



Type: Journal Article

Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, "Sketch Book"

Author(s): Leonard J. Arrington

Source: *BYU Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1972), pp. 410–426

Published by: BYU Studies

Abstract: As a witness of significant events in the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Oliver Cowdery's importance is superseded only by that of the Prophet Joseph Smith. With the exception of Joseph's First Vision and the appearances of Moroni, Cowdery participated with the Prophet in the key events of the Restoration. The scope of his experiences include the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Priesthood, the organization of the Church, the first extensive missionary work of the Church, and divine manifestations in the Kirtland Temple.

The youngest of eight children, Oliver Cowdery was born 3 October 1806 in Wells, Rutland County, Vermont. In 1825 he moved to New York, where he worked successively as a clerk in a general store, as a blacksmith, and as a farmer. In 1828 he entered the teaching profession in Manchester, New York, where he first became acquainted with the religious claims of Joseph Smith. His entry into the mainstream of Mormon history occurred in April 1829 when he traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to meet Joseph Smith, who was engaged in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Cowdery assisted Joseph as a scribe during the translation of the major part of that work, and his name appears in the Book of Mormon as one of the witnesses to the reliability of the claims of Joseph Smith regarding its origin and method of translation.



BYU Studies is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on The Book of Mormon. Archived by permission of BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>

Oliver Cowdery's Kirtland, Ohio, "Sketch Book"

Leonard J. Arrington

As a witness of significant events in the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Oliver Cowdery's importance is superseded only by that of the Prophet Joseph Smith. With the exception of Joseph's First Vision and the appearances of Moroni, Cowdery participated with the Prophet in the key events of the Restoration. The scope of his experiences include the translation of the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the Priesthood, the organization of the Church, the first extensive missionary work of the Church, and divine manifestations in the Kirtland Temple.

The youngest of eight children, Oliver Cowdery¹ was born 3 October 1806 in Wells, Rutland County, Vermont. In 1825 he moved to New York, where he worked successively as a clerk in a general store, as a blacksmith, and as a farmer. In 1828 he entered the teaching profession in Manchester, New York, where he first became acquainted with the religious claims of Joseph Smith. His entry into the mainstream of Mormon history occurred in April 1829 when he traveled to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to meet Joseph Smith, who was engaged in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Cowdery assisted Joseph as a scribe during the translation of the major part of that work, and his name appears in the Book of Mormon as one of the witnesses to the reliability of the claims of Joseph Smith regarding its origin and method of translation.

Oliver Cowdery testified that he was with Joseph Smith in the spring of 1829 when they "called upon the Lord, and he answered us out of the heavens, and while we were in the heavenly vision the angel came down and bestowed upon us this priesthood; and . . . after this we received the high and holy priesthood."² Oliver's description of the events he witnessed is more than a colorless statement of facts:

Earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage The assurance that we were in the presence of an Angel; the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving.³

Oliver Cowdery held many positions of importance and was engaged in a variety of experiences during the initial eight years of his Church activity.

He was present at the meeting that marked the official beginning of the Church on 6 April 1830 and delivered the first public discourse to members of the new organization five days later. In the fall of 1830 he traveled west from New York with three companions on one of the most portentous missionary journeys in the annals of Church history. After baptizing 130 disciples in Ohio in less than four weeks and traveling some 1500 miles to western Missouri, in what has been described as “a journey perhaps as spectacular as any of the apostle Paul,”⁴ Cowdery and his associates taught the message of the restoration to Indians along America’s western frontier. He was one of eight men with Joseph Smith who participated in the dedication of the temple site at Independence, Missouri, on 3 August 1831. As one of the presidents of the Church in Missouri, Oliver saw the expulsion of the Latter-day Saint community from Jackson County in 1833. In February 1834 he was named to the High Council in Kirtland, Ohio, acting first as clerk, and later, as president of that body. In December of that year he was ordained Assistant President of the Church—second only to Joseph Smith. In February 1835 he officiated, with fellow witnesses to the Book of Mormon, in the selection, instruction, and ordination of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. And although he served as Church Historian and Recorder in 1830–31, he was again appointed to that office in Kirtland in 1835.

Oliver Cowdery also performed a variety of activities as a printer and publisher for the Church. In June 1831 he was named in a revelation to direct the selection, writing, and printing of books for the instruction of children in the Church schools. After returning to Kirtland from Missouri in the summer of 1831, he was called to a committee to review and prepare Church revelation for publication. Then, in company with John Whitmer, Elder Cowdery was sent back to Missouri with the revelation for publication by the Church press in Independence. After the destruction of the press in 1833, Cowdery was directed to re-publish the Church paper, *The Evening and the Morning Star*, in Kirtland. He later edited two other Church papers—the *Northern Times* and the *Messenger and Advocate*.

After allying himself with dissenters from the Church, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated in Missouri on 12 April 1838. During the following ten years that he remained out of the Church, Oliver resided in Kirtland and Tiffin, Ohio, and Elkhorn, Wisconsin. He practiced law in all three communities, participated in local political and civic affairs, and edited two newspapers.

In October 1848, through the instrumentality of his brother-in-law, Phineas Young, Oliver returned to the Church at the time Latter-day Saints were encamped at Council Bluffs, Iowa, during their trek across the Plains to Salt Lake Valley. He was initiated into his former faith by Orson Hyde, who baptized him in the Missouri River on 12 November 1848. Less

than two years later, on 3 March 1850, Cowdery succumbed to tuberculosis while visiting relatives in Richmond, Missouri.

