

Was The Garden of Eden in Missouri?

by Sandra Tanner

When Christians hear Mormons refer to the Garden of Eden they may incorrectly assume that the LDS believe it was by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Joseph Smith, however, claimed by revelation that the Garden of Eden was in western Missouri. This would throw off the entire first part of Genesis. Noah would have left in the ark from Missouri and sailed to some location in the Middle East. LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe explained:

Latter-day Saints know, **through modern revelation, that the Garden of Eden was on the North American continent** and that Adam and Eve began their conquest of the earth in the upper part of what is now the state of **Missouri**. It seems very probable that the children of our first earthly parents moved down along the fertile, pleasant lands of the Mississippi valley. (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, three volumes in one, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft 1960, p. 127)

Joseph Smith declared this new understanding of Genesis and the location of Eden during a trip through Missouri in 1838. Historian Fawn Brodie commented:

Shortly after his arrival Joseph rowed up the Grand River to Lyman Wight's ferry to explore land on the north bank in Daviess County [Missouri]. On a high bluff overlooking the river someone in the party discovered the **ruins of what seemed to be an altar** and excitedly led the prophet to it. After examining it Joseph stood silent, his eyes sweeping over the prairie that rolled away beneath him. . . . The glory of the scene made Joseph heady as with new wine. "**This is the valley of God in which Adam blessed his children**," he said, "and upon this very altar Adam himself offered up sacrifices to Jehovah. . . . we will lay out a city which shall be called **Adam-ondi-Ahman**. Here Adam, the Ancient of Days, shall come to visit his people. . . ." (Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, Random House, 1971, p. 211)

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In 1835 the *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* printed a poem titled "Adam-ondi-Ahman":

Adam-ondi-Ahman.
BY W. W. PHELPS.
This world was once a garden place,
With all her glories common;
And men did live a holy race,
And worship Jesus face to face,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

We read that Enoch walk'd with God,
Above the power of Mammon:
While Zion spread herself abroad,
And saints and angels sung aloud
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Her land was good and greatly blest,
Beyond old Israel's Canaan;
Her fame was known from east to west;
Her peace was great, and pure the rest—
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come—
The Savior's second comin'—
When all the world in glorious bloom,
Affords the saints a holy home
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman.

This poem was considered of such importance that it was incorporated in the first LDS hymnal in 1835 and continues to be included in current LDS hymnals (see the 1985 LDS hymnal, p. 49). While the poem does not designate the location as being in Missouri, it is the earliest printing of the name Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Even after the Mormons moved west they continued to talk about the importance of Adam-ondi-Ahman in Missouri. LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff, writing in his journal on March 30, 1873, commented:

Again Presdet Young said Joseph the Prophet told me that **the garden of Eden was in Jackson Co Missouri**, & when Adam was driven out of the garden of Eden He went about 40 miles to the Place which we Named **Adam Ondi Ahman**, & there built an Altar of Stone & offered Sacrifice. **That Altar remains to this day. I saw it as Adam left it** as did many others, & through all the revolutions of the world that Altar had not been disturbed. Joseph also said that when the City of Enoch fled & was translated it was whare the gulf of Mexico now is. It left that gulf a body of water. (Susan Staker, ed., *Waiting for World's End: The Diaries of Wilford Woodruff*, Signature Books, 1993, p. 305)

Oliver B. Huntington, a faithful Mormon, wrote an article on Adam-ondi-Ahman for the LDS magazine *Juvenile Instructor*:

Adam's Altar, which was mentioned, I have visited many times. I sat upon the wall of stone and reflected upon the scenes that had taken place thousands of years ago right where I was. **There were the rocks that Father Adam used.** . . . My father's house stood about two hundred and fifty yards from that altar, on the bottom land of Grand River, in the valley of Adam-on-Diahman. (*Juvenile Instructor*, Nov. 15, 1895, p. 700-701)

LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie gives this information about the location of the Garden of Eden:

ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN

Adam was the first man of all men; Ahman is one of the names by which God was known to Adam. Adam-ondi-Ahman, a name carried over from the pure Adamic language into English, is one for which we have not been given a revealed, literal translation. As near as we can judge—and this view comes down from the early brethren

who associated with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was the first one to use the name in this dispensation—**Adam-ondi-Ahman means the place or land of God where Adam dwelt.**

Apparently the area included was a large one; at least, the revelations speak of the land, the valley, and the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman. They tell us that Christ himself “established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman” (D. & C. 78:15-16), and that it included the place now known as **Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri.** (D. & C. 116.)

Far West, Missouri, also appears to be included in the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman. On April 17, 1838, the Lord commanded his saints to assemble at Far West, which place, he said, was holy ground; and there they were to build a city. (D. & C. 115.) By July 8 of that year, William Marks and Newel K. Whitney had not left their temporal concerns in Kirtland, Ohio, and were not assembling with the saints coming to Zion. In rebuking them the Lord said this: “Is there not room enough on the mountains of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and on the plains of Olaha Shinehah, or **the land where Adam dwelt**, that you should covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty

The songs to be sung during the conference may be selected by the Stake Superintendent. If there are several schools in the place where the conference is held, it is well to divide the exercises among them; and if there are too many schools for each one to have an opportunity, then let three or four schools take part at one conference and other schools at the following conferences.

