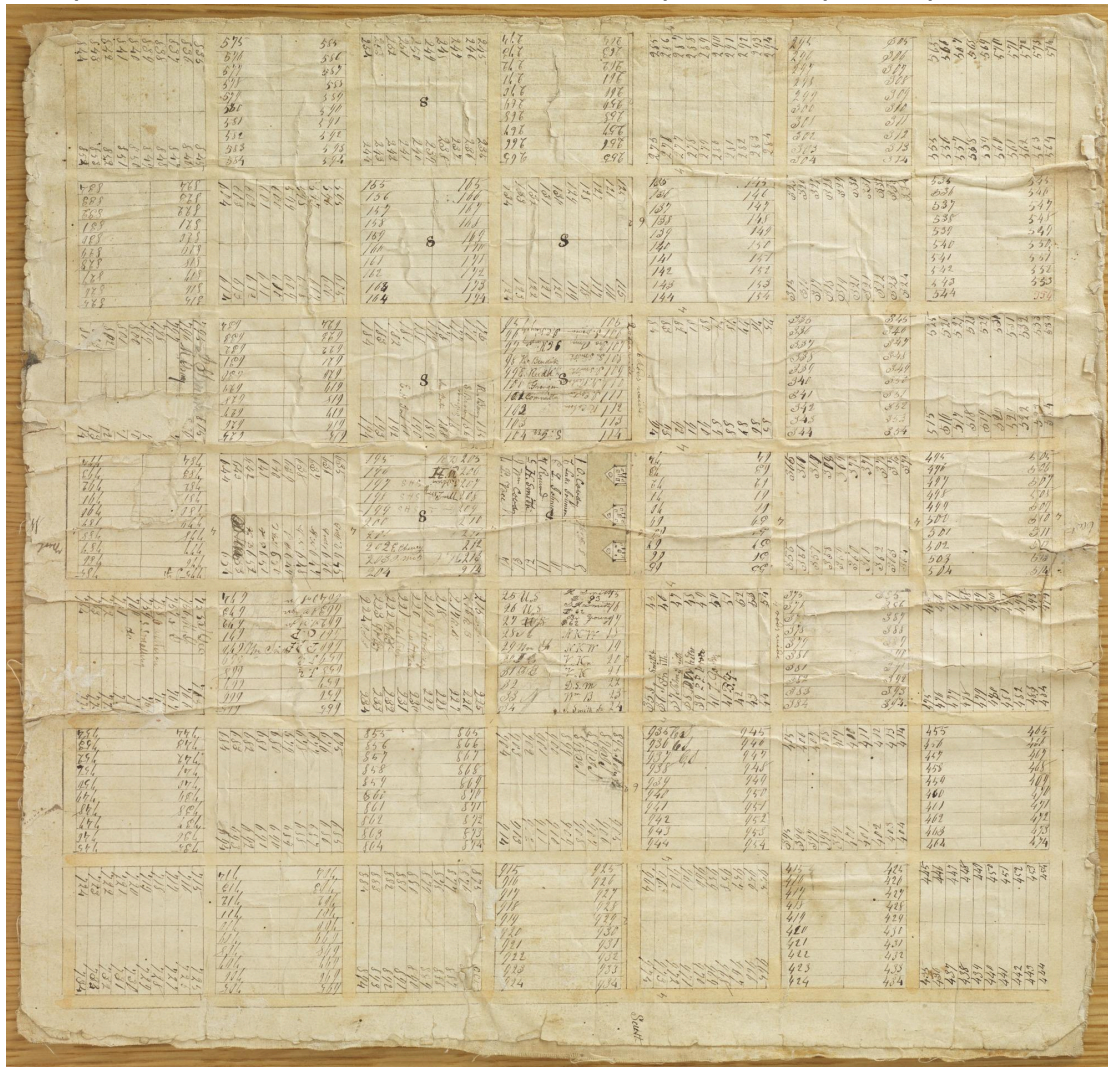


Martin Harris 34 Year Connection to the Kirtland Temple

For several years before moving to Utah, Martin Harris lived just 200 feet from the Kirtland Temple and acted as a tour guide for many individuals who visited the area.

