



Type: Magazine Article

Original Words of the Book of Mormon

Author(s): Harold Lundstrom

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (February 1948)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 84–86, 116

Abstract: Defending the originality of the Book of Mormon, this article discusses how during the period of 1820-1830 coining words was less common than at any subsequent time in America. The fact that the Book of Mormon contains so many unfamiliar words is a testimony of its divinity. B. H. Roberts studied the names in the Book of Mormon and found that Jaredite names end with consonants and Nephite names in vowels. One hundred eighty-one new words came forth out of seventy-five working days of translation.

ORIGINAL Words OF THE

AMONG the vast number of men who have contributed to the field of American letters, probably none achieved in a lifetime what the Prophet Joseph Smith, as an instrument of the Lord, accomplished in seventy-five working days—the bringing forth of one hundred and eighty-one new words.

Occasionally, and only occasionally, an author coins a new name for a character, but for a young man to have produced so many new names and other words in such a brief period of time without divine help seems almost beyond comprehension.

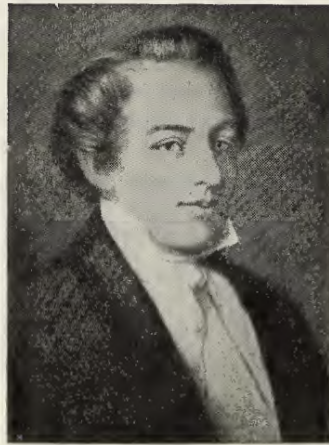
Coining of new words in America was a less common practice in the decade of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, 1820-1830, than in any subsequent period. Prior to the advent of the great industrial revolution, which had its real beginning around 1830, with its new inventions which made many new words necessary, few new names had been coined. The young nation was but on the threshold of producing its own literature. Few American authors' works were widely circulated. Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper, the most prolific of the early writers, coined perhaps a dozen words which have survived the century, and these were but the combining of terms already accepted, i.e., *Leatherstocking*, *Deerslayer*, and *Pathfinder*.

William Shakespeare, whose twenty-thousand-word vocabulary is considered the greatest of all time, is generally not credited with coining new words although he practised the introducing of morality nomenclature such as *Sly*, *Goodfellow*, *Quince*, and others. Many of Shakespeare's names were taken from Plutarch's *Lives* and also from the Latin language. Although his works were available, they were not published in America until 1847, seventeen years after the Prophet Joseph Smith had published the Book of Mormon.

Many of the new words which become part of the American language begin as slang. After a time some of them come into good usage

because they express an idea so clearly. It would, for example, take a phrase of several words to give the same idea as expressed by the word *racketeer*, a word no longer slang.

Most of the slang words created are not newly coined; they are words already common to the language which are given new meanings and spellings. Walter Winchell is perhaps one of the best known of the slang makers. In a list of forty-one of his words compiled by H. L. Mencken, only *two* are actually newly coined: *phfft*, and *foofff*.¹



JOSEPH SMITH THE PROPHET

In a list of over a thousand new words in the *New Words* section of the Merriam-Webster *New International Dictionary*, there is only one word accredited to an author: *boondoggle*, coined by R. H. Link. Included in this list are several coined trademark names though most of these are derivatives and are hardly new. Some of these trademark names are: *benzedrine*, *celanese*, *haliver*, *kinescope*, *kodak*, and *polaroid*.

Some new words are so important that they are given official recognition by the groups who use them. *Trylon* was coined for use at the New York World's Fair in 1939. The word *radio*, a derivative, was officially accepted at an interna-

tional convention in Berlin in 1906. Certainly the coining of new words is anything but an easy practice.

WHETHER Joseph Smith's story that, "Through the medium of the Urim and Thummin I translated the record of the Book of Mormon, by the gift and power of God," is accepted or not, the great number of new words, and the short time in which they appeared, justifies comment and explanation. Some preliminary studies of some of the new words in the Book of Mormon have been made from time to time, but it yet remains for the philological scholar to exhaust the field of similarities between the Book of Mormon words and the Semitic, Egyptian, and Semito-Hamitic languages. This present study merely classifies the words which are found in the Book of Mormon and which are not found in the Merriam-Webster unabridged *New International Dictionary* or in Dr. James Hastings's five volume *Dictionary of the Bible*. These words can be considered new to the American language. Although it is possible that certain of them are to be found in foreign languages, that Joseph Smith knew of them is highly improbable.

