

# David Whitmer and the Shaping of Latter-day Saint History

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Although I had already read everything Richard Lloyd Anderson had published, I met him for the first time in January 1963 when I first arrived at Brigham Young University in quest of a Ph.D. degree in LDS church history. Unlike some professors, Richard treated me as an equal, shared his knowledge and items from his archives with me, and seemed pleased when I gave him materials that I had discovered pertaining to Mormon history. He encouraged me to publish several articles and inspired me with his dedication to finding the truth wherever it led him, while at the same time maintaining his deep faith in the church, its leaders, and the integrity of Joseph Smith and those men and women most closely associated with him.

For more than thirty years I have continued to visit with Richard whenever I have been in Provo and have counted him among my most cherished friends. He has never failed to have something new and exciting to share with me and my admiration for him has continued to grow. The essay that follows is intended as a tribute to a great scholar, one of Mormonism's most important historians, and a man I deeply respect and love.

## David Whitmer and Early Mormon History

David Whitmer, like Joseph Smith, Lucy Mack Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, has greatly influenced our perceptions of Mormon beginnings. Interviewed on more than fifty occasions, Whitmer related over and over again what he knew about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the organization of the church, and his experience as a restoration witness.<sup>1</sup> Moreover in 1887, after he had lost the thumb on his right hand and was therefore unable to write, Whitmer dictated to John J. Snyder a ninety-one-page document entitled *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. Eighty-two years old at the time, and only a year from his death, Whitmer recalled his first experiences with Joseph Smith and the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon and also detailed his reasons for leaving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>2</sup>

A careful study of the Whitmer interviews reveals that he gave believing Latter-day Saints more details regarding his Mormon experiences than he did nonbelievers. When facing reporters who, he felt confident, did not believe angels who delivered gold plates to unlearned boys, he tended to relate only those things that he had witnessed, such as the translation process and his experience with the angel and the plates. With believers, in contrast, he at times commented about things to which he was not a personal witness, such as the priesthood restoration, the ordination of the first high priests, and the establishment of the Quorum of the First Presidency.<sup>3</sup>

It may be that Whitmer, who by the 1880s had perhaps known Joseph longer than any living person, tended to enlarge his memory when in the presence of believers because he knew they were vitally interested in every event, no matter how small, that involved their beloved Prophet Joseph Smith. He also knew that Mormons would talk about their experiences with him and make available the details he provided as part of the historical record. Thus with each interview he reestablished his importance as one of the preeminent figures in the early Latter-day Saint movement.

While scholars, historians, anti-Mormon writers, and faithful Latter-day Saints have carefully scrutinized the writings of Joseph Smith, pointing out inaccuracies, inconsistencies, chronological problems, and errors of fact, David Whitmer's accounts of Mormonism's seminal years, for the most part, have escaped such a scrutiny;<sup>4</sup> instead, most of what he said has been accepted as fact. A careful study of Whitmer's writings reveals that his

statements are not always synchronized. The fact that he was out of the church for almost half a century tends to give an anti-Mormon flavor to some of his views on doctrine and history. Scholars therefore attempting to flesh out the true story of those initial years of Mormonism would be well-advised to weigh carefully what Whitmer remembered against accounts authored by his contemporaries such as Joseph Knight, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, and Lucy Mack Smith. It is important, too, to note that Whitmer himself was not always consistent in the way he remembered Latter-day Saint beginnings. This paper addresses the latter concern by pointing out significant contradictions in Whitmer's own statements about important events in the church's early years. While I do occasionally evaluate Whitmer's claims in light of what others remembered and reported, my main purpose is to delineate inconsistencies in Whitmer's own record. My intent is not to wholly discredit Whitmer as a reliable source of information, but to show that historians must subject his statements to the same scrutiny to which they subject the accounts of others.

The accompanying table (see table 1, pp. 245–50) provides information on interviews with David Whitmer, all of which took place in Richmond, Missouri. David Whitmer said that he first heard of Joseph Smith early in 1828 after the Prophet had obtained the plates of gold from the Hill Cumorah. Whitmer told M. J. Hubble in 1886 that his (Whitmer's) brother was "Sheriff of our county in Western New York. He [Whitmer's brother] got Crippled," and, having business in the Palmyra area, sent David "to attend to it."<sup>5</sup> While transacting his brother's business, David learned that about "150 pages" of the plates had been translated, then lost, and that Joseph had been punished for his transgression by having the plates taken from him. However, Joseph received assurances that "at the end of his punishment, . . . [he] might translate" again.<sup>6</sup>