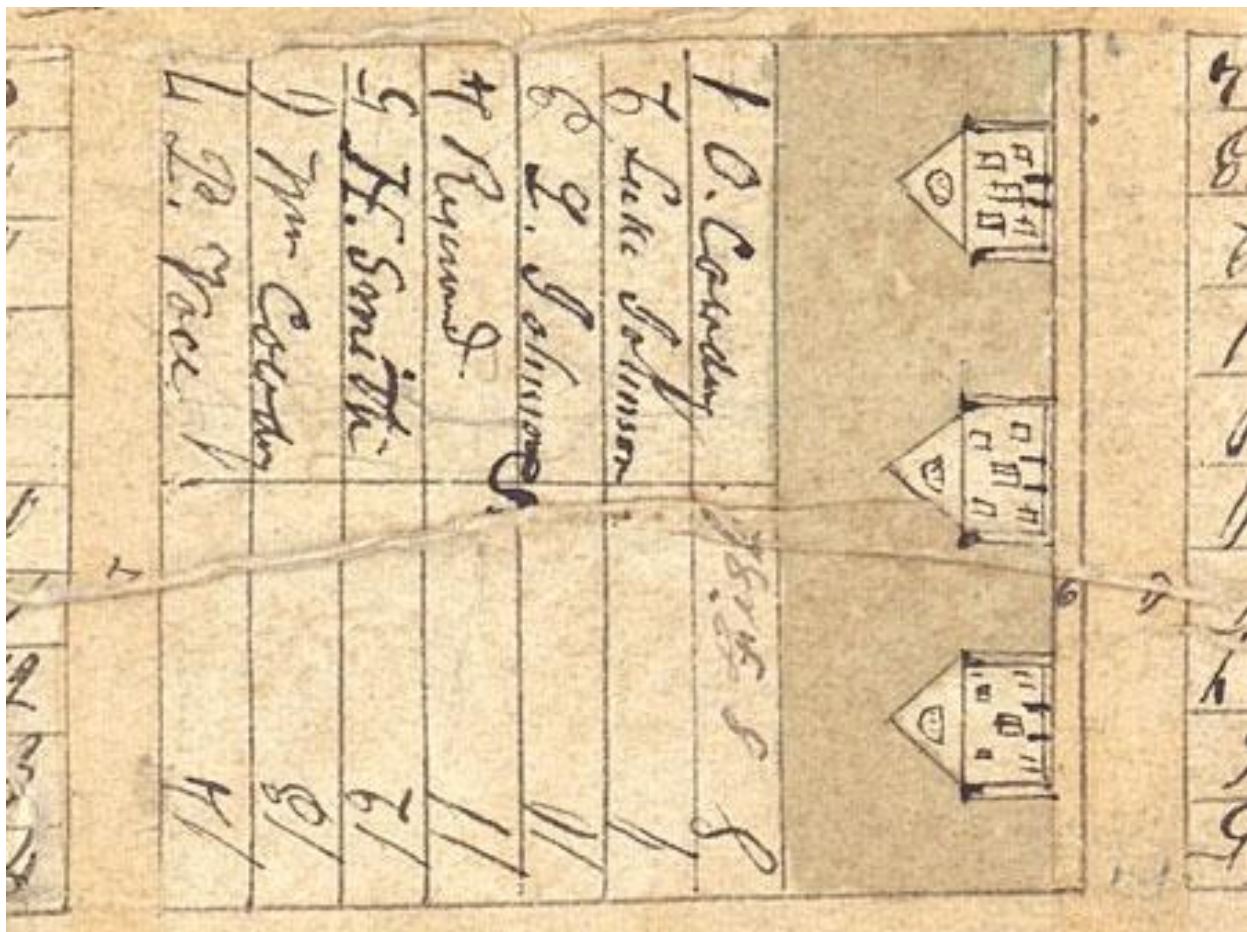
In April 1833, Joseph Coe, acting as agent for the Church and its leader, Joseph Smith, purchased 103 acres of land in Kirtland, Ohio, belonging to Peter French. At the time, his newly organized Church was not incorporated in Ohio, and could not legally own land. In addition, 2 other large parcels were added to the land holdings.