To fabricate such a complex story as is contained in the Book of Mormon, to re-use and give additional identification to fifty-three Bible names, to refer directly to another eighty-eight Bible names, and then in addition, to coin one hundred and eighty-one words in such a limited period rationally appears to be beyond the ability of the young twenty-three-year-old Prophet. He had little formal schooling; the little to which he was exposed while attending a rural school in the wilds of western New York a century and a quarter ago would in no way equip him with such a background as would be required for such an accomplishment.

IN seeking to establish the amount of time consumed in writing the Book of Mormon, the beginning

¹H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, p. 561

²*Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1842

BOOK OF MORMON

By Harold Lundstrom

date and the finishing date should be determined if possible. Joseph Smith wrote:

On the 5th day of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery came to my house, . . . Two days after the arrival of Mr. Cowdery (being the 7th of April) I commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, and he began to write for me.³

In addition to the Prophet's statement, Oliver Cowdery said:

I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God.⁴

These two statements establish the date of the beginning of the translation. The time of the completion of the translation cannot be as definitely established as its beginning. The Prophet recorded:

In the beginning of the month of June, his [Peter Whitmer's] son, David Whitmer came to the place where we were residing,

³Documentary History of the Church, v. 1, p. 32

and brought with him a two-horse wagon, for the purpose of having us accompany him to his father's place, and there remain until we should finish the work, . . . we . . . there resided until the translation was finished and the copyright secured.⁵

David Whitmer, referred to above, and one of the Three Witnesses of the plates of the Book of Mormon, stated:

I, as well as all my father's family, Smith's wife, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris were present during the translation . . . The translation at my father's occupied about one month, that is, from June 1, 1829, to July, 1829.⁶

From his exhaustive research on "The Writing of the Translation," Dr. Francis W. Kirkham concludes:

It is clear that the Book of Mormon was dictated by Joseph Smith in the relatively short period of seventy-five working days. There were many witnesses both at his home at Harmony, Pennsylvania, and at Fayette, New York. Many persons knew

⁴The Contributor, v. 5, p. 446; Historical Record, v. 6, p. 201

⁵Op. Cit., v. 1, pp. 48-49

⁶Historical Record, v. 6, p. 206

all the facts. No one has attempted to deny them. The physical facts concerning time, place and scribe of the writing of the translation and the publishing of the Book of Mormon are attested by both believers and non-believers in the divine origin of the book. There was no incentive for deception or misrepresentation of these facts by the persons who willingly gave their time to this effort. No wealth, honor, power or influence was to come to any one of them from this achievement, only the privilege to serve.⁷

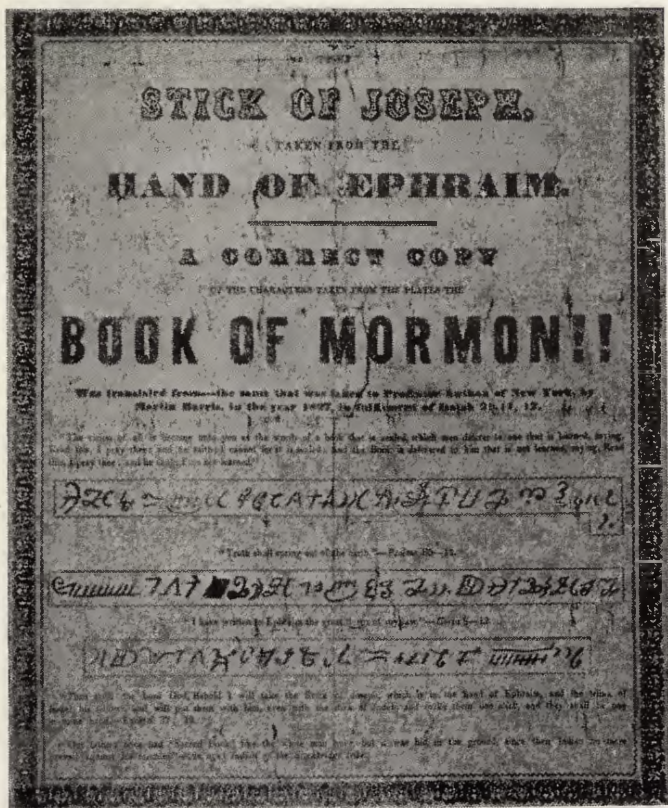
MODERN philological evidence has tended to demonstrate that some of the unfamiliar words of the Book of Mormon have been retained down to present times in Indian words. Such words as *Angola*, *Anti*, *Antipas*, *Hagoth*, *Jacobugath*, *Liahona*, *Manti*, *Mormon*, *Moroni*, *Mulek*, *Nephi*, *Onidah*, *Pachus*, *Sidon*, and *Zarahemla* are discussed by J. M. Sjodahl in his chapter, "Book of Mormon Names in American Geography."⁸ This, as well as other similar studies,⁹ is additional evidence of the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