The words of an ex-law partner, William Lang, give a vivid description of Oliver Cowdery, typical of the esteem in which he was held among his associates:

Mr. Cowdery was an able lawyer and a great advocate. His manners were easy and gentlemanly; he was polite, dignified, yet courteous. He had an open countenance, high forehead, dark brown eyes, Roman nose, clenched lips and prominent lower jaw. He shaved smooth and was neat and cleanly in his person. He was of light stature, about five feet, five inches high, and had a loose, easy walk. With all his kind and friendly disposition, there was a certain degree of sadness that seemed to pervade his whole being. His association with others was marked by the great amount of information his conversation conveyed and the beauty of his musical voice. His addresses to the court and jury were characterized by a high order of oratory, with brilliant and forensic force. He was modest and reserved, never spoke ill of any one, never complained.⁵

Oliver Cowdery's involvement in the beginning events of Church history establishes his writings as essential to any study of the claims of Joseph Smith and Mormon beginnings. In light of the role he played in early Church history, the recent finding of a Cowdery diary covering three months in 1836 is of more than passing significance. The diary is written in Cowdery's own hand, and in the back of it is a volume of the Nauvoo High Council minutes. Filed in the Church Archives, the twenty-two page "Sketch Book" contains valuable insight into the life and character of the Second Elder of the Church, and gives a detailed account of his activities immediately preceding the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The diary provides a view of persons and events in Kirtland from a significant perspective. It is reproduced here in its entirety without editorial corrections.

OLIVER COWDERY'S SKETCH BOOK, January 1836

January 1, 1836.

This year came in on Friday: the Lord having spared me another year, and my family also enjoying health, I pray that I may be spared from the temptations of the adversary, and that I and my family may have health.

The man that keeps the commandments of the Lord will never be forsaken: his soul shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, his days shall be many, and his seed shall inherit the earth.

Saturday, the 2nd.

Presided with Presidents F. G. Williams and David Whitmer in a high council, in the case of elder Wm. Smith, was was brought before the same for unchristianlike conduct. He acknowledged the charges to be correct, and was forgiven.

Sunday the 3rd

This morning I left for Columbus, the capital of this State, to attend a Convention to nominate a candidate for Governor,⁶ in company with Benj. Adams, Lyman Root⁷ and Simeon Wright. I did not like to start a journey on Sunday, but was obliged to do so, or go in the stage: this I could not do for want of means. From the 3rd to the morning of the 8th I was on the road, a part of the way being very muddy. My company used me with perfect respect, and spoke favorably of the cause of truth.

Friday & Saturday, the 8th & 9th

Sat in Convention in the Theatre: a great many men assembled from different parts of the State. Here the delegation from this section treated me with deference, and appointed me on an important committee in preference to others.

While in Columbus I had several interviews with Mr. John A. Byan [Bryan],⁸ the Auditor of State, from whom I received expressions of the most perfect friendship and confidence. My only wish in forming acquaintances with the great men of the nation, is, that I may be of service to my fellow beings and benefit the cause of truth and righteousness. I would that all these were men of God, walking in the path of holiness. While in Columbus I also visited the house of Cyprian Rudd,⁹ a member of the Church of Christ: his wife was very low of a fever.

Sunday the 10th

Left for home in company with Mr. Root and Wright. On my way I called on Silas Austin,¹⁰ the son of my present mother: he received me with a smile, and wished me to remember him.

Monday the 11th

Left Newark, Licking Co. and left Mr. Wright, who is to come home another way. Nothing of importance occurred from this till I arrived home of importance.

Thursday the 14th

Arrived home this evening, and found my family all alive, though my child was some unwell.¹¹ My heart was truly grateful to God for extending his mercy, and suffering me to behold them once more, after fateaguing my body so long. My soul also rejoiced to meet my brethren of the Church, with whom I have lived since the organization of the same.

Friday the 15th.

The several Quorams of the authorities of the Church met today, and transacted important business preparatory to the endowment.¹² The Spirit of the Lord was in our midst.

Saturday the 16th

Wrote a letter to my brother Warren¹³ on the subject of a difficulty which exists between him and the Twelve.¹⁴ Wrote another to John A. Bryan, of Columbus, Auditor of State, on the subject of the Post Office.¹⁵ See Post Script below.

Sabbath the 17th

The quorums of the Church were organized in the presence of the Church, and commenced confessing their faults and asking forgiveness. The Holy Spirit rested upon us. O may we be prepared for the endowment,—being sanctified and cleansed from all sin.

Post Script to Saturday the 16th.

Met in the evening with bro. Joseph Smith, jr. at his house, in company with bro. John Corrill,¹⁶ and after pure water was prepared, called upon the Lord and proceeded to wash each other's bodies, and bathe the same with whiskey, perfumed with cinnamon.

This we did that we might be clean before the Lord for the Sabbath, confessing our sins and covenanting to be faithful to God. While performing this washing unto the Lord with solemnity, our minds were filled with many reflections upon the propriety of the same, and how the priests anciently used to wash always before ministering before the Lord. As we had nearly finished this purification, bro. Martin Harris¹⁷ came in and was also washed.

Monday the 18th

Recorded blessings until evening,¹⁸ when a man came in by the name of Lee Reed, and said he had been sued for an assault, and that his opponent had sought thus to destroy him: he urged me to go before the court and plead his cause. On examining the same before the court, I saw the man was guilty of a misdemeanor, and could not say but little in his behalf. He was finally bound over to await his trial before the court of common Pleas: this decision was just, for he was guilty of throwing a stick against a little child.

Tuesday the 19th

Wrote blessings: this day I felt more like dedicating my self to tire Lord than usual. O my God, my soul desires to see thee as thy favored ones in days of old. Received a letter from Joel Sweetland, of East Evans, Erie County, N.Y. and answered the same.¹⁹ Peace be to my soul forever.