A 4 June 1833 revelation declared a plan for these newly acquired properties, "I design to build mine holy house" and commanded Newel K. Whitney to also further divide it into lots for "those who seek inheritances as it shall be determined in council among you." A 2 August 1833 revelation then directed the presidents of the high priesthood to "commence a work of laying out and preparing a beginning and foundation of the city of the stake of Zion here in the land of Kirtland beginning at my house. In the later part of 1833 Frederick G. Williams drew up a master plat map.



The Kirtland plat detailed a seven-by-seven block grid with twenty half-acre lots in each of the forty-nine blocks, with the exception of the center block, which had fourteen individual lots and reserved the remaining three acres for the three aforementioned buildings, making 974 individual lots in total.

This revelation also specified that three “houses,” all of a similar size, were to be built in Kirtland’s central block: “my house,” or temple, which was already under construction and was to be the northernmost building; a “house for the presidency,” to be located immediately south of the temple; and a “house unto me for the work of the printing of the translation of my scriptures,” which was to be the southernmost building. These three “houses” are represented on the plat as block 113 by drawings of three simple gabled buildings in the center block.



Block 113 of The 1833 Plat Map of Kirtland:

East side shows plan to located 3 official buildings:

Temple, Administration, Printing.

Lot 1. O. Cowdery (Oliver)

Lot 2. Luke Johnson
Lot 3. Lyman Johnson
Lot 4. Reserved
Lot 5. H. Smith
Lot 6. Wm. Cowdery (William, father of Oliver)
Lot 7. P. Voce



Lithograph drawn by Henry Howe in 1846. Kirtland Safety Society building on left and the Methodist Meetinghouse on the right situated on the southeast corner of the lot now known as the Kirtland Cemetery. Note the Printing House and residential houses (likely Cowdery and Johnson) are located on the backside of the Temple.

