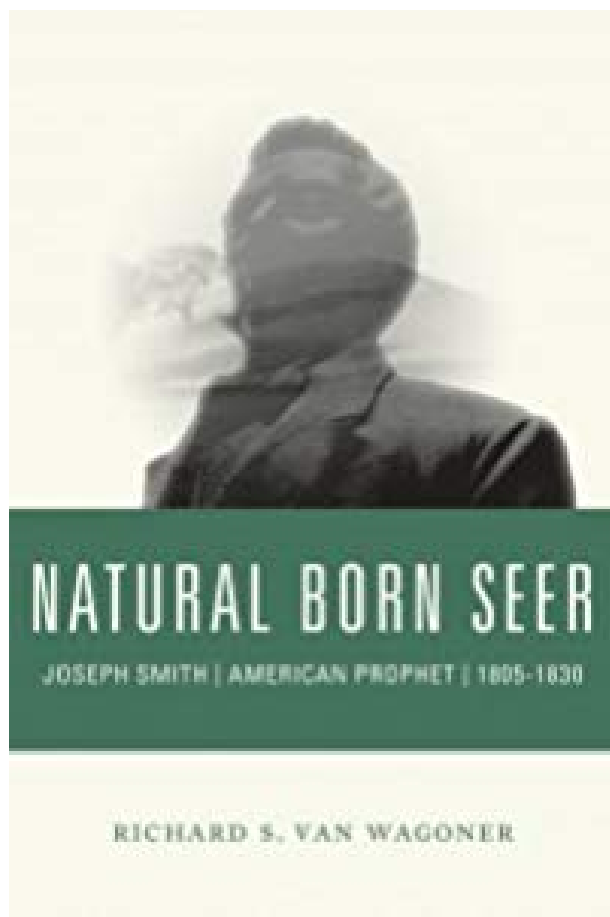


# Natural Born Seer: Joseph Smith, American Prophet, 1805-1830



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As prize-winning historian Richard S. Van Wagoner narrates the first twenty-five years of Smith's life, the young seer struggled with his family through a series of roller-coaster hardships, eventually securing work as a sayer of lost treasure and money digger. In the wake of successive failures, including run-ins with the law, Smith's glass-looking activities gave way to more religiously oriented pursuits, especially after a heavenly messenger showed him the location of buried golden plates containing a pre-Columbian story of the Americas and charged him with the record's decipherment and publication. Smith also learned, following another extraordinary vision, that his sins had been remitted, that humanity was in a state of apostasy, and that Jesus would soon return to the earth. After eloping with Emma Hale, much to her skeptical father's chagrin, the couple settled down to complete work on what would appear for sale in early 1830 as the Book of Mormon. By this time, Smith had begun to shoulder more fully the prophet's mantle, issuing proclamations in God's own voice, and on April 6, 1830, organized the Church of Christ, known today as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.