
Oliver Granger

(1794–1841)

D&C 117: Introduction, 12–13

At age 33 Oliver lost partial eyesight from exposure to extreme cold weather. In spite of what became a bothersome handicap, he attained the rank of colonel in the New York Militia. His patriotism to his country was as real as his commitment to Christianity. He was a licensed exhorter in a Methodist congregation but always thought there must be more to religion. It was a heavenly visitation from angel Moroni that led to his baptism in Sodus, New York, by Brigham Young. His daughter, Sarah Granger Kimball, spoke of that visitation—

My father was told by a person who said his name was Moroni that the Book of Mormon, about which his mind was exercised, was a true record of great worth. Moroni instructed Oliver to testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and prophesied that if he would so testify, he should hereafter be ordained to preach the everlasting Gospel to the children of men. The angel instructed him to offer a prayer while kneeling. As he did so, Moroni and another personage knelt with him by the bedside. Moroni repeated words and instructed [Oliver] to repeat them after him.¹

In 1833 Oliver moved his family from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, to be with the Saints of God. In Kirtland he was called by the Prophet Joseph Smith to serve on the high council and to labor on the temple. He enjoyed both assignments, but his days in Kirtland were cut short. Religious persecution forced him to take his leave from the community.

¹ Sarah Granger Kimball quote, in Augusta Joyce Crocheron, *Representative Women of Deseret* (Salt Lake City: J. C. Graham and Co., 1884), 24

Oliver and his family journeyed about 800 miles from Kirtland to Missouri, hoping to establish a home free from persecution and harassment. One month after Oliver had arrived in Missouri, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation instructing him to return to Kirtland and represent the First Presidency in settling Church affairs and retiring past debts. The Prophet Joseph wrote, "As I was driven away from Kirtland without the privilege of settling my business, I . . . employed Colonel Oliver Granger as my agent, to close all my affairs in the east."²

Without hesitation or question, Oliver turned his wagon around and headed back to Kirtland to fulfill the assignment given him by a prophet. His negotiations with angry creditors were not easy, yet one creditor wrote, "Oliver Granger's management in the arrangement of the unfinished business of people that have moved to the Far West, in redeeming their pledges and thereby sustaining their integrity, has been truly praiseworthy, and has entitled him to my highest esteem, and ever grateful recollection."³

After retiring some major debts of the Church, Oliver joined the Saints in Commerce, Illinois. He was recognized for his success in Kirtland and called to be a land agent for the Church in Iowa. A May 13, 1839, letter signed by the First Presidency explained the reason why Oliver was again selected to fulfill such an important task:

We have always found President Oliver Granger to be a man of the most strict integrity and moral virtue, and in fine, to be a man of God. . . . We have entrusted vast business concerns to him, which have been managed skillfully to the support of our characters and interest as well as that of the Church.⁴

Acting in the name of the Church, Oliver purchased lands in Montrose, Iowa Territory, before being asked to return again to Kirtland. In 1840 in Kirtland, while acting as the Prophet Joseph's legal representative, Oliver negotiated to cancel outstanding debts, clear the Kirtland Temple of financial encumbrances, and oversee many Church affairs before his death in 1841 at age 47.

² Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:164.

³ Letter book 2, 40. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, [2 November 1838–31 July 1842]. Joseph Smith Papers.