

Minutes of the Council of Fifty,
March 1844-January 1846
Administrative Volume 1, Joseph
Smith Papers

Where did the minutes come from?



Record of the Council of Fifty for Kingdom of God— 1844—

Organization & injunction to secrecy page 26-27-28
 Title of the organization page 30
 Committee to arrange Constitution page 39
 Explanation of meaning of "Alman" page 84
 Instruction that no law except all vote page 94
 Meetings to be opened by prayer page 95
 Government Democracy — page 99
 Definition of Masonry — page 103
 Joseph could not be on Constitution page 105
 Joseph Prophet and St. Mary page 113 Hosanna 114
 Reasons why men who don't belong to the church are admitted page 115
 What the U.S. Constitution should be page 120-121
 Breaking the meaning of page 122
 Report of com. on Constitution page 143
 Name 151 Constitution page 205
 Ages of the members page 275

1
This Council was organized
on the strength of the contents of
two letters from the brethren in
the Pine Country which President
Joseph Smith received by the hands
of George Miller and Alexander Wad-
lawn on Sunday the 10th day of March
A.D. 1844. The letters read as
follows - "Black River Falls.

February 15th 1844

To the First Presidency and the quorum of
the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter Day Saints. Dear Brethren, Through
the goodness and mercy of God the Eternal
Father, and grace of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ, we are permitted to write
and send by a special messenger, a concise

The following is a list of the names
of the members of this Council with
their ages and station in the Council
according to age, as they stood at the
adjournment in May 1844 -

- 1 President, Joseph Smith was the
standing Chairman born Dec. 25th 1805
- 2 Samuel Bent born July 19th 1778
- 3 John Smith " July 16th 1781
- 4 Alpheas Cutler " February 29th 1784
- 5 Niah Brown " May 9th 1784
- 6 Reynolds Cahoon " April 30th 1790
- 7 Ezra Thayer " October 14th 1791
- 8 Wm. M. Phelps " February 17th 1792
- 9 Amos Fielding "
- 10 Wm. Marks " November 15th 1792

- 11 Sidney Rigdon born February 19th 1793
- 12 John P. Green " September 3rd 1793
- 13 George Miller " November 25th 1794
- 14 Newel K. Whitney " February 5th 1795
- 15 Peter Hancock " February 17th 1796
- 16 Lyman Wight " May 9th 1796
- 17 Joseph Fielding " March 26th 1797
- 18 Cornelius P. Pratt " September 27th 1798
- 19 Lucian Worden " April 3rd 1799
- 20 Levi Richards " April 14th 1799
- 21 John M. Bernhisel " June 23rd 1799
- 22 John D. Parker " November 22nd 1799
- 23 Hyrum Smith " February 9th 1800
- 24 Brigham Young " June 1st 1801
- 25 Heber C. Kimball " June 14th 1801
- 26 Orson Spencer " March 14th 1802
- 27 James Emmett " February 22nd 1803
- 28 Philip B. Lewis " January 16th 1804

- 277
- 29 Elias Smith born September 6th 1804
 30 Orono Hyde " January 8th 1805
 31 Samuel James.
 32 Wilford Woodruff. " March 1st 1807
 33 Parley P. Pratt. " April 12th 1807
 34 Edward Parney " August 25th 1807
 35 David B. Hensley " March 3rd 1808
 36 David S. Hollister " June 4th 1808
 37 John Taylor " November 1st 1808
 38 Alexander Badlam " November 28. 1808
 39 Charles C. Rich " August 21st 1809
 40 George J. Adams " November 7th 1810
 41 Wm. Smith " March 13th 1811
 42 Orson Pratt " September 19th 1811
 43 Merinus G. Eaton " March 22nd 1812
 44 Almon W. Ballis. " October 20th 1812
 45 Amasa Lyman. " March 30th 1813

- 278
- 46 Joseph W. Lovidge born May 31st 1814
 47 Orrin P. Rockwell " June 16th 1814
 48 Jedidiah M. Grant " February 21st 1816
 49 George A. Smith " June 24th 1817
 50 Erastus Snow " November 9th 1818
 51 Lorenzo D. Nasson " March 31st 1819
 52 Benjamin V. Johnson " July 28th 1818
 53 Wm. Clayton Roberts. " July 17th 1814
 54 Willard Rich and Brenda June 24th 1804

About the time the connect met the last times, there arose considerable excitement amongst the mobocrats against Joseph Smith and others. The excitement was got up by Wm. & Wilson Law, Robert D. Foster, Francis M. & Chauncey L. Highley, Joseph H. Jackson & others. They yielded to the influence of wickedness because Jesus

When and why was the council established?

March 11, 1844: “All seemed agreed to look to some place where we can go and establish a Theocracy either in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California.”

The Kingdom of God

- “Theodemocracy”
 - Protect minority rights against tyranny of the majority
 - Allow for dissent and free discussion
 - Involve Latter-day Saints and others
 - Increase righteousness in preparation for the Second Coming
 - Religious liberty

“He concluded by offering a motion that this honorable assembly receive from this time henceforth and forever, Joseph Smith, as our Prophet, Priest & King”

The Church and the Kingdom

Joseph Smith: “There is a distinction between the Church of God and kingdom of God [or Council of Fifty]. The laws of the kingdom are not designed to effect our salvation hereafter. It is an entire, distinct and separate government. The church is a spiritual matter and a spiritual kingdom; but the kingdom which Daniel saw was not a spiritual kingdom, but was designed to be got up for the safety and salvation of the saints by protecting them in their religious rights and worship.”

What did the Council accomplish?

- Managed Joseph Smith's presidential campaign
- Provided a forum for making practical decisions in Nauvoo
- Played a major role in the exploration of the West for new settlement sites

THE PROPHET.

SATURDAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1844.



SUPER HANC PETRAM EDIFICABO.

FOR PRESIDENT,
GEN. JOSEPH SMITH,
OF NAUVOO, ILLINOIS.
FOR VICE PRESIDENT,
SIDNEY RIGDON,
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Jeffersonian Democracy.

Protection of Person and Property,

For President,
JOSEPH SMITH.

For Vice President,
SIDNEY RIGDON.

Electors for the State of Michigan,
Mephibosheth Serrine,
William Van Every,
Samuel Graham,
Alvan Hood,
Seth Taft.

