

Visitors to Hill Cumorah in Manchester, Ontario County, New York



Oliver Cowdery, Associate President of the Church, in Letter Number VII to W.W. Phelps. Page numbers are of the first edition (1830) of the Book of Mormon:

I must now give you some description of the place where, and the manner in which these records were deposited. You are acquainted with the mail road from Palmyra, Wayne Co. to Canandaigua, Ontario Co. N. Y. and also, as you pass from the former to the latter place, before arriving at the little village of Manchester, say from three to four, or about four miles from Palmyra, you pass a large hill on the east side of the road. Why I say large, is, because it is as large perhaps, as any in that country. To a person acquainted with this road, a description would be unnecessary, as it is the largest and rises the highest of any on that route. The north end rises quite sudden until it assumes a level with the more southerly extremity, and I think I may say an elevation higher than at the south a short distance, say half or three fourths of a mile. As you pass toward Canandaigua it lessens gradually until the surface assumes its common level, or is broken by other smaller hills or ridges, water courses and ravines. I think I am justified in saying that this is the highest hill for some distance round, and I am certain that its appearance, as it rises so suddenly from a plain on the north, must attract the notice of the traveller as he passes by. At about one mile west rises another ridge of less height, running parallel with the former, leaving a beautiful vale between. The soil is of the first quality for the country, and under a state of cultivation, which gives a prospect at once imposing, when one reflects on the fact, that here, between these hills, the entire power and national strength of both the Jaredites and Nephites were destroyed.

By turning to the 529th and 530th pages of the book of Mormon you will read Mormon's account of the last great struggle of his people, as they were encamped round this hill Cumorah. (It is printed Cumorah, which is an error.) In this valley fell the remaining strength and pride of a once powerful people, the Nephites once so highly favored of the Lord, but at that time in darkness, doomed to suffer extermination by the hand of their barbarous and uncivilized brethren. From the top of this hill, Mormon, with a few others, after the battle, gazed with horror

upon the mangled remains of those who, the day before, were filled with anxiety, hope, or doubt. A few had fled to the South, who were hunted down by the victorious party, and all who would not deny the Savior and his religion, were put to death. Mormon himself, according to the record of his son Moroni, was also slain.

But a long time previous to this national disaster it appears from his own account, he foresaw approaching destruction. In fact, if he perused the records of his fathers, which were in his possession, he could have learned that such would be the case. Alma, who lived before the coming of the Messiah, prophesies this. He however, by divine appointment, abridged from those records, in his own style and language, a short account of the more important and prominent items, from the days of Lehi to his own time, after which he deposited, as he says, on the 529th page, all the records in this same hill, Cumorah, and after gave his small record to his son Moroni, who, as appears from the same, finished, after witnessing the extinction of his people as a nation.

It was not the wicked who overcame the righteous; far from this: it was the wicked against the wicked, and by the wicked the wicked were punished. The Nephites who were once enlightened, had fallen from a more elevated standing as to favor and privilege before the Lord, in consequence of the righteousness of their fathers, and now falling below, for such was actually the case, were suffered to be overcome, and the land was left to the possession of the red men, who were without intelligence, only in the affairs of their wars; and having no records, only preserving their history by tradition from father to son, lost the account of their true origin, and wandered from river to river, from hill to hill, from mountain to mountain, and from sea to sea, till the land was again peopled, in a measure, by a rude, wild, revengeful, warlike and barbarous race. -- Such are our Indians.

This hill, by the Jaredites, was called Ramah: by it, or around it, pitched the famous army of Coriantumr their tents. Coriantumr was the last king of the Jaredites. The opposing army were to the west, and in this same valley, and near by, from day to day, did that mighty race spill their blood, in wrath, contending, as it were, brother against brother, and father, against son. In this same spot, in full view from the top of this same hill, one may gaze with astonishment upon the ground which was twice covered with the dead and dying of our fellowmen.

The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, Vol.1, No.10 (July 1835): 158-59.

Jonathan H. Hale, May 29-30, 1835, in New York:

[May 29:] ... in company with Elders Thomas B Marsh & David W Patte[n] went to Palmyra in the night [May 30:] went to <Elde[r]> Ma[r]tin Harris to Brakefast thence to the hill Cumorah went on the hill and offered up our thanks to the most high God for the record of the Nephites and other blessings we went about in the Neighbourhood from house to house to inquire the Character of Joseph Smith jr previous to his receiveing the Book of Mormon. the amount was that his Charactor was as good as young men in General. this was on the 30 day of May 1835
Jonathan H. Hale Reminiscences and Journals, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

William Hyde recalled his visit, April 1841:

I will here state, as it was neglected on the preceding page, that on my return route, in passing up the Erie Canal, I stopped at the village of Palmyra, and in company with some three or four others, procured a carriage and went back into the country and visited the hill Cumorah, so-called in the Book of Mormon, from which the Records were taken. We passed up the hill from the north end, to the top, passed over the west and east sides, and found the description given by Oliver Cowdery to be very satisfactory. A gentleman in company picked up an Indian arrow point near the top of the hill, which was very curiously wrought. While viewing the country round about many peculiar sensations crossed my bosom, as here many thousand, strong men had fallen in battle, and the numerous hosts of Jerodites, as well as the armies of the Nephites had become extinct — and here it was that Moroni, the man of God, had deposited the Records of the Nephites by the command of the Lord. And here it was they were revealed in the due time of the Lord by an holy Angel to Joseph Smith as the commencement of the great work of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

William Hyde Journal, typed copy, LDS Church History Library.

Willard Richards visit to the Hill Cumorah, Manchester, New York, July 1841:

22 ½ P M. ¼ 5 ascended the Summit of Ramah Cumorah Blessed Blessed & ate some cake cheese & Dried beef – Kneeled before the Lord in thanksgiving & Prayer 5.25 read Cowdery description of Cumorah &c – 5.6 read destruction of Lamonites . Nephites & Jaredites in book of Mormon. Searched for cave 18 or 20 trees - 15 rod Set Compass. hill N. & S. Telescope – all round excavation on the north point of the Hill at top. level 2 [illegible] miles west ½ mile East ½ mi North – 6 ½ Left the Hill arrived at Palmyra 8.-

Willard Richards Journal, entry for July 22, 1841, LDS Church History Library.

Franklin D. Richards visit in 1880:

Breakfasted early, & all 5 of us took train for “Palmyra” where we put up at “Palmyra Hotel” hired a livery team & went to “Cumorah” “Ramah” . . . With Mr Tompsons folks - Mr Robinson came who used to own the Hill & Farm & told us about where Joseph told his Father the plates were [illegible] We met & each prayed on the hill cut some sticks. Called on Chapman at the farm where Joseph saw God & Jesus & the visions of his latter day work C[hapman]. Gave us a cannon Ball

Franklin D. Richards Journal, May 12, 1880, LDS Church History Library.