

Wayne A. Mori grew up in Western Pennsylvania and attended Clarion University, majoring in French with a minor in German. He also studied at the Université Laval in Québec City, the Université de Montpellier, France, and SUNY at Fredonia. In the fall of 1969 he moved to Fredonia and started his teaching career in the Pine Valley School District, South Dayton, from which he retired in 1999. He now lives in Dunkirk, has a small second hand book business, dealing in books on religion in America, and is very much enjoying retirement.

Though not a Latter-day Saint, Wayne has always had a keen interest in early Mormonism and its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. He is a member of the Mormon History Association and the John Whitmer Historical Association, both of which are "independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to the study of and understanding of all aspects of Mormon history." His particular interest in local Mormon history started some fifteen years ago when he discovered that Joseph Smith passed through Chautauqua County on two missionary journeys in the 1830's and had spent a few days, on both occasions, with the Freeman Nickerson Family of South Dayton. It was there in the fall of 1833 that Smith wrote this prophecy concerning Western New York, "Behold, and lo, I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened in the regions round about in this eastern land." (L.D.S. *Doctrine and Covenants* 100:3 )

Wayne's talk will cover the lives of some of the many men and women from Chautauqua County who had accepted Joseph Smith, Jr. as a latter-day prophet, and who would pass through that "effectual door" that opened westward. In spite of unimagineable depravations and relentless persecutions many of these former Chautauquans contributed greatly to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, and would eventually, under the leadership of Brigham Young, make their way across the Plains to the Great Salt Lake.



# County History

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## “Early Mormon Converts in Chautauque County, 1830 - 1836”

The summer luncheon program  
presented by Wayne Mori

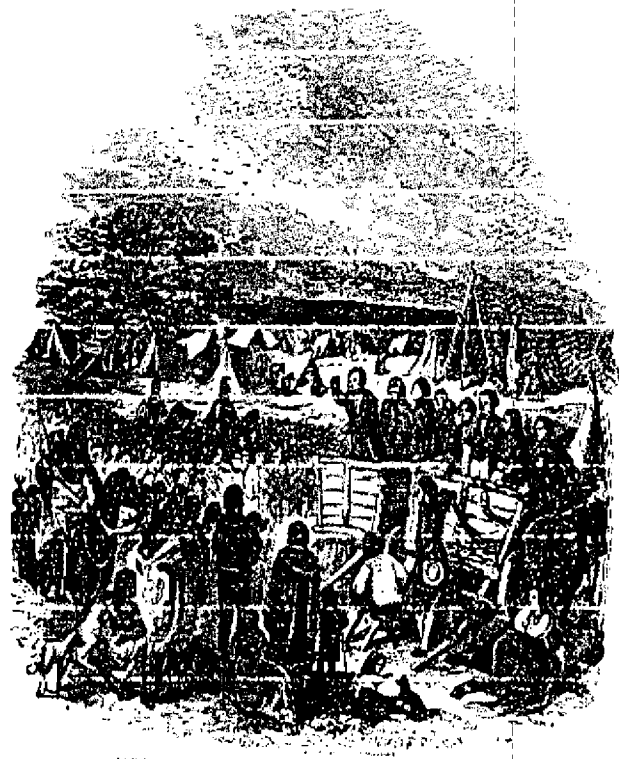
The photo to the left is Wayne A. Mori  
in the Sacred Grove near Palmra, NY  
where Joseph Smith Jr., as a teenager,  
had his first encounter with the Divine.

### Mission Statement:

*Our mission is to  
foster an interest  
in and  
knowledge  
of the  
history of  
Chautauque  
County through  
the collection,  
preservation and  
interpretation of  
objects of  
local  
historical  
significance.*

Joseph Smith, Jr. passed through Chautauque County, NY on two missionary journeys. In October 1833 he spent a night with the Job Lewis Family of Westfield, the next day he spoke with a Mr. Nash of Portland and on October 12 arrived at the Freeman Nickerson home in South Dayton. His journal entries for the March 1834 visit mentions passing through Westfield, Laona, Villenova, and onto Perryburgh, Cattaraugus County.

The sketch to the right is of Joseph Smith preaching in the wilderness.





JOSEPH SMITH PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS.

### Mormonism Unveiled:

**I**R, a faithful account of that singular im-  
 position and delusion, from its rise to the  
 present time. With sketches of the charac-  
 ters of its propagators, and a full detail of the  
 manner in which the famous *Golden Bible* was  
 brought before the world. To which are added  
 inquiries into the probability that the historical  
 part of the said bible was written by one Bal-  
 mond Spalding, more than 20 years ago, and by  
 him intended to have been published as a ro-  
 mance. With plates.

Just received and for sale at the Frede-  
 nia Bookstore. Price 75 cents.

March 16, 1855.

I have the sad & dreadful intelligence  
to give you of the premature death of Gen  
Joseph Smith Mayor of the City of Nauvoo and  
Commander in Chief of the Nauvoo Legion, & Hyrum  
Smith his brother. They were murdered (assassinated)  
while in the County Jail by an armed force of 150 to  
50 all painted & otherwise disfigured they were awaiting  
trial on a charge of treason. Their enemies  
acknowledged that they had done nothing & that nothing  
could be found against them. They had voluntarily given  
themselves up to trial upon the Governor with the people  
joining their words & honor that they should be  
protected from all violence (But they are dead)  
They died Martyrs in a religious persecution.

"Mormonism Unveiled" (sic), published in Painesville, Ohio in 1834 by Eber D. Howe, was based mainly on the work of an excommunicated Mormon, Doctor Philastus Hurlbut (Doctor was a given name, not his profession), who may have had ties with early Methodism in Jamestown, NY. This 290 page book was a vitriolic attack on the character of Joseph Smith, Jr. and on Mormonism in general. An ad from the *Fredonia Censor* shows that it was selling for .75¢ in 1835. Today a reasonably good copy of this book sells for a couple thousand dollars.

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Wayne A. Mori in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, NY where Joseph Smith, Jr., as a teenager, had his first encounter with the Divine.

Ezekiel and Julia Hills Johnson arrived in the Town of Pomfret, NY from Westford, VT in the fall of 1813 and made a home for their 16 children (one died in infancy) on lot 21, located on the Fredonia-Stockton Road. Julia moved the family to Kirtland, OH in the spring of 1833 while her husband was at Fort Dearborn (Chicago), preparing a new home for his wife and children.

This is an excerpt from a letter dated July 3, 1844, written by Joseph E. Johnson who was living in Hancock County, IL (b. 1817 Town of Pomfret, NY) to a boyhood friend, Benjamin Willson of Laona. In it he relates the tragic events of June 27, 1844, on which date Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered. The original is housed in the Darwin R. Barker Museum, Fredonia, NY.



**JULIA HILLS JOHNSON**

Born Sept. 26, 1783 at Upton, Mass.  
Died May 30, 1853 — Council Bluffs, Iowa



**EZEKIEL JOHNSON**

Born Jan. 12, 1776 (1773), Uxbridge, Mass.  
Died Jan. 13, 1848 at Nauvoo, Illinois