Wednesday the 20th

Copied blessings until evening, at which time I went, in company with my wife, to Elder John F. Boynton's²⁰ wedding: a large company assembled, and after the services we were treated with wine and cake very sumptuously. While these things were passing, and joy filled each heart, I reflected back to the seasons in my life when I, like a stranger, was cast out of society of men, without the common blessings of nature; and also did I think upon the afflictions of the Saints, in being driven from their homes; and further, upon the time when the righteous will enjoy peace and plenty, aside from the society of the Gentile. Then, as when Israel walked in favor with God, will our sons and daughters be united in marriage, and joy will possess each bosom, there being nothing to molest or make afraid. O my [may] the Lord my God roll on the day of peace and rest!

Thursday, the 21st

This morning, at 15 minutes past nine, my little daughter is 5 months old.²¹ O Lord, I thank thee that thou hast thus been merciful and spared my only child. At about three o'clock P.M. I assembled in our office garret, having all things prepared for the occasion, with presidents Joseph Smith, jr. F. G. Williams,²² Sidney Rigdon²³ Hyrum Smith,²⁴ David Whitmer,²⁵ John Whitmer²⁶ and elder John Corroll, and washed our bodies with pure water before the Lord, preparatory to the anointing with the holy oil. After we were washed, our bodies were perfumed with a sweet smelling oderous wash. At evening the presidents of the Church, with the two bishop and their counsellors, and elder Warren Parrish,²⁷ met in the presidents' room, the high councils of Kirtland and Zion in their rooms. Those named in the first room were anointed with the same kind of oil and in the man[ner] that were Moses and Aaron, and those who stood before the Lord in ancient days, and those in the other rooms with anointing oil prepared for them. The glorious scene is too great to be described in this book, therefore, I only say, that the heavens were opened to many, and great and marvelous things were shown.²⁸

Friday, the 22nd.

Copied blessings. At evening met in the president's room where were the presidents, the twelve, the presidents of the 70, the high councils of Kirtland and Zion, and the bishops and their counsellors. The presidents proceeded and anointed Thomas B.

Marsh,²⁹ the president of the twelve, and he annointed the other eleven. The twelve then proceeded, president Marsh taking the lead, and annointed the presidents of the Seventy. Elder Don Carlos Smith³⁰ was ordained and annointed president of the high priesthood of the Melchisedek priesthood, by the presidents of the Church. Near the close of the meeting, 2 o'clock in the morning, almost all present broke out in tongues and songs of Zion.³¹

Saturday, the 23rd.

Was, most of the time, in the office, though I did not write much. Conversed considerable time with president Rigdon on the subject of his vision concerning the return of the Ten Tribes. In the evening Elder Marsh called at my house: we talked much upon the subject of visions: he greatly desired to see the Lord. Brother Marsh is a good man, and I pray that his faith may be strengthened to behold the heavens open.

Sunday, the 24th.

The quorums met today: we had a good season. At evening met the presidency in the upper room in the printing office, and conversed upon the time of, and preperation and sanctification for the endowment.

Monday the 25th. Wrote a little: settled with James M. Carrel,³² who left the office. I gave him a reproof for urging himself into the society of a young female while he yet had a wife living, but he disliked my admonition: he however confessed his impropriety.

Tuesday, the 26th. This day commenced the Hebrews language under the tuition of Mr. J. Seixas,³³ besides making selections for the Northern Times.³⁴ My family are well.

P. S. To Monday: In the evening the high priests and elders, all who did not belong to the quorums, met in the Lord's house, and also the Lesser priesthood, with the bishop at their head, to receive instructions relative to washing and anointing a large number of elders convened; more than I had supposed resided in Kirtland.

Wednesday, the 27th. Attended the Hebrews School.

Thursday, the 28th. Attended Hebrews School: at evening met many brethren in the Lord's house, who assembled to receive anointing.

Friday, the 29th. Attended Hebrews School.

Saturday, 30. Attended Hebrews School: at evening met in the upper rooms with the 70, elders & priests, who were anointing.

Sunday, 31. Attended meeting in the forenoon: the quorums met as before. In the afternoon went, but the house being full did not go in.

February 1836

Monday, February 1. Met with the remaining committee of the School and assisted to make up the other Hebrews class of 30, or 31.

Tuesday, 2. Attended Hebrews School, At 11 o'clock the new class of 31 members took their first lesson. In the evening I finished the selections for this week's Times, and wrote a short article on the present agitating question of slavery and antislavery. There is a hostile spirit exhibited between the North and South, and ere long must make disturbances of a serious nature. If the North says that Slavery is unjust the South says, you are endangering our lives, and we will not endure it.

Wednesday, 3. Attended school. At evening went to a wedding at bishop Whitney's:³⁵ elder Joseph C. Kingsbury³⁶ was married to Caroline Whitney, sister of bishop

Whitney. This day a man arrived, as he said, from Jackson County, Mo. and wished to join the Church: Suspicions are entertained that he is not an honest man. Time will tell.

Thursday, 4. Attended school. After our class had recitation the committee selected a new class of 15 who are to receive lessons in the Hebrews. In the evening wrote two editorial articles for the Times, one on the subject of our difficulties with France and another upon the subject of Slavery. Our country is agitated, & many look with anxious eyes for coming events. May the Lord preserve his people. Amen.

Friday, 5. Attended Hebrews School.

Saturday, 6. Attended Hebrews School. In the afternoon wrote a letter in the name of the committee containing a request to Professor Seixa's wife, for a valuable Lexicon.³⁷ In the evening met with the presidency and quorums in the Lord's house, when their anointing blessings were sealed by uplifted hands and praises to God. Many saw visions, many prophesied, and many spoke in tongues. Closed a little before 12 o'clock.

