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## NEWSLETTER AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE

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# S. E. H. A.

Number 158

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158.0 **THE RIVER OF NEPHI: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON AN OLD DIARY ENTRY.** By Ross T. Christensen, professor emeritus of archaeology and anthropology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Extemporaneous address delivered at the Thirty-third Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, held at BYU on September 28 and 29, 1984. Enlarged and revised.

A KEY LOCATION of Book of Mormon geography may have been identified by Joseph Smith, according to an 1881 diary entry recording a sermon of an elderly man who had heard the identification from the Prophet's lips nearly 40 years before.

The diarist was Charles Lowell Walker. Under date of January 26, 1881, he wrote,

Br McBride also related that Joseph marked with his cane in the sand the track the saints would take to the Rocky Mountains. . . .

Said we should make stations and build up settlements all the way to new, and old Mexico Until we crossed the Isthmus and get back to the place where the Covenant was broke [i.e., the United Order] by the old Nephites. Spoke of the Great Temple in Central America unfinished, showing marks of the work being stopped while in the Course of erection; that pillars and other curiously worked stones were found in the Quarry quite a distance from the Temple exactly corresponding with those already fitted

and placed in the grand and massive structure, Showing plainly that some unexpected event transpired causing a stoppage in the work. This temple was situated by the River Copan anciently called the River of Nephi. (Larson and Larson, eds., 1980, Vol. 2, pp. 524-525; words in brackets inserted by Larson and Larson)

This entry was first brought to my attention in 1967 by John H. Wittorf, a student of chemistry and archaeology at Brigham Young University, a one-time president of the SEHA Campus Chapter, and the author of two papers involving Latter-day Saint history read before the Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures (1968 and 1969, published in *News. and Proc.*, 113.0 and 123.0, respectively). At the time, I thought the matter extraordinary but merely filed the sheet away, and presently it dropped out of my consciousness.

Then about 1978, another friend, who prefers to remain anonymous, quite independently of Dr. Wittorf

handed me a copy of the same diary entry. This time, I was immediately struck with its potential in advancing an understanding of Book of Mormon geography and archaeology, assuming it to be reliable.

Since then the diary has been published (Larson and Larson, eds., 1980). Minor changes of punctuation, etc., have been made in it for better readability. It is this version that has been used in the present paper.

Three persons are involved in telling how this information has come down to our times: Charles Lowell Walker, Reuben McBride, and Joseph Smith, Jr.

**Charles Lowell Walker**, of British birth and ancestry, was a resident of Fillmore, Utah. He faithfully kept a diary, which eventually ran to ten volumes. It was his practice to record summaries of sermons he especially liked. In 1881 he entered the above passage in his record of a sermon by Reuben McBride.

**Reuben McBride** had been a member of Zion's Camp, which marched in 1834 from Kirtland, Ohio, to the defense of Latter-day Saint colonists in Missouri. He had also been the first person ever to be baptized for the dead when that practice was instituted at Nauvoo. (Jenson, 1901-36, Vol. 4, p. 690). He must have been well acquainted with the prophet Joseph Smith and therefore spoke in his sermon of matters of which he had personal knowledge. Walker mentions him a number of times in his diary, referring to him sometimes as "Bro. McBride" and sometimes as "Father McBride." He was born in 1803 and would thus have been 77 or 78 years old when Walker recorded his sermon.

**Joseph Smith, Jr.**, apparently made the statement McBride attributed to him during the last week or so of his harried life, before his martyrdom on June 27, 1844, at the age of 38. It is likely, however, that he made such statements a number of times in addition to the instances reported here.

#### HANCOCK MEMOIR

The Walker diary is actually only one of two sources that have come to my attention which not only include the prophesied exodus to the intermountain area of the western United States but also carry it well beyond, southward, even as far as Mesamerica. The other is a memoir by Mosiah Lyman Hancock that I have known about for some 30 years. Both of them seem to date to the last weeks of the Prophet's life.

In this memoir, dictated when he was an old man, Hancock tells of Joseph Smith visiting his parents' home in Nauvoo when he was a ten-year-old boy.

The next day [i.e., on June 19, 1844] the Prophet came to our home and stopped in our carpenter shop and stood by the turning lathe. I went and got my map for him. "Now," he said, "I will show you the travels of this people. . . . You will travel west until you come to the valley of the Great Salt Lake! . . . But, the United States will not receive you with the laws which God desires you to live, and you will have to go to where the Nephites lost their power. They worked in the United Order for 166 years. . . ." He said we will not [yet] travel the shape of the horse shoe, for there [in the intermountain area] we will await the action of the government. Placing his finger on the map, I should think about where Snowflake, Arizona, is situated, or it could have been Mexico, he said, "The government will not receive you . . . , and those who are desirous to live the laws of God will have to go south." (Hancock, p. 19)

#### HOW MUCH DID THE PROPHET KNOW?

Such questions have been asked as "How much did the prophet Joseph Smith actually know about Book of Mormon geography?" and "How much of what he knew did he feel at liberty to reveal to his followers?"

Joseph Smith was first shown the plates of the Book of Mormon on September 22, 1823, but it was not until the fourth anniversary of that date, i.e., in 1827, that they actually came into his possession. What was he doing during those four years, and why that long wait before he could get on with his important assignment of translating them into English?

A recent study documents no fewer than 22 visitations of the angel Moroni to Joseph, as well as appearances of Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and other Book of Mormon notables (Woodford, 1978). Most of these visits were made, no doubt, during this four-year period, and many of them were reported by Lucy Mack Smith, mother of the Prophet, who in her old age dictated a biography of her controversial son (Smith, 1979).

Chapter 18 (pp. 79-85) of Mother Smith's biography is of particular interest. It starts with the date September 22, 1823, when young Joseph told his father of the visits of Moroni through the previous night. Then, that evening and the next, his whole family gathered about to listen to him.