Arrangements should be made by the stake and ward superintendents in regard to these department exercises; for instance: That one school furnish a theological-department exercise, another a primary-department exercise and so on, as in your wisdom will make the conference most interesting.

We submit these suggestions to you and trust they may aid you in the preparation of a suitable program for your annual Sunday school conference.

Very truly your brethren,

John M. Whitaker, Geo. Q. Cannon,
Gen. Secretary. George Goddard,
 Karl G. Maeser,
Gen. Superintendency of Sunday Schools.

TOMMY: "Pa why do they always say, 'counting noses' when they talk about counting a crowd?"

Mr. Figg: "It started at political meetings, my son. You can see a politician's nose when there is not light enough to distinguish anything else."

LITTLE BROTHER: "Can't you walk straight, Mr. Mangel?"

Mr. Mangel: "Of course I can. Why do you ask?"

Little Brother: "Oh nothin', only I heard sister say she'd make you walk straight when she married you. And mamma said she'd help her."

ADAM'S ALTAR AND TOWER.

I READ a letter in the *News* of November 12th, 1895, from B. F. Johnson of Mesa City, Arizona, and am pleased with his statement of facts as related in the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Bible.

Adam's Altar, which was mentioned, I have visited many times. I sat upon the wall of stone and reflected upon the scenes that had taken place thousands of years ago right where I was. There were the rocks that Father Adam used. I looked for marks of tools upon the rocks, but found none, not knowing then the command of God that there should be no mark of tool upon the rocks of an altar upon which sacrifices were to be offered to Him.

The wall of rock that was in sight and rising above the ground about thirteen inches, was laid as accurately as any wall nowadays, and was five or six feet long. One end showed the corner and end wall enough to prove that it ran back into the hill; the other end of the wall was covered with earth, and I do not know that the visible end was the real end. Dirt had naturally washed and worn down so as to cover the body of the altar.

One day while sitting on the wall and devoutly thinking of the use that had been made of that place, I got a naturally-sharpened stick and dug into the earth that covered the altar and found charcoal quite plentiful. I scraped back the earth into the hole and said "Peace to the ashes."

Perhaps those coals, I thought, were from wood burned by Father Adam, and perhaps that altar had been used by men of God hundreds and thousands of years after him.

I felt sure, however, that the rocks were the identical rocks that he placed

there, for Joseph said, "That altar was built by our Father Adam and there he offered sacrifice."

The man who showed me the altar was with Joseph when he discovered it. He said that when within a rod or two of the place Joseph stepped quickly ahead of the little company of men who were with him, and, standing upon the altar, told them what use had been made of that spot and who built it.

The rocks that were visible showed indisputable signs of having been burned with fire. I have hunted for rocks around there of that kind, but found none. There were plenty of other kinds not far distant.

After Joseph the Seer had stood upon that memorable spot and told his brethren many things that had taken place there and in the valley just below, while Adam dwelt in that locality, they traveled on up into the prairie beyond. About half a mile or between a quarter and a half of a mile, just in the edge of a grove of timber, they came to a little elevated spot of earth, like a knoll or slight hill, the earth of which was slightly dotted with cobble stones.

"Here," the Prophet and Seer said, "Adam built a tower, from the top of which he could see all the surrounding country, and this knoll is formed of its remains."

I want my friends, and in fact all people, to understand that Joseph Smith could see events that transpired and people who lived hundreds or thousands of years ago as if they were then before his eyes.

My father's house stood about two hundred and fifty yards from that altar, on the bottom land of Grand River, in the valley of Adam-on-Diahman.

When Alanson Ripley surveyed a part of the farming land around the settle-

ment, I was flagman, and the spot of ground designated as the place of Adam's Tower came within that survey. Our late president, A. O. Smoot, was flagman when Brother Ripley surveyed the town plat.

In connection with the historical part of the Bible, stating that the altar was about one hundred miles from the Garden of Eden, from which Adam was driven, I recollect that it is eastwardly from the Garden, and also that after the Lord had made Adam He planted a garden eastwardly in Eden, where He placed Adam and gave him directions how to manage affairs.

It appears that their emigration was all from the west to the east, and, according to the words of the Prophet Joseph, man kind in that age continued to emigrate eastwardly until they reached the country on or near the Atlantic coast; and that in or near Carolina Noah built his remarkable ship, in which he, his family, and all kinds of animals lived a few days over one year without coming out of it.

Where was that place from which the Lord went east to make that very nice garden? He no doubt took Adam to a better country than they occupied at first, and who knows but they were on some of these western deserts, or in these mountains?