Sunday, 7. Copied the committee's letter to Mrs. Seixas, as her husband was urging for it. The quorums met in the room below the printing office and proceeded as previous. In the afternoon assisted Pres. Phelps³⁸ in keeping the door, seating the congregation, and keeping order out at the door. Met the presidency and presidents of the 70 soon after meeting in No. 2 printing office, blessed one of the sons of Zion, and also selected another quorum of 70 from among the elders. Previously to the close of the afternoon services I asked for a letter from the Church for bro. James M. Carrel, now absent:—the church directed me to send him one.

Monday, 8. Att. Hebrews School. In the evening visited Profess. Seixas in company with Pres. J. Smith, jr. & S. Rigdon.

Tuesday, 9. Att. Hebrews School. Also wrote a letter to my Mother,³⁹ now in Ellery, Chautauque County, N.Y. Received a letter from my brother Stephen F. Cowdery,⁴⁰ of Buffalo, N.Y. Also wrote a letter to James M. Carrel, informing him that I could not send him a certificate of fellowship, as I heard that he had been intoxicated since he left. Wrote another letter to Genesis Joseph Thompson,⁴¹ now a Member of Congress, for the Congressional Globe, and also upon the Post Office business.

Wednesday, 10. Attended Hebrews School. In the evening took supper, in company with pres. Phelps, at my father's table, with my wife. My sister Lucy⁴² was also there.

Thursday, 11. Received a letter from my bro. Warren, from Freedom, N.Y. accompanying a letter to the High Counsel, and one to the Twelve. Read them to pres. Rigdon, who thought that they would be satisfactory—I hope they may. In the evening met bro. Phelps and J. Whitmer in the upper room of the office and studied our Hebrews lessons.

Friday, 12. Att. Hebrews School. Met the quorums in the presidents' room in the evening to transact some church business.—regulating the manner and power to ordain.

Saturday, 13. Att. Hebrews School. Engaged a cutter for pro. Seixas to go to Hudson in the afternoon.

Sunday, 14. At home—the weather cold & house crowded, was the reason why I did not go to meeting.

Monday, 15. Att. Hebrews School. The profess. being absent, our class appointed myself to look over them for the time. After, assisted pres. Smith to overlook the 1

1 o'clock. In the afternoon met Pres's. J. Smith, jr. S. Rigdon, W. W. Phelps John Whitmer and elder S. James⁴³ in the office study and united in prayer for Professor Seixas and his family, pres. Smith taking the lead: The items asked for were in substance as follows: That the Lord will have mercy upon the man whom we have employed to teach us the Hebrews language; that all evil prejudice may be taken from his heart, and that the Spirit of God may visit him continually by night and by day, that he may be lead to embrace the gospel and believe the book of Mormon; that he will give him the spirit of humility and meekness that we may become his teachers in the things of salvation, that he may come forth and be baptized into the Church of Christ, that we may be benefited with the knowledge he has of languages: and that the Lord will have mercy upon his family, and visit them with his Holy Spirit and cause them to embrace the fulness of the gospel, that they may be saved with him. We do not ask to become his teachers only that he may become our brother in the faith of the gospel, that his soul may be saved: all of which are asked in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Tuesday, 16. Att. Hebrews School.

Wed. 17 Att. Hebrews School.

Thursday, 18 Att. Hebrews School.

Friday, 19. Att. Hebrews School. Visited profess. Seixas in the evening, with pres. J. Smith, jr. & S. Rigdon. We found him weary with his labors in teaching the school.

Saturday, 20. Att. Hebrews School. Received a letter from James M. Carrel, and also wrote him an answer—in which I enclosed a certificate from the Church, having learned that the accusation was untrue charging him with intoxication since he left this place. Received another letter from my brother Lyman Cowdery,⁴⁴ of Manchester, N.Y. Wrote a letter to Mr. S. Burnett, of Orange, Ohio, on the subject of the Post Office in this place.

Sunday, 21. Attended meeting in the afternoon.

Monday, 22. At the school (Heb.)

Tuesday, 23. At school. (Heb.)

Wednesday, 24. Attended Hebrews school. In the evening met the quorums of the Church in the Lord's house, and heard the petitions of several brethren, who wished to be ordained. Was appointed by the council, in company with pres. Orson Hyde⁴⁵ and Sylvester Smith,⁴⁶ to draft resolutions to be adopted as a rule of Church, regulating the recording of licenses, and conference minutes.

Thursday, 25. My brother Warren and family arrived this morning from Freedom, N.Y. I was glad to see them—they were well. Att. Hebrews School. This evening conversed with a brother-in-law of mine, upon the subject of religion, and found him very stubborn, and ignorent, and withal far from God. His name is Winslow Wilber:⁴⁷ he married my sister Olive.

Friday, 26. Attended Hebrews School

Saturday, 27. Professor Seixas left this morning to visit his family at Hudson, Ohio. I was called to lay hands upon pres. T. B. Marsh, in company with pres. J. Smith, jr. and also upon my brother-in-law, Peter Whitmer, jr.⁴⁸ the latter was very sick of a Typhus fever, and was immediately heald and arose from his bed. I heard the other was better. In the afternoon and evening met pres. Orson Hyde and Sylvester Smith in committee and dictated resolutions to be introduced Thursday evening for the consideration of the quorums.

Sunday, 28. Attended meeting on the flats, and preached in the forenoon. In the afternoon broke bread and administered the Sacrament.

Monday, 29. Professor Seixas not being in town my class met and studied together.

March, 1836.

Tuesday, 1. Attended Hebrews School.