From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived

upon the face of the earth—all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life: he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them. (Smith, pp. 82–83)

Why would four years, 1823 to 1827, elapse between young Joseph's first view of the plates and the time when they came into his possession? At least the germ of an answer was put into my head long ago in classroom lectures of Dr. Sidney B. Sperry. The four years between 1823 and 1827 were a period of training for the young prophet. He had to become familiar with Nephite civilization in order to accomplish the great task of translation that lay ahead of him. Hence the visitations of the various personages of Book of Mormon history, especially Moroni. Also, when Joseph told these things to his family, the practice he had in relating such information to others would no doubt be to his advantage when later he would need to search for words with which to translate.

Speaking of the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants, Orson Pratt in later years reflected upon the manner of their composition in the Prophet's mind: "Joseph . . . received the ideas from God, but clothed the ideas with such words as came to his mind" (Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake Stake, December 9, 1872, as cited in Woodford, 1984, p. 34). The same would also have been true earlier, I presume, when he translated the Book of Mormon.

Anyone who has ever attempted to translate from one language to another will know what I am talking about. Translation is not easy; it is not a mechanical process. Even with divine assistance, it is not a matter of merely looking at a passage written in one language, then automatically receiving a proper translation of it in the other language. You have to search for suitable words with which to express yourself. You have to *know* the civilizations the two languages represent, and the more you know about them the greater your advantage in making a correct and clear translation. I believe this was one kind of training young Joseph was getting during those four years between 1823 and 1827. In any case, the Prophet seems

to have known a good deal about ancient Nephite civilization.

Why, then, did he not tell his followers more about such matters as Book of Mormon geography? Because they were not yet ready for it, and because that was not what the Church was to become involved in at that stage of development. It would seem, however, that he at least left a few clues behind, perhaps to stimulate us of the present generation to further inquiry.

(Incidentally, I am not one to accept everything Joseph Smith ever said or wrote as automatically binding; he was a human being like the rest of us. But I do believe he had special insights, and whatever he may have had to say—even on a subject like Book of Mormon geography—is worthy of careful consideration.)

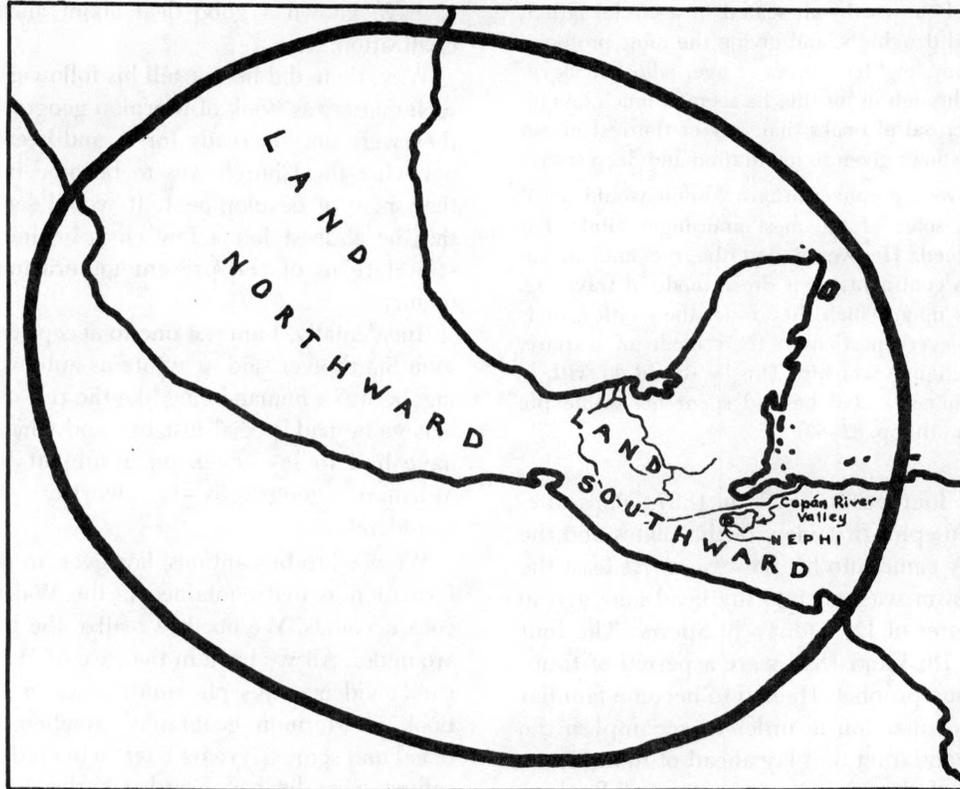
We need to be cautious, however, in using such information as that contained in the Walker and Hancock accounts. We need to realize the limitations we are under. All we have in the case of Walker is third-hand evidence: Joseph Smith made a statement on Book of Mormon geography; Reuben McBride listened and some 37 years later delivered a sermon recalling what he had heard; Charles Lowell Walker wrote a summary of the sermon in his diary. That would be called hearsay evidence. We would prefer, of course, to have an eyewitness account or, one might say, to work with a primary source.

According to scientific procedure, it is quite permissible to make assumptions and then test them. But one should realize that they are assumptions. What I am now giving you is based upon two assumptions: (1) that Joseph Smith knew what he was talking about, and (2) that Walker correctly reported what the Prophet had said. If new evidence later appears bearing on the subject, we will then need to adjust our thinking to it.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CLAIMS

The few lines by Charles Lowell Walker, a nineteenth-century pioneer untrained, so far as I know, in scientific method, and almost certainly untrained in archaeology, nevertheless can be tested by that science at a number of points. I would like now to restate in different words and briefly comment on Walker's claims. In doing so, I will also draw a few words from the Hancock account.

1. The general area under consideration was located beyond—that means, I presume, east or southeast of—the isthmus. And that must be the Isthmus of



Mesoamerica, the proposed region of Book of Mormon civilizations according to a large wall map prepared by M. Wells Jakeman in the late 1940s for classroom instruction. The location of the city of Nephi is shown here exactly where he put it on the wall map. The location of the Copán river drainage has been added, however.

Tehuán-tepec; it cannot have been written about the Isthmus of Panama (see map; cf. *News. and Proc.*, 147.0, and Christensen, 1963, pp. 194–195).