Early Discussions of Relocating

THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Early Discussions of Relocating



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Early Discussions of Relocating



15 FEBRUARY 1844

Latter-day Saints at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Territory, write to Joseph Smith, suggesting the "table lands" of the Republic of Texas as an additional gathering place.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Early Discussions of Relocating

20 FEBRUARY 1844

Joseph Smith and the apostles at Nauvoo begin planning for an expedition to Oregon territory and the Mexican territories of California to find a new home for the Saints.

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

Disputed between
Texas and Mexico

IOWA
TERRITORY

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

REPUBLIC
OF
TEXAS

15 FEBRUARY 1844

Latter-day Saints at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Territory, write to Joseph Smith, suggesting the "table lands" of the Republic of Texas as an additional gathering place.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Early Discussions of Relocating

20 FEBRUARY 1844

Joseph Smith and the apostles at Nauvoo begin planning for an expedition to Oregon territory and the Mexican territories of California to find a new home for the Saints.

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

Disputed between
Texas and Mexico

IOWA
TERRITORY

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

REPUBLIC
OF
TEXAS

11 MARCH 1844

Joseph Smith organizes the Council of Fifty in part to seek places of refuge "in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California."

15 FEBRUARY 1844

Latter-day Saints at Black River Falls, Wisconsin Territory, write to Joseph Smith, suggesting the "table lands" of the Republic of Texas as an additional gathering place.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith

THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

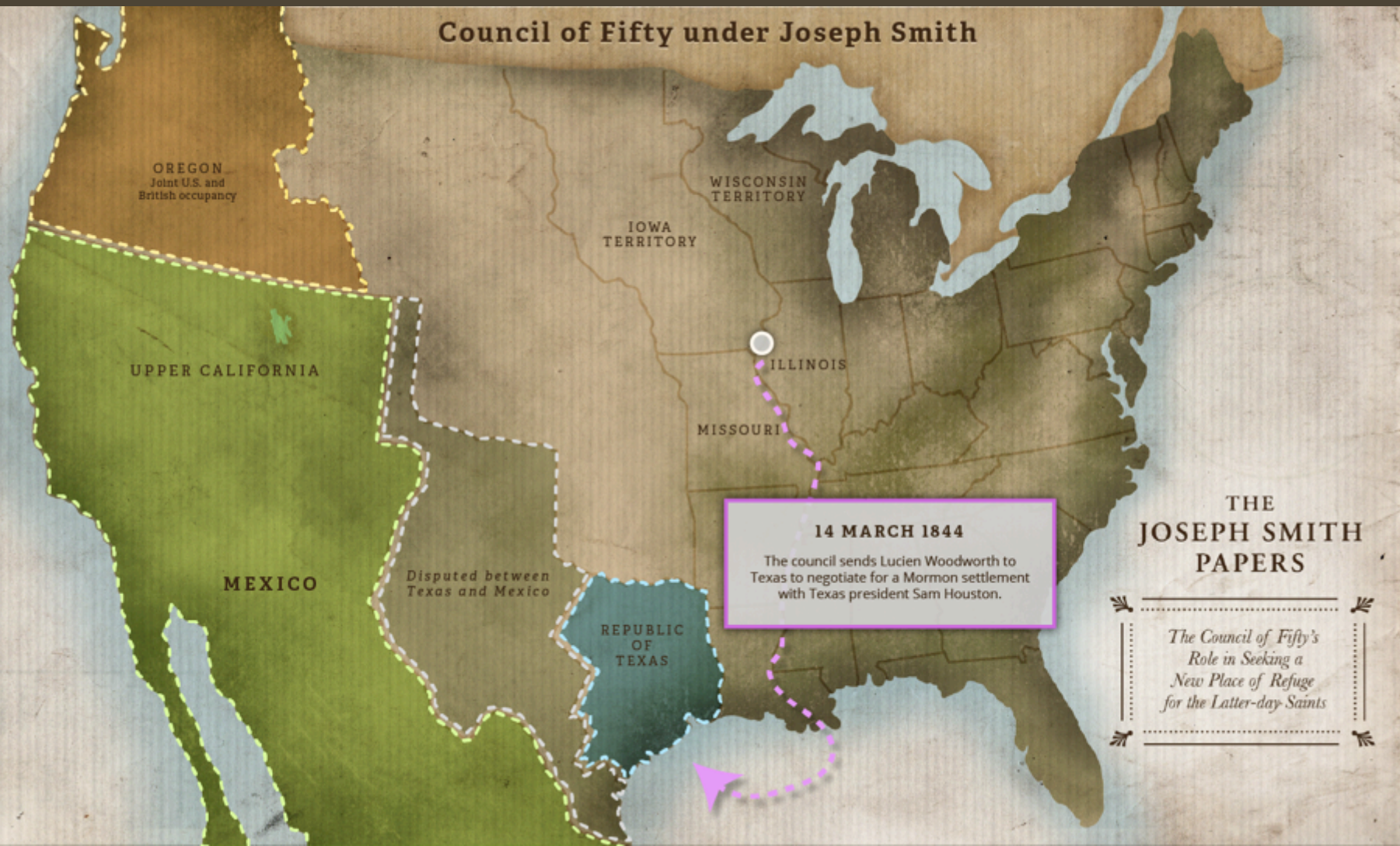
Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith



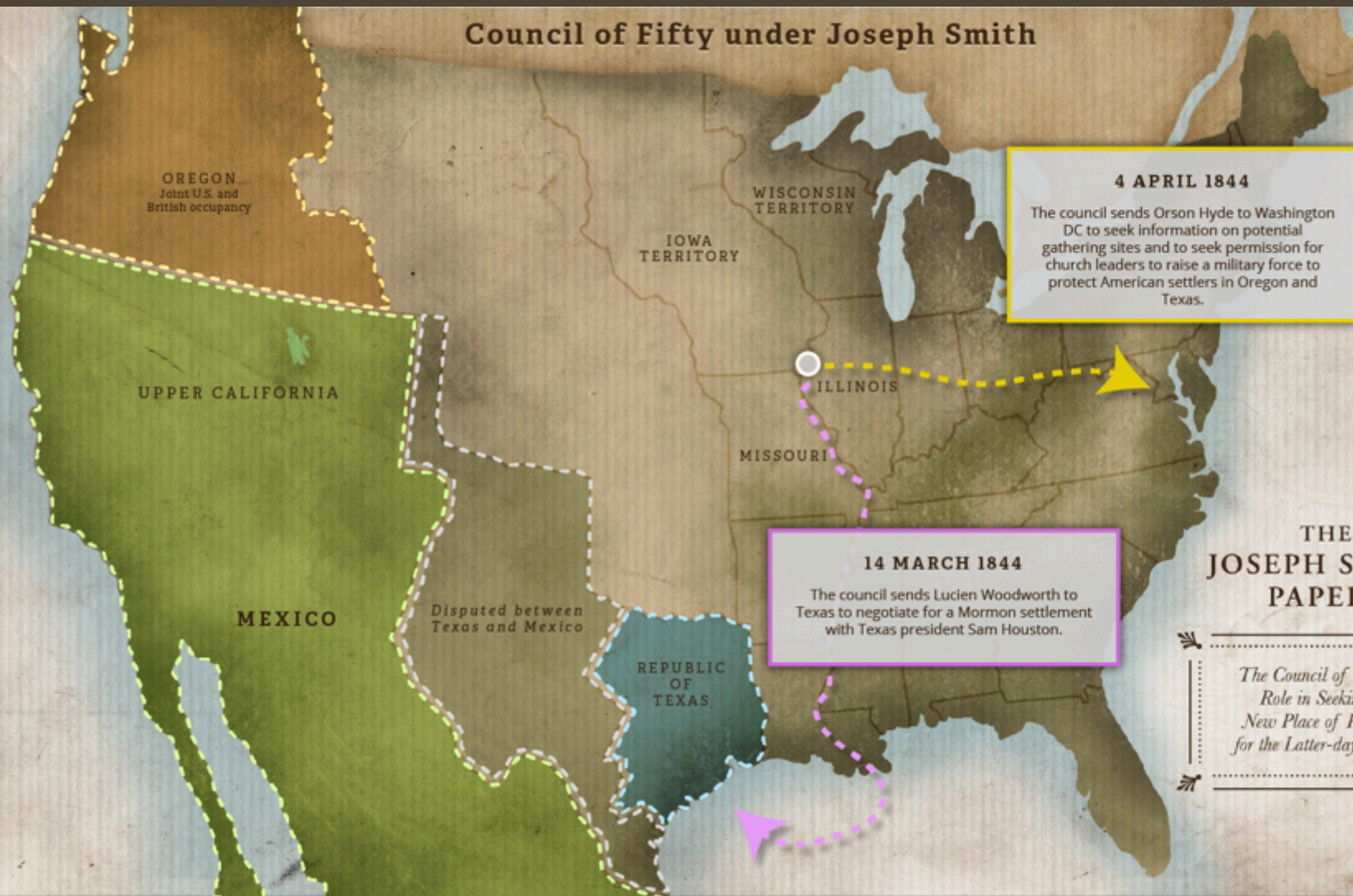
14 MARCH 1844

The council sends Lucien Woodworth to Texas to negotiate for a Mormon settlement with Texas president Sam Houston.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

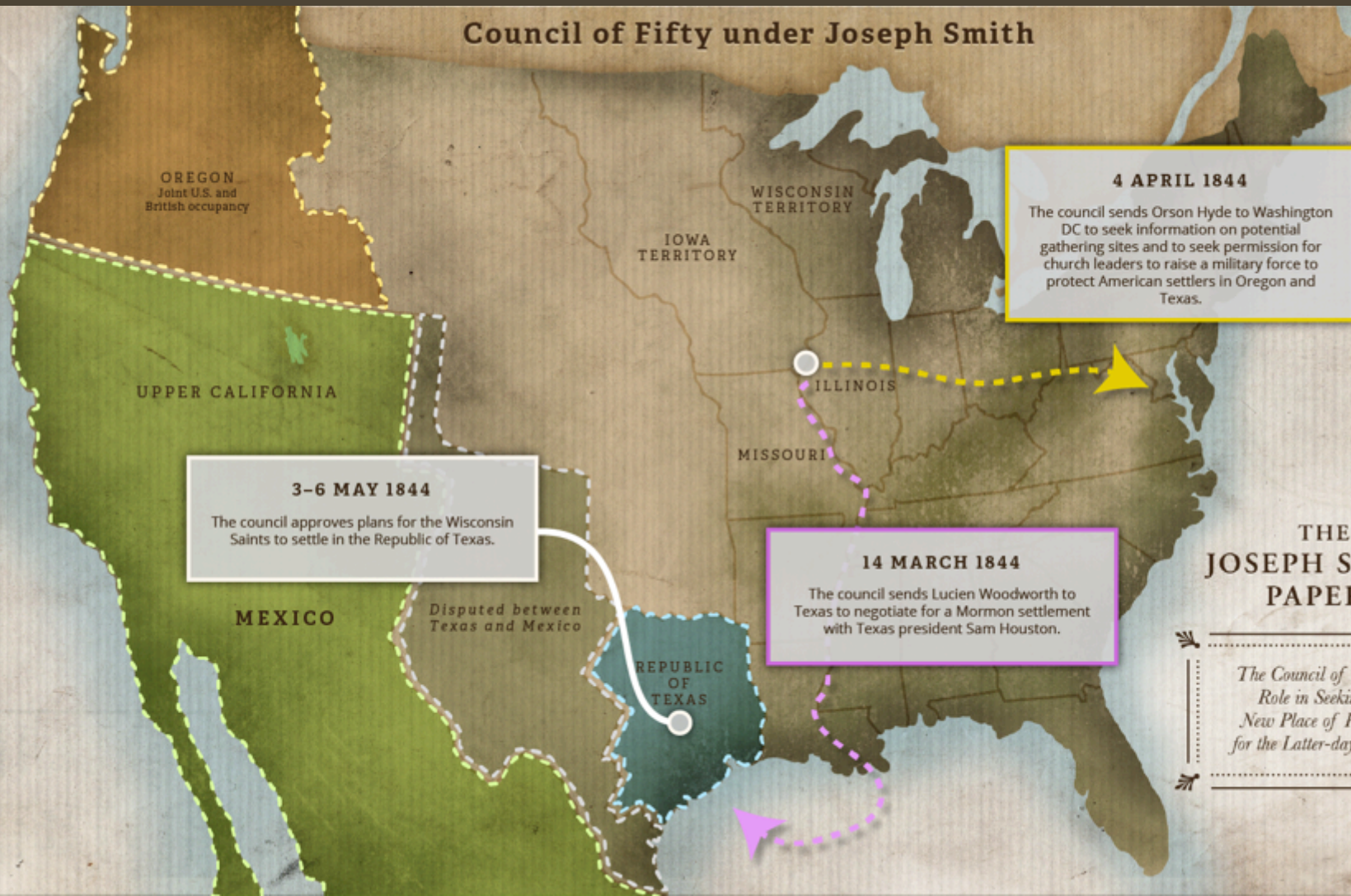
Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith



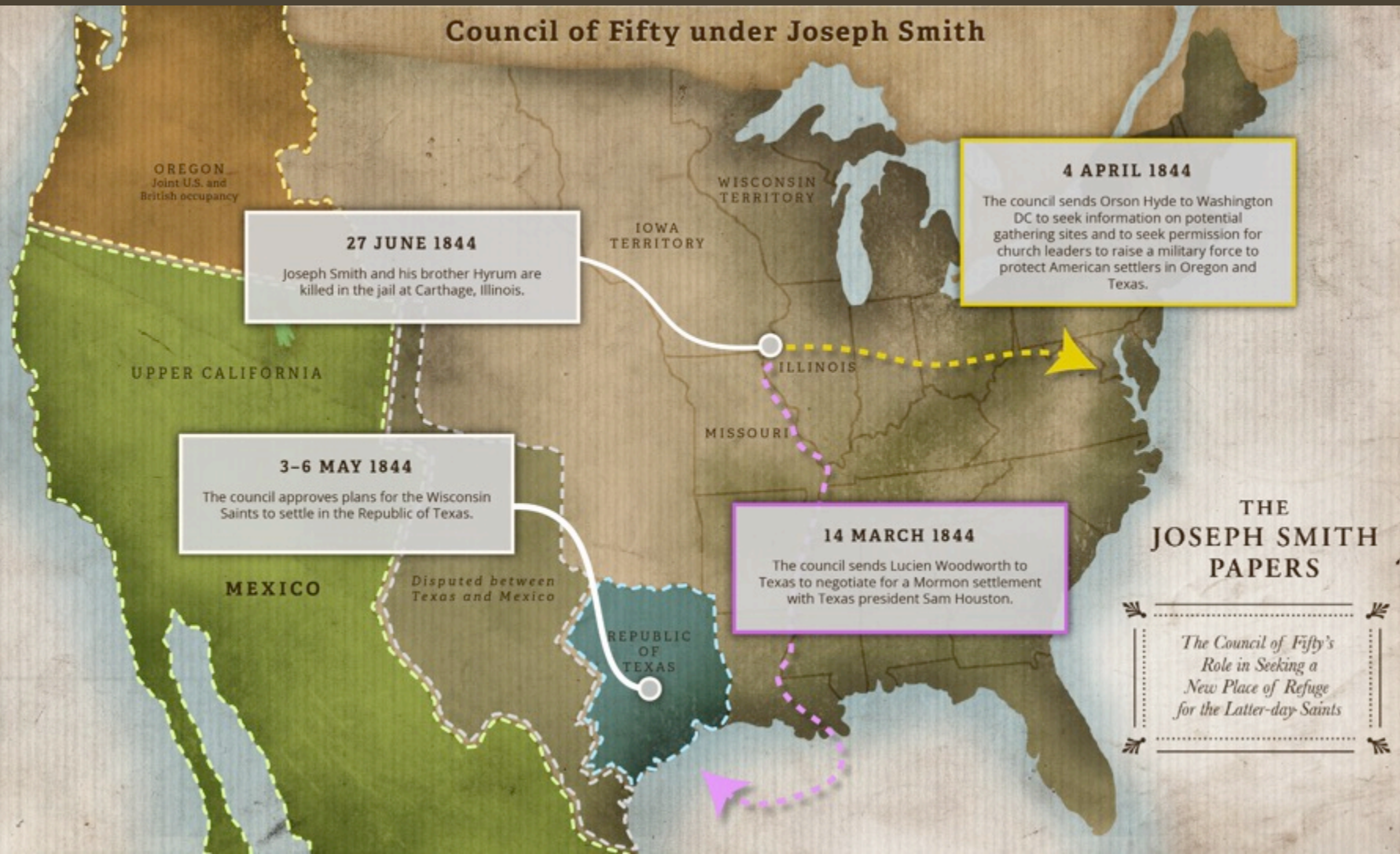
THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith



Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith



Council of Fifty under Brigham Young

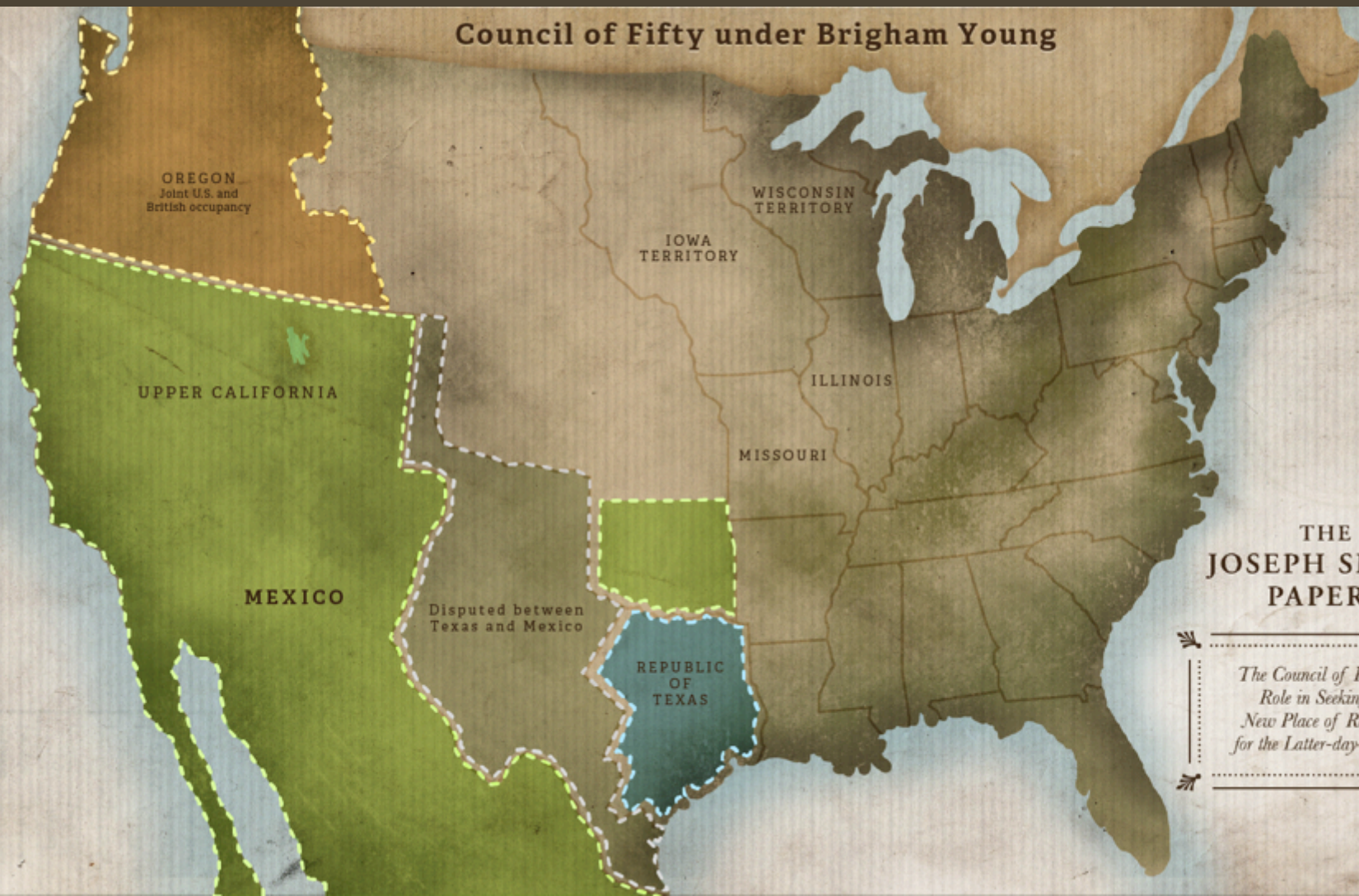
THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

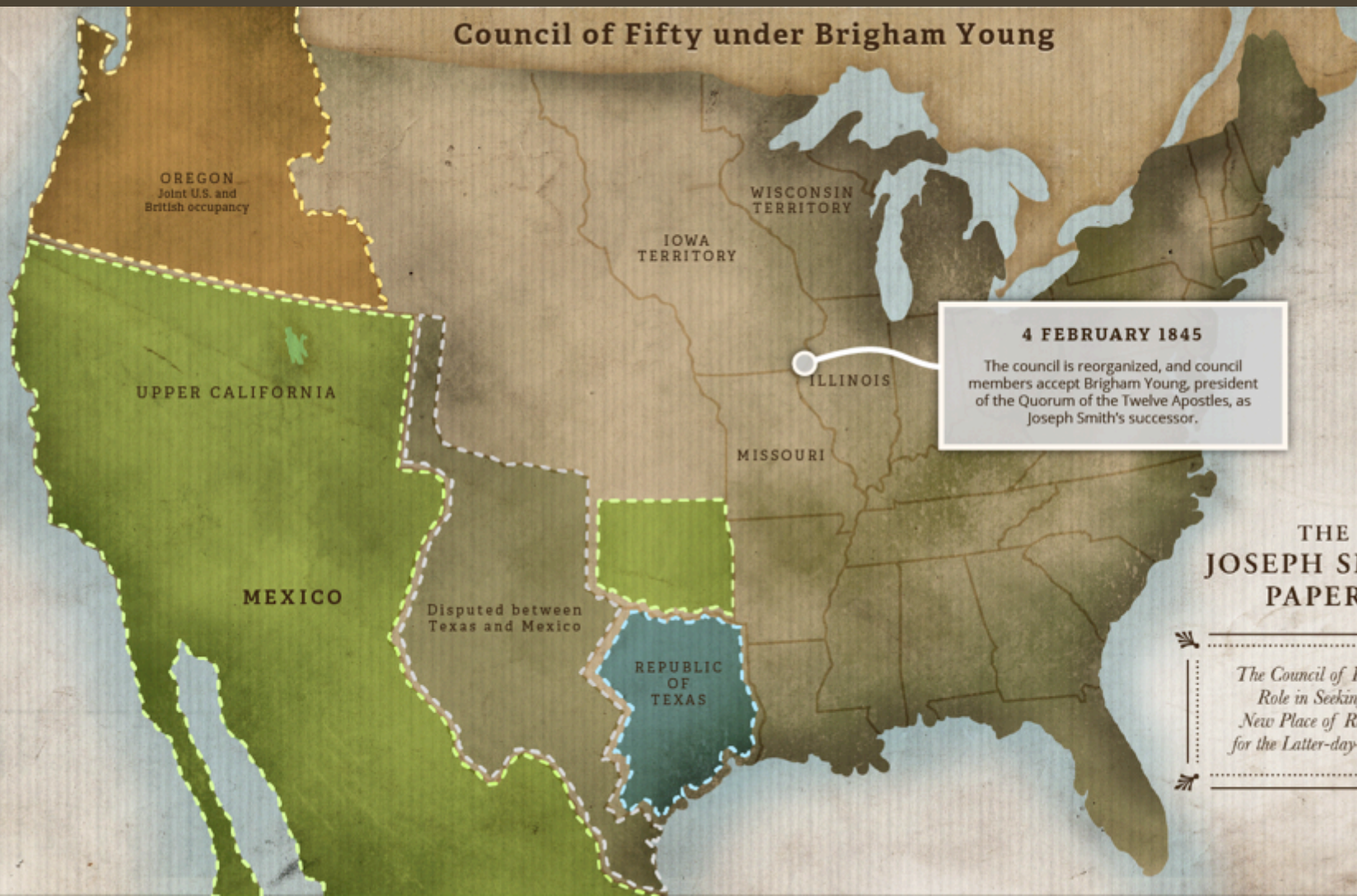
Council of Fifty under Brigham Young



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Council of Fifty under Brigham Young



OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

Disputed between
Texas and Mexico

REPUBLIC
OF
TEXAS

MISSOURI

ILLINOIS

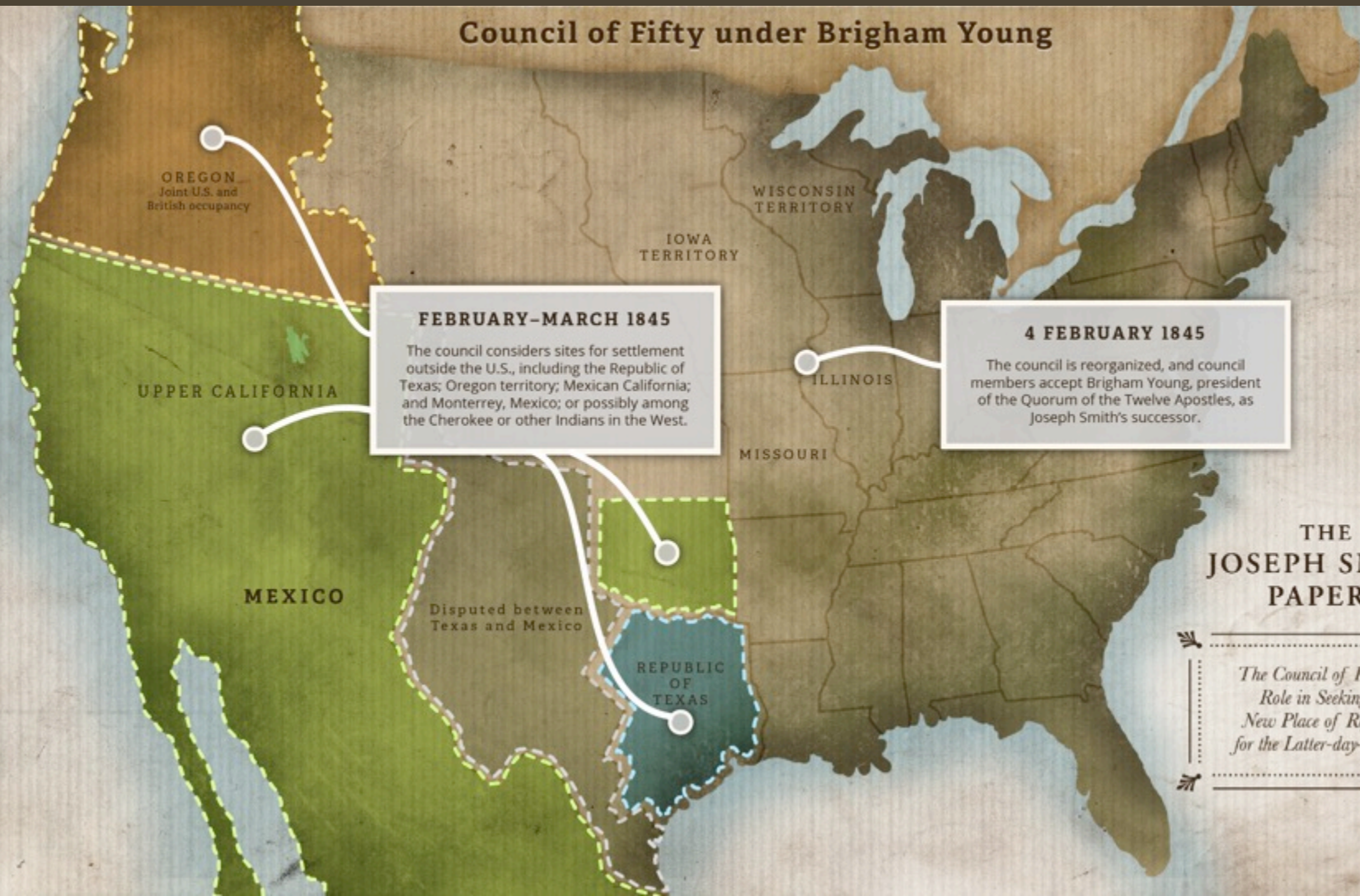
4 FEBRUARY 1845

The council is reorganized, and council members accept Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as Joseph Smith's successor.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Council of Fifty under Brigham Young



OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1845

The council considers sites for settlement outside the U.S., including the Republic of Texas; Oregon territory; Mexican California; and Monterrey, Mexico; or possibly among the Cherokee or other Indians in the West.

Disputed between
Texas and Mexico

IOWA
TERRITORY

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

REPUBLIC
OF
TEXAS

4 FEBRUARY 1845

The council is reorganized, and council members accept Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as Joseph Smith's successor.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Upper California

THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

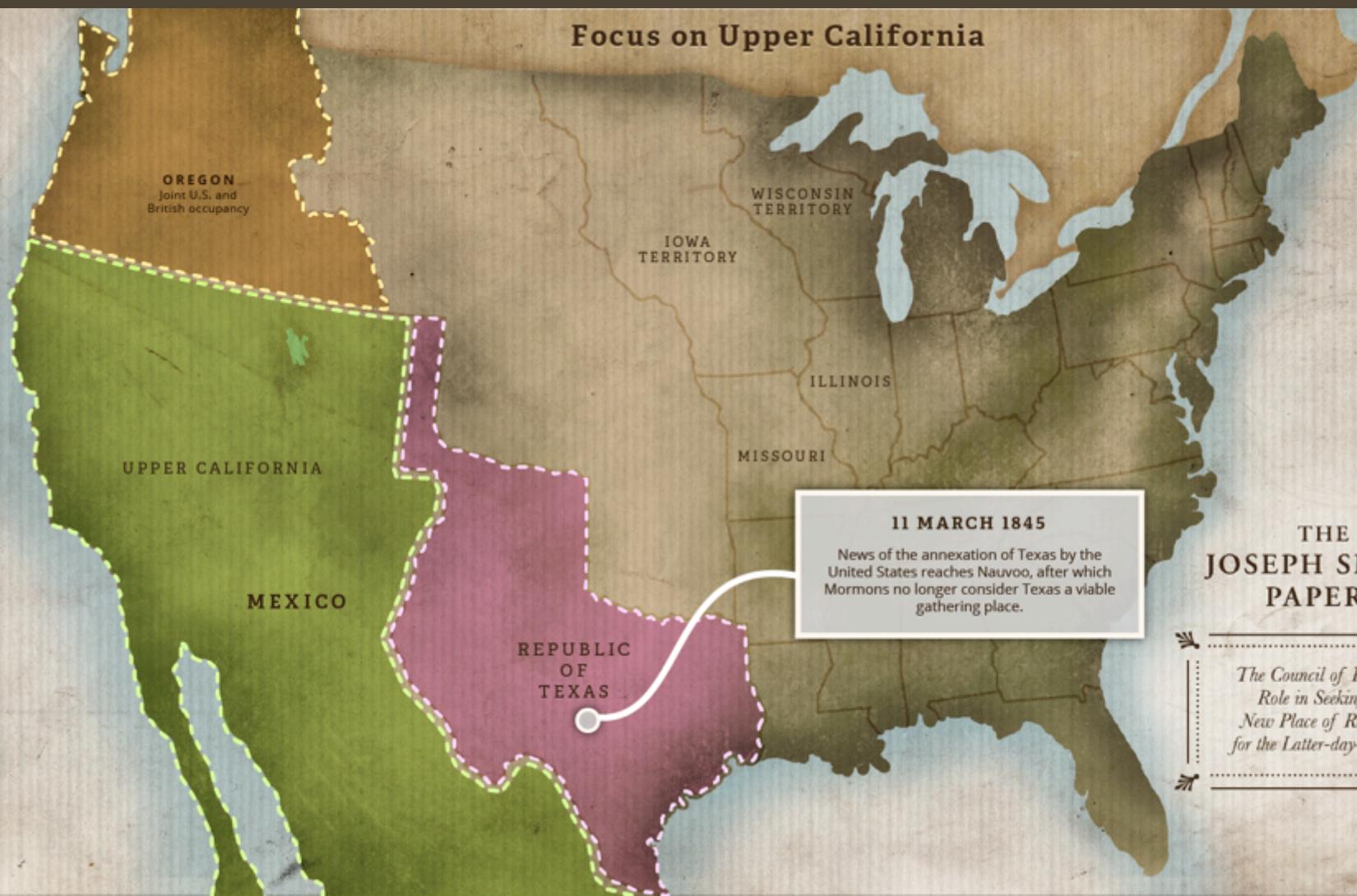
Focus on Upper California



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

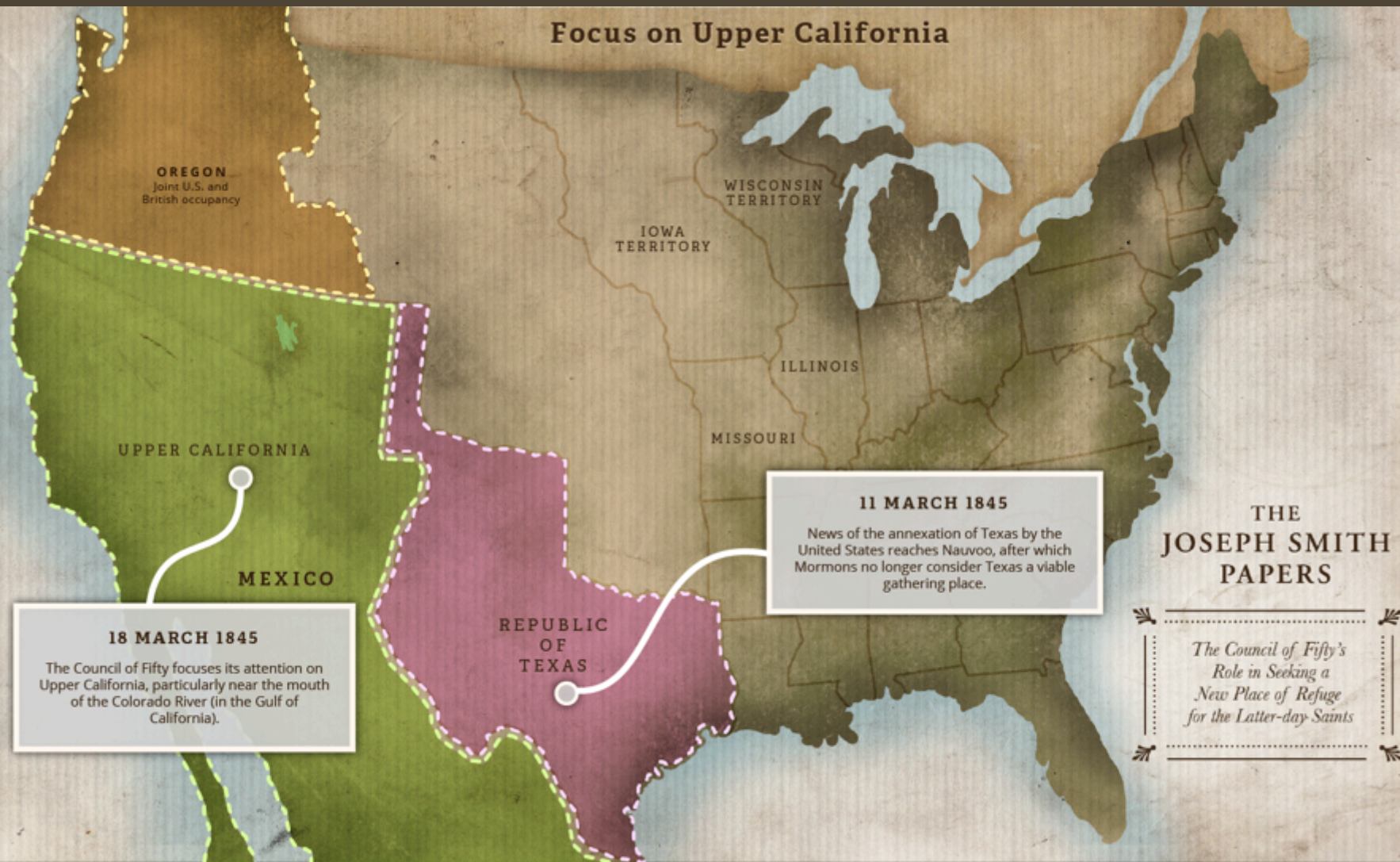
Focus on Upper California



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Upper California



Focus on Upper California

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

23 APRIL 1845

Missionaries travel to Indian tribes west of the Missouri River seeking temporary places of refuge for the Saints.

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

11 MARCH 1845

News of the annexation of Texas by the United States reaches Nauvoo, after which Mormons no longer consider Texas a viable gathering place.

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

18 MARCH 1845

The Council of Fifty focuses its attention on Upper California, particularly near the mouth of the Colorado River (in the Gulf of California).

REPUBLIC
OF
TEXAS

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Upper California

"The Upper California Oh thats the land
for me
It lays between the mountains & great
pacific sea,
The Saints can be supported there &
enjoy sweet liberty
With flocks and herds abounding Oh
thats the land for me

"We'll go and lift our Standard, we'll go
there and be free
We'll go to California and have our
Jubilee
A land that blooms with endless spring
In Upper California Oh thats the land
for me."

— John Taylor, 18 March 1845

23 APRIL 1845

Missionaries travel to Indian tribes west of
the Missouri River seeking temporary places
of refuge for the Saints.

11 MARCH 1845

News of the annexation of Texas by the
United States reaches Nauvoo, after which
Mormons no longer consider Texas a viable
gathering place.

18 MARCH 1845

The Council of Fifty focuses its attention on
Upper California, particularly near the mouth
of the Colorado River (in the Gulf of
California).

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Great Salt Lake Area

THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Focus on Great Salt Lake Area

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

UPPER CALIFORNIA

TEXAS

MEXICO

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Great Salt Lake Area

EARLY AUGUST 1845

Church leaders receive positive reports of the Great Salt Lake area from Mormons living among fur trappers on the Vermillion River in present-day South Dakota.

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

TEXAS

IOWA
TERRITORY

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Great Salt Lake Area

EARLY AUGUST 1845

Church leaders receive positive reports of the Great Salt Lake area from Mormons living among fur trappers on the Vermillion River in present-day South Dakota.

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

UPPER CALIFORNIA

MEXICO

TEXAS

IOWA
TERRITORY

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

27-31 AUGUST 1845

Church leaders meet to discuss the latest intelligence on western North America brought by Parley P. Pratt, who had been living in New York City.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

Focus on Great Salt Lake Area

EARLY AUGUST 1845

Church leaders receive positive reports of the Great Salt Lake area from Mormons living among fur trappers on the Vermillion River in present-day South Dakota.

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

9 SEPTEMBER 1845

The council reconvenes. Brigham Young announces his intention to settle "somewhere near the Great Salt Lake," and the council begins preparations for a mass exodus from Nauvoo.

UPPER CALIFORNIA

27-31 AUGUST 1845

Church leaders meet to discuss the latest intelligence on western North America brought by Parley P. Pratt, who had been living in New York City.

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

MEXICO

TEXAS

The Mormon Exodus

THE CHURCH
HISTORIAN'S
PRESS

JOSEPH SMITH
PAPERS

Church History Department

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Mormon Exodus



THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

The Mormon Exodus

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

UPPER CALIFORNIA

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

MEXICO

TEXAS

11–19 JANUARY 1846

The council meets to finalize preparations to move west.

"The Saying of the Prophets would never be verified unless the House of the Lord should be reared in the Tops of the Mountains & the Proud Banner of liberty wave over the valley's that are within the Mountains & I know where the spot is & I no [know] how to make the Flag."

— Brigham Young, 13 January 1846

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

The Mormon Exodus

OREGON
Joint U.S. and
British occupancy

WISCONSIN
TERRITORY

IOWA
TERRITORY

UPPER CALIFORNIA

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

MEXICO

TEXAS

4 FEBRUARY 1846

The first group of Saints crosses the
Mississippi River into Iowa Territory.

11–19 JANUARY 1846

The council meets to finalize preparations to
move west.

"The Saying of the Prophets would never be
verified unless the House of the Lord should
be reared in the Tops of the Mountains & the
Proud Banner of liberty wave over the valley's
that are within the Mountains & I know where
the spot is & I no [know] how to make the
Flag."

— Brigham Young, 13 January 1846

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

The Mormon Exodus

27 FEBRUARY 1846

William Clayton crosses the Mississippi River with the records of the Council of Fifty in his possession.

4 FEBRUARY 1846

The first group of Saints crosses the Mississippi River into Iowa Territory.

11–19 JANUARY 1846

The council meets to finalize preparations to move west.

"The Saying of the Prophets would never be verified unless the House of the Lord should be reared in the Tops of the Mountains & the Proud Banner of liberty wave over the valley's that are within the Mountains & I know where the spot is & I no [know] how to make the Flag."

— Brigham Young, 13 January 1846

THE JOSEPH SMITH PAPERS

*The Council of Fifty's
Role in Seeking a
New Place of Refuge
for the Latter-day Saints*

He supposed there has not yet been a perfect revelation given, because we cannot understand it, yet we receive a little here and a little there. He should not be stumbled if the prophet should translate the bible forty thousand times over and yet it should be different in some places every time, because when God speaks, he always speaks according to the capacity of the people. The starting point for the government of the kingdom is in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, but he does not know how much more there is in the bosom of the Almighty. When God sees that his people have enlarged upon what he has given us he will give us more.

Brigham Young, April 18, 1844

He then went on to say that for the benefit of mankind and succeeding generations he wished it to be recorded that there are men admitted members of this honorable council, who are not members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, neither profess any creed or religious sentiment whatever, to show that in the organization of this kingdom men are not consulted as to their religious opinions or notions in any shape or form whatever and that we act upon the broad and liberal principle that all men have equal rights, and ought to be respected, and that every man has a privilege in this organization of choosing for himself voluntarily his God, and what he pleases for his religion, inasmuch as there is no danger but that every man will embrace the greatest light. God cannot save or damn a man only on the principle that every man acts, chooses and worships for himself; hence the importance of thrusting from us every spirit of bigotry and intolerance towards a man's religious sentiments, that spirit which has drenched the earth with blood—When a man feels the least temptation to such intolerance he ought to spurn it from him. It becomes our duty on account of this intolerance and corruption—the inalienable right of man being to think as he pleases—worship as he pleases &c being the first law of every thing that is sacred—to guard every ground all the days of our lives. I will appeal to every man in this council beginning at the youngest that when he arrives to the years of Hoary age he will have to say that the principles of intolerance and bigotry never had a place in this kingdom, nor in my breast, and that he is even then ready to die rather than yield to such things. Nothing can reclaim the human mind from its ignorance, bigotry, superstition &c but those grand and sublime principles of equal rights and universal freedom to all men.

Joseph Smith, April 18, 1844

The chairman said he had never had any trials about brother Wights conduct, and presumed no one present had. We have no right to complain of others while we are as corrupt as they are. Gods way is, never to commence a matter untill he is able to carry it out.

He wanted Elder Wight and every other man who could leave, to go into all the States and preach and electioneer for him to be president. And when he is president we can send out ministers plenipotentiary, who will secure to themselves such influence that when their office shall cease they may be received into everlasting habitations, but we should never indulge our appetites to injure our influence, or wound the feelings of friends, or cause the spirit of the Lord to leave us. There is no excuse for any man to drink and get drunk in the church of Christ, or gratify any appetite, or lust, contrary to the principles of righteousness.

The chairman continued to instruct the council on the principles of sobriety, and every thing pertaining to godliness at considerable length & concluded by remarking that it is best to run on a long race and be careful to keep good wind &c. —

Joseph Smith, May 3, 1844

He looks for a full and perfect emancipation of the whole human race, that the sound of oppression should be buried in eternal oblivion. The paltry considerations of earthly gain and glory falls into insignificance before the glories we now realize. The object we have in view is not to save a man alone or a nation, but to call down the power of God and let all be blessed, protected, saved and made happy – burst of the chains of oppression. This is a kingdom worth having.

-- Amasa Lyman, April 11, 1844