Wednesday, 2. Art. Hebrews School.

Thursday, 3. Att. Hebrews School. met the quorums in the evening in the Lord's house, and read the committee's report previously drawn, which was adopted without amendment, except a small addition in the last article, extending the power of certain conference further, in signing licenses. I confess the hand of God in this matter, in giving me his Holy Spirit, to indite this valuable article, as by it the elders will enjoy their privileges as citizens, and the churches be freed from imposition.

Friday 4. Attended Hebrews School.

Saturday, 5. Attended Hebrews School. In the evening met the Twelve, pres. J. Smith, jr. & S. Rigdon, and my brother Warren, in the upper room of the printing office. The Twelve had preferred a charge against my brother for a letter he wrote last summer upon the subject of their teaching while at the Freedom conference. My brother confessed his mistake, upon the testimony of the Twelve, and said he was willing to publish that they were not in the fault, but that he was satisfied they delivered those instructions which he had supposed they had not.⁴⁹

Sunday, 6. Did not attend meeting in consequence of there not being sufficient room for so many in the small houses occupied for meetings.

Monday, 7. Attended Hebrews School.

Tuesday 8. Attended Hebrews School.

Wednesday 9. Attended Hebrews School.

Thursday 10. Attended Hebrews School.

Friday 11. Attended Hebrews School.

From this time to Saturday the 19th attended Hebrews School, without anything of note's transpiring.

From Saturday 19th attended Hebrews School, up to Saturday the 26. Nothing of note's transpiring. This day our school did not keep, we prepared for the dedication of the Lord's house.⁵⁰ I met in the president's room, pres. J. Smith, jr. S. Rigdon, my brother W. A. Cowdery & Elder W. Parrish, and assisted in writing a prayer for the dedication of the house.⁵¹

Sunday, the 27th attended on the dedication of the Lord's house. For the particulars of this great event see my account written by myself, and printed in the March No. of The Messenger and Advocate, signed C. In the evening I met with the officers of the church in the Lord's house. The Spirit was poured out—I saw the glory of God, like a great cloud, come down and rest upon the house, and fill the same like a mighty rushing wind. I also saw cloven tongues, like as of fire rest upon many, (for there were 316 present,) while they spake with other tongues and prophesied.

Dr. Arrington is Historian of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is particularly grateful for the help of Dean Jessee, senior historical associate, Historical Department of the Church, in editing this historic document.

1. The most significant works on Oliver Cowdery are Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery* (Salt Lake City, 1962); an essay by Richard L. Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery, Esq.: His Non-Church Decade," *To the Glory of God*, ed. Truman G. Madsen and Charles D. Tare, Jr. (Salt Lake City, 1972), pp. 199–216; and four articles by Dr. Anderson in *The Improvement Era*: "Oliver Cowdery's Non-Mormon Reputation," 71 (August 1968), 18–26; "The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration," 71 (September 1968), 15–24; "The Second Witness on Priesthood Succession," 71 (November 1968), 14–20; and "The Scribe as a Witness," 72 (January 1969), 53–59.

2. Part of an introduction to some blessings given by Joseph Smith, Junior, written by Oliver Cowdery in "The Book of Patriarchal Blessings, 1834," pp. 8–9, MS, Historical Department of the Church, Salt Lake City. (Hereafter designated HDC.) This volume consists mainly of patriarchal blessings given by Joseph Smith, Senior.

3. *Latter Day Saints Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio), 1 (October 1834), 16.

4. Anderson, "The Scribe as a Witness," p. 54.

5. William Lang, *History of Seneca County* (Springfield, Ohio 1880), p. 365. For a fuller treatment of Cowdery's ten years out of the Church see Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery, Esq.: His Non-Church Decade."

6. Oliver Cowdery had been elected by the Geauga County Democratic Convention on 10 October 1835 as a delegate to the State Convention to be held at Columbus on 8 January 1836.

7. Lyman Root was one of the original settlers of Ridgeville, Lorain County, Ohio, in 1810.

8. John A. Bryan, a Democratic editor of the *Columbus Sentinel*, was a native New Yorker and an opponent of excessive state banking privileges. In 1835 he was being mentioned in the public press as a candidate for governor of Ohio. In a letter dated 15 October 1835 Oliver pledged his support for Bryan in the up-coming state convention. See "Cowdery Letterbook," pp. 51–52, MS, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

9. Cyprian Rudd was born in Bennington, Vermont, and was fifty-three years of age in 1836.

10. Oliver Cowdery's mother, Rebecca Fuller Cowdery, died on 3 September 1809 when Oliver was two years old. The following year his father, William, married Mrs. Keziah Pearce Austin. Silas Austin was a son of Oliver's stepmother by a former marriage.

11. Reference is made here to Maria Louise, the first of six children born to Oliver and Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery. Born on 11 August 1835, Maria was the only one of the Cowdery children who grew to maturity.

12. The "endowment" referred to was not the ordinance performed in later Latter-day Saint temples, but a preliminary ordinance of washing and anointing. At this meeting Oliver's father, William, was appointed to preside over the Priest's Quorum in Kirtland. See Joseph Smith, "Diary," 1835–1836, 114–119, MS, HDC.

13. Warren A. Cowdery (1788–1851), an older brother of Oliver, was born in Poultney, Vermont, in October 1788. He practiced medicine in Vermont and in Freedom, New York, between 1816 and 1831, and was also the first postmaster of Freedom, beginning in 1824. He joined the LDS Church about 1830 and moved to Kirtland, where he remained until his death on 23 February 1851. Warren succeeded his brother, Oliver, as editor of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, and assisted Joseph Smith as a scribe.

