

A History of the Rise of
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints
in
Illinois

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Anyone with historical information about the rise of the Church is invited to share that information by sending it to this website and it will be added. Thanks.

Sources: [Kenneth W. Godfrey, BYU Studies](#)

Zelph

A very unique experience of the Saints involves the story of Zelph that was discovered in Pike County Illinois by the Zion's camp army that was traveling to Missouri from Kirtland Ohio to offer relief to those saints in Missouri who were being abused by many of the citizenry and government of Missouri.

As they camped near the east side of the Mississippi river and on a large mound or hill they discovered that the hill was an ancient burial site. Apparently in many years past the area had been used to bury the dead, most who had died in battle. With little effort bones of the dead could be extracted. It appeared that the site was used to bury the dead by bringing dirt and covering them with a shallow covering which increased the size of the hill.

The prophet Joseph Smith was allowed to interpret the story of one of the dead. From the size of the bones, an arrow head found in his rib area and the skull bearing only one tooth some obvious and some inspired information was obtained.

Joseph said the man's name was Zelph who was a very large and well known warrior who served under the direction of a prophet named Onandagus. He had lost all of the teeth in his head except one.

Zelph was a white Lamanite, or righteous man who had his curse removed because of his righteousness. He likely lived from about 360 to 390 AD during the time of the destruction of the Nephite peoples in an area that was known as the plains of the Nephites. This destruction of the Nephites was a result of them becoming wicked and turning from the Lord. This period of time is detailed in The Book of Mormon toward the end of The Book of Mormon. It was a most terrible time to be on earth and many millions of people lost their lives.

At a later time Joseph Smith said that this location in the Mississippi river valley contained an extremely large number of angry spirits of the dead.