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Writing Paper for the Book of Mormon Manuscript

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Abstract: This article recounts the contributions of R. Joseph Knight, Sr. to Joseph Smith, Jr. during the translation of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Knight's aid was instrumental in the process by providing food and the paper that the translation was written on.

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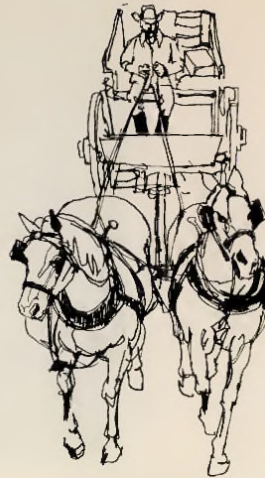
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Lest We Forget



Writing Paper for the Book of Mormon Manuscript

By Albert L. Zobell, Jr.
Research Editor

● As a people we solemnly testify that the Angel Moroni visited the Prophet Joseph Smith during the Sabbath night of September 21, 1823. Three times that night the resurrected being came with counsel and instruction. There were other visits between the angel and the young Prophet, notably at the Hill Cumorah in September of 1824, 1825, and 1826, until the angel delivered the gold plates of the Book of Mormon into his hands September 22, 1827. The Prophet's mother records that Joseph and Emma took the horse and wagon of their friend, the senior Joseph Knight, with them to bring back the plates.

The 21-year-old youth had the responsibility of translating that record, and publishing the Book of Mormon to the world.

How could he accomplish such a great task? Where was he to begin? He was to learn that friends would be raised up who would have a testimony of the work, each willing and able to do his share to assist him.

The Prophet and Oliver Cowdery met for the first time April 5, 1829. Two days later Oliver began to serve as scribe, penning most of the Book of Mormon manuscript.

Admittedly the recorded history of this period is sketchy. The Prophet was living in Harmony, Pennsylvania. In the Documentary History of the Church is recorded the revelation dated May 1829, now Section 11 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and then the Prophet adds:

"About the same time an old gentleman came to visit us of whose name I wish to make honorable

mention—R. Joseph Knight, Sen., of Colesville, Broome County, New York, who, having heard of the manner in which we were occupying our time, very kindly and considerately brought us a quantity of provisions, in order that we might not be interrupted in the work of translation by the want of such necessities of life. . . ." (DHC, Vol. 1, p. 47.)

In telling his part of the story, Brother Knight later wrote:

" . . . I bought a barrel of mackerel and some lined paper for writing, and some nine or ten bushels of grain and five or six bushels of potatoes, and I went down to see the boys, and they were in want. Joseph and Oliver had been out that day to see if they could find a place to work for provisions, but they had not found any." (Manuscript of Joseph Knight's Autobiography.)

Think of it! The Prophet was ready to translate from the gold plates and to give to the world the restored gospel, but he didn't have food for himself, his wife, and his friend Oliver Cowdery, nor did he have the paper to write upon.

Returning to the Prophet's statement:

" . . . and I would just mention here, as in duty bound, that he [Joseph Knight] several times brought us supplies, a distance of at least thirty miles, which enabled us to continue the work when otherwise we must have relinquished it for a season." (DHC, Vol. 1, p. 47.)

Elderly Joseph Knight has been described as not being rich, but he did own a farm, a gristmill, and carding machines, which gave him and his family not only the necessities but also the comforts of life. He had befriended and given employment to the youthful Joseph Smith several times. He knew and believed the Prophet's story. His faith moved him to action, and he supplied the paper to write the Book of Mormon manuscript as it was translated by the Prophet of God.

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