14. The difficulty that existed between Warren A. Cowdery and the Twelve is summarized in a published notice at the time the problem was concluded in March 1836: "NOTICE is hereby given to all whom it may concern, that Messrs. T. B. Marsh and others, denominated the 'Twelve' while on their mission to the East, last season, received a letter from the Presidency of the church in which they were censured for neglecting to teach the Church in Freedom Cattaraugus County, N.Y., the necessity of contributing of their earthly substance for the building of the House of the Lord in this place. The rebuke from the Presidency, (as the undersigned has been informed) was predicated upon a letter addressed by him, to the Presidents or some one of them, stating that they, the Twelve taught no such thing. The undersigned although actuated by the purest motives at the time he wrote believing he had stated nothing but the truth, has since become satisfied from the best of evidence, that, that particular item in their instructions was not omitted as he had represented, he, therefore, most deeply regrets it, being sensible as he now is, that he was the cause (although innocent) of wounding the best of feelings, and depressing spirits buoyant with hope, while in a field of useful labor at a distance from home. W. A. COWDERY. Kirtland, March 7th 1836." *Messenger and Advocate*, 2 (February 1836), 263.

15. James M. Carrel describes the post office difficulty that existed in Kirtland at this time which no doubt explains Oliver's correspondence on the subject. In a letter to R. M. Williams, Post Master of Potter, New York dated 29 October 1835, Carrel charges the Whig postmaster of Kirtland with "gross neglect of duty, and disqualified for the office," on the grounds that when he absent from his office he "leaves it in care of a woman!" and when he is in the office "he is entirely destitute of that spirit of accommodation, and gentlemanly deportment towards those having business in the office, that should characterize the conduct of every man who is living in the bounty of the government." Carrel charges further that the Whig postmaster treats those of an opposite political sentiment "with marked indignity and contempt." Furthermore, instead of publishing his lists of letters in the Northern Times where everyone in town "could see when there was a letter for him," and which was published "almost at his own door," the postmaster posted the lists in the local tavern, to the inconvenience of the town's people. Carrel concluded his letter by giving reasons "that lead us to petition for the appointment of Mr. Oliver Cowdery" as postmaster at Kirtland. See "Cowdery Letterbook," pp. 58-60.

16. John Corrill (1794-) was born 17 September 1794 in Worcester, Massachusetts. He was living in Ashtabula, Ohio, in the fall of 1830 when Oliver Cowdery and fellow missionaries passed through Ohio and baptized him. In June 1831 he was ordained a high priest and set apart as second counselor to Bishop Edward Partridge. Soon after this, he was sent to Missouri, where he presided over branches of the Church in Jackson County. At the time of the difficulties in Jackson County in 1833, Corrill was imprisoned for a time in Independence, where he had been engaged in terminating the business of the Church. He returned to Ohio with Joseph Smith following the Zion's Camp march in 1834 and was appointed to take charge of the final construction of the Kirtland Temple. After dedication of the Temple in March 1836, Corrill returned to Missouri, where he participated in building up the Church center at Far West. He was appointed as a Church historian along with Elias Higbee in 1838, but soon afterward left the Church. See John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*. . . (St. Louis, 1839).

17. Martin Harris (1783-1875) was born in Easttown, Saratoga County, New York. With Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, he was one of the witnesses to the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. Nine years after his birth his family moved to Palmyra, New York, where, in 1827, he became acquainted with Joseph Smith. Harris

assisted the Prophet financially and clerically during the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon. He was appointed as a member of the High Council of the Church in Kirtland in 1834 and assisted Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer in instructing and ordaining the Twelve Apostles at the time of the calling of that Quorum in February 1835. Three years later he became dissatisfied and remained in Kirtland after the Church moved west. He did not return to the Church until he came to Utah in 1870.

18. Thirty-five pages of the patriarchal blessing book kept by Joseph Smith, Senior, are in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. Several of the blessings were written during the first months of 1836.

19. A copy of Cowdery's letter to Joel Sweetland, in which he suggests reasons Sweetland did not receive his Messenger and Advocate subscription, is found in the "Cowdery Letterbook," p. 76.

20. John F. Boynton (1811–1890), who married Susan Lowell on this date, was a native of Bradford, Essex County, Massachusetts. He was baptized by Joseph Smith at Kirtland in September 1832. He engaged in proselyting activity for the Church in Pennsylvania in 1832 and in Maine in 1833–34. He was ordained an Apostle under the hands of the Three Witnesses in February 1835. Boynton left the Church in 1837 and took up residence in New York, but in 1872 he visited Brigham Young and his former associates in Utah. He was engaged as an engineer in the invention of weapons systems during the Civil War, and at least thirty-six patents were issued under his name. He died in Syracuse, New York, 20 October 1890.

21. See note 11 above.

22. Frederick G. Williams (1787–1842) was born 28 October 1787 in Suffield, Hartford County, Connecticut. He was baptized in Kirtland by Oliver Cowdery during Oliver's mission to Missouri in 1830–31. Williams became second counselor to Joseph Smith in the Church presidency on 18 March 1833. In Kirtland he was the owner of the F. G. Williams and Company printing establishment, and was a member of the committee to arrange the interior of the Kirtland Temple. In 1834 he served as paymaster in Zion's Camp. Williams was excommunicated from the Church at a conference in Quincy, Illinois, on 17 March 1839, but was reinstated in April 1840. He died in Quincy on 10 October 1842. See Nancy Clement Williams, *After 100 Years (Independence, Mo., 1951)*. and Frederick G. Williams, "Frederick Granger Williams of the First Presidency of the Church," *BYU Studies*, 12 (Spring 1972), 243–261.

23. Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876) was born in St. Clair, Alleghany County, Pennsylvania, on 19 February 1793. He was a popular Campbellite minister in Mentor, Ohio, when Oliver Cowdery converted him to Mormonism in the fall of 1830. In 1831 Rigdon accompanied Joseph Smith to Missouri and was present at the dedication of the land of Zion. After returning to Kirtland, Sidney assisted Joseph as a clerk, and in March 1833 he was appointed as a counselor to the Prophet in the First Presidency. During Joseph Smith's absence with Zion's Camp in 1834, Sidney assisted Oliver Cowdery in directing the affairs of the Church in Kirtland. Rigdon taught penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography in the Kirtland School, and assisted in the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church in 1835. He left Kirtland with Joseph Smith in 1838 and in the following year was imprisoned during the Mormon difficulties in Missouri. After the death of Joseph Smith in 1844, Rigdon left the main body of the Church. He died at his home in Friendship, New York, in 1876. See F. Mark McKiernan, *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer (Lawrence, Kansas, 1971)*.

24. Hyrum Smith (1800–1844), an older brother of Joseph Smith, was born in Tunbridge, Vermont, on 9 February 1800. He was a faithful supporter of his brother

and the cause of the Latter-day Saints from the beginning. His name is among the witnesses of the Gold Plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. He was a leader of Zion's Camp in 1834 and was chosen to serve on the Kirtland High Council that same year. In September 1837 Hyrum was appointed as assistant counselor to the First Presidency of the Church and two months later replaced Frederick G. Williams as second counselor in the Presidency. He was appointed Patriarch to the Church in 1841. Hyrum lost his life by the side of his brother, Joseph, in Carthage, Illinois, on 27 June 1844. Pearson H. Crobett, Hyrum Smith, Patriarch (Salt Lake City, 1963).

25. David Whitmer (1805–1888) was born 7 January 1805 near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He met Oliver Cowdery in Palmyra, New York, while on a business trip in 1828. Whitmer was associated with Joseph Smith during the translation of the Book of Mormon at the Whitmer residence in Fayette, New York, and became one of the Three Witnesses of that work. He was ordained a High Priest by Oliver Cowdery in October 1831, and went to Missouri, where he settled in Jackson County. After the Mormon expulsion from that county in 1833, David Whitmer settled in Clay County, where he was appointed president of the High Council on 3 July 1834. Whitmer then became dissatisfied and was rejected by the Church in 1838. After leaving the Church he resided in Richmond, Missouri, some fifty years, until his death on 25 January 1888.

26. John Whitmer (1802–1878) first met Oliver Cowdery in 1829 during the translation of the Book of Mormon. He was born 27 August 1802 in Fayette, New York. In March 1831 he was appointed Church Historian and later that year accompanied Oliver Cowdery to Missouri to prepare the Church revelations for printing. He was a presiding officer of the Church in Missouri and Ohio. John Whitmer left the Church in 1838 and settled in Far West, where he died in 1878.

27. Warren Parrish was an officer in the Kirtland Bank and a member of the Quorum of Seventy in Kirtland. He had accompanied Zion's Camp to Missouri in 1834 and was a scribe to Joseph Smith. Charged with conduct injurious to the Church, Parrish denounced his membership in 1837 and associated with others in open dissent. See also D. Paul Sampson and Larry T. Wimmer, "The Kirtland Safety Society: the Stock Ledger Book and the Bank Failure," in this issue of *BYU Studies*.

28. Joseph Smith's description of events on 21 January was recorded extensively in his diary. Among other things he noted that "the heavens were opened upon us and I beheld the celestial Kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell,—I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that Kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire, also the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son,—I saw the beautiful streets of that Kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold. . ." Joseph Smith, "Diary," 1835–1836, pp. 134–38.

29. Thomas Baldwin Marsh (1799–1866) was born in Acton, Massachusetts, on 1 November 1799. He first met Oliver Cowdery in 1829 after traveling to Palmyra, New York, to investigate rumors he had heard about Joseph Smith. He moved to Palmyra from Massachusetts in the fall of 1830 and was baptized. In the spring of 1831 he went to Kirtland, Ohio, and the following year settled in Missouri. He was driven from his home in the 1833 Mormon expulsion from Jackson County. After returning to Kirtland in 1835 he was appointed as one of the Twelve Apostles and ordained by Oliver Cowdery. Marsh left the Church during the Missouri difficulties of 1838, but was re-united with the Latter-day Saints in Nebraska in 1857 and settled in Ogden, Utah, where he died in 1866.

30. Don Carlos Smith (1816–1841) was the youngest of Joseph Smith's brothers. In 1833 he was employed by Oliver Cowdery who taught him the business of printing. He published the *Elder's Journal* in Kirtland prior to the fire that destroyed the printing

office in 1837 and later edited thirty-two issues of the *Times and Seasons* in Nauvoo, where he also served on the City Council. He died of tuberculosis in Nauvoo on 7 August 1841. Don Carlos was the father of California's first poet laureate, Ina Coolbrith.

31. Joseph Smith described this occasion in these words: ". . . the gift of touns fell upon us in mighty pour, angels mingled their voices with ours, while their presence was in our midst, and unseasing prases swelled our bosoms for the space of half an hour" *Joseph Smith, "Diary," 1835– 1836, p. 141.*

32. James M. Carrel was a member of the Kirtland Safety Society. He was also the recorder of several of the letters in the "Cowdery Letterbook" at the Huntington Library.

33. Joshua Seixas, a resident of Hudson, Ohio, taught Hebrew in the Kirtland School for two months beginning 26 January 1836. He was held in high esteem by Joseph Smith, and the School was attended by many of the leading men of the Church in Kirtland.

