



Type: Magazine Article

---

## The Original Manuscript

Editor(s): Junius F. Wells

Source: *The Contributor*, Vol. 8, No. 12 (October 1887)

Published by: The Contributor Company

Page(s): 441, 474

---

**Abstract:** A reproduction, explanation, and description of a page of the original Book of Mormon manuscript.

that as we journeyed in the wilderness behold lamem &  
Lemuel and two of the daughters of Ishmael and the two sons  
of Ishmael and their families did rebel against us year against  
Lehi and Sam and their father Ishmael and his  
wife ~~and his wife~~ and his three other daughters and it came  
to pass that in the which rebellion they were driven to  
go into the land of Perushem and now Ishmael being  
grieved for the bandings of their horns therefore I spake  
unto them saying ye <sup>even</sup> shall come and unto Lemuel  
behold thou art mine elder brother and how is it that  
ye are so hard in your hearts and so blind in your mi-  
nds that ye have seen that I your younger brother should  
speak unto you ye are set an example for you how  
is it that ye have not hearkened unto the word of the Lord

#### FAC-SIMILE OF ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

This extract is a reproduction of a portion of a page of manuscript recovered from the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, in 1833, where it had been deposited October 2d, 1841, by the Prophet Joseph Smith. The page of manuscript from which this is taken measures sixteen and one-half inches by six and one-half inches, and is of good paper, of medium weight, but much discolored by time. The head line of this page reads: "Lamen & Lemuel rebelleth against Nephi," and the printed counterpart will be found in I Nephi, vii: 6-9, Book of Mormon, page 13. (For further particulars relating to this manuscript, see History of the Book of Mormon, by Geo. Reynolds, CONTRIBUTOR, Vol. V, page 365, and A Tour of Historical Scenes, by F. D. Richards, Vol. VII, page 303.)

---

# THE CONTRIBUTOR.

---

JUNIUS F. WELLS, EDITOR.

---

PUBLISHED BY THE CONTRIBUTOR COMPANY.

*Terms: Two Dollars a Year, in advance.*

---

SALT LAKE CITY,                      OCTOBER, 1887.

---

## THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

THE fac-simile of the original manuscript, which we present as the frontispiece of the present number, is of great interest to the student of Church history as it no doubt will be to our readers generally. The history of the manuscript, from a part of which this engraving is made was written by Elder George Reynolds and published in the fifth volume of the CONTRIBUTOR. From it we may fairly presume that the extract here given is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and was written between the seventh of April, 1829, and the fifteenth of the following May.

The appearance of this manuscript will be variously regarded, and it may not be amiss to direct attention to some of its features which may excite criticism. The writing is at first a little difficult to decipher, but on becoming used to it is found to be clear and regular and quite easy to read. It was penned upon paper which was good for the times, but does not compare in smoothness of surface to the ordinary writing paper of the present day, and considering that it was unruled, the lines are remarkably straight and even. There are fifty-four lines on a page, and they commence and finish as near the edges as possible, testifying to a disposition to economy, made necessary by the scarcity and expense of good writing paper so early in the century. The entire absence of punctuation marks may be accounted for by the fact that the system of punctuation as applied to manuscript was not in common use by those whose education was derived from the common schools. It was not taught by them, and indeed has found place in the course of instruction in country schools only within more recent times.

In 1829 western New York was the wild west, the border land of American civilization, and scholars were rarely met among the sturdy farmers and backwoodsmen. The young man who had received a common school education—reading, writing and arithmetic—in the villages of New England, stood high for scholastic learning in the border land, and such were called in winter time to lay aside the woodman's ax and take up the spelling book and ferule to teach the children the rudiments of English. They were the school teachers of those times; and among them Oliver Cowdery passed for a good scholar, notwithstanding that his spelling was not the best, that he had no accurate knowledge of the use of capitals and entirely avoided the employment of marks and signs of punctuation. However, it may not be quite just to say that he knew nothing of punctuation. The absence of these signs in the manuscript may be due to their absence on the plates from which the Prophet translated. The plates were engraved before the art of punctuation was known in Europe. As the manuscript in possession of David Whitmer is marked by the printer and the first edition of the Book of Mormon is carefully punctuated, it seems reasonable to conclude that the punctuation of manuscript was regarded at that time as among the duties of the compositor rather than of the editor or author. Or it may be that in the conscientious endeavor of Joseph to perform the task of translation, literally, as the words were pictured by the Urim and Thummin before him, he would not suffer Oliver to insert punctuation marks that did not appear, and punctuation and paragraphing were therefore deferred until a copy of the original translation should be made for the printer.

At the commencement of another season's work the Mutual Improvement Associations have the assurance of continued encouragement, and it is expected of them that they will manifest renewed interest and energy in carrying out the high object for which they have been organ-