PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-17

The first log of the Pioneer Log Cabin, 1923: Major Joseph Smith's homestead, his granddaughter, and the county office building he put up in 1860

Michael Urbanski ORCID 0009-0006-8183-5828 (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8183-5828), Project Scroll · Issued 2 November 2026 · Version 1 · a permanent identifier (DOI) will be added here

SUMMARY

The Pioneer Log Cabin at Cassopolis, Michigan, was raised in 1923 from logs given by families across Cass County, each numbered on a donor list. Log No. 1, a beech "from the Major Smith Homestead," was given by Mr. and Mrs. A. N. Armstrong; the cabin's own account names the homestead but not the Major. Glover's county history of 1906 shows that the log came from Mrs. Armstrong's own family: she was May S. Smith, daughter of John and Adelia (Tietsort) Smith, and her father "was a son of Major Joseph Smith," the county pioneer whom Mathews (1882) calls "Maj. Smith." The Society's letterhead of 1924 adds that the first log was hauled to the lake "passing old County Office Building," and Mathews records that the county's fire-proof office building beside the court house, known today as "the Fort," "was erected in 1860, by Joseph Smith." Very probably the same man, so the log from Major Smith's homestead was drawn past the building he had put up sixty-three years before.

THE RECORD

1. **Marcia Gaskin, comp., *1923 Pioneer Log Cabin Museum Searchable Donor List* (Cassopolis, 2012): log No. 1**

   > *A beech "from the Major Smith Homestead," given by Mr. and Mrs. A. N. Armstrong.*

   Pioneer Log Cabin Museum, Cassopolis; scan at the Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/pioneer_log_cabin_museum_text_searchable1a)

2. **The Cass County Pioneer and Historical Society's letterhead, 1924, reproduced ibid.**

   > *The first log was hauled to the cabin site "passing old County Office Building."*

   Pioneer Log Cabin Museum, Cassopolis; scan at the Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/pioneer_log_cabin_museum_text_searchable1a)

3. **L. H. Glover, ed., *A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Lewis, 1906), pp. 454–455: A. N. Armstrong**

   > *Mrs. Armstrong was May S. Smith, daughter of John and Adelia (Tietsort) Smith; her father "was a son of Major Joseph Smith."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/twentiethcentury00glov)

4. **Alfred Mathews, *History of Cass County, Michigan* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1882), p. 73: the county buildings**

   > *The county officers' building "was erected in 1860, by Joseph Smith."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/historyofcasscou00wate)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The cabin's first log is usually described only as coming "from the Major Smith Homestead." Its givers can now be placed in the Major's own family, through his granddaughter, and its route links it to a second monument of the county's first

generation: the 1860 county office building, “the Fort,” which a Joseph Smith built and which the Society’s letterhead names as a landmark of the log’s journey. The commemoration of 1923 thus began with a gift from a pioneer family, carried past a pioneer’s own work.

LIMITS

That the Joseph Smith who built the county office building in 1860 was Major Joseph Smith is a reading, not a documented fact: Mathews does not give the builder’s rank, and Joseph Smith was a common name. The line from the Major to Mrs. Armstrong rests on Glover’s biography of her husband. The route of the log is known only from the letterhead’s phrase; the homestead’s exact place has not been fixed, though the county atlas of 1872 places Major Smith’s land just north of the village.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

The cabin’s booklet of 2012 (Gaskin), which gives only “Major Smith Homestead”; Wikipedia; the Cass County Historical Society’s and the cabin museum’s pages; *Leader* articles of 2003–2013; Mathews (1882) and Glover (1906); the Historical Marker Database entry for the old court house and the county office building; web searches for the Major Smith homestead, the Armstrongs and the builder of the Fort. None connects the first log with the Major’s family or with the office building.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. “Old Cass County Court House” and the county office building, “the Fort.” Historical Marker Database, marker 64729. https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=64729
2. Michael Urbanski, “The cabin a county built,” *Project Scroll* (2026), Part 2 of the series on the Cass County Pioneer Society. https://projectscroll.com/news/the-cabin-a-county-built/

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in The cabin a county built (projectscroll.com/news/the-cabin-a-county-built/). In the discoveries register:

- `major-smith-armstrong` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#major-smith-armstrong)
- `major-smith-fort` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#major-smith-fort)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

Michael Urbanski, “The first log of the Pioneer Log Cabin, 1923: Major Joseph Smith’s homestead, his granddaughter, and the county office building he put up in 1860,” Project Scroll Research Note 2026-17, version 1 (2 November 2026), https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-17/.

BibTeX

```
@techreport{urbanski202617,
  author      = {Urbanski, Michael},
  orcid       = {0009-0006-8183-5828},
  title       = {{The first log of the Pioneer Log Cabin, 1923: Major
Joseph Smith's homestead, his granddaughter, and the county office
building he put up in 1860}},
  institution = {Project Scroll},
  type        = {Project Scroll Research Note},
  number      = {2026-17},
  year        = {2026},
  month       = {nov},
  url         = {https://projectscroll.com/discoveries/notes/2026-17/},
  note        = {Version 1}
}
```