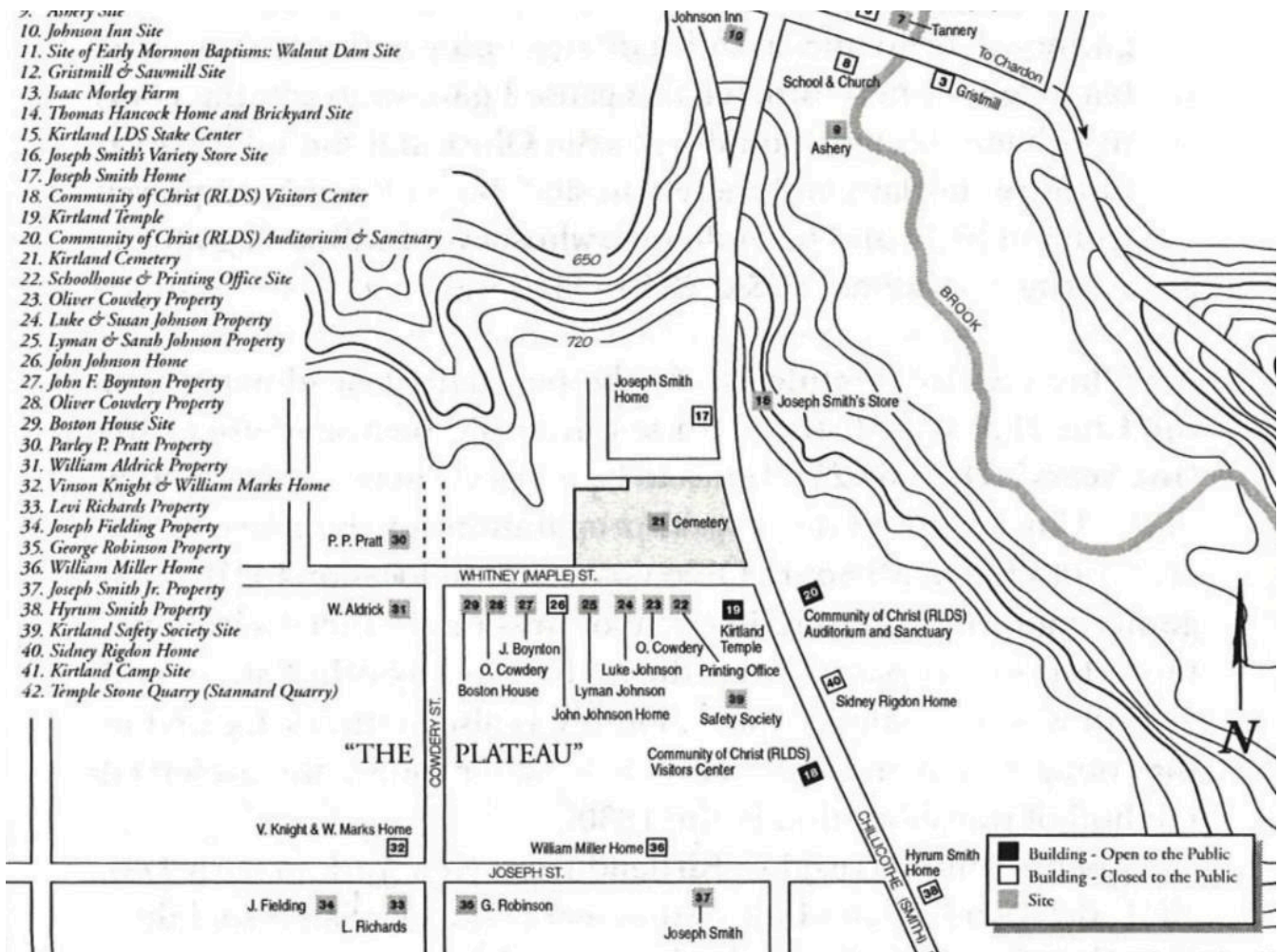


Illustration of neighborhood around Kirtland Temple published in Sacred Places, Ohio and Illinois, Volume Three by LaMar C. Berrett published in 2002.

The building labeled #39 as the Safety Society was built as a small, white structure frequently referred to as the "old banking house of the Mormons". The banking building was not the originally planned, larger, two-court "house for the presidency" mentioned in the revelation.

See the following description and location numbers:

22. (Temple Lot) Printing Office. In 1833 the church built the printing office (meeting room on the first floor) to the rear (west) of the Temple and was also used for the "First Presidency". It faced Whitney Street which was later renamed Maple Street.

23. (Lot 1) has been absorbed into Lot 2 and part of 7788 Maple St. Lot 1 was the first residential lot west of the temple property. Originally, there was a stake in the ground

near the street between the Printing Office and what was originally Oliver Cowdery's house. The stake was the beginning point of the plat of Kirtland. 23.(Lot 1) O. Cowdery

24. (Lot 2) presently 7788 Maple St. Luke Johnson and Susan JJohnson was one of the original Apostles. Luke was a son of John Johnson.

25. (Lot 3) presently 7786 Maple St. Lyman Johnson and Sarah S. Johnson. Lyman was an original member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and was a son of John Johnson.

26. (Lot 4) presently 7772 Maple St. and listed as "Reserved". This property is identified as having a home built by John Johnson. His money made possible the purchase of land on the plateau and the flats including this Kirtland Temple site. After moving from Hiram, OH, he occupied the existing home. Joseph Smith performed a wedding ceremony here for John E. Boynton and bride Susan Lowell on Jan 20, 1836.