34. The *Northern Times* was a political newspaper edited by Oliver Cowdery and published by Frederick G. Williams in Kirtland beginning in February 1835. A Democratic sheet, the *Times*, supported the candidacy of Martin Van Buren in 1835–36.

35. Newel Kimball Whitney (1795–1850) was born in Marlborough, Vermont, on 5 February 1795. He served in the War of 1812 before moving to Ohio about 1817. He was a partner in the mercantile firm of Gilbert and Whitney in Kirtland, Ohio, when he met Oliver Cowdery and the Indian missionaries in November 1830 and was converted. Newel was appointed bishop of the Church at Kirtland in December 1831, and was identified with the mercantile affairs of the Church during the Kirtland years. After the Latter-day Saints were driven from Missouri in 1839, Bishop Whitney assisted in locating and settling them on newly purchased land in Illinois. He officiated as bishop and was Trustee-in-trust of the Church in the years prior to his death in Salt Lake City in September 1850.

36. Joseph C. Kingsbury (1812–1898) was born 2 May 1812 in Endfield, Connecticut, and was baptized in January 1832 in Kirtland. On 13 January 1836 he was appointed to the High Council in Kirtland in the place of Orson Hyde who had been ordained an Apostle. Kingsbury migrated to Utah in 1847 and served as a bishop of the Salt Lake City Second Ward.

37. Signed by the First Presidency and Oliver Cowdery, the letter to Madam Seixas expresses a belief that her husband "has been sent to this institution through the immediate directions of God," and solicits the purchase of the valuable lexicon "as our only object is to do good to lay aside error when we discover it forsake evil and follow righteousness and truly be the better prepared and qualified to render assistance to our fellow men and glorify the name of the Lord...." Dated 13 February, the letter is recorded in the "Cowdery Letterbook," pp. 77–78.

38. William W. Phelps (1792–1872) was born on 17 February 1792 in Hanover, New Jersey. Arriving in Kirtland in 1831, he was called to assist Oliver Cowdery in printing and writing books for the schools of the Church. He was the editor of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, (*Zion [Independence, Mo.]*) and published the *Book of Commandments* in Missouri prior to the destruction of the press in 1833. In Kirtland he assisted the committee appointed to compile the *Doctrine and Covenants* and was appointed to revise and arrange the hymns of the Church for printing. In July 1834 Phelps was appointed as a counselor to David Whitmer in the presidency of the stake in Missouri. As a scribe for Joseph Smith he drafted and signed numerous Church documents. In 1838 he became embittered toward the Church and was excommunicated. In

1841, however, he returned to the Church and was prominent in literary and agricultural affairs in pioneer Utah. See Walter D. Bowen, "The Versatile W.W. Phelps: Mormon Writer, Educator, and Pioneer" (M.S. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958).

39. See note 10 above.

40. Stephen Fuller Cowdery (1791–), an older brother of Oliver, was living with his family in Buffalo, New York, in 1835 when Oliver traveled east to purchase books and equipment for the Church. A letter to Warren Cowdery from Oliver on 22 November 1835 reveals that at the time of Oliver's visit in Buffalo, Stephen's home had been demolished by "wind and water," but they escaped injury. "Cowdery Letterbook," p. 63.

41. A Democrat, John Thompson was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from the Chillicothe District of Ohio.

42. Lucy was Oliver's half sister, the second of three girls born after their father married Keziah Pearce Austin in 1810. Lucy later married Phineas H. Young, the brother of Brigham Young.

43. Samuel James was appointed to the High Council in Kirtland on 13 January 1836 in the place of Joseph Smith, Senior. In the following years he undertook extensive missionary labor for the Church in the East.

44. Lyman Cowdery (1802–), an older brother of Oliver, resided in Freedom, New York, and later became a prominent lawyer and judge in Wisconsin.

45. Orson Hyde (1805–1878) was born in Oxford, Connecticut, on 8 January 1805. At the age of fourteen he walked from Connecticut to Ohio, and was a clerk in the Gilbert and Whitney store in Kirtland. He joined the Campbellites under Sidney Rigdon in 1827 and became a pastor. He was converted to Mormonism in 1831 and ordained a high priest by Oliver Cowdery in October of that year. During the next four years he performed lengthy missionary journeys to the East. On 15 February 1835 he was chosen one of the Twelve Apostles in Kirtland and ordained by Oliver Cowdery. He was prominently involved in Church affairs until the time of his death in Spring City, Utah, on 28 November 1878. See Marvin S. Hill, "An Historical Study of the Life of Orson Hyde, Early Mormon Missionary and Apostle" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955).

46. Sylvester Smith was a president of the Seventy in Kirtland from 1835–1837. He had been ordained a high priest by Oliver Cowdery in 1831 and was a member of the High Council organized in Kirtland in February 1834. He also accompanied Zion's Camp in 1834.

47. Winslow Shepherd Wilbur was a member of the Seventy in 1837 and accompanied the Kirtland Camp to Missouri in 1838.

48. Peter Whitmer, Junior, (1809–1836) was born in Fayette, New York, on 27 September 1809. He first met Oliver Cowdery in the summer of 1829 during the final stages of the translation of the Book of Mormon, of which Whitmer was one of the witnesses. He was a companion of Oliver Cowdery on the Indian Mission in 1830–31. Employed as a tailor in Independence, Whitmer was among the Saints driven from Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833. He died of tuberculosis near Liberty, Missouri, on 22 September 1836.

49. See note 14 above.

50. Construction of the Kirtland Temple began 23 July 1833. The building was dedicated 27 March 1836. See Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," in this issue of *BYU Studies*.

51. The dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple is published as Section 109 in the *Doctrine and Covenants*.