The original words of the Book of Mormon have a curious similarity about them. In an unpublished observation on this subject, W. Aird Macdonald has noted that such names as *Anderson*, *Johnson*, *Peter-son*, and *Nelson* are easily identified as being Swedish names; *Caille*, *LeHayre*, *Dejean*, *Guizot*, *Fointaine*, and *Denis* as French; *Bruhl*, *Kuntz*, *Reuss*, *Schwab*, and *Schnabele* as German; *Hrebec*, *Cervicek*, *Mlynar*, *Kovar*, *Mosnicka*, and *Dvorak* as Slavic; *Papapadakis*, *Constantino-poulos*, *Poulos*, and *Pappageorgiou* as Greek; *Kowalczyk*, *Tomaszewski*, *Jarosc*, and *Siminowicz* as Polish; etc. Even some non-Latter-day Saints recognize *Nephi*, *Mahonri*, and *Laman* as being Book of Mormon names.¹⁰

B. H. Roberts divided the names of the Jaredite leaders and the Nephite leaders and very astutely observed that, with two exceptions, all the Jaredite names end in consonants, and that nearly all the Nephite names end in vowels.¹¹ This noted similarity seems to indicate that the words came from two different sources.

(Continued on page 86)

WHETHER Joseph Smith's story that, "Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record of the Book of Mormon, by the gift and power of God," is accepted or not, the great number of new words, and the short time in which they appeared, justifies comment and explanation.



⁷Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, p. 227

⁸J. M. Sjodahl, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 113

⁹B. H. Roberts, *A New Witness for God*, v. 3, p. 134

¹⁰H. L. Mencken, *The American Language*, p. 516

ORIGINAL WORDS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Continued from page 85)

As stated above, there are eighty-eight Bible nouns which appear in the Book of Mormon which refer only to the Bible identification; they have no new or added meaning in the Book of Mormon. These words can be placed in three classifications: persons, places, and miscellaneous.

Persons: (31), Abel, Abraham, Adam, Ahaz, Cain, Elijah, Eve, Isaac, Jeberechiah, Jesse, Jesus Christ, John, Jotham, Mathershall-Hash-Baz, Malachi, Manasseh, Mary, Melchizedek, Moses, Pekah, Remalia, (Remaliah in Bible), Rezin, Sarah, Saul, Shearjashub, Solomon, Tabaal (Tabeel in Bible), Uriah, Uziah, Zebulun, and Zechariah.

Places: (51), Aiath, Anathoth, Arpad, Assyria, Babylon, Bashan, Bethabary (Bethabara in Bible), Calno, Carchemish, Chaldea, Cush, Damascus, Eden, Edom, Egypt, Elam, Galilee, Gallim, Geba, Gebim, Gibeah, Gomorrah, Hamath, Horeb, Judah, Laish, Lebanon, Madmenah, Michmash, Migron, Moab, Naphtali, Nazareth, Nob, Ophir, Palestina, Pathros, Rahab, Ramath, Red Sea, Salem, Samaria, Shiloah, Shinar, Sinai, Sinim, Sion, Sodom, Syria, Tarshish, and Zion.

Miscellaneous: (16), ephah, a measurement; Hebrew, a language; Jehovah, the Lord; Immanuel, a title; Jew, a people; manna, a food; mammon, wealth; Medes, a people; Messiah, the Lord; Pharaoh, a title; Philistines, a people; raza, a libelous expression; seraphims, creatures; tabret, an instrument; teil-tree, a tree; and viol, an instrument.

