

Joseph Smith-History 1:27-65



A modern replica of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith's home in Manchester, New York.

Lucy Mack Smith's memory of Joseph Knight, Sr. and her son getting the gold plates

Joseph Knight, Sr. was very aware that September 22nd was the day when Joseph Smith, Jr. was to receive the gold plates from Angel Moroni. He was anxious to learn if young Joseph actually got them when the angel said he would. Both Joseph Knight and his friend Josiah Stowell had business in the Palmyra area, and they arranged to be at the Smith home for the much anticipated night.

Lucy Mack Smith, mother to the prophet, wrote in her history some years later about her memories of that night when her son brought home the plates.

“On the 20th of September, Mr. Knight [Joseph Knight Sr.] came with his friend to see how we were managing matters with Mr. Stoddard and company. They remained with us until the 22. On the night of the 21st I sat up very late as my business pressed upon my hands & I did not retire until past 12. About 12 [am] Joseph came to me and asked me if I had a chest with a lock and key. I knew in a moment what it was wanted for and was frightened for the issue, as I had broken every lock in the house in moving. . . I was

alarmed fearing that this might be a matter of great importance to him at that time. I told him this but he replied never mind. Joseph replied, "I can do very well just now without it," and bid me be calm, all was right. But I found it very difficult to do so for I had not forgotten the first failure. He left soon after with his wife taking Mr. Knight's horse and wagon.

I spent the night in prayer and at reasonable time for rising, I went to preparing breakfast my heart fluttering at every footfall, for I now expected Joseph & Emma every moment and was in dread of a second disappointment in his obtaining the plates.

When the male part of the family sat down to breakfast Mr. Smith [Joseph Smith Sr.] enquired for Joseph, for no one but myself knew where he was. I told him that I thought I would not call Joseph that I would have him set down with his wife. "No, No," said my husband. "I must have Joseph come and eat with me."

"Well, now," Mr. Smith [Joseph Smith, Sr.] says, "I do [will] let him eat with his new wife this morning. He most always takes breakfast at the first table with you." . . . Father at last finally consented to eat without him, and I thought that there would be no danger of any further inquiry as to Joseph. . . or any thing else calculated to lead to an exposure of the cause of his absence.

But in a few minutes Mr. Knight came in quite disturbed. "Why, Mr. Smith," said he, "My horse is gone! I can't find him in on any part of the premises and I want to start home in half an hour."

"Why never mind the horse," said I. [I told him he] does not know all the nooks and corners in the pasture. "I will call William. [her 5th son.] "He will soon bring him [your horse.]" This satisfied him [Joseph Knight] for a little while, but he soon made another discovery -- his wagon was gone, & now he concluded that the horse and wagon had gone together and some rogue had gone with them both!

"Well now," said I. "Do be quiet. I would be ashamed to have you go about gearing your own horse and waiting upon yourself. Just go out and talk with Mr. Smith till William comes. And if you really must go home you shall be attended upon like a gentleman."

He [Joseph Knight] went and while he was absent Joseph returned. I was trembled so much with fear, lest all might be lost again by some small failure in keeping the commandments, that I was under the necessity of leaving the room to conceal my feelings.

Joseph saw this and followed me. "Mother," said he, "Do not be uneasy. All is right. See here," said he. "I have got the key." I knew not what he meant but took the article [he held out] in my hands and upon after examining it, with no covering but a silk handkerchief, that it consisted of 2 smooth, 3 cornered diamonds set in glass and the

glass was set in silver bows. Stones [were]connected with each other in the same way that old fashioned spectacles are made.

He took them again and left me but did not tell me anything of the record. Soon after he came again and asked my advice what it was best to do about getting a chest made. I told him to go to a cabinet maker who had been making some furniture for my oldest daughter and tell the man we would pay him for making a chest, as we did for the others things, viz half money and half produce.

He [Joseph] said he would but did not know where the money would come from for there was not a shilling in the house.”

Lucy goes on in her history to tell how Joseph was hired the next day to work on a well for a neighbor, and she considered it a “provision of providence” that enabled them to pay the money to the cabinet maker.

Lucy’s wrote this account about 1845. It is found at Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [1], bk. [1], p. [1], bk. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed October 3, 2024, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/1>

Diane L. Mangum, October 2024