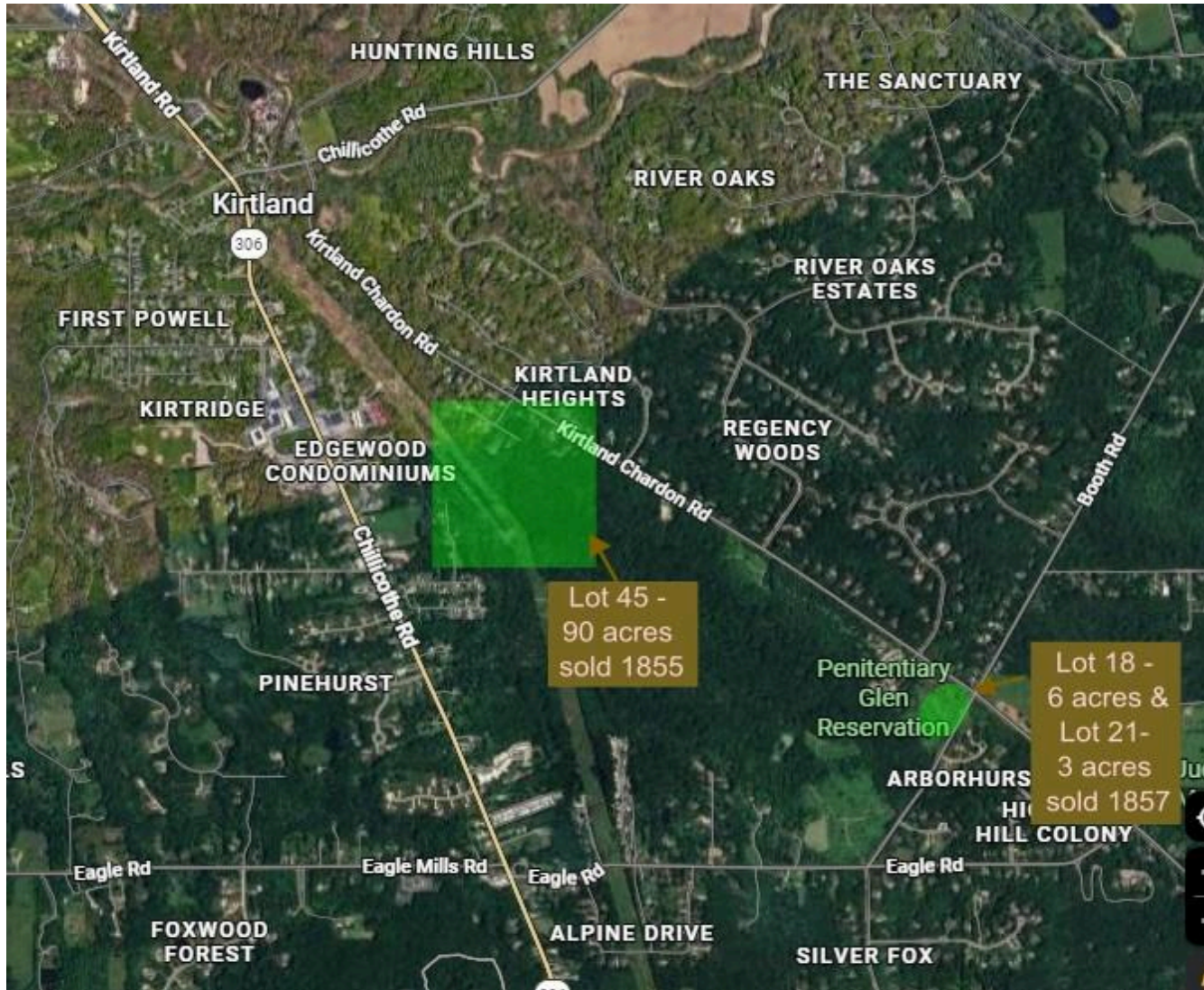
27. (Lot 5) presently 7762 Maple St. H. Smith is listed on the Plat map further research indicates it came to belong to John E. Boynton who was one of the original LDS Apostles.