Fifty-three nouns found in the Bible are also used in the Book of Mormon with new and added identifications. These words are also given in three groupings: persons or peoples, places, and miscellaneous.

Persons or Peoples: (41), Aaron, Amaleki, Amalekites, Aminidab, Ammah, Ammon, Amos, Ammonites, Benjamin, Enos, Esrom, Gad, Gideon, Gilead, Gilgal, Helam, Helem, Heth, Isaiah, Ishmael, Israel, Israelites, Jacob, Jared, Jeremiah, Jonas, Joseph, Kish, Laban, Lehi, Lemuel, Levi, Nimrah, Nimrod,

Noah, Omer, Samuel, Seth, Shem, Timothy, and Zedekiah.

Places: (11), *Aaron, Antipas, Boaz, David, Ephraim, *Gideon, *Gilgal, *Helam, *Heth, *Ishmael, *Jacob, Jordan, Joshua, Judea, *Lehi, *Lemuel, Midian, *Noah, Ramah, *Shem, Shilom, and Sidon.

Miscellaneous: (1), leah, a measurement.



THE Book of Mormon gives a new meaning to a few words common to the English language as used in America. In instances these words can be found only in an unabridged dictionary. Even though the Prophet Joseph Smith probably did not know of them, they do appear in our lexicons, and the Book of Mormon cannot be given credit for them as new words.

These words are: Aha, Alma, Angola, Antum, Gid, Lib, Mormon, Omni, and Shim.

THE following one hundred and eighty-one words appear in the Book of Mormon which was translated in seventy-five working days. They demonstrate either the divine claims made for the Book of Mormon or the genius of Joseph Smith. Certainly the list is far too long to have been produced by the genius of a single writer, even had he been academically trained, or a philologist, which Joseph Smith was not.

The original words are here arranged in three main groupings:

^{12A}A small star (*) indicates that the word also appears in another list, and is not counted in this listing.

^{12A}A few words are almost identical with Bible words: i.e., Antipas (BM), Antipas (Bible), Zenos (BM), Zenos (Bible).

persons or peoples, places, and miscellaneous. These main groupings are further divided into lesser classifications.

PERSONS

Nephite soldiers: (22), Amnor, Amoron,^{12B} Antionum, Antipus, Archantus, Camenihah, Emron, Gidgiddonah, Gidgiddoni, Joneam, Laham, Limhah, Limher, Luram, Manti, Moronihah, Pachus, Shiblom, Teancum, Teomner, Zenephi, and Zeram.

Jaredite Kings: (16), Ahah, Amgid, Amnigaddah, Com, Coriantum, Corum, Emer, Ethem, Hearthom, Kib, Kim, Morianton, Orihah, Rip-lakish, Shez, and Shule.

Nephites: (16), Aminadi, Amlici, Ammaron,^{12B} Chemish, Corianton, Gadianton, Helorum, Himni, Kori-hor, Nehor, Omner, Paanchi, Shem, Shiblom, Zeezoram, and Zoram.

Nephite Prophets: (13), Abinadi, Abinadom, Amaron,^{12B} Amulek, Amulon, Giddonah, Helaman, Jarom, Lachoneus, Moroni, Mosiah, Muleki, and Nephi.

Jaredites: (13), Akish, Cohor, Coriantor, Coriantumr, Corihor, Gilgah, Jacom, Kimnor, Mahah, Mulek, Pagag, Shiz, and Zarahemla.

Peoples: (7), Amalickiahites, Amlicites, Ammonihahites, Amulonites, Lamanites, Nephites, and Zoramites.

Gadianton Robbers: (5), Giddianhi, Kishkumen, Seantum, Seezoram, and Zemnariah.

Disciples: (5), Kumen, Kumen-onhi, Mathoni, Mathonihah, and Shemnon.

Nephite Judges: (4), Cezoram, Nephihah, Pacumeni, and Pahoran.

Lamanite Kings: (4), Antiomo, Laman, Lamoni, and Tubaloth.

Nephite Rulers: (3), Antionah, Limhi, and Zeniff.

