Wayne A. Mori grew up in Western Pennsylvania and attended Clarion University, majoring in French with a minor in German. He also studied at the Université Laval in Québec City, the Université de Montpelier, France, and SUNY at Fredonia. In the fall of 1969 he moved to Fredonia and started his teaching career in the Pine Valley School District, South Dayton, from which he retired in 1999. He now lives in Dunkirk, has a small second hand book business, dealing in books on religion in America, and is very much enjoying retirement.

Though not a Latter-day Saint, Wayne has always had a keen interest in early Mormonism and its founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. He is a member of the Mormon History Association and the John Whitmer Historical Association, both of which are "independent nonprofit organizations dedicated to the study of and understanding of all aspects of Mormon history." His particular interest in local Mormon history started some fifteen years ago when he discovered that Joseph Smith passed through Chautauqua County on two missionary journeys in the 1830's and had spent a few days, on both occasions, with the Freeman Nickerson Family of South Dayton. It was there in the fall of 1833 that Smith wrote this prophecy concerning Western New York, "Behold, and lo, I have much people in this place, in the regions round about; and an effectual door shall be opened in the regions round about in this eastern land." (L.D.S. Doctrine and Covenants 100:3)

Wayne's talk will cover the lives of some of the many men and women from Chautauqua County who had accepted Joseph Smith, Jr. as a latter-day prophet, and who would pass through that "effectual door" that opened westward. In spite of unimagineable depravations and relentless persecutions many of these former Chautauquans contributed greatly to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, and would eventually, under the leadership of Brigham Young, make their way across the Plains to the Great Salt Lake.
Mission Statement:

Our mission is to foster an interest in and knowledge of the history of Chautauqua County through the collection, preservation and interpretation of objects of local historical significance.

Joseph Smith, Jr passed through Chautauqua County, NY on two missionary journeys. In October 1833 he spent a night with the Job Lewis family of Westfield, the next day he spoke with a Mr Nash of Portland and on October 12 arrived at the Freeman Nickerson home in South Dayton. His journal entries for the March 1834 visit mentions passing through Westfield, Laona, Villenova, and onto Perryburgh, Cattaraugus County.

The sketch to the right is of Joseph Smith preaching in the wilderness.

“Early Mormon Converts in Chautauqua County, 1830 - 1836”

The summer luncheon program presented by Wayne Mori.

The photo to the left is Wayne A. Mori in the Sacred Grove near Palma, NY where Joseph Smith Jr., as a teenager, had his first encounter with the Divine.
Mormonism Unveiled: A faithful account of that singular impostor and delusion, from its rise to the present time. With sketches of the characters of its propagators, and a full detail of the manner in which the famous Golden Bible was brought before the world. To which are added inquiries into the probability that the historical part of the said Bible was written by one Alphonso Spalding, more than 200 years ago, and by him intended to have been published as a romance. With plates.

Just received and for sale at the Fredonia Bookstore. Price 75 cents.
March 10, 1835.
I have the sad & dreadful intelligence to give you of the premature death of Gen. Joseph Smith, Mayor of the City of Nacooche and commander in Chief of the Nacooche Legion & Hyman Smith, his Brother. They were murdered (assassinated) while in the county jail by an armed force of 150 to 50 all painted & otherwise disfigured they were away in trial on a charge of treason. Their enemies acknowledged that they had done nothing that nothing could be found against them. They had voluntarily given themselves up to trial upon the Governor with the full saying their words & Hymn that they should be instructed from all violence (But they are dead) They died Martyrs in a religious prosecution
"Mormonism Unveiled" (sic), published in Painesville, Ohio in 1834 by Eber D. Howe, was based mainly on the work of an excommunicated Mormon, Doctor Philastus Hurlbut (Doctor was a given name, not his profession), who may have had ties with early Methodism in Jamestown, NY. This 290 page book was a vitriolic attack on the character of Joseph Smith, Jr. and on Mormonism in general. An ad from the Fredonia Censor shows that it was selling for .75¢ in 1835. Today a reasonably good copy of this book sells for a couple thousand dollars.

Joseph Smith, Jr. passed through Chautauqua County, NY on two missionary journeys. In October 1833 he spent a night with the Job Lewis Family of Westfield, the next day spoke with a Mr. Nash of Portland and on October 12 arrived at the Freeman Nickerson home in South Dayton. His journal entries for the March 1834 visit mentions passing through Westfield, Laona, Villenova and on to Perryburgh, Cattaraugus Co.

Wayne A. Mori in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, NY where Joseph Smith, Jr., as a teenager, had his first encounter with the Divine.
Ezekiel and Julia Hills Johnson arrived in the Town of Pomfret, NY from Westford, VT in the fall of 1813 and made a home for their 16 children (one died in infancy) on lot 21, located on the Fredonia-Stockton Road. Julia moved the family to Kirtland, OH in the spring of 1833 while her husband was at Fort Dearborn (Chicago), preparing a new home for his wife and children.

This is an excerpt from a letter dated July 3, 1844, written by Joseph E. Johnson who was living in Hancock County, IL (b. 1817 Town of Pomfret, NY) to a boyhood friend, Benjamin Willson of Laona. In it he relates the tragic events of June 27, 1844, on which date Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered. The original is housed in the Darwin R. Barker Museum, Fredonia, NY.
JULIA HILLS JOHNSON
Born Sept 26, 1783 at Upton, Mass.
Died May 30, 1853 — Council Bluffs, Iowa

EZEKIEL JOHNSON
Born Jan. 12, 1776 (1773), Uxbridge, Mass.
Died Jan 13, 1848 at Nauvoo, Illinois