28. (Lot 6) presently 7752 Maple St. a vacant lot. Wm. "William" Cowdery was the father of Oliver who owned Kirtland lot No. 6, Block 113. It is believed William lived on it until his death in 1837.

29. (Lot 7) presently 7742 Maple St. P. Voce (known as Boston House was named after Polly Vose of Boston. Although it is not clear she ever occupied it.

Martin remained at Kirtland and participated in several expressions of Mormonism and was then re-baptized into the western Latter-day Saint movement on November 6, 1842.

He and wife Caroline lived in a comfortable home east of Kirtland on the Kirtland Chardon Road. They sold 90 acres, Range 9, Township 9, Tract 1, Lot 45, in October 1855 to Isaac W. Smith. They retained 14 acres of land but no further record is found on that. The 1956 Kirtland tax record lists Martin Harris as owning 6 acres on Tract 2, Lot 18, and another 1 and 2 acre lots adjoined all West of the intersection of Kirtland Chardon Road and Booth Road.



After several years of pleading with Martin to go to Utah they did travel as a family as far as Pattawattamie County, Iowa where daughter Ida May was born in May of 1856. However, Martin chose to not continue to go west and left his family there, returning to Kirtland by April of 1857. After 3 years in Iowa, Caroline made her way to Utah with the children by Summer of 1859.

In the fall of 1857, Martin acquired two one-half-acre lots near the temple: (No. 2 and No. 3 of Block 113). He lived in a home on Lot No.2, just 200 feet to the Kirtland Temple and gave tours to whoever knocked on his door.

LOT 3

Martha Frost had acquired Lot 3 prior to 1849 (as shown on a tax record that year).

Martin Harris purchased Lot 3 from Martha Frost on October 17, 1857. [See: Martha Frost to Martin Harris, Lot 3, Deed Record Book S, p. 277, Lake County Recorder's Office, Painesville, Ohio;](#)

Personal circumstances necessitated Martin to sell it 14 years later. He sold Lot No. 3 to Hiram Dixon on November 11, 1863 (or 1866 as per another record found) for the consideration of \$125.00. [See: Martin Harris to Hiram Dixon, Lot No. 3, Deed Record Book X, pp. 462–63; also Jenson, LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:271-76.](#)

LOT 2

Electa Stratton acquired Lot 2 in November of 1856 from Samuel Wadsworth.

Martin purchased Lot No. 2 from Hiram and Electa Stratton, October 20, 1857. [See: Hiram and Electa Stratton, Lot 2, Deed Record Book N, pp. 589–90, Lake County Recorder's Office, Painesville, Ohio.](#)

Martin deeded 50% ownership of Lot No. 2 to his son George B. Harris on December 10, 1859 for the consideration of \$200.00, [See: Martin Harris to George B. Harris, Lot No. 2, Deed Record Book T, pp. 524–25, Lake County Recorder's Office, Painesville, Ohio.](#)

While living in his home on Lot 2, David H. Cannon visited Martin in 1861, who took him over to tour the Kirtland Temple. James McKnight met with Martin Harris there in 1862. In 1869, William H. Homer visited Martin Harris. Both were shown the Temple.

Martin's son George married Mary Jane Thompson on 28 Dec 1858. Their marriage was annulled 21 Feb 1862. By 28 May 1862 George was sentenced to jail for 10 days for assault on Mary Jane's Father. Martin still had one half of this lot and house held jointly with Mary Jane and George. 18 Oct 1862 Mary Jane married Alonzo Miller. George was killed in the Civil War on 1 October 1864.