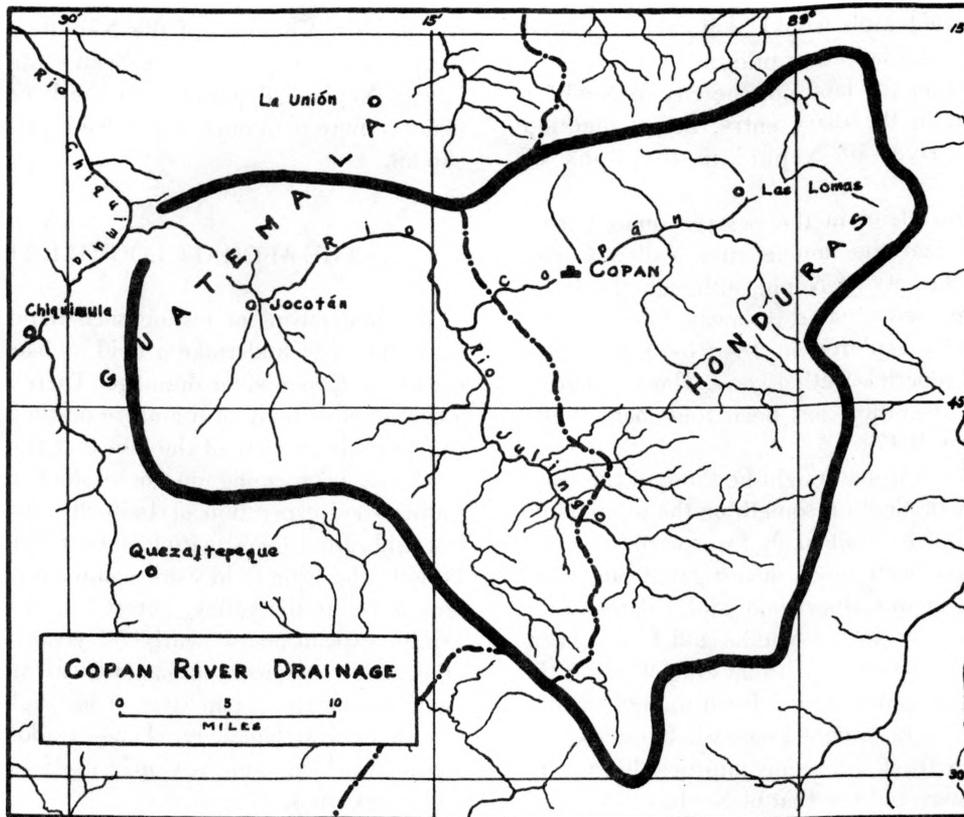
We thus get a picture of the Saints traveling to the Rocky Mountains, then continuing on in “the shape of the horse shoe” (Hancock), making settlements all the way back “to where the Nephites lost their power” (Hancock), or “to the place where the Covenant was broke by the Old Nephies” (Walker). If we trace out roughly the shape of a horseshoe on a large map, beginning at Nauvoo, we can make it pass through the Salt Lake Valley and on south into Middle America, the other end extending past the Isthmus of Tehuán-tepec to Guatemala and beyond.

In addition to the Mormon Colonies in Chihuahua, northern Mexico, Latter-day Saints planted in fact at least two short-lived settlements much farther to the southeast in Guatemala: in 1902 (Hooper, 1983, pp. 120, 134, 216) and about 1904 (Taylor, 1964, pp. 91–92).

2. The Copán river was “anciently called the River of Nephi.” It is a tributary of the Chiquimula, which flows into the Motagua, which in turn empties into the Caribbean Sea. Also, the Julingo river, nowadays considered a tributary of the Copán, may have been thought of anciently as actually a part of that river. (See maps.)

It is well to recall that, when Joseph Smith spoke of the Copán river as the River of Nephi, he had read, less than two years before, John Lloyd Stephens’ account of exploration among ancient Maya ruins, in which the famous site of Copán, situated beside a small river of the same name, figured prominently (Stephens, 1842; cf. *News. and Proc.*, 144.1, p. 3). As for the river itself, Stephens tells us only that it contained many rapids and was lined with dense foliage.

3. A great temple was located beside or near the Copán river, and the quarry from which the building material came was located “quite a distance from the temple.” Also, the sculptured stones to be found in



The Copán river of Honduras and Guatemala, which Joseph Smith called the “River of Nephi,” according to Charles Lowell Walker. The approximate limits of its drainage are indicated by the heavy black line. Note the Classic-period Maya ruin of Copán, a little to the right of center. This ruin has now become a major tourist attraction. It is not the Book of Mormon city of Nephi, however.

the quarry correspond exactly to those already in place in the “grand and massive” but “unfinished” structure.

4. That temple was evidently under construction at the time the Nephites broke their covenant. This act of apostasy was no doubt the “unexpected event” that brought work to a halt. Now when could that have been? It happens that the diarist made a footnote at this point. He put an X following the word “broke,” then at the bottom of the page another X and entered the words “United Order.”

The term “United Order” does not actually appear in the Book of Mormon, but any of the Prophet’s listeners would have understood well enough what he intended. According to 4 Nephi 1:24–26, in the year AD 201 the Nephites “did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.” This date, incidentally, counting from the year AD 35, corresponds exactly to the Prophet’s assertion, as recorded

by Hancock, that the Nephites “worked in the United Order for 166 years.” (See 3 Ne. 26:19; 4 Ne. 1:1–3)

(One is reminded that the Christians of the New Testament also had all things in common; see Acts 2:44, 4:32–35.)

#### CLAIMS NOT MADE

It is also important to note two claims the diary entry does *not* make:

1. There is no explicit claim that the land of Nephi was coterminous with, or lay within, or was connected with, the drainage of the River of Nephi, although such would be a fair assumption to make. Likewise, there is no explicit claim that the city of Nephi was located within or near that drainage—only that the great temple was located by the Copán river.

But again, that the temple would be closely associated with the city seems a fair assumption.

