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Title: **Jesse Nathaniel Smith centennial sketch**

Provenance:

Category: **Document**

Person: **Jesse Nathaniel Smith**

Date:

Jesse Nathaniel Smith Contributed By JosephMReed1 · 2013-08-26 09:37:20 GMT+0000 (UTC) · 0 Comments Written for his one hundredth anniversary of birth By Joseph W. Smith
The subject of this brief

Jesse Nathaniel Smith

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Written for his one hundredth anniversary of birth By Joseph W. Smith The subject of this brief sketch commenced his earthly pilgrimage in Stockholm, St. Lawrence County, New York. He was the youngest child of a second marriage, and traces his lineage thus on his father's side: Silas Smith, and Mary Aikens; Asahel Smith and Mary Duty; Samuel Smith, and Priscilla Gould; Samuel Smith, and Rebecca Curtis; Robert Smith, and Mary French; who came from England in 1638 and settled in Topfield, Massachusetts. On his mother's side: Nathaniel Aikins, and Mary Tupper; Solomon Aikins, and Dorcas Whitcomb, whose parents came from England. Both of his grandfathers fought in the Revolutionary War, Nathaniel Aikens serving under the direct command of General Washington. Asahel Smith was a somewhat visionary man; he predicted that something would come forth in his family that would transmit his name with honor to posterity. When near his death in 1830, he was visited at grandfather Silas's home by his son Joseph, (the prophet's father), and grandson, Don Carlos, having with them the Book of Mormon and the tidings of the restored Gospel. He received with gladness the testimony of his son, and remarked that he had always been expecting the coming forth of the true Gospel. At this, his oldest son, Jesse Smith, became greatly enraged, and conducted himself like a mad man. Grandfather Asahel died a few days later, being over 86 years old. His wife moved to Kirtland with her son Silas in 1836, but died soon after, being 93 years of age. I might say in passing,

that Jesse N's father, Silas Smith, was baptized in the summer of 1835 by Hyrum Smith. Although he had been convinced for nearly five years, he had refrained from taking the decisive step, owing to the opposition of his wife and older children, as well as other relatives. HIS BOYHOOD AND YOUTH Jesse N. was the youngest child of a second marriage. He moved with his father's family from Kirtland, Ohio, in April 1835, bound for Far West, Missouri, but was turned back at Huntsville by some parties who were fleeing from their homes, and bearing Governor Boggs Exterminating Order. His father died when he was scarcely five years old, and his mother moved to Nauvoo, where she was kindly received by relatives, and where she taught school for substinence, and from whom he received teaching, not only in the rudiments of education, but also the Principles of the Gospel. He readily absorbed both. He labored for a time with one Daniel Miles, one of the most trying experiences of his boyhood. His labor was very exacting, and meant spending long hours in the fields, and then being required to hunt cows in the dark and fearsome forest, besides having to carry water some distance from the spring, when he wanted and really needed rest. He was baptized August 13, 1843, by John Smith (father of President George A. Smith), who also confirmed him. He seems to have selected the best company. He was acknowledged as "friend" by the Prophet, who made him welcome, and presented him with a copy of the Book of Mormon. He was familiar with the stirring events of Nauvoo, played soldier with the boys in the spirit of the Nauvoo Legion, was present and heard the speech of Governor Ford on the day of the martyrdom, and saw the bodies of the Prophet and Patriarch when they were prepared for burial.

He took the responsibilities of teamster in the great exodus, and herded cows after arriving in the Valley. I find very little to indicate that he was ever a boyish boy. He seemed to be always "grown up." I do not think he ever had a very large patch of wild oats. His father was a very commendable character. He fought his country's battles in the War of 1812 as Captain of militia. He was ordained first an Elder, and, afterwards, a High Priest. He died September 13, 1839. William Smith tried hard to dissuade his mother and family from going off into the wilds with Brigham Young, but they all expressed their purpose of doing so. Then he very dramatically shook the dust off his cloak as evidence that he was not responsible for their actions. With his mother's family Jesse passed the summer of 1845 about six miles west of Nauvoo until they were picked up by the Church teams that came from Winter Quarters (afterward called Florence, Nebraska) where they arrived November 30, 1846. In the spring he was engaged felling trees for the stock to browse on the swelling buds, before the grass started. The family started west in Perigrine Session's company of 50 wagons on June 30, 1847, and arrived in the Valley on September 25, 1847. Although scarcely 13 years of age, Jesse drove Uncle John Smith's two yokes of oxen in making the arduous journey. It requires no stretch of the imagination to determine that there was a great scarcity of food in that then-barren land. The fact is they had no meat nor vegetables. Fruit was out of the question, except a few Service Berries bought from the Indians. It is required that a limited number of fish were caught in the Utah Lake, but the supply was far short of the demand. Added to the scarcity that already existed, they were faced with actual starvation when the plague of crickets began their destructive attack on the growing crops. Jesse became a soldier in the ranks of the army which fought them. He saw the prospective defeat, and was one of the grateful witnesses of the deliverance wrought by the beautiful white gulls. With his mother and brother he tried farming in what became Davis County. In the fall of 1851 he and his brother were called to go to Parowan and help build up and strengthen that locality. It thus appears that while he was not yet 17 years old he was counted among the strong men. AS A FAMILY

