



American Legends: The Life of Joseph Smith

Charles River Editors

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*Explains Joseph Smith's life and the founding of the Mormon Church.

*Includes pictures of Smith and important people, places, and events in his life.

*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

"Our missionaries are going forth to different nations, and in Germany, Palestine, New Holland, the East Indies, and other places, the standard of truth has been erected: no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing, persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done." – Joseph Smith

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

Among all the various figures in 19th century America who left controversial legacies, it is hard to find one as influential as Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the founder of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Mormonism, and the Latter Day Saint movement. Revered as a prophet on the level of Moses by some, reviled as a perpetrator of large-scale fraud by others, what everyone can agree on is that Joseph Smith founded a religious movement that played a crucial role in the settlement of the West, especially in Utah. Locating Joseph Smith in history is to look for the "mess" of early America and find him standing in the middle, trying to make sense of the "native pandemonium" that gripped the nation in its formative years. All the things that Mormon recoil at, the mention of his treasure seeking days of youth, the use of the seer stones and looking into the hat to read "reformed Egyptian" help explain the youthful creativeness of a young United States trying to organize itself. There is a humor in his story, and especially those first years of creating the church that speak directly anyone who has felt the exhilaration of creativity. Inspired by the Second Great Awakening evidence of Native American cultures that surrounded him during his early years in western New York, Smith claimed that he had visions as a young adult that helped him produce the Book of Mormon, and he was able to create a society of like-minded followers who intended to strike west and found Zion.

Smith's dream of Zion would lead the way for the trials and the tribulations of the Mormons for the rest of the 19th century, including countless conflicts with local authorities and the U.S. government. Smith himself would be a casualty of the clashing, murdered by a mob in 1844 after being imprisoned in Carthage, Illinois near the settlement of Nauvoo, which Smith had painstakingly tried to create as a commune for his people. American Legends: The Life of Joseph Smith profiles the life of Joseph Smith, the founding of his religion, and the aftermath of his death. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Joseph Smith like you never have before, in no time at all.

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