(Actually, neither the land nor the city of Nephi is even mentioned in the diary entry, nor is mention made of any “river of Nephi” in the Book of Mormon.)

2. There is no claim in the passage quoted from Walker’s diary that the famous ruins called Copán were those of the city of Nephi, although the latter should not have been situated far away. Copán was a large ancient city explored in 1840 by John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood. The fascinating story of their adventures has been told many times (e.g., Von Hagen, 1947).

That the ruins of Copán might be those of the Book of Mormon city of Nephi is something the mind could easily leap to, but it is not likely for a variety of reasons. Copán has been much investigated since the days of Stephens and Catherwood, and it dates to the wrong time; namely, to the Middle and Late Classic periods (c. AD 400–900), i.e., to an era *following* the downfall of the Nephite nation. Even though excavations in 1983 brought to light Preclassic burials (Goldstein, 1984, p. 870), it still seems improbable that the site as now known could be that of Nephi.

### SOME HYPOTHESES

I would like to propose the following hypotheses based on the diary entry:

1. That the land of Nephi is to be associated in some way or another with the Copán drainage shown on the map; the drainage was no doubt a part of that land.

2. That the city of Nephi lay somewhere within the Copán drainage and near a river.

3. That the great temple was located at or near that city and beside the river.

4. That the site of the temple was chosen and construction begun during the Nephite “Golden Age,” i.e., AD 34–201, in order to memorialize the location of Nephi’s original temple.

It must have seemed fitting, in an age of Nephite prosperity, to rebuild the older temple on a grand scale. Referring to the sixth century BC, Nephi wrote that he

did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon’s temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine. (2 Ne. 5:16)

By the “Golden Age” of the Nephites, this original temple must long since have been destroyed, for the city of Nephi had passed into the hands of the Lamanites more than once and indeed had become their capital.

### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST

The best means of testing such hypotheses would no doubt be to undertake a field archaeological project in the Copán river drainage. There already exists a considerable body of literature on the great ruins of Copán itself, in view of the fact that responsible field work has been going on there since the Stephens-Catherwood expedition of 1839–40 (Stephens, 1842). But aside from investigating these remains of Classic Period date, little field work seems ever to have been undertaken in the valley. The report of an American-Danish expedition of nearly 50 years ago refers to “the very numerous archaeological sites” that lie along the upper Copán river (Yde, 1938, p. 43). The test of field archaeology, then—in addition to what has already been done at Copán itself—would seem to be the next step.

What are some of the benefits that might follow from a positive result to the test?

1. It would help in working out the geography of the Book of Mormon. Specific identifications might include the locations of the land and the city of Nephi. It would also have a bearing on the question of which of the two rivers discussed from this stand two years ago—the Grijalva or the Usumacinta—might be the Sidon of the Book of Mormon (*News. and Proc.*, 151.2).

2. The ruins of Nephi would show a long sequence of human occupation, and this would be of special interest to the professional archaeologist, for it would help him set up his time periods.

The basic text, speaking of the flight of Nephi and his followers in the sixth century BC, says,

And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness . . . many days. And . . . we did pitch our tents. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi. . . . And all those who were with me did . . . call themselves the people of Nephi. (2 Ne. 5:7–9)

The fact that they pitched their tents suggests that the spot was not already occupied when the Nephites

got there. In fact, it may never before have been occupied. Then, as they settled down and began to expand it became their capital city.

After the passage of several centuries, the place may have been abandoned. About 200 BC, the returning colony of Zeniff found it occupied by the Lamanites and partially in ruins (Mos. 9:4–8). Then later still, it became the main capital of the Lamanites. (The city of *Nephi*, mind you!) We have little information about the city through the first two centuries AD, but in the later age of religious warfare and until Moroni's last entry of AD 421, we find it once again the Lamanite capital. It must have had a long and varied archaeological history.

3. The city of Nephi was so situated that an excavation of its ruins might reveal evidence of an intermingling of its inhabitants with late Jaredite survivors. The existence of such survivors following the great terminal Jaredite civil war of perhaps the sixth century BC has been discussed at our Annual Symposium and referred to in our Society publications a number of times. In addition to convincing evidence within the Book of Mormon itself, there also exists a good deal of archaeological evidence.

The "Olmec" civilization of archaeology, extending from a time before 1500 BC to as late as the sixth century BC, has been equated with the Jaredites by most recent students of Book of Mormon archaeology. That various groups of survivors lingered on to intermingle with the later settlers of Israelitish origin has been widely accepted. Indications of this have been pointed out in lectures by M. Wells Jakeman since 1946. (Cf. *News. and Proc.*, 150.0; 153.0, p. 8; Christensen, 1963, pp. 86, 101–102; Nibley, 1952, pp. 238–248.)

4. The site of Nephi might contain writings in various Book of Mormon scripts, especially if they should be found preserved on durable materials, such as stone, clay, or metal. Included, for example, might be writings in archaic Hebrew or in Hebrew-derived alphabets. (We would not expect, of course, to find, in remains of Book of Mormon date, the modern Hebrew alphabet, now used to record that language, since it did not come into use for that purpose until the time of the Babylonian captivity. There might also appear examples of "reformed Egyptian" (Morm. 9:32). In addition, if my thinking is correct, the Jaredite script might be found there.

A recent paper enumerates the ancient Mesoamerican writing systems now known to New World experts (Sorenson, 1984). Included is a map showing where 14 such scripts, one of them going back to at

least 1000 BC, have been found. The author's conclusion: "We are . . . on safe ground in saying that, on the basis of finds so far, many Mesoamerican cultures were literate . . . from at least 1000 BC."

The discovery of still another ancient script, the fifteenth—this one found in Highland Guatemala—is reported in the latest issue of the *Newsletter and Proceedings* (Christenson, 1984).

The Guest Address of the present Annual Symposium, "Maya Hieroglyphic Decipherment—Its Current Status," delivered from this lectern earlier today by Dr. James A. Fox, presented abundant evidence of recent progress in understanding the Maya script, so far the best known of ancient New World writing systems (see below, 158.1; see also *News. and Proc.*, 157.1).