Five years earlier Whitmer told a *Kansas City Journal* reporter that he traveled to Palmyra on business in 1828 and "stopped with one Oliver Cowdery."<sup>7</sup> "A great many people," Whitmer said, "were talking about the finding of certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith, jr."<sup>8</sup> Talking about the things they heard, Cowdery and Whitmer "paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be only . . . idle gossip."<sup>9</sup> Cowdery, seemingly more interested than Whitmer and acquainted with the Smiths, resolved to investigate the matter further. Whitmer, however, was intrigued enough to engage in conversation with "several young men" and learned that they were positive Smith had obtained golden plates. Before "he attained them," these boys told Whitmer, "he had promised to share with them but had not done so, and they were very much incensed with him."<sup>10</sup> The young men told Whitmer they had seen the place in the hill from which the plates were extracted. Their statements were so positive that he "began to believe there must be some foundation for the stories then in circulation all over that part of the country."<sup>11</sup> Interviewed by James H. Hart in 1884, Whitmer said that the young men, who were about Joseph's age, believed he had the plates and "were very angry" because he "had not given them any [of the plates] as he had promised."<sup>12</sup>

In subsequent conversations with Cowdery, Whitmer learned the "history of the finding of the plates."<sup>13</sup> He told a *St. Louis Republican* reporter that when Joseph Smith saw the plates, his first thought was how much they were worth, and the angel then hurled him down the Hill Cumorah. Whitmer further reported that it was "six months" before Joseph "obtained possession of the stone box that held the plates" (actually four years passed before Joseph secured the plates of gold).<sup>14</sup>

Whitmer probably did not learn all these details on his visit to Palmyra in 1828. Joseph and Emma lived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, at the time Whitmer traveled to Palmyra, but what he remembered provides important details regarding talk in the Manchester area at the time he transacted business there.<sup>15</sup> Oliver Cowdery wrote

accounts of early events in Mormon history, published in the Latter-day Saints' *Messenger and Advocate* in 1835, and Whitmer's own accounts of these early events may well have been influenced by Cowdery's writings.<sup>16</sup>

His business completed, Whitmer returned home. Several months passed and Cowdery—on his way to Harmony, Pennsylvania, to see Joseph Smith—stopped at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York. He told Whitmer he intended to learn the “truth or untruth” regarding Smith and “would let [Whitmer] know.”<sup>17</sup>

Only days after becoming Joseph's amanuensis or scribe, Cowdery sent a missive to Whitmer telling him “that he was convinced that Smith had the records.” Cowdery was, moreover, assisting in their translation.<sup>18</sup> In a second letter to Whitmer, Cowdery included “a few lines of what they had translated” and informed him that the record “gave a complete history” of a people “that inhabited this continent.”<sup>19</sup> Whitmer shared this letter with his parents, brothers, and sisters.

Not many days passed before a third letter came from Cowdery. He asked Whitmer to come to Harmony with a team and wagon and bring Joseph and Oliver to his (Whitmer's) father's house so they could there complete the translation of the Book of Mormon.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for the first time, Whitmer was placed in a position to become a witness to important events in early Latter-day Saint history.

Notwithstanding this account, Whitmer told Edward Stevenson a slightly different story. He said that on 1 June 1829 he received a letter from Joseph Smith, not Cowdery, asking that he come to Harmony and convey the two men to Fayette. Pressured with work, having twenty acres of land left to plow, Whitmer concluded he would first finish his farmwork and then make the journey as requested.<sup>21</sup> One morning, although he did not remember how long after receiving the letter, he arose to go to work and “found between 5 and 7 acres of my ground had been plowed during the night.”<sup>22</sup> The plowing, he said, was done precisely as he would have done it, and the plow “was left standing in the furrow.”<sup>23</sup> His ground plowed, Whitmer departed.<sup>24</sup>

Arriving in Harmony, David was met by both Joseph and Oliver, who came out to welcome him. Whitmer relates Cowdery's report that “Joseph had told him [Cowdery] when I started from home, where I had stopped the first night, how I read the sign at the tavern, where I stopped the next night and that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me.”<sup>25</sup> Whitmer was astonished by what Cowdery told him, it was all true. In recounting his visit with Whitmer, Joseph F. Smith remembered Whitmer reporting that before his (Whitmer's) arrival, Joseph Smith also detailed for Cowdery the wagon Whitmer would arrive in, “with two long poles in it at each end across the end gates of the wagon box, and then two boards laid across that for seats those hickory poles.”<sup>26</sup>

