
David Whitmer's Introduction to the Restoration

D&C 14: Introduction

David Whitmer was the first in his family to learn of Joseph Smith and the gold plates. On an 1828 business trip to Palmyra, New York, he heard many in the village conversing about Joseph Smith and gold plates. Although David supposed it was “idle gossip,” Oliver Cowdery convinced him that it was more than gossip. As David inquired of other young men in the village, he learned,

Smith had certainly golden plates, and that before he had attained them he had promised to share with them, and had not done so, and they were very much incensed with him. Said I, “How do you know that Joe Smith has the plates.” They replied, “We saw the place in the hill that he took them out of, just as he described it to us before he obtained them.” These parties were so positive in their statements that I began to believe there must be some foundation for the stories then in circulation all over that part of the country. I had never seen any of the Smith family up to that time, and I began to inquire of the people in regard to them. . . .

After thinking over the matter for a long time, and talking with Cowdery, who also gave me a history of the finding of the plates, I went home and after several months Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Pa., whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates on account of the persecutions of the neighbors, and see him about the

matter. He did go, and on the way stopped at my father's house and told me that as soon as he found out anything, either truth or untruth, he would let me know.

After he got there he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and shortly after, wrote to me telling me that he was convinced that Smith had the records, and that he [Smith] has told him that it was the will of heaven that he [Cowdery] should be his scribe to assist in the translation of the plates.¹

In a letter from Oliver Cowdery, David learned that Oliver had "revealed knowledge" about the plates and was convinced the plates contained a record of an ancient people who once lived on this continent. In yet another letter from Oliver, David was told to come to "Pennsylvania and bring [Oliver] and Joseph to my father's house, giving as a reason therefore that they had received a commandment from God to that effect."²

David brought Joseph and Oliver to his father's home in Fayette, New York. The Prophet Joseph wrote of being well received in the Peter Whitmer Sr. home: "It was arranged that we should have our board free of charge, and the assistance of one of his brothers to write for me, and also [David's] assistance when convenient."³ Joseph resided in the Whitmer home until he completed the translation of the Book of Mormon.

¹ *Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881, as cited in Larry C. Porter, "A Study of the Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816–1831," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, August 1971, 235.

² *Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881, 235.

³ *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], Document Transcript, June 1829. Joseph Smith Papers.