5. The field project here proposed, if our reasoning be correct, might locate the great temple of Walker's diary. The details mentioned constitute a direct archaeological challenge: the sculptures and pillars of the temple and those of the quarry being exactly similar to each other. If we should find such a feature, it is likely indeed that we would have found the right place.

#### RUINS ALREADY VISITED?

As a matter of fact, a preliminary field exploration in the "River of Nephi" area has long since been made by students of Book of Mormon archaeology. Thirty years ago, an expedition to Mesoamerica led by Dr. Jakeman examined, in the region of the boundary between Guatemala and westernmost Honduras, the site of an ancient, possibly Preclassic, city in the locality he had previously concluded was likely that of the city of Nephi, according to the geographical requirements of the Book of Mormon. It was during the BYU-SEHA expedition of 1954, briefly reported at the Society's Eighth Annual Symposium. (Christensen, 1963, p. 174)

When the Walker diary entry was shown to Dr. Jakeman about a year ago, in September, 1983, he expressed surprise, for it appeared to confirm to some extent his earlier conclusions. Even before the 1954 expedition, on a large wall map prepared in the late 1940s for classroom instruction, he had marked the approximate locations provisionally assigned to the land and the city of Nephi. A reexamination of the map showed his city of Nephi to lie near the southwestern edge of the drainage of the Copán river, which, according to the newly discovered diary entry, the prophet Joseph Smith had declared to be the "River of Nephi."

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158.1 **MAYA EXPERT FEATURED AT ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM.** Remarkable progress of recent years in deciphering ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing was reported in the Guest Address delivered at the Society's 1984 Annual Symposium. James A. Fox, a professor of anthropology at Stanford University and a leading expert in Maya studies, entitled his address **MAYA HIEROGLYPHIC DECIPHERMENT—ITS CURRENT STATUS.**

The Guest address occupied a full hour just before lunch on the final day of the symposium. After lunch, Dr. Fox continued his explanations in a question-and-answer format.

Welby W. Ricks, as the general chairman, organized the Thirty-third Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, held at Brigham Young University, Friday and Saturday, September 28 and 29. Dr. Ricks has been an SEHA trustee since 1955; was a member of the Fifth BYU Archaeological Expedition to Middle America in 1958; was the Society president, in 1962-65 and again in 1968-72; and served as chairman of the Annual Symposium on five previous occasions (*UAS Newsl.*, 31.22, 46.0, 82.0; *Newsl. and Proc.*, 109.2, 121.0, 131.2).

Assisting Dr. Ricks as members of the Symposium Committee were Esther Phelps Parks, SEHA vice-president, in charge of publicity; V. Garth Norman, president of a Utah firm of archaeological consultants; Bruce W. Warren, adjunct professor of anthropology at BYU, in charge of local arrangements, and Ruth R. Christensen, SEHA secretary and treasurer, committee secretary. Dr. Warren and Mr. Norman are leading experts on ancient Mexico and Central America. The symposium program emphasized Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon.

## FRIDAY EVENING

A panel discussion entitled **BOOK OF MORMON NAMES AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS** was presented on Friday evening, September 28. John W. Welch, discoverer of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, a professor of law at BYU, and president of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, served as moderator. Panelists included John A. Tvedtnes, a doctoral candidate in Semitic and Egyptian languages at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and an instructor at the BYU-Salt Lake Center for Continuing Education; Benjamin Urrutia, an advanced student of Hebrew and anthropology; Gordon C. Thomasson, a student in the field of applied anthropology completing a doctorate at Cornell University; and Paul Y. Hoskisson,

an instructor in the BYU Department of Ancient Scripture.

The panel discussion focused on possible etymologies of personal and place names to be found in the Nephite scripture. It was a progress report of a research project now underway.

#### SATURDAY MORNING

Other papers of the Saturday morning session, in addition to the Guest Address by Dr. Fox, included DOCUMENTATION OF THE NEWARK, OHIO, HOLY STONES, by Joseph Schenck, Sr., of St. Louis, Missouri. The Newark Holy Stones contain sacred writings in an unusual Hebrew script. They were found by David Wyrick in ancient burial mounds that he excavated near that town in 1860. Mr. Schenck told of the earliest written accounts of the discovery and of his reasons for believing the stones to be authentic antiquities.

Following Mr. Schenck, Benjamin Urrutia read THE LAMANITE PENTECOST. The author drew parallels between a remarkable spiritual manifestation of about 30 BC recounted in the Book of Mormon (Hel. 5) and the Pentecost that took place in Jerusalem shortly after the ascension of Jesus (Acts 2).

Next was CHIASMUS AMONG THE HIGHLAND MAYAS OF GUATEMALA, by Allen J. Christenson, a former student of linguistics and archaeology at BYU and former translator of Quiché for the LDS church. Dr. Christenson was necessarily absent from the symposium, serving a residency as a dental surgeon in Washington, DC. His paper was read in his behalf by Margaret Blair Fox. Chiasmus is a remarkable ancient Old World literary device, rediscovered by modern scholars within about the past century and now known to be especially characteristic of biblical Hebrew. Striking examples in the Book of Mormon have also been pointed out within the past 15 years. In his paper, Dr. Christenson demonstrated that the literature of the Quiché nation of Highland Guatemala also contained chiasmus of high quality, by analyzing examples found in the *Annals of the Cakchiquels* and in the *Popol Vuh*, both of which were written shortly after the Spanish conquest.

#### SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Following Dr. Fox's question-and-answer session on Maya decipherment, Saturday afternoon, Charles Stuart Bagley of Alamogordo, New Mexico, a retired

geodesist of the US Air Force, read the next paper. In A TEXTUAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON, the author asserted that statements made in the Book of Mormon itself should take precedence over all other sources of information, such as personal statements of early LDS church leaders. He identified the Isthmus of Tehuántepec as the narrow neck of land, the Usumacinta river as the Sidon, and Uxmal in Yucatan as the city of Nephi.