Nathan Tanner Jr., who talked with Whitmer in April 1886, recorded the story in a slightly different version. He wrote that it was Joseph who told Whitmer that he had seen him “coming in vision” and “told him where he stayed en route. How he had seen him reading a sign,” and told “him so many things which he could not know only by inspiration.”<sup>27</sup>

Edward Stevenson called on David Whitmer in January 1887 and wrote that Whitmer told him that “the Prophet look[ed] into the seer stone [and] told names of each stopping place.” Whitmer, having forgotten the names, was reminded by “O. Cowdery who [had] mad[e] notes for every one.”<sup>28</sup> They found it was just as the Prophet related James H. Hart, who spoke with David in 1884, said that Whitmer could not remember the names of the hotels at

which he stayed and that on the way back to Fayette, “[Whitmer] pointed out the several houses where [he] had stopped, when he [Cowdery] took out his book and found them to correspond even to the names on the sign boards, all of which he had written before [they] met.”<sup>29</sup> Though the details vary, Whitmer’s account of his going Harmony and Joseph’s having seen his travels in vision or through the seer stone had an impressive core consistency. It had the effect of increasing Whitmer’s faith that Joseph Smith was indeed God’s prophet.

Whitmer related to apostles Smith and Pratt one other unusual event connected with the journey that Joseph, Oliver, and he made from Harmony to Fayette. He said that one day as they were traveling, they “were suddenly approached by a very pleasant, nice looking old man in a clear open place, who saluted us with, ‘Good morning, it very warm,’ at the same instant wiping his face or forehead with his hand.” At Joseph’s signal, Whitmer invited him to ride, which invitation was declined. “No,” he said, “I am going to Cumorah,” and suddenly the old man disappeared.<sup>30</sup>

Whitmer said that the old man “was about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches and heavy set.” He was “dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes; his hair and beard were white,” and the knapsack on his back appeared book shaped.<sup>31</sup> Talking to Edward Stevenson in 1886, Whitmer claimed that he and Cowdery asked Joseph to “enquire of the Lord who the stranger was.” After only a short time Joseph, appearing pale, declared he “was one of the Nephites and he had the plates of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>32</sup> In an 1887 interview, Whitmer told Stevenson that this mysterious stranger was one of the Three Nephites. When Stevenson published the account of his interview with Whitmer in the *Juvenile Instructor*, he wrote that Whitmer had said that Joseph told him the messenger was Moroni. Whitmer later saw him near his father’s farm and said that Moroni showed the plates to his mother, Mary.<sup>33</sup> They felt his influence previous to his mother’s visitation.<sup>34</sup> Reporting his visit with Whitmer in the *Millennial Star*, Stevenson said that when Mother Whitmer went to the barn to milk cows the stranger showed her the plates, turning them over leaf by leaf, except for the sealed portion.<sup>35</sup> Apparently, Whitmer only told this story to Latter-day Saint General Authorities who visited with him. While David only related the story after his mother’s death, his nephew John C. Whitmer told assistant church historian Andrew Jenson essentially the same tale and added that she [Mary] called the holy angel, “Brother Nephi.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, while Whitmer was consistent in asserting that both he and his mother had seen this being, his own statements leave us wondering who this “stranger” really was.

Concerning the journey from Harmony to Fayette, Whitmer related at least one other incident. He told Zenas Gurley in a January 1885 interview that Joseph and Oliver talked freely about baptizing each other but said nothing about an angel ordaining them.<sup>37</sup> It was not until 1834–36 that Whitmer learned an angel had ordained Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic Priesthood.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps the two men believed that it was not the proper time nor place to convey such knowledge to Whitmer. More about this incident will be discussed later.

## How the Book of Mormon Was Translated

Whitmer freely told the many visitors who came to his Richmond, Missouri, home what he knew about the golden plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the translation of the Book of Mormon.<sup>39</sup> He informed a *Chicago Tribune* reporter that the plates were eight by seven, the sheets as thick as ordinary tin and were bound together with three gold rings. A large portion of the volume was sealed, he said. On the loose plates were engraved hieroglyphics. With the plates came “a pair of spectacles, set in silver bows.”<sup>40</sup> Discussing early Mormon history with Nathan Tanner Jr., Whitmer said that the Prophet “had the Urim and Thummim, and a chocolate colored

stone, which he used alternately, as suited his convenience.”<sup>41</sup> And when M. J. Hubble interviewed him in November 1886, he told him that Joseph translated the Book of Mormon with a pair of “large bound Spectacles.”<sup>42</sup>

