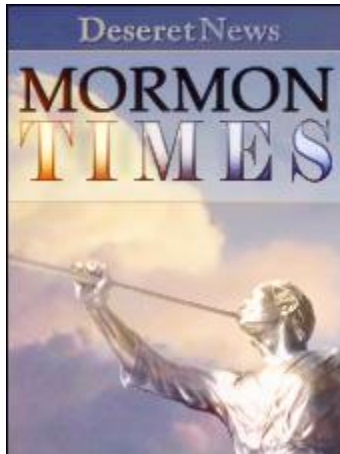
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The Irish Mormon prophet

By Michael De Groote

Mormon Times

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When people think of St. Patrick's Day and famous Irishmen they probably don't think about Joseph Smith Jr.

But they should.

As reported in the Deseret News and [on MormonTimes.com](http://on.MormonTimes.com) last August, Ugo Perego, director of operations at the Sorenson Molecular

Genealogy Foundation discovered a rare DNA marker in descendants of Joseph Smith. This marker establishes that the Smith family line came from Ireland.

Genealogists had been able to trace the Smiths to a Robert Smith who arrived in the United States in 1638 from England. Some assumptions were made about where he came from and guesses were made, but no hard evidence existed that enabled reliable tracing to go any further.

Enter DNA.

Perego thought it would be an easy task to match the well-established DNA signature of the Joseph Smith family with other Smiths in England.

It wasn't.

The Smith's DNA was not like any Smith in England that Perego could find.

Perego began DNA detective work -- trying to find a close match. After narrowing his search he discovered that the Smith family DNA matched very closely with the many descendants of "Niall of the Nine Hostages," a fifth-century Irish warlord who was the ancestor of the kings of Ireland up to the 10th century. Joseph Smith's ancestors along his paternal line were not just Irish, but probably related to Irish royalty.

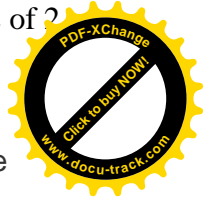
Perego speculated that the Smiths had to be relatively new to England when Robert Smith came to America, otherwise there should have been DNA matches in England. He thinks that Robert's family came from Ireland and changed their last name to fit in and avoid anti-Irish sentiments. They chose the most common of English names.

If the family had not changed their name, it is possible that the first prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could have been named "Joseph O'Malley" or "Joseph Flannigan."

Perego's study only applies to the Smith line -- the descent from father to son and so forth. Joseph Smith, of course, had many ancestors who were not along the Smith line (his mother for instance).

So how are Joseph's descendants receiving this news?

Michael Kennedy, the President of the Joseph Smith Jr. Family Organization and of the Joseph Smith Jr. and Emma Hale Smith Historical Society, said that most members of the family probably



don't know about the study yet, but they will announce it at the next reunion. "I thought we were Scottish," he said.

[Read the article about the discovery from August, 2008.](#)

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