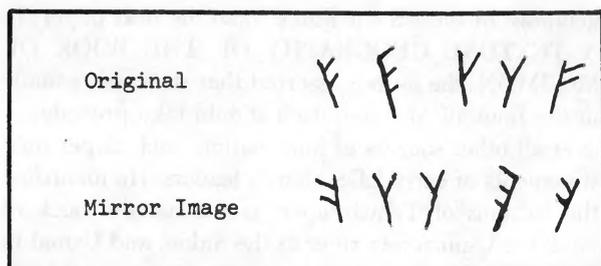
Mr. Bagley is probably the earliest scholar still living to center Book of Mormon geography on the Isthmus of Tehuántepec as the narrow neck of land, a viewpoint now generally accepted. He is a longtime Research Patron and Life Member of the SEHA. As sponsor of No. 153 (June, 1983) of the *Newsletter and Proceedings*, it was with his financial assistance that that issue was published.

THE RIVER OF NEPHI: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON AN OLD DIARY ENTRY, by Ross T. Christensen, a BYU professor emeritus of archaeology and anthropology, came next. This paper is published in full in the present issue of the *Newsletter and Proceedings* (see above, 158.0).

FOURTH CENTURY A.D. MIGRATION RELATED BY IXTLILXOCHITL was read by Bruce W. Warren. As an intensive student of the pre-Columbian literature of Mesoamerica for many years, Dr. Warren has found evidence of a large-scale migration, in the fourth century AD, of a people called the Tultecas for the purpose of conquering new lands. Some students of the Book of Mormon have equated their leader, Huematzin, with the Nephite general Mormon. Both were historians, and both prophesied future events. However, the author believes that Huematzin was not Mormon, but instead some contemporaneous Lamanite leader.

The final topic of the day was treated by the symposium chairman, Dr. Ricks himself; TIDBITS IN THE NEWS: RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES. Included were the photographing of thousands of fired-clay bricks excavated at Comalcalco, Tabasco, near the southern Gulf Coast of Mexico; about 500 of them bear brief inscriptions in what appear to be Old World scripts.

Also, some examples of writing found in the eastern United States were reported. An illustration of the Spangler Nodule, a small round piece of iron ore found about 1800 at Plain, Stark County, Ohio, and carved with what seems to be a single word of five characters in an unknown script, was projected onto the screen. Benjamin Urrutia stepped forward and reversed the transparency on the projector. The word thus appeared on the screen as a mirror image of the



The original inscription of the Spangler Nodule, together with the same characters reversed to form a mirror image. According to Mr. Urrutia, the latter spells a variant form of the name Yahweh (Jehovah).

original on the nodule. This word, he stated, reads YHWWY, or Yahowi, a variant form of the divine name Jehovah in archaic Hebrew, an alphabet that was in use until the sixth century BC.

A paper by V. Garth Norman, IS THE 16th OF NISAN THE 6th OF APRIL? CALENDRIAL ANALYSIS OF STELA 21, IZAPA, CHIAPAS, MEXICO, appeared on the printed program of the symposium but was not read because of the author's absence in Mexico City (see below, 158.6).

Virgil V. Peterson, SEHA president, opened the Saturday morning session with Welcoming Remarks and closed at the end of the day with a Response to the symposium proceedings.

Papers selected from among those presented at the symposium will appear in forthcoming numbers of the *Newsletter and Proceedings*; it is editorial policy to publish one or more such papers in most issues. Prepublication copies are not distributed from the Society office without the author's permission. In case a member desires to request a copy directly from the author, however, the editor will be glad to help him make contact.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

Dr. Fox is the author of Chapter 15, "Language and Writing," in Robert J. Sharer's new revision of Morley's and Brainerd's classic volume, *The Ancient Maya* (4th ed.; Stanford University Press, 1983). His Guest Address at the Annual Symposium was similar in content to the chapter in the book.

A brief essay on current progress in Maya decipherment may be found in the August, 1984, issue of the *Newsletter and Proceedings*. See Article 157.1.

The Friday evening panel discussion, "Book of Mormon Names and Their Associations," reported a research project that has not yet been completed. It is understood that this information will be published later by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.

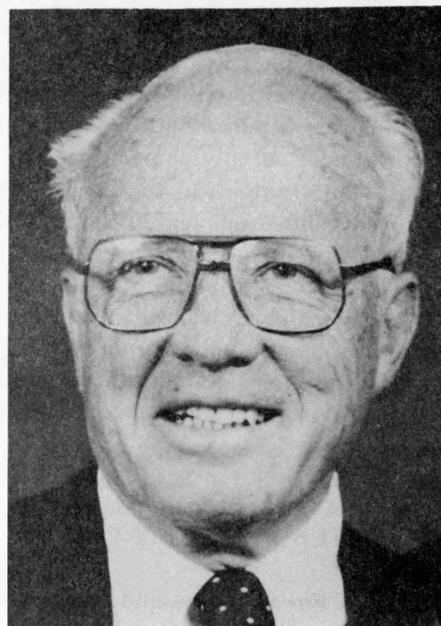
Copies of Joseph Schenck's volume, *Mysteries of the Holy Stones* (Pheasant Run Publications: St. Louis, 1982), were on sale at the Annual Symposium. They may now be ordered directly from the author, 2601 Natural Bridge Rd., St. Louis, Mo. 63107. (Price, \$10 per copy, including postage. Paperback. 179 pp.)

A reference to the Spangler Nodule may be found in *American Antiquarian*, Vol. 5 (1880), on p. 15: "Letter of Dr. Pease, Massillon, April 15, 1880, to Col. Charles Whittlesey" (illustrated).

Charles Stuart Bagley read papers on Book of Mormon geography before the Annual Symposium in 1963 ("A New Approach to the Geography of the Book of Mormon") and 1976 ("Yucatan as the Land of Nephi"). The 1963 paper was published in Forrest R. Hauck, ed., *Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures* (BYU Department of Extension Publications: Provo, 1963), pp. 70-86.

**158.2 FORMER SOCIETY LEADER RE-ELECTED TRUSTEE.** Fourteen years after his release from service as an SEHA trustee in 1970, Dr. Franklin S. Harris, Jr., was reelected to the same office. At the Society's Annual Business Meeting, held on September 29, 1984, following the close of the Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures (see above, 158.1), Dr. Harris was named once again a member of the Board of Trustees.