David asserted that each day before Joseph commenced to translate, everyone in the Whitmer household knelt in prayer and invoked “the Divine blessing on the proceeding.” Following the prayer, Joseph would sit “on one side of a table and the amanuenses, in turn as they became tired, on the other.”<sup>43</sup> Those people present and “not actively engaged in the work seated themselves around the room and the work began.”<sup>44</sup>

The story Whitmer told regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon varied at times. Whitmer told a *Chicago Times* reporter that the Prophet “affix[ed] the magical spectacles to his eyes” and the graven characters would appear one character at a time, which he then translated.<sup>45</sup> Sometimes one English word would appear while at other times an entire sentence.<sup>46</sup>

However, in discussing the translation with a J. L. Traughber Jr., Whitmer reported he never heard Joseph say that the translation was made with the Urim and Thummim, but in 1876 he told Thomas Wood “that he saw Joseph translate, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, time again.”<sup>47</sup> When interviewed in the late 1880s Whitmer again told a story that altogether excluded the Urim and Thummim from the translation process. He said that before translating, Joseph would offer prayer, then take “a dark colored opaque stone, called a ‘seer-stone,’ and plac[e] it in the crown of his hat.” He would then “put his face into the hat, and read the translation as it appeared before him.”<sup>48</sup>

A *Kansas City Journal* reporter said that Whitmer told him Joseph “had two small stones of a chocolate color, near egg shaped and perfectly smooth but not transparent.” He would hold these “to his eyes and cover his face with a hat.” (Just how this could be accomplished he does not say.) What seemed to be a parchment would soon appear with the characters written thereon, and “immediately below would appear the translation in English.”<sup>49</sup> Smith then read this to his scribe “who wrote it down exactly as it fell from [Smith’s] lips.”<sup>50</sup>

Whitmer also told George Q. Cannon that Joseph placed a stone in a hat to exclude light, and the characters appeared and under that “the translation in English.” The English remained until the scribe had copied it correctly.<sup>51</sup>

When James H. Hart visited Whitmer in March 1884, he learned that

Joseph would place the seer stone in a deep hat, and placing his face close to it, would see, not the stone but, what appeared like an oblong piece of parchment, on which the hieroglyphics would appear, and also the translation in the English language, all appearing in bright luminous letters. Joseph would then read it to Oliver, who would write it down as spoken. Sometimes Joseph could not pronounce the words correctly, having had but little education; and if by any means a mistake was made in the copy, the luminous writing would remain until it was corrected.<sup>52</sup>

Whitmer also said that if the seer stone was not placed in the hat “no characters or writing could be seen therein.”<sup>53</sup>

Martin Harris told Edward Stevenson essentially the same story as Whitmer regarding the translation. Joseph Knight, Isaac Hale, and Michael Morse (Emma's sister's husband) related similar stories.

However, difficulties remain in these accounts that completely exclude the Urim and Thummim from the translation process. As Stephen Ricks has pointed out, neither David Whitmer, Martin Harris, nor anyone else, for that matter, save perhaps Oliver Cowdery, had "knowledge of the method of translation of the Book of Mormon from personal experience."<sup>54</sup> Joseph Smith, the only person who really knew how the translation was done, wrote the following in the 1839 draft of his history. He said that after he arrived at the Whitmers' Fayette home in June 1829, he still had the Urim and Thummim through which he obtained revelation.<sup>55</sup> The Prophet's mother related that following prayer and supplications to God after the loss of the 116 manuscript pages, Joseph received again the Urim and Thummim and had the satisfaction of translating again.<sup>56</sup> Oliver Cowdery, who knew more about the translation than anyone save Joseph Smith himself, testified under oath "that said Smith [Joseph] found with the plates, from which he translated his book, two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows. That by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates."<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Cowdery, in the *Messenger and Advocate*, describes sitting "day after day" as Joseph "translated" through the interpreters.<sup>58</sup> Cowdery, who became Joseph's scribe after the 116 pages were lost, "does not speak of translation only by a single seer stone."<sup>59</sup> I agree with Ricks, who, in his study of the translation of the Book of Mormon, concluded: "It seems most likely, then, that both instruments [the Urim and Thummim and the seer stone] were used during the entire translation process."<sup>60</sup>

Whitmer's account of the translation appearing in English at the bottom of a hat, seems, moreover, to minimize the spiritual and mental effort on the part of the translator. Oliver Cowdery, as is well known, learned that more than asking and reading were required of the would-be translator. Study, thought, and then prayer were necessary before the meaning of the markings on the plates became clear (see D&C 6, 8, and 9). Royal Skousen, a scholar who has spent years studying the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, i.e., the one written as Joseph Smith dictated, has shown that textual errors do exist in that document.<sup>61</sup> Thus Whitmer's assertion that the English only disappeared after the scribe had written it down correctly was not entirely true.<sup>62</sup> I am not arguing here for lack of "tight control" (Skousen's phrase) over the text, but rather that Oliver and Joseph's human nature did not allow them to produce an error-free text as Whitmer's account of the translation process would have us believe.

