



Sustaining the Law

John W. Welch

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Joseph Smith believed in sustaining the law. This book presents his main legal encounters in the context of his day. Party to more than two hundred suits in the courts of New York, Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and elsewhere, he faced criminal charges as well as civil claims and collection matters. In the end, he was never convicted of any crime, and he paid his debts. These incidents were significant institutionally as well as personally.

Eleven legal scholars analyze these legal encounters. Topics cover constitutional law, copyright, disorderly conduct, association, assault, marriage, banking, land preemptive rights, treason, municipal charters, bankruptcy, guardianship, habeas corpus, adultery, and freedom of the press.

A 53-page legal chronology presents key information about Joseph's life in the law. An appendix provides biographies of sixty lawyers and judges with whom he was involved, some being the best legal minds of his day. This book is for anyone interested in the life of Joseph Smith, whether general readers, historians, lawyers, or law students. Each chapter tells a fascinating story based on controlling legal documents — many just recently discovered — that allow detailed legal analysis and accurate understanding.

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