Dr. Harris was first elected a trustee of the Society in 1950, and in 1954 he was elected its vice-president and appointed director of its Salt Lake Chapter (now Archaeology and History Associates; see *News. and Proc.*, 147.3, p. 9).



Franklin S. Harris, Jr.

From 1956 to 1959, Dr. Harris served the Society as its president (*UAS Newsl.*, 37.00).

In 1958, President Harris donated a large collection of important books to the SEHA for use in the Brigham Young University Department of Archaeology, the Society's sponsoring organization at that time (*UAS Newsl.*, 48.30). In appreciation, the Society made him a member for life.

When the SEHA was legally incorporated in 1970, Dr. Harris was released as a trustee, along with others who lived at too great a distance to attend board meetings regularly. In 1971, he was named an advisor to the Board of Trustees and has continued in that office until his reelection as a trustee in 1984 (*Newsl. and Proc.*, 131.3).

Dr. Harris is the author of *The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences* and co-author with Dr. John A. Widtsoe of *Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon*. For several years he served on the staff of the *Improvement Era* as a contributing editor and has also written on metallurgy of the ancient world for the *Instructor* (*UAS Newsl.*, 46.20; cf. *Newsl. and Proc.*, 103.4). More recently, he reviewed the volume *Science and Religion: Toward a More Useful Dialogue* (Palidin House Publishers: Geneva, Illinois, 1979) for the *Newsletter and Proceedings* (146.4; see also 144.6).

For many years Dr. Harris was a professor of physics at the University of Utah. From 1962 to 1970, he was employed by Aerospace Corporation of El Segundo, California. In 1971 he moved to Virginia, where he served Old Dominion University, at Norfolk, as a senior scientist in the Department of Chemistry and the Institute of Oceanography. His research there included a project in atmospheric optics under contract with the National Space and Aeronautics Administration.

Since 1978, Dr. Harris has lived at Rockville, Utah, south of Zion's National Park. He is at present engaged in a major project of indexing scholarly journals in the field of physics, to be published by the Optical Society of America.

From 1939 to 1942, Dr. Harris was an officer of the former Itzan Society of Los Angeles, California, a group of Book of Mormon archaeology enthusiasts considered to have been the forerunner of the SEHA. He is a son of Dr. Franklin S. Harris, president of BYU from 1921 to 1945.

Eleven incumbent trustees were also elected at the Annual Business Meeting of last September: Virgil V. Peterson, Esther Phelps Parks, M. Wells Jakeman, Ruth R. Christensen, Ross T. Christensen, Clark S.

Knowlton, Macoy A. McMurray, V. Garth Norman, Welby W. Ricks, John A. Tvedtnes, and Bruce W. Warren. With the addition of Dr. Harris, the Board now consists of 12 members. All will serve for a one-year period ending with the Annual Business Meeting of 1985.

**158.3 DR. HARRIS NAMED 1985 SYMPOSIUM CHAIRMAN.** Franklin S. Harris, Jr., whose election as an SEHA trustee is reported in this issue of the *Newsletter and Proceedings* (see above, 158.2), has also been named general chairman of the Society's 1985 Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures.

This announcement was made by SEHA vice-president Esther Phelps Parks. It is one of the duties of her office to appoint the symposium chairman each year.

Dr. Harris extends a general invitation to Society members to submit abstracts (brief summaries) of proposed papers. "The Annual Symposium is a great time for Society members to get together and share ideas," Dr. Harris adds. "We hope a good number will respond to this invitation and help make this year's meeting exciting and memorable.

"The Symposium Committee, when appointed, will help me select the papers to appear on the program. A form for the abstract, together with instructions, will be mailed to all members soon."

The Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures has been held nearly every year since 1947. It is an occasion for sharing research findings among Society members on the archaeology of the Hebrew-Christian and Latter-day Saint scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and for fellowshiping among those interested in these fields. The Society's Annual Business Meeting usually follows the Symposium.

Dr. Harris has himself read four papers before the Annual Symposium: "Recent Versions of the 'Diffusion' Theory" (1949); "A Comparison of Ancient American and Near Eastern Metallurgy" (1950); "Iron in Ancient America" (1951); and "Ancient Records on Metal Plates" (1961).

Announcement of the date and place of the yearly meeting, appointment of members to serve on the Symposium Committee, the papers chosen to appear on the program, and other information will be published in forthcoming issues of the *Newsletter and Proceedings*.

**158.4 SOCIETY FOUNDER LECTURES IN SALT LAKE CITY AND PROVO.** M. Wells Jakeman principal founder of the SEHA in 1949, lectured on Book of Mormon archaeology in Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah, October and November, 1984.

As previously announced at the Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures held last September 28 and 29 (see above, 158.1), Dr. Jakeman delivered a series of six weekly evening lectures at the Society headquarters, Salmon House, Brigham Young University, Provo, October 4 through November 8, then covered the same subjects in a series of five evening lectures held at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, University of Utah, October 23 through November 27. All the lectures were free and were partly seminar-type class discussions. Maps and chronological charts were distributed as aids to the discussions and for future study. Attendance at the Salt Lake City lectures or classes averaged about 80 persons per evening.

The series was entitled "Ancient Mesoamerican History, Geography, and Archaeology." The individual lectures were

1. Introduction: The Main Historical Claims of the Book of Mormon.
2. Ancient Mesoamerican Hieroglyphic Records.
3. Early Native and Spanish Historical Accounts in European Script: Their Authenticity, a Survey and Evaluation.
4. What Early Native and Spanish Historical Accounts Say About the Peoples and History of Mesoamerica in the Periods of the Book of Mormon, Partially Confirmed by Archaeological Findings to Date.
5. Book of Mormon Comparisons, and Some Important Remaining Problems in the History and Geography of Mesoamerica in the Periods of the Book of Mormon.