With respect to the translation of the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer gave those who interviewed him other details. He said that while Joseph and Oliver resided at the Whitmer home, "a blanket which served as a portiere was stretched across the family living room to shelter the translators and the plates from the eye of any who might call at the house while the work was in progress."<sup>63</sup> The purpose of the blanket, said Whitmer, was not to conceal the plates or the translator from the amanuensis. However, in another account, Whitmer told Nathan Tanner Jr. that a blanket separated Joseph from his scribe, a variation from the account in the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>64</sup>

Whitmer also told Tanner that he believed the plates were not present while Joseph dictated to his scribes. If this information is correct, then why were the plates preserved in the first place? Why did Joseph Smith have all those years of preparation and waiting before obtaining the plates if he did not need them present while he translated? Furthermore, why did Whitmer see them on the table in the woods near his father's farm, and why were they shown to the Eight Witnesses and to his mother, Mary Whitmer? And finally, why did he tell other interviewers that the plates were present during the translation?

Historians and teachers of Mormon history should be cautious in accepting Whitmer's version of the translation process. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery make no reference to placing a seer stone in a hat as the prime method of translating the Book of Mormon. Why did David and the other witnesses see the Urim and Thummim and the bow in which they were placed if the Book of Mormon as we now have it was translated exclusively by means of a chocolate-colored seer stone, as Whitmer sometimes asserted? Why, if the Prophet read the English translation it appeared in the crown of a hat, does the original manuscript "show signs of rapid writing with many words spelled as they sounded, and with no punctuation other than periods at the end of chapters, and only indiscriminate capitalization?"<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, if there was not tight textual control, how does one account for Hebraisms, chiasmus, and other sophisticated writing forms that pepper the Book of Mormon narrative? We should remember that Whitmer, after all, was not an eyewitness to the translation process, i.e., he did not look in the seer stone or the Urim and Thummim and see what Joseph saw.

## David Whitmer the Witness

David Whitmer is most acclaimed and remembered for his role as one of the Three Witnesses who saw the plates, an angel, and other sacred objects about eleven o'clock one morning "towards the end of June 1829."<sup>66</sup> His testimony of this event was the prime reason reporters and Mormons traveled to Richmond to talk with him. That he outlived Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery, the two other witnesses, allows Richard L. Anderson to call him the witness who "was interviewed far more extensively than the others."<sup>67</sup> Significantly, given his tendency to contradict himself when reporting on other topics, Whitmer's accounts of his experience as a witness are quite consistent.

Conversing with Edward Stevenson, Whitmer said that he was plowing in a field when he heard a voice and saw a personage. The "voice said Blessed is the name of the Lord & they who keep his commandments."<sup>68</sup> While reflecting on this experience, still plowing, he observed Joseph Smith approaching. Joseph told Whitmer he had been chosen to be one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Whitmer tied his team to the fence and the two men at "the edge of the woods . . . sat upon [a] log."<sup>69</sup> A *Richmond Democrat* reporter remembered that Whitmer told him that while plowing "Smith and Cowdery" came and "requested that he accompany them into the woods, [located] on a hill across the road for the purpose of witnessing a manifestation."<sup>70</sup> While in the woods, the three men engaged in prayer, but only for a short time, when "a great light . . . far brighter and more dazzling than [than] the brilliancy of the noon-day sun," appeared. The light, he said, "seemingly envelop[ed] the wood[s] for a considerable distance."<sup>71</sup> Seized by "a spirit of elevation," he felt "joy indescribable" and a "strange influence" entranced him, and he felt "chained to the spot."<sup>72</sup> Then a personage clothed in white appeared, as did a table upon which lay gold plates, brass plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban. The three men were "directed to examine" these objects carefully, following which "they were told that the Lord would demand that they bear witness thereof to all the world."<sup>73</sup>

Ten years before this account, Whitmer