After the 1850s, those who remained in Kirtland were those who had been attracted to other groups who were not part of the "Brighamite Church" movement or who were unable to take their leave to Utah. Martin Harris was the principal holdout.

Life became more of a struggle for Martin during the later 1860s. Sometime between 1864 and 1869 he sold his remaining portion of Lot 2 (no record is found). With little money left and no more home he was taken in by his former neighbor Electa who had married the owner of Lot 1 Joseph Hollister.

Christopher G. Crary, a Kirtland Township Trustee, described Harris's circumstances in 1869 as: "destitute of a home, poorly clothed, feeble, burdensome to friends, and that he ought to be taken to the poor-house. I found him at a house near the Temple, with a family...(Hollisters). The Lady (Electa) said she would take care of him while their means lasted."

LOT 1

Joseph C. Hollister purchased Lot 1 (former Cowdery property) from Lyman Cowdery on 14 Mar 1859.

After Electa Stratton's husband Hiram Stratton died, she married Joseph Hollister in 1869. Joseph Hollister was her next door neighbor living on Lot 1. His wife Azuba had died in 1868.

Martin, age eighty-eight, having no real wealth to speak of, was then living on the goodwill and charity of Joseph C. Hollister, age eighty-four; and his wife, Electa Stratton Hollister, age sixty-six." [See: US. Federal Census, 1870, Kirtland Township, Lake County, Ohio, 404, fn. 75; 420.](#)

In February 1870 Edward Stevenson visited Martin at the Hollister residence in Kirtland. Then in August 1870 Stevenson returned to transport Harris to Utah by train. Within 5 years, Martin died July 10, 1875, at Clarkston, Cache, Utah.



The seven original ½ acre lots on the Temple Block 113 overlaid on a current aerial photograph of the neighborhood. Note the individual lot boundaries and their structures evolved over time.

Print office on Temple Lot

Oliver also obtained “ownership/stewardship” of the print shop on the backside grounds of the temple when the partnership of Cowdery and F. G. Williams was dissolved in 1836. Then a dissident church faction obtained “title” to the print shop during a sheriff’s sale in late 1837, likely by Lyman Sherman. When he learned that dissenters in Kirtland were making plans to use the press in the printing office to print lies and slanderous opposition to the Prophet Joseph, he set fire to the office to thwart their plans. The 16 Jan 1838 fire destroyed the office building and its contents and scorched the back side of Kirtland Temple.

Additional information on Lots 1 - 7, Block 113
Lot No. 1, Block 113, presently 7788 Maple St.

(Oliver) was appointed by revelation as the steward of several lots in Kirtland (D&C 104:28-34). His lot 1 shared boundaries with the Temple Lot and its Print Shop and Office built in the rear property of the Temple next to the Cowdery property.

When they left Kirtland, Oliver and Elizabeth Cowdery sold their home on Lot 1 to John Johnson on May 27, 1837, for \$600.00. [See: Black and Porter's Article citing this transaction: Lot 1, in Block 113, in the town of Kirtland, Geauga County Ohio Land Records Vol. 24, 374; See Lyle S. and Gladys A. Briggs, "Land Transitions of the Saints," Kirtland, Ohio 18301 & 1840s, August 5, 1993.](#)

When Oliver returned to Kirtland from Far West after the expulsion of the church from Missouri he and Elizabeth's house, was now the home of Oliver's brother Lyman Cowdery who had purchased it from John Johnson. [See: Black and Porter cite this as Lyman purchased Lot 1, in Block 113, in the town of Kirtland on October 16, 1838, Geauga County Ohio Land Records, Vol. 26, 477.](#)

Oliver and Elizabeth's family probably became part of Lyman's household. It appears that Oliver's father, William Cowdery, Jr. was then living with Lyman.

Joseph C. Hollister purchased some of the former Cowdery lands from Lyman Cowdery including Lot #1 on 14 Mar 1859. Hollister later married Electa Ann, the former husband of Hiram Stratton. In 1857 they sold lot #2 to Martin Harris..