**158.5 READS PAPER IN DENVER ON MESO-AMERICAN WORLD-AGE SYSTEMS.** Bruce W. Warren, adjunct professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University and SEHA trustee, read a paper on November 25 at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, held in Denver, Colorado.

Entitled "The Four- and Five-World-Age Systems in Mesoamerica," the paper drew heavily upon the writings of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, a native American expert on pre-Columbian history, which date to about AD 1600.

Dr. Warren reports that his paper won the enthusiasm of David H. Kelley, professor of archaeology at the University of Calgary, Canada, and well known authority on Mesoamerican archaeology, writing systems, and calendars. He was pleased that scholars are taking the writings of the sixteenth-century Texcocan prince more seriously as a source of reliable history than they have heretofore done.

Dr. Kelley was the Guest Speaker at the SEHA Annual Symposium of 1972 ("The World Ages in India and Mesoamerica;" published in *News. and Proc.*, 137.0, March, 1975).

Ixtlilxóchitl's works were also the basis of Dr. Warren's contribution at the latest Annual Symposium of the SEHA held in September, 1984 (see above, 158.1).

**158.6 READS TWO PAPERS ON IZAPA MONUMENTS.** V. Garth Norman read a paper, "Astronomical Alignments of Izapa Sculptures and Their Significance," at an international conference on Mesoamerican archaeoastronomy and ethnoastronomy, held at the National Autonomous University in Mexico City, September 24-29, 1984.

Mr. Norman is an SEHA trustee, president of Archaeological Research Consultants of American Fork, and a research associate in archaeology at Brigham Young University. From 1965 to 1976 he carried out field investigations at the ruins of Izapa and is the author of *Izapa Sculpture* (BYU—New World Archaeological Foundation: Provo, 1973 [Part I] and 1976 [Part II]). (*News. and Proc.*, 156.1)

Izapa is a large ruin in southern Mexico near the Guatemala border that has been investigated by BYU and the SEHA since 1954. It contains a large temple complex dating back to the third century BC (*News. and Proc.*, 156.1, p. 8). In his Mexico City paper, Mr. Norman reported his discovery of astronomical alignments of 50 sculptures with the sun, the moon, and the planet Venus, on cyclic extreme-declination azimuths on the horizon. He also discussed the calendrical and religious implications of these alignments in terms of sculptured themes and symbols and showed evidence for the 260-day calendar cycle at Izapa.

In Denver, Colorado, in November, Mr. Norman read another paper on Izapa sculpture at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Entitled "The Geometric Structure of the Sun Priest on Izapa Stela 4," it presented evidence that

the priest of the sculpture was carved to a predetermined geometry consisting of a circle within a square, with diagonal lines added. He believes the origin of this pattern was in the observable diffused light of the sun. The composition of the temple center, and of other sculptures, in this same pattern—together with Old World comparisons—will be reported in detail at a scholarly gathering later this year, according to Mr. Norman.

**158.7 THE CUBIT IN ANCIENT MESO-AMERICA? A POSSIBLE NEAR-EASTERN PARALLEL.** By V. Garth Norman. Following the archaeoastronomy symposium of September, 1984 (see above, 158.6), I conducted field research at the ruins of Izapa and at the Mexico National Museum on a problem I had been working on for several years: the possible use in Mesoamerica of the cubit, a characteristic Old World unit of linear measure.

Evidence now indicates that the Izapa temple center and monuments were planned utilizing a 495mm unit (19½ inches), which is precisely equal to the cubit of the famous king Gudea, who reigned at Lagash in Mesopotamia about 2000 BC. (The Izapa study, incidentally, was not colored by a search for possible Near Eastern correspondences, for the Gudea cubit came to my attention only after I had already discovered the Izapa unit.)

One Izapa sculpture of a human figure has been found with the same measurement, 495mm, from the elbow to the tip of the extended fingers.

Since the invention of units of measure among various peoples is always arbitrary, the possibility of exactly the same unit being invented independently twice is virtually nil. Preliminary research indicates that this unit probably began to be used in the Izapan cultural period, which Book of Mormon students recognize as the time just following the migrations of Lehi and Mulek, and continued elsewhere in Mesoamerica, such as at Monte Albán and Teotihuacán, into Early Classic times. The fact that the 495mm unit was evidently altered in Middle Classic times im-

plies that its use may have been confined largely to the Nephite-Mulekite period.

The discovery of the cubit in Mexico has important implications for both Mesoamerican and Book of Mormon research, especially if this trait should prove to be a cultural marker, i.e., characteristic of, or peculiar to, a specific culture in time and space. However, many additional sites will need to be inspected before firm conclusions can be drawn.

I expect to report in detail my research to date, at a forthcoming scholarly meeting later this year.

**Editor's Note.** The author has invited those who may like to collaborate with him in his search for evidence of the cubit in ancient America to contact him at 232 East 300 North, American Fork, Utah 84003.

A preliminary search for evidence of the use of the cubit by the builders of Yagul, a ruin located between Monte Albán and Mitla in southern Mexico, was reported in 1957 by Joseph Eugene Vincent (now an advisor to the SEHA Board of Trustees.) Positive and exciting results had been obtained by his son David, then a beginning freshman at Mexico City College (now University of the Americas). See *Progress in Archaeology*, pp. 112-113. For further information on Yagul, see pp. 153-156.

**158.8 UPDATE ON LIFE MEMBERS.** Life Membership in the SEHA continues to be attractive to Latter-day Saint archaeology enthusiasts. The total list of Life Members has reached over 100.

A Life Member is entitled to all the benefits of belonging to the Society as long as he lives and is spared the inconvenience of mailing in his renewal fee, year by year. The lifetime fee is \$150.

The following persons have become Life Members since the last previous listing in the *Newsletter and Proceedings* (150.7):

Horacio R. Alvarez, Tustin, California; Darris J. Chivers, Salt Lake City; Steven F. Christensen, Salt Lake City; Malin L. Jacobs, Littleton, Colorado; Thelma Kunz, Salt Lake City; Alexis Wm. Shumate, Murray River, PEI, Canada; Cornelia M. Smith, Las Vegas, Nevada; and Norm Steggel, Canyon City, Oregon.