
Ramus, Illinois

D&C 130: Introduction

Ramus, also known as Perkins’s Settlement, Macedonia, and Webster, is located approximately twenty-two miles east of Nauvoo and eight miles north of Carthage, Illinois. The area was first settled in 1826 by Ute Perkins. Latter-day Saints began moving into the area in 1839. As they did so, they renamed the town Ramus, a Latin word meaning “branch.”

From 1839 to 1845, Ramus was intended to be a gathering place for Latter-day Saints. The Ramus Stake was organized on July 15, 1840, with Joel Hills Johnson as stake president. Johnson ran a saw mill in town. Other Latter-day Saints played an active role in business enterprises. Benjamin F. Johnson operated a tavern, Morris Phelps ran a carpentry shop, and Wilkins J. Salisbury worked as a lawyer and a blacksmith. Latter-day Saints built the earliest Church meetinghouse in Ramus.

On December 4–5, 1841, a conference was held at Ramus with Hyrum Smith presiding. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and John Taylor of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were present. It was “unanimously resolved by the conference that the organization of the Church at Ramus as a Stake be discontinued.”¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith was a frequent visitor to the community. On March 11, 1843, the Prophet pulled sticks with Justus A. Morse, whom Joseph described as “the strongest man in Ramus.”² Joseph bested him. The next morning Joseph preached to the Saints at Ramus, “taking for a text 14th chapter of John, 2nd verse:— ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’” Joseph wrote, “I found the brethren well, and in good spirits. In the afternoon, Brother Brigham preached. Stayed at Brother Benjamin F. Johnson’s all night.”³

¹ History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], 1259. Joseph Smith Papers.

² Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:302.

³ History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], 1497. Joseph Smith Papers.

On March 13, 1843, Joseph “wrestled with William Wall, the most expert wrestler in Ramus, and threw him.” Of the evening meeting, Joseph wrote, “Twenty-seven children were blessed, nineteen of whom I blessed myself, with great fervency. Virtue went out of me, and my strength left me, when I gave up the meeting to the brethren.”⁴ The next day, Elder Jedediah M. Grant inquired of the prophet the cause of his “turning pale and losing strength ... while blessing the children.” Joseph said to Elder Grant:

I told him that I saw that Lucifer would exert his influence to destroy the children that I was blessing, and I strove with all the faith and spirit that I had to seal upon them a blessing that would secure their lives upon the earth; and so much virtue went out of me into the children, that I became weak, from which I have not yet recovered; and I referred to the case of the woman touching the hem of the garment of Jesus. (Luke, 8th chapter). The virtue here referred to is the spirit of life; and a man who exercises great faith in administering to the sick, blessing little children, or confirming, is liable to become weakened.⁵

On April 1, 1843, after spending the night at the Benjamin F. Johnson tavern, a meeting was held in the morning at ten o’clock. Elder Orson Hyde preached. In his sermon, Hyde compared

the sectarian preachers to crows living on carrion, as they were more fond of lies about the Saints than the truth. Alluding to the coming of the Savior, he said, “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, &c. He will appear on a white horse as a warrior, and maybe we shall have some of the same spirit. Our God is a warrior. (John xiv, 23.) It is our privilege to have the Father and Son dwelling in our hearts, &c.”⁶

After the meeting, as Joseph Smith and Orson Hyde dined with Sophronia McCleary, the sister of Joseph Smith, the prophet “told Elder Hyde that I was going to offer some corrections to his sermon this morning. He replied, ‘They shall be thankfully received.’”⁷ The corrections given are contained in Doctrine and Covenants 130. “When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves” (D&C 130:1). He also stated, “The idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false” (v. 3).

⁴ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:302–303.

⁵ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:303.

⁶ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:323–24.

⁷ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:323–24.