



## GIFT HONORS SURGERY THAT SAVED JOSEPH SMITH'S LEG

Members of the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association presented a check to the medical school in September to establish a scholarship fund.

**D**ESCENDANTS OF JOSEPH SMITH, FOUNDER OF THE MORMON CHURCH, have created a scholarship at the Geisel School of Medicine to honor and give thanks for a pioneering surgery that Dartmouth's Dr. Nathan Smith performed on young Joseph.

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Two hundred years ago, a surgeon in rural New Hampshire saved a young boy's leg and possibly his life. This was no ordinary treatment, however. The surgeon was Dr. Nathan Smith, founder of Dartmouth's medical school; the child was Joseph Smith, who later founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and the surgery was far ahead of its time.

“We have always been grateful to Dr. Nathan Smith for the miraculous surgery,” said Daniel Adams, a member of the Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association. “We felt it appropriate on the 200th anniversary of that surgery to offer a gift of gratitude to the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth.”

The organization, named in honor of Joseph Smith's parents,

has donated \$25,000 to create the Joseph Smith's Miracle Scholarship for medical students. The money was raised through a 5K run and celebration that the group organized in 2013 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Representatives of the group presented the check to the school this past fall. They hope to grow the scholarship fund in years to come. Such funds help Geisel to meet the financial needs of its students, more than half of whom rely on scholarships to fund their education.

### SURGICAL SUCCESS

Joseph Smith was seven years old in 1813 when an epidemic of typhoid fever ravaged Lebanon, NH, including his family. Joseph recovered from the fever but developed osteomyelitis—an infection of the bone—in his left leg.

A group of doctors from Dartmouth consulted on the case, and their first recommendation was the standard treatment of the time: amputation.

Desperate to avoid losing the leg, the family opted instead for an innovative surgery practiced by Nathan Smith, who had founded Dartmouth Medical School in 1797 and was still teaching there in 1813. The procedure Smith developed was not widely adopted until World War I. Assisting Smith during the operation was his medical school colleague and partner in practice Cyrus Perkins. Smith drilled out pieces of diseased bone from the boy's leg—without anesthesia or antiseptic techniques, which were not yet common.

Although Joseph Smith used a crutch for three years and limped thereafter, his leg healed well and supported him for the rest of his life.

“Even today that would still be considered a very successful result,” said Dr. LeRoy Wirthlin, a retired vascular surgeon who has researched and written about the historical event. Wirthlin gave a lecture on the surgery at the Church of Latter-day Saints, in Lebanon, NH, coinciding with the Association's visit.

#### COMMITTED AS EVER

“We are grateful to Dartmouth College for preserving the legacy of this great surgeon and are pleased to make this modest donation to Dartmouth's medical school in Dr. Nathan Smith's honor,” said M. Russell Ballard, co-chairman of the Board of Trustees of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith Family Association, upon the establishment of the scholarship.

“I cannot think of a better way to use the money raised than for Joseph Smith's Miracle Scholarship,” added David Longcope, MD, who is the great-great-great grandson of Nathan Smith and who participated in the initial fundraiser in Utah.

“We are proud to have a founder as visionary and transformative as Dr. Nathan Smith,” said Duane Compton, PhD, interim dean of the Geisel School of Medicine. “This generous gift in honor of Dr. Smith and the incredible surgery he performed on young Joseph Smith provides us the opportunity to remember an important part of our medical school's history. Two hundred years later, we remain as committed as ever to training future physicians and caring for our community.”

NANCY FONTAINE

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Group members also visited Joseph Smith's birthplace in nearby South Royalton, Vt.