The travels of this Church have been from the very beginning the reverse direction from the "course of empire" both of the Jaredites and Nephites while marching to their last struggle.

According to the Bible and the words of Joseph Smith, we have emigrated in exactly a reverse course also from the first people on the earth. What direction will we travel next if we ever emigrate?

O. B. Huntington.

matters? Therefore, come up hither unto the land of my people, even Zion.”

William Marks was told that he was to “preside in the midst of my people in the city of Far West,” and Newel K. Whitney was told to “come up to the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and be a bishop unto my people.” (D. & C. 117.)

The early brethren of this dispensation taught that the Garden of Eden was located in what is known to us as the land of Zion, an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center place. In our popular Latter-day Saint hymn which begins, “Glorious things are sung of Zion, Enoch’s city seen of old,” we find William W. Phelps preserving the doctrine that “In Adam-ondi-Ahman, Zion rose **where Eden was**.” . . .

One of the greatest spiritual gatherings of all the ages took place in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman some 5,000 years ago, and another gathering—of even greater importance relative to this earth’s destiny—is soon to take place in that same location. Our revelations recite:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. (D. & C. 107:53-56.) (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 19-20)

Apostle McConkie went on to explain that Joseph Smith had even identified an altar in Missouri as one built by Adam:

At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. **A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remainder of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri.** There the Prophet taught them that Adam again would visit in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, holding a great council as a prelude to the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (*Mediation and Atonement* pp. 69-70.) At this council, all who have held keys of authority will give an accounting of their stewardship to Adam. Christ will then come, receive back the keys, and thus take one of the final steps preparatory to reigning personally upon the earth. (Dan. 7:9-14; *Teachings*, p. 157.) (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 21)

LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe gave these comments about the Garden of Eden:

Later, the Prophet designated “Spring Hill,” a hill of eminence about fifty or sixty miles north and somewhat to the east of Independence, as Adam-ondi-Ahman, . . . the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” (D. & C. 116) . . .

Since Adam called together seven generations of his descendants at Adam-ondi-Ahman, it can well be believed that there was his old homestead. If so, **the Garden of Eden was probably not far distant**, for it was the entrance at the east of the Garden which was closed against them at the time of the “fall.” (Genesis 3:24) In fact, it has been commonly understood among the Latter-day Saints, from the teachings of the Prophet, that the temple was to be built in or near the location of the Garden of Eden. **That the Prophet actually taught that the Garden of Eden was in or near Independence, Missouri, is amply testified to by many who knew and heard him.** Heber C. Kimball, close associate and friend of the Prophet, said on one occasion:

The spot chosen for the **Garden of Eden** was Jackson County, in the state of Missouri, where Independence now stands; it was occupied in the morn of creation by Adam and his associates, who came with him for the express purpose of peopling this earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, 10:235)

Brigham Young, also a close associate of the Prophet, testified similarly:

In the beginning, after this earth was prepared for man, the Lord commenced his work upon what is **now called the American continent, where the Garden of Eden was made.** In the days of Noah, in the days of the Boating of the ark, he took the people to another part of the earth. (*Discourses*, p. 102)

In conversation with Orson Hyde, on March 15, 1857, President Young said:

You have been both to Jerusalem and Zion, and seen both. I have not seen either, for I have never been in Jackson County. **Now it is a pleasant thing to think of and to know where the Garden of Eden was.** Did you ever think of it? I do not think many do, for in Jackson County was the Garden of Eden. **Joseph has declared this, and I am as much bound to believe that as to believe that Joseph was a prophet of God.** (*Journal History*, March 15, 1857)

That is the position of the Latter-day Saints today, with respect to the much-discussed **location of the Garden of Eden.** Adam, after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden, lived in the vicinity of the great Missouri and Mississippi rivers. As his descendants multiplied, they

would naturally settle along the fertile and climatically acceptable river valleys. When the flood came in the days of Noah, the Mississippi drainage must have increased to a tremendous volume, quite in harmony with the Biblical account. **Noah's ark would be floated on the mighty, rushing waters, towards the Gulf of Mexico.** With favorable winds, it would **cross the Atlantic** to the Eastern continents. There the human race, in its second start on earth, began to multiply and fill the earth.

The location of the Garden of Eden in America, and at Independence, Missouri, clears up many a problem which the Bible account of Eden and its garden has left in the minds of students. (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 395-397)

However, there is nothing in the book of Genesis to indicate that the first eight chapters of the story happened in North America.

Additionally, Smith's 1838 designation of Missouri as the home of Adam and Eve contradicts his earlier 1830 revelation in the Book of Moses. That account of the creation clearly presented the Garden of Eden as being in the Middle East. In it we read:

And, I, the Lord God caused a river to go out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. . . . And the name of the second river was called Gihon; the same that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river was Hiddekel; that which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river was the Euphrates. (*Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 3:10, 13-14)

(For more information on Adam-ondi-Ahman see http://www.lds-mormon.com/adam_ond.shtml)