MAN It would appear that someone else thought so, too, for in less than a year Jesse N. Smith became a married man. Thus, he commenced early in life to fulfill the first great command. He became the husband of five good women, all of whom had great respect for him, and each of them bore him children. He married Emma Seraphine West, May 13, 1852, who bore 9 children. He married Margaret Fletcher West, January 27, 1856, who bore 2 children. He married Janet Maurette Johnson, October 9, 1866, who bore thirteen children. He married Augusta Gerhardina Marie Outzen, June 3, 1869, who bore eleven children. He married Emma Larson, October 28, 1881, who bore 9 children. The record shows that he was not yet 18 years old when he married the first, and he was nearly 47 when the last wedding occurred. And when his youngest child was born--the forty-fourth--he was 69 years of age. The record is wonderful, and the achievement can scarcely be excelled. We may almost say that in this he made his greatest accomplishment. CHURCH POSITIONS He was, essentially, a Church man. although he was very active in civil positions, as we shall see. He was ordained an Elder July 6, 1851, by John Smith. Joseph Young ordained him a Seventy March 12, 1854, and he became a member of the 9th Quorum. He became counselor to President John C. L. Smith, at the organization of the Parowan Stake, and was ordained a High Priest in 1855, probably by Brigham Young, who organized the stake. President John C. L. Smith having died, the stake was reorganized by President George A. Smith, with William H. Dame as president, and Calvin Pendleton and father as counselors. Jesse was also appointed to preside over the High Priests of the stake. During the winter of 1857 he performed missionary work among the settlements, and was with the White Mountain exploring party from May 21 of the same year until the party came in. Being sent out for that purpose, he, with a few companions, explored the valleys at the headwaters of the Sevier and Rio Virgin Rivers, and made a report thereof to the Church Historian. In the spring of 1859 he helped in making a settlement at Minersville, in Beaver County. There, while harvesting wheat in the field, he received a letter from George A. Smith informing him that he was called on a mission to Europe, and that the compa-

ny of Elders would leave Salt Lake City on the 25th. As it was September 12th when he received this word, quick action was required if he got there in time. Therefore, he immediately set about arranging his affairs, and he started for Parowan, moving his family, the following morning. Here he turned over his business to his brother, Silas S., and left for Salt Lake on the 17th, where he was informed that his mission was to Scandinavia. He was given an Elder's certificate, a blessing by the Apostles, and left with some 50 Elders going to various parts of the world. Among them was Orson Pratt, Erastus Snow and George Q. Cannon. It took them 40 days to reach Florence, Nebraska, where they sold their ponies. They traveled by boat and railway from there to New York. Jesse reached Copenhagen January 11, 1861, having suffered considerably from the cold during the latter part of the journey, as lack of money compelled him and his companions to travel third class. He says that he was gone seven months before receiving a letter from home. On Sunday, March 16, 1862, President Van Cott announced to the conference of about 1,000 Saints that Jesse has been appointed president of the mission by President Young. We shall make reference to some of the activities of his mission later. He was very busy, and, apparently, quite successful during the four years of his absence from home. He was honorably released and reached home October 22, 1864, and found his family in extreme poverty. It had taken everything that he possessed for their support during his absence. And it barely sufficed. He rented some land, worked hard, and did every honorable thing for the next four years to recuperated his fortune. Among other things, he assisted in organizing a cooperative store in Parowan. And, in 1868, he answered a second call to the mission field. This time he was set apart in Salt Lake City to preside over the Scandinavian Mission. He attended in Liverpool a conference of leading Elders, at which he strongly advocated sending the emigrating Saints on steamships, thereby saving many lives that might be lost by being longer exposed in sailing vessels, from sea sickness, contagious disease, and other dangers of sea travel. He filled a very good mission of two years, and started home July 15, 1870, in charge of a company of emigrants numbering nearly 600, be-

