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An Australian Contribution to the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: Over 170 years after it was first published, the Book of Mormon is still the subject of intense scrutiny by LDS scholars, some of whom are attempting to recover the original text as Joseph Smith dictated it. Ross Geddes from Brisbane was one of a handful of people assisting in this massive undertaking, starting on the project in 2004 and carefully sifting through thousands of pages of text and commenting on the changes.

as commanded by the messenger” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:34–50).

Joseph’s continuing to search, ponder, and pray is repeated over time, during which period he receives the plates and begins the process of translation. “Oliver Cowdery describes these events thus: ‘These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven’” (Joseph Smith—History 1:71; footnote).

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is the record which representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bring to the world.

Subsequently, priesthood authority was revealed in May 1829, when Joseph and Oliver “on a certain day went into the woods to pray and

inquire of the Lord respecting baptism. . . . While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us” (Joseph Smith—History 1:68).

In the same month, the Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred under the hands of Peter, James, and John.

The Church was organized on April 6, 1830, and the rest is a continuing history, a prophetic example for each of us to follow.

Ways will vary and the answers will not always come in the desired manner, but there is power in an individual’s desire to search, ponder and pray. Divine truths will always come to those who search, ponder, and pray. ■

LOCAL NEWS

An Australian Contribution to the Book of Mormon

By Warren Aston

Over 170 years after it was first published, the Book of Mormon is still the subject of intense scrutiny by LDS scholars, some of whom are attempting to recover the original text as Joseph Smith dictated it. Ross Geddes from Brisbane was one of a handful of people assisting in this massive undertaking, starting on the project in 2004 and carefully sifting through thousands of pages of text and commenting on the changes.

Sadly, Ross passed away unexpectedly on 14 November 2010. In tribute, Royal Skousen,

professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, praised Ross’s contributions to this project as being “very significant.”

“No one has been more diligent in reading the work of the critical text and commenting on it,” said Professor Skousen. “Ross alone made 33 suggestions—the most of anyone. And seven of his suggestions were accepted—also the highest of anyone.”

For over a decade, Professor Skousen has led the mammoth effort to produce what is called the “Critical (i.e. definitive) Text”



Ross Geddes was a significant contributor to a project aimed at reclaiming the original text of the Book of Mormon.

of the Book of Mormon. The project examines the original and printer’s manuscript and every significant edition of the Book of Mormon published

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF WARREN ASTON

since then, tracking every change, no matter how minor. This has resulted in a series of voluminous publications documenting each change made to the text. Critical texts have previously been prepared for other famous historical and literary documents, but until recently, not for the Book of Mormon.

In addition to Oliver Cowdery, a variety of scribes wrote the words down, but in the process many words were misspelled or misheard. Later, in copying the text, words were sometimes misread.

Professor Skousen said, “I greatly miss Ross Geddes. He was a real help to me in my work on the critical text of the Book of Mormon. I would have enjoyed meeting Ross. Now I’ll just have to wait a while for that meeting. We’ll have a lot to talk about.”

Ross’s suggestions appear alongside others in the book, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, published in 2009 by Yale University Press. Future editions of the Book of Mormon will owe much of their accuracy to the dedication of faithful, often unsung, members like Ross. ■

Note: Further information about the project can be found at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu>.

Explorer Bringing the Book of Mormon to Life

By Christopher Cooper

While every young man is inspired by the adventure stories of youth with aspirations to sail the seas, climb mountains and discover lost cities, few ever realise those dreams of youth as the responsibilities of adult years take hold. Warren Aston is a notable exception—a man who has made it his lifelong journey and career to explore and discover tangible truths of the adventure stories of the Book of Mormon that enchanted him in his youth and which continue to inspire him in adulthood.

Warren Aston is an explorer, writer, researcher and travel guide based in Brisbane, who has seen much of the world and has visited many places far removed from the regular tourist

tracks in search of evidence supporting the history and stories of the Book of Mormon.

Warren travels extensively in pursuit of his research interests. He writes and gives lectures along the way, while also keeping up with his six children and nearly a dozen grandchildren.

“My travels began simply because I wanted to see for myself the places important to Latter-day Saints—Jerusalem, Nauvoo, Hill Cumorah, etc. Then I began realising that no one was actually doing any research into many of these places, so when the chance came to investigate Nahom—the place where Ishmael was buried (see 1 Nephi 16:34), I took it. That was in 1984. From there it has continued and expanded,” said Warren.



Warren Aston and son Chad filming on the Arabian coast.

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