Hebrew Prophets: (4), Ezias, Neum, Zenock, and Zenos.

Lamanites: (2), Lehonti and Zarahemnah.

Nephite Traitors: (2), Amaliakiah and Ammaron.^{12B}

Miscellaneous: (5), Abish, A Lamanite woman; Gazelem, name of a servant of God; Hagoth, a Ne-

(Concluded on page 116)

^{12B}These names, Amoron, Ammaron, Amaron, and Ammoron, apparently have a common root. Other words with common roots are: Corianton, Coriantor, Coriantum, Coriantumr; Morianton, Moriantum, Moriantumr; Shiblom, Shiblom, Shiblum; and Cezoram, Seezoram, Zeezoram.

^{12B}H. H. Roberts, A New Witness for God, v. 3, p. 135

ORIGINAL WORDS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

(Concluded from page 86)

phite ship builder; *Rabbanah*, a title; and *Sariah*, Lehi's wife.

PLACES

City of: (12), *Amonihah*, *Antiparah*, *Cumeni*, *Gadiandi*, *Gadiomnah*, *Gimgimno*, *Jacobugath*, *Jashon*, **Kishkumen*, **Laman*, **Manti*, *Mo-cum*, **Morian-ton*, **Moroni*, **Mor-onihah*, **Mulek*, **Nehor*, **Nephi*, **Nephihah*, **Omner*, *Onihah*, *Sher-rizah*, *Shimnilon*, **Teancum*, **Zarahemla*, and **Zeezoram*.

Land of: (8), **Ammonihah*, **Antionum*, **Amulon*, *Antum*, **Corihor*, **Jashon*, **Manti*, *Melek*, *Mid-doni*, *Minon*, *Moriancumer*, **Mori-anton*, *Morian-tum*, **Moroni*, **Mu-lek*, **Nehor*, **Nephi*, **Nephihah*, *Shemlon*, *Siron*, and **Zarahemla*.

Place of: (6), *Ablom*, *Nahom*, *Ogath*, *Onidah*, *Shazer*, and *Sidom*.

Hill of: (4), *Amnihu*, *Comnor*, *Cumorah*, **Manti*, **Onidah*, and *Riplah*.

Plains of: (2), *Agosh*, *Heshlon*, and **Nephihah*.

Mount of: (2), *Shelem* and *Zerin*.

Waters of: (2), *Ripliancum* and *Sebus*.

Wilderness of: (1) **Akish* and *Hermounts*.

Valley of: (1), **Corihor* and *Shurr*.

Miscellaneous: (3), *Irreantum*, ocean of; *Jershon*, region of; **Laman*, river of; and *Ani-Anti*, a La-manite village.

MISCELLANEOUS

Measurements of Gold: (6), *an-tion*, *limnah*, *senine*, *seon*, *shublons*, and *shum*.

Measurements of Silver: (3), *ezrom*, *onti*, and *senum*.

Measurements: (1), **shiblon* and *shiblum*.

Animals: (2), *cumon* and *cure-lom*.

Food, seeds of: (2), *neas* and *sheum*.

Miscellaneous: (5), *cimeter*, a weapon; *deseret*, a honey bee; *lia-hona*, a kind of compass; **Nephi*, plates (record) of; *Rameumptom*, place of, in the synagogue; and *ziff*, a metal.

One of the impressive features of the Book of Mormon is this imposing list of words new to the language. Some of Joseph Smith's critics

have debated whether he did or did not experience certain of his claimed spiritual manifestations. But the Book of Mormon and all that it contains, including these words, is not a debatable premise, or an intellectual concept; it is a tangible book. And here are the words for every-one to see!

If he did not translate these words in the manner in which he said he did, then another satisfactory explanation must be advanced. For nearly fourteen decades writers unfriendly to the Prophet have attempted at least eleven solutions to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, other than the one given by him. Their changing explanations have not stood the discerning scrutiny of historical evidence and research. These critics in the tower have yet to agree among themselves on an explanation of the book.³⁶

The original words in the Book of Mormon help prove that Joseph Smith translated the record the way he said he did, from ancient plates by the gift and power of divine aid!

³⁶Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America*, chap. 14, 1947 edition

THE CHURCH MOVES ON

(Concluded from page 115)

MISSIONARIES ENTERING THE MISSIONARY HOME DECEMBER 1, AND DEPARTING DECEMBER 10

Reading from left to right, first row: Mrs. John Adams, Minnie Warwood, Grace Adams, Afton Cheney, Dan B. Colton, director; Thomas Pettersson, Everal Dawn Harris, Donna W. Nielsen, Caroline L. Beardshall.

Second row: Deola Chesley, R. H. Sainsbury, Josephine E. Sainsbury, Elizabeth Anderson, Elam H. Anderson, Zella E. Smith, Elaine A. Hawkins, Herman Reisner, Emily Lee, Lloyd Hubbard.

Third row: Wayne H. Thomack, Henry A. Bradshaw, Jr., Thomas H. Chambers, Kenneth Edwin Hampton, George Staheli, Milton Jay Ricks, Roy Lindsay Flanery, Ben Leavitt Rogers, David E. Smith, David H. Beardshall.

Fourth row: Lloyd L. Patterson, Theron E. Hall, Lloyd T. Anderson, B. Lyle Schofield, C. Bob Lundell, Theodore W. Bateman, Robert Wilson, Wendell W. Gardner, William E. Schindler, Clyde E. Brown, Eugene M. Larsen, Kenneth D. Allen.

Fifth row: Maythel F. Layton, Marley Lynn Fackrell, Frederick H. Dellenbach, Lester S. Henderson, Grant R. Litchfield, Joy Dell Butler, Jack W. Dowdle, Lloyd R. Ethington, Thomas M. Hadley, Frank J. Milner.

Sixth row: Kay B. Smith, Arthur J. Kocherhans, LaMar Spencer Brown, Wendell Edstrom, William Grant Webster, Paul Thomas Mabey, H. Ralph Keller, Keith K. Crane, Karl G. Benson, George J. Stahle, Jay Ferrell, Gerald L. Little.

Seventh row: Alva A. Young, Verl G. King, Kenneth Rex Curtis, LeRoyden Heslop, Kenneth E. Peck, Cortland Oleson, Grant Kunzler, Brinton C. Kelly, Brice J. Hallows, Burke Vernal Bastian, Verl J. Bastian.

Eighth row: Reed J. Coleman, Kay L. Hair, Hal T. Sharp, Hugh L. Sharp, Roy Ashby Barrett, Dale L. Maughan, Arnold B. Call, E. Reece Finlanson, John Anderson, Edward Kuntaw Jones, Boyd B. Belnap, Floyd William Kunzler.

Ninth row: Lawrence R. Grigg, Jack L. Hansen, Richard M. Petersen, Fred Hurst, Lawrence T. Heath, Meade Coleman, LaMar Virgin, Deon E. Anderson,

Kenneth E. LeFevre, David Williams, Osborne Wayne Hatch, Harold Western.

Tenth row: Maurice K. Heaton, James Clarence Ricks, Joseph C. Clark, Jr., Vance A. Leavitt, Mervin R. Brown, Roland C. Schramm, Carl W. Cook, Jack Raynal Pearson, Norman T. Baker, Leland O. Anderson.

Eleventh row: Neil Wahlen Wirick, Richard Penrod Glazier, Don Stanley, John O. Whitaker, Byron E. Hunsaker, Duane G. Chadwick, Arthur Lowell Sorenson, Boyd Rex Mackay, J. Rudon Jones, T. Max Evans.

Twelfth row: K. E. Shelton, Robert C. Taylor, Andre C. Anastasiou, Jr., William B. Hesterman, Elliott A. Fairbanks, Warren L. Anderson, David W. Ballif, David R. Dinsdale, Hugh Junior Barnes, Frank L. Craven, Joseph C. Sandberg, John G. Clawson.

Thirteenth row: Douglas H. Jenkins, Theodore Emery McKeon, William R. Furnell, Jr., James McFarlane, Charles R. Madsen, George O. Pope, Evan G. Hunter, Glenn A. Barber, Joseph Y. Hamilton.

Fourteenth row: Wayne L. Clawson, Bernard L. Prows, J. Howard Johnson, Ardeon W. Bench, Valdemar C. Christensen, Delmar R. Jamison, Doney Leon Woodward, Alma Peterson.