sides 9 returning Elders. Just before reaching Salt Lake City he was met and welcomed by the First Presidency, the Presiding Bishop, and other leading citizens. He made his report of his mission in the old tabernacle, speaking in English and Danish. On the invitation of President Brigham Young, Jesse accompanied him and his party on an exploring trip to Pahrea. In 1878 he made a trip of exploration into Arizona with Erastus Snow and others. Upon his return he was called and set apart as President of the Eastern Arizona Stake. Apostle Erastus Snow set him apart for this mission. To provide means of subsistence for the people, he, in company with John W. Young and Ammon M. Tenney, took a small railroad contract for grading near the continental divide in New Mexico. Later, when the work reached our settlements in Arizona, he was called to work on the railroad and preach the Gospel in the railroad camps while the road was being built past them. He assisted in organizing a grist mill and cooperative herd in Taylor and Snowflake Wards. At the October Conference in 1883 he was asked to act as a Lamanite or Indian missionary. He was appointed on a committee of five to purchase lands in Mexico, where persecuted Saints could make homes. The members of the committee were Moses Thatcher, Christopher Layton, Alexander F. McDonald, Lot Smith, and Jesse N. Smith. In the discharge of this duty he labored in Mexico for nearly a year, in the states of Sonora and Chihuahua. In the spring of 1889, he was called by the First Presidency, in company with Brigham Young, Jr., to go east and negotiate a purchase of lands from the Aztec Land and Cattle Company, who had ordered the people to vacate their lands, and would have broken up the settlements on Silver Creek and Showlow. Before discussing those matters further, let us glance at his:

CIVIL AND MILITARY ACTIVITIES He bore his full part of the hardships of the Indian War in 1853. He was elected district attorney by the legislature, and officiated as county clerk of Iron County. During the winter of 1854-1855, he taught school. At the August election he was elected as representative to the legislature. In the winter of 1856 was broke out with the Utah Indians, and, as Jesse was in Salt Lake City, Governor Young sent word by him to break up the smaller settlements in Southern

Utah, and consolidate them in larger settlements. He did missionary work among the settlements, and taught school during the following winter. He was elected mayor of Parowan City in February 1859. He was appointed regimental adjutant of the Iron Military District, soon after returning home from his mission, and was also appointed county clerk. In January 1866 he was elected Probate Judge for Iron County. During the year a state of war again existed and the Utah Indians, and Sevier River country, including all above Gunnison, was organized into what was known as the Piute Military District, of which he was appointed Colonel. The duty of organizing the militia was assigned to him. He made the organization in full, and reported to military headquarters in Salt Lake City. During the year he was engaged in six military expeditions, furnishing his own horses, arms, and outfit, and for his service he never received any pay form any quarter. On his return from his second mission, he officiated as county clerk, and justice of the peace. He returned from Arizona to Utah, and attended the legislature during the winter of 1878-1879. In 1881 he was appointed probate judge by the governor of the Territory, and was also appointed Notary Public by Governor Fremont. He assisted in organizing the Arizona Cooperative Mercantile Institution in 1883. He attended the 19th session of the legislature of Arizona as a member of the house.

ACCIDENTS AND MISFORTUNES In the course of so busy a life it would scarcely be expected that Jesse would entirely escape accidents or misfortunes. As a matter of fact, he did not. In a very early day of the settlement of Parowan, before the repeating rifles were known to the pioneers, Jesse and Richard Benson went out to hunt rabbits. They lost the hammer of their muzzle-loading Kentucky gun, but they decided to try another shot at a rabbit. So Jesse held the gun on the animal, and Richard hit the cap on the tube with the back of a butcher knife. A piece of the cap flew back and hit Jesse in the eye. the accident almost cost him the sight of that eye. It was not entirely blind, but the sight was so dim that it was very little use to him. When on the White Mountain survey, he and one companion were surrounded by 14 Indians. Their intention was, no doubt, robbery. But the two men put on a bold front and showed

fight, so the Redskins weakened and let them go. He had purchased a wagon load of cotton yarn at the factory at Washington in southern Utah, and was returning home with it. While crossing one of the sandy washes for which that country was noted, a sudden freshet caught him, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he got out. As it was, the muddy water ran into the wagon and almost ruined the cotton.

HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHURCH AND STATE He was a true convert to the Restored Gospel. Of the divinity of the Prophet Joseph's mission there was not the slightest doubt in his mind. He was altogether loyal to the leaders of the Church. He suffered persecution for his religion, but he laid that to the mistakes of men, and not to the government. As a citizen of the United States, he maintained an unfailing loyalty. He never got down there in the ranks of the "damnation shriekers".

HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS Jesse N. Smith's life of 71 years was full of activity. As a pioneer, a statesman, an officer in court, in field, or office, he was ever industrious, painstaking, dignified, and honorable. He gave prestige to every activity that he undertook. As a missionary he labored for the saving of souls. His preaching had the ring of righteousness. It never echoed a taint of hypocrisy, nor an appeal to the "grandstand". In the spring of 1858 he assisted in exploring the country at the headwaters of the Sevier and Virgin Rivers, and reported to the Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, was with the White Mountain exploring party from May 21st until the party came in. President Young sent the first sorghum seed by him to be tried in the south. He assisted in moving the public machine shop from Salt Lake City. He helped found the town of Minersville in the spring of 1859. He spent six years as a foreign missionary, four of which he presided over the Scandinavian Mission. During the first two years of his presidency he revised the Swedish Hymn Book, with the assistance of Elder Jonas Engberg, and published a new edition. He collected a number of legacies for parties from whom he held power of attorney. He paid off an indebtedness of 874 Rigsdaler, and turned the accounts of the mission over to his successor square. He labored earnestly to have the Elders and members refrain from the use of strong drink and tobacco, and assisted in emigrating 1778

Church members, besides children. On his return he gave many months of time in assisting to protect the people during Indian wars. He helped to organize and incorporate cooperative stores, cattle herds companies, and grist mills and saw mills, both in Utah and Arizona. During his second mission of two years, 1100 adults, besides children, were emigrated. He again paid off a deficit in the mission accounts of 1343 Rigsdaler, and passed the accounts over to his successor square. Besides being respected and loved by the members, he was esteemed by the citizens of Copenhagen, who gave him the privilege of voting without solicitation on his part. After his release, on the invitation of President Cannon, he joined a party of leading Elders in traveling through Germany, Holland, Switzerland and France, and took notes by the way. This trip added to his knowledge respecting the peoples and governments. On his return from his second mission he had charge of the company of some 600 emigrants, and made a very successful journey both by sea and land. In Arizona he performed a distinct service in assisting to incorporate and organize irrigation companies for St. Joseph, Woodruff, and Snowflake and Taylor. And he labored enthusiastically to locate and build dams and reservoirs for the storing of flood waters. These activities cannot be over-estimated in benefits to the communities. He thus became a pioneer in the thing that has now become so popular and essential in the nation--the building of storage reservoirs. The Church leaders made no mistake in selecting him to assist in the purchase of lands from the Aztec Land and Cattle Company. Through his aid the purchase was successfully made, the accounts were faithfully kept, and he, with the help of E. M. Webb, made a careful survey, and platted the lands. His survey he recorded, and it is the guide and standard of description in the conveyance of all transfers of real estate in this locality. Not only so, but during the latter years of his life, he was the most trusted maker of deeds of transfer. In all his duties as president of this stake, and they were numerous, none was of greater benefit to the whole people than what he did in this connection. At the time of his death, he left the family with a home for each of his wives, or provision was made for the completion of buildings al-

ready commenced. Notwithstanding the fact that he was constantly engaged in the service of the public, he had, by his industry and careful planning, got together an estate which was appraised at \$10,000.00. Without going into further details, we may be justified in saying that as a missionary, a church leader, a jurist, a legislator, a pioneer, or a safe counselor, he was great. The record might warrant our referring to him as a scholar and a gentleman; but probably his greatest achievement was in rearing a family. Any man who has lived harmoniously and finished a life successfully with one wife has done well, and is to be commended, but here we have a character who does him not only one but five times better. What a compliment to the real manhood of a husband! He was a good disciplinarian; and with the hearty cooperation of his good wives, he reared forty-four children, all but two of whom reached maturity; and they were all obedient in the home, and became dependable, useful citizens. Not a criminal, nor an imbecile in the bunch. In my judgment, a man's success in life is primarily measured by the development of his family. "By their fruits shall they be known," said the Savior. So, considering the great number, their character and all, he has here a fine testimonial. The record is wonderful. May we not say that in this he has few equals, and no superiors? In conclusion, let me say: Jesse N. Smith was true to his friends; he never betrayed a trust; and he discharged capably and faithfully every commission that was properly placed in his hands.