their footsteps.

This work is a compilation of stories that have been recorded, told, and retold in various settings and publications. To improve readability for young readers, references to historical sources are omitted from the main text. However, a list of works cited is provided at the end of the book to acknowledge the great work done by others in preserving the history of the Church.

While efforts have been taken to accurately recount the history, this book should in no way be considered a scholarly work. For a more in-depth review of Church history, we recommend the reader and their families become well acquainted with official Church historical publications and other resources.

The illustrations herein are simple representations created from our imagination. The scenes should not be viewed as an accurate re-creation or depiction of any scriptural event or person. They are just a fun way to help young readers visualize events from Church history.

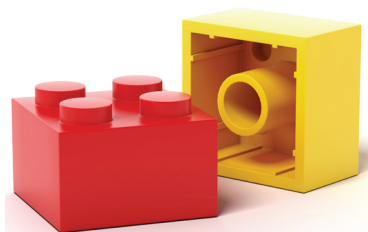
Just as it is important to liken all scriptures unto ourselves, that it might be for our profit and learning (see The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 19:23) we believe that all will benefit from studying LDS Church history and learning how to become Saints. Saintly, Christ-like character is built step by step--brick by brick.

Enjoy!

# Character Building Blocks

An important element of studying Church history is in answering the questions, “What can I learn from that?” and “How does this apply to me?” Throughout the book, the reader will find a “Character Building Blocks” section, which is meant to highlight some characteristics of great men and women, and prompt discussion around how we can develop those same characteristics.

|     |                      |
|-----|----------------------|
| 50  | Act Quickly          |
| 150 | Brave                |
| 73  | Charitable           |
| 123 | Courageous           |
| 158 | Dedicated            |
| 8   | Faith                |
| 182 | Focused              |
| 14  | Hard Work            |
| 21  | Humble               |
| 91  | Inquisitive          |
| 190 | Led by the Spirit    |
| 33  | Listening to Counsel |
| 110 | Obedient             |
| 57  | Optimistic           |
| 135 | Organized            |
| 28  | Patient              |
| 100 | Peaceful             |
| 42  | Persistent           |
| 175 | Prudent              |
| 81  | Refined              |
| 65  | Resilient            |
| 38  | Seeker of Revelation |
| 168 | Selfless             |
| 140 | Steadfast            |
| 163 | Teachable            |
| 118 | Unselfish            |
| 129 | Wholesome            |



## A PROPHET IN THE MAKING

Joseph Smith Jr. was born on December 23, 1805 in Sharon, Vermont to his father, Joseph, and mother, Lucy.

His father, Joseph, was a farmer, and was described as cheerful, harmless, affectionate and tender. He had a strong belief in God, but was not a member of a church.



Lucy was a great mother. She was very attentive to her children and took good care of their needs at home. Lucy was religious and did her best to bring spirituality into her home.

During the early years of Joseph's life, the family moved many times, trying to find better farmland and places to live.

Because the family moved frequently, Joseph's chances for going to school were limited. He was, however, taught to read at home and was encouraged to frequently read the Bible.

Joseph described his education by saying, "We were deprived of the benefit of an education suffice it to say I was merely instructed in reading and writing and the ground rules of arithmetic [math] which constituted my whole literary acquirements."



When Joseph was seven years old, he and many members of his family became sick with Typhoid fever. Joseph recovered from the illness, but was left with an infection in his leg which was very painful. Joseph's brother Hyrum helped care for Joseph by holding his leg during the day to ease the pain.

Doctors tried to help, but they recommended removing Joseph's leg to stop the infection. Joseph's mother said, "No, you will not, you must





not, take off his leg, until you try once more.” She asked the doctors to try again to save his leg by removing some of the infected bone.

Fortunately, one of the best doctors in the area was the expert at the time for the surgery Joseph needed.

As they got ready for the surgery, the doctors wanted Joseph to drink alcohol to help with the pain, but Joseph refused. He also did not want to be tied down. Instead, Joseph asked for his father to hold him.

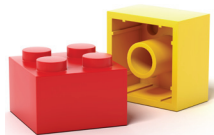


The surgery was painful, but they were successful in removing the infection. It took Joseph a long time to recover. He walked with crutches for three years and sometimes limped, but as he grew older, he was described as follows:

“A handsome youth, he was six feet tall with blue eyes and soft, wavy hair. He was all muscles -- developed from hard labor. His chest was expansive and well formed, with strong and sinewy limbs. He reveled in sports and outdoor life. As a jumper and wrestler he had few equals and no superiors.”

# FAITH

## A Character Building Block



Joseph's bravery and the success of the surgery were a result of Joseph's trust in his father, and in his Heavenly Father, that everything would be fine. He showed us how to endure our trials with faith.

Joseph's mother also reminds us of the importance of trying again and again and not giving up. The easy solution would have been to accept the doctors' recommendation to remove the infected leg. However, Joseph's ability to do all that he was called to do the rest of his life required that leg. History would be much different if the doctor's had not tried again. We must never give up.

Brigham Young counseled us to "Pray as though everything depended on the Lord and work as though everything depended on you."

### *Questions for Discussion:*

- Who do you trust in when you need help? Who trusts in you?
- When has Heavenly Father helped you or your family through a tough time? How were you blessed?
- When have you had to practice something over and over, or work hard on something that wasn't easy, and not give up?



“It is good to look to the past to gain appreciation for the present and perspective for the future.

It is good to look upon the virtues of those who have gone before, to gain strength for whatever lies ahead.

It is good to reflect upon the work of those who labored so hard and gained so little in this world, but out of whose dreams and early plans, so well nurtured, has come a great harvest of which we are the beneficiaries.”

(Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Faith of the Pioneers,” Ensign, July 1984)



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