Lot No. 4, Block 113, presently 7772 Maple St.

John Johnson was an important financial supporter of the development of Kirtland. John Johnson invested in the Kirtland "Bank" and lost a lot of money. Consequently, John was dropped from the high council and excommunicated when he affiliated with the dissenting party. John and Elsa Johnson remained in Kirtland [See: History of the Church, 2:510; See also, Andrew Jenson, ed. and pub., The Historical Record \(Salt Lake City, 1889\), 5: 32.](#)

Lot No. 7, Block 113 Boston House (P. Voce refers to Polly Voce) presently 7752 Maple St.

Polly Voce, Fannie Brewer, along with Vienna Jacques, "old maids from Boston, furnished money to build a three-story house; they called it the Boston House." [See: Mrs. Alfred Morley, Arthur B. Deming, ed., Naked Truths About Mormonism 1, No. 1. \(January 1888\). W. W. Phelps explained, "The 'Boston House' . . . is 53 feet by 32 feet--three stories high, it is not yet enclosed. It is almost a miracle how such a large number of people live \[in it.\]" See: W. W. Phelps to Sally, Kirtland, January 3, 1836. —"Some Early Letters of William W. Phelps," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 31 \(January 1940\):25-31.](#)

Though occupied from early 1836, the exterior of the building apparently remained unfinished for two years. Writing on January 19, 1838, Hepzibah Richards wrote, "The Boston house is finished outside. Some few other buildings have been erected this summer; but in general K [Kirtland] wears the same aspect as when I first saw it." [See:](#)

Letters of Hepzibah Richards, 1838, Kenneth W. and Audrey W. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of The Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City; Deseret Book, 1982), 69-80.

Additional Source Material:

Letter from Ron Romig to L. Randall Harris, 22 Mar 2026

1833 Kirtland Plat Map:

<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/plat-of-kirtland-ohio-not-before-2-august-1833/1#historical-intro>

Ron Romig's History of Martin on Ancestry

<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tree/65173649/family?cfpid=48134900705&fpid=112249315101>

“Martin Harris’s Kirtland” edited by Ronald E. Romig, John Whitmer Books, 2007

Kirtland Township, Lake County, Ohio, cited in Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter, “Martin Harris Will Be Here In Time,” *Bountiful Harvest, Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown*, 46.

Martin Harris, Uncompromising Witness of the Book of Mormon, Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter, BYU Studies, 2018

Sacred Places, Ohio and Illinois, Volume Three by LaMar C. Berrett Deseret Book, 2002

Old Mormon Kirtland and Missouri Historic Photographs and Guide, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, Fieldbrook Productions, 1991

Howe Litho of Kirtland Temple. The 1846 Howe engraving describes the small building on the left as the "old banking house of the Mormons." The word "old" by 1846 — only about nine years after the bank failed — is telling, suggesting the building may already have been in declining condition or disuse by then.:

<https://collections.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6s3t4sf>

The two months following the formal organization of the Kirtland Safety Society on November 2, 1836 were spent addressing logistical issues, including constructing a building from which they would operate. This puts construction squarely in late November and December of 1836, so the building was a very hastily erected structure — put up in a matter of weeks specifically to house the new institution before it opened in early January 1837.

Caroline Young Harris: The Kirtland Wife of Martin Harris by Dennis A. Wright:
<https://rsc.byu.edu/regional-studies-latter-day-saint-church-history-ohio-upper-canada/caroline-young-harris-kirtland-wife-martin-harris#:~:text=Seven%20children%20were%20born%20to,other%20Church%20members%20in%20Utah>

<https://www.dialoguejournal.com/articles/martin-harris-the-kirtland-years-1831-1870/>

FamilySearch PINS:

Electa Stratton L7J6-XQZ

Hiram Dixon KGCJ-DMW

Joseph Hollister L7JY-5FX