



THE HOUSE OF THE LORD AT KIRTLAND, OHIO

"The House of the Lord at Kirtland, Ohio." Kirtland Temple, early 1900s.
Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library,
Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Chronology of Historical Events

1789 22 July. Turhand Kirtland, a stockholder and general land agent for the Connecticut Land Company (after whom the township is named), arrives in what later becomes Kirtland.

1800 10 July. Trumbull County is formed—the first county in the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio—county seat at Warren, Ohio.

Connecticut relinquishes jurisdiction of the Western Reserve in northeastern Ohio.

1805 23 December. Joseph Smith Jr. is born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. Son of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy (Mack) Smith, Joseph Smith Jr. is considered the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church), the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ), and several smaller religious groups (for example, the Kirtland branch is called the Church of Jesus Christ, Kirtland Restoration Branch).

31 December. Geauga County is formed from Trumbull County by the Ohio General Assembly and

extends to Lake Erie. The first Geauga County courts were held near present-day Painesville until 1813, when a small log cabin courthouse was built on Chardon Square. The Geauga County seat is now located at Chardon, Ohio.

- 1810–12 Early white settlers arrive in what later becomes Kirtland Township.
- 1815 War of 1812 ends. Settlement increases in Kirtland Township and in the Western Reserve.
- 1818 Kirtland Township is organized.
- 1819 What becomes known as the Old South Congregational Church of Kirtland (now Old South Church—United Church of Christ) is organized at the home of Levi Smith.
- Kirtland's first framed schoolhouse is built.
- 1820 Spring. Joseph Smith Jr. receives the "First Vision" in Palmyra, New York.
- Methodist Episcopal congregation is organized at Kirtland. Settlers continue to move into Kirtland Township during the 1820s.
- 1825 Erie Canal is completed in northern New York state connecting the Hudson River with Buffalo and Lake Erie. Mormons and many others later use the Erie

Canal for westward migration to Lake Erie and north-eastern Ohio.

Mail service to Kirtland begins.

1826 Newel K. Whitney General Store is established in an area now known as the “Kirtland Flats” (lowlands north of the present-day Kirtland Temple).

1827 18 January. Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma Hale marry at South Bainbridge, New York.

1830 6 April. Joseph Smith Jr. organizes the “Church of Christ” at Fayette Township, Seneca County, New York, in the log cabin of Peter Whitmer Sr. Joseph Smith is sustained as the first elder of the Church. The offices of Apostle, elder, priest, teacher, and deacon are established.

9 June. The first general conference of the Church is held at Fayette, New York.

October. Oliver Cowdery and others travel westward to preach to the Lamanites (Native Americans). On their way west they establish a branch of the Church at Kirtland, then in Geauga County.

6 October. Kirtland Temperance Society is organized.

17 October. In the Kirtland area, Sidney Rigdon and his congregation, including Newel K. Whitney, are baptized into the LDS Church.

30 December. The Latter-day Saints are instructed to gather to Ohio (D&C 37:1, 3 and D&C 38:32)¹¹, where Kirtland becomes LDS Church headquarters during the period 1831 to 1838.

Kirtland population: 1,018.

1831 Early February. After leaving Fayette, New York, Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma (Hale) Smith arrive in Kirtland and meet Newel K. Whitney at his general store. Thus begins a settlement of the Latter-day Saints in north-eastern Ohio. Kirtland is established as the headquarters of the Church from 1831 to 1838. Ohio becomes the fastest growing area in the Church.

4 February. Joseph Smith Jr. receives many revelations in the Kirtland area, including several in the Newel K. Whitney Store. Edward Partridge is called as the Church's first bishop (D&C 41:9).

May. Latter-day Saints from New York state begin arriving in the Kirtland area. Thompson, Ohio, is settled.

3–6 June. The fourth general conference of the Church is held at Kirtland. The first high priests are ordained into the Church at Kirtland. Elders are called and sent to Jackson County, Missouri, for settlement (D&C 52).

11. References to "D&C" in this work are to *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981). This book and its index are available online at www.lds.org. The Community of Christ has published a similar version of the *Doctrine and Covenants* with a different imprint.

12 September. Joseph and Emma Smith move to Hiram, Ohio, and live with the John Johnson family.

20 July. Joseph Smith receives a revelation that Jackson County, Missouri, is the location of Zion.

4 December. Newel K. Whitney is appointed the Church's second bishop in Kirtland.

1831–32 Many Mormons migrate to Kirtland, Ohio.

1831–33 During what is known as “the Kirtland period,” Jackson County, Missouri, is also another major gathering place for Latter-day Saints.

1831–38 Kirtland, Ohio, serves as headquarters of the Latter-day Saint Church.

1832 24 March. Joseph Smith Jr. is taken by a mob from the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, and tarred and feathered.

