



A CHURCH FOR ALL LANDS — PENNSYLVANIA

The hospitable squire

President Martin Van Buren refused to aid the saints. So the Prophet Joseph Smith presented his petitions to Congress. During a two months' wait for Congress to act, Joseph visited eastern branches and saints, and one trip took him to Pennsylvania.

There in Chester County, he first met Edward Hunter, a man highly regarded for his wealth, business acumen and leadership, who was friendly to Mormons. The Hunters, Bible-reading people who belonged to no church, promoted religious toleration. Edward had built and donated to the town its meeting hall, Nantmeal Seminary, but required that all religions be permitted to use it.

When Mormon elders first came to the area, local people tried to prevent their preaching. One time Edward rode to a neighboring town to publicly defend Elder Elijah H. Davis' right to preach. That night, troubled by his action, he prayed: "Are these Mormons thy servants?" Instantly a blinding light filled his bedroom, forcing him to turn to the wall and cover his head to endure it. After that spiritual witness he opened his home to Mormons, many of whom preached in Nantmeal Seminary.

When the Prophet visited Nantmeal, he too was a guest with the Hunters and preached at the seminary. He and Edward talked earnestly about religion. During a sleigh ride Edward once asked: "How is it I am attracted to those backwoods boys? I believe I would risk my life for them." Joseph answered but not in words: "He looked me in the face," said Edward, "It was the most friendly look I ever got from man." Joseph deeply impressed Edward.

Later that year another guest, Elder Orson Hyde, on his way to dedicate Palestine, convinced the proud squire to be baptized. The news stirred Edward's neighbors, many of whom joined the Church because they had learned to trust Edward's judgment over the years.

Soon Edward sold his vast farmlands and moved to Nauvoo, donating to Joseph and the Church his entire earthly fortune of almost \$15,000. Edward became a trusted friend of Joseph, was called to be a Nauvoo bishop, and later in Utah served for three decades as the Church's Presiding Bishop — William Hartley

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