14 April. Brigham Young is baptized in New York.

1 June. The *Evening and Morning Star* is published at Independence, Missouri.

6 November. Joseph Smith III, son of Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma (Hale) Smith, is born at the Newel K. Whitney Store in Kirtland. He later becomes the first president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ), serving as president during the years 1860–1914.

27 December. Joseph Smith Jr. receives a revelation to build a house of the Lord, known as the Kirtland Temple, in Kirtland, Ohio (D&C 88:119).

1833 17 January. The School of the Prophets is organized in the Newel K. Whitney Store, Kirtland. Later meetings of the School of the Prophets are held in the Kirtland Temple and finally in Utah.

22–23 January. School of the Prophets meets.

27 February. Joseph Smith Jr. receives a revelation at Kirtland known as the “Word of Wisdom,” which establishes the current health code for Latter-day Saints. This revelation advises against smoking and drinking and encourages eating proper foods (D&C 89).

18 March. The First Presidency of the Church is organized at Kirtland with Joseph Smith Jr. as president. Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams are called as counsellors.

5 June. Construction of the Kirtland Temple begins (D&C 95:8, 13–17).

23 July. Cornerstones of the Kirtland Temple are laid.

18 December. The *Evening and the Morning Star* is published at Kirtland. Joseph Smith Sr. is appointed patriarch to the Church.

About 150 Latter-day Saints reside in Kirtland.

1834 17 February. The first stake in the Church is organized at Kirtland, with Joseph Smith Jr. as president. The First

Presidency serve as the Kirtland Stake presidency. The first high council in the Church is created (D&C 102).

8 May. Latter-day Saints begin a march from Ohio to western Missouri to assist the Saints there; this migration is known as Zion's Camp.

October. The *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* is published at Kirtland.

5 December. Oliver Cowdery is appointed as an assistant (or associate) president in the Church.

1835 January. Joseph Smith prepares the Lectures on Faith for publication.

14 February. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is organized at Kirtland (D&C 18).

27 February. Joseph Smith Jr. meets with nine of the Twelve Apostles and stresses the importance of keeping records (HC 2:198–200).

28 February. The First Quorum of the Seventy is organized at Kirtland.

February. The *Northern Times* begins publication in Kirtland.

28 March. A revelation regarding priesthood offices is received at Kirtland (D&C 107).

17 August. Revelations of Joseph Smith Jr. are to be published in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

1836 27 March. The Kirtland Temple is dedicated by Joseph Smith Jr. (D&C 109). The account is published in the

Messenger and Advocate (March 1836) and as a broadsheet, 1836. Some 900 to 1,000 people attend the dedicatory services.¹²

Approximately 2,000 Latter-day Saints have settled in and near Kirtland.

3 April (Easter Sunday). Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery receive visions of heavenly messengers in the Kirtland Temple—Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah appear (D&C 110).¹³ Other spiritual manifestations are also received in the Kirtland Temple by LDS Church leaders and Church members.

2 November. Kirtland Safety Society Bank is formed at Kirtland, Ohio.

- 1837 2 January. Joseph Smith Jr. and associates organize the Kirtland Safety Society, also known as the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company—a joint stock company which later fails.

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12. The Kirtland Temple is now a National Historic Landmark and is today owned and operated by the Community of Christ with headquarters in Independence, Missouri. Guided tours of the temple are available beginning in the Kirtland Temple Historic Center.
 13. For a discussion of the historical significance of these events and a description of the symbols in the Kirtland Temple, see Matthew B. Brown and Paul Thomas Smith, *Symbols in Stone: Symbolism on the Early Temples of the Restoration* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 1997), 58–64; and James Edward Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962. Rev. ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968. Special reprint of the 1912 first edition, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

November. Kirtland Safety Society ends operations as a result of the lack of a charter (in addition to the nationwide economic “Panic of 1837,” which causes many banks in the U.S. to fail).

Kirtland population: 2,300.

1838 12 January. Joseph and Emma Smith leave Kirtland for western Missouri due to religious persecution in the Kirtland area, financial strains on the LDS Church, and other reasons.

14 March. Joseph Smith Jr. resides in Far West, Missouri, and establishes the headquarters of the Church.

6 July. Under the direction of the First Council of the Seventy, over 500 Latter-day Saints begin leaving Kirtland for western Missouri in a group known as Kirtland Camp.

The name of the Church is established as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

1839 11 June. Joseph Smith Jr. begins compiling the *History of the Church*.

1840 6 March. Lake County is formed from Geauga County and Cuyahoga County, and its county seat is Painesville, Ohio. Kirtland Township is transferred from Geauga County to Lake County. (Records of Lake County prior to 1840 are recorded in Geauga County records.)

Kirtland population: 1,778.

- 1840s–1850s Kirtland Temple is leased and used by the Western Reserve Teacher’s Seminary and as a schoolhouse. Tradition includes reports that the temple is used as a stable for animals.
- 1841 19 January. Joseph Smith Jr. receives a revelation at Nauvoo, Illinois, that says in part, “I, the Lord, will build up Kirtland” (D&C 124:83). This revelation becomes known as the “Kirtland Prophecy.”
- Hyrum Smith writes a letter containing the prophesy that Kirtland will be “polished and refined” (*Times and Seasons*, November 15, 1841, 589).
- Some proxy baptisms for the dead are performed in Kirtland, Ohio (probably in the east branch of the Chagrin River in the “Kirtland Flats” area).¹⁴
- 24 May. First Kirtland LDS Stake is discontinued.
- 1844 27 June. Joseph Smith Jr. and his brother, Hyrum, are killed by a mob in the Carthage Jail at Carthage, Hancock County, Illinois.
- 1846 4 February. The westward migration of Mormons from Nauvoo, Illinois, begins under the leadership of Brigham Young, who becomes the prophet and president of the LDS Church.

14. Alexander L. Baugh, “For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House: The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3 (2002): 47–58; and Alexander L. Baugh, “The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside of Temples,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 13 (September 1998): 3–6.

- 1850 Kirtland population: 1,598.
- 1860 6 April. In Amboy, Lee County, Illinois, eight years after the beginnings of the organization, Joseph Smith III, son of Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma Hale, becomes president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), now Community of Christ.
- First Congregational Society is formed in Kirtland (now the Old South Church—United Church of Christ).
- Kirtland population: 1,231.
- 1870 Kirtland population: 1,029.
- 1873 5 February. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois.
- 1880 23 February. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ) obtains legal title of ownership to the Kirtland Temple, awarded by the Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Ohio.¹⁵
- Kirtland population: 984.

15. Court of Common Pleas, Lake County, Lake County Courthouse, Painesville, Ohio, J:432–35, FHL microfilm 885,075. In addition to Common Pleas Journal Volume J, this microfilm contains loose papers, petitions, correspondence, and newspaper clippings pertaining to the suit over the ownership of the Kirtland Temple by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. See also Roger D. Launius, “Joseph Smith III and the Kirtland Temple

- 1880s Restoration of the Kirtland Temple begins by the RLDS Church.
- 1890 Kirtland population: 909.
- 1900 Kirtland population: 1,134.
- 1970 Kirtland is established as a village.
- 1971 Kirtland is incorporated as a city. Kirtland's motto is "City of Faith and Beauty."
- 1977 The Kirtland Temple becomes a National Historic Landmark, registered by the National Park Service.
- 1979 14 October. LDS Church President Ezra Taft Benson states that the rebuilding of Kirtland is to begin and prophecies are to be fulfilled. He prays to lift the "scourge" placed on Kirtland. Ground is broken for the Kirtland LDS meeting house.
- 1982 17 October. President Ezra Taft Benson dedicates the Kirtland LDS Ward building in Kirtland, Ohio.
- 1983 16 October. Kirtland LDS Stake (similar to a diocese) is organized with Zane F. Lee as stake president. Stake center is located in Kirtland.

Suit," *BYU Studies* 25 (Summer 1985): 110–16; and Harry Black, *Kirtland Temple* (Independence, Mo.: Herald House, 1958), 24–25.

- 1984 Newel K. Whitney store, located on the “Kirtland Flats,” is restored by the LDS Church for visitors.
- 1986 4 May. An arsonist’s fire destroys the Kirtland Ohio LDS Stake Center and Family History Center (LDS branch genealogical library), destroying books, microfilms, microfiche, and Kirtland manuscripts.
- 1987 November. Kirtland Ohio LDS Stake Center and Family History Center reopen. The Kirtland Heritage Collection is located in the Family History Center.¹⁶
- 2000 Kirtland population: 6,670.
- 2001 6 April. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints changes its name to Community of Christ.
- 2002 25–29 June. Open houses are held at several new and restored buildings in Kirtland, including a new spacious LDS Visitors’ Center (replica of a gristmill), the Newel K. Whitney Store, the Newel K. and Elizabeth Ann Whitney Home, the John Johnson Inn, the Little Red School House, an ashery, and a sawmill (with a working waterwheel) built on the east branch of the Chagrin River.

16. The Family History Center, formerly housed in the Kirtland LDS Stake Center, is now located near the restored Newel K. Whitney Store in Kirtland. The mailing address is Kirtland Family History Center, c/o Historic Kirtland Visitors’ Center, 7800 Kirtland-Chardon Road, Kirtland, OH 44094.

- 2003 18 May. LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicates restored sites, known as “Historic Kirtland,” as a part of Ohio’s bicentennial celebration (Ohio became a state in 1803).

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See especially Appendix A, "Document Chronology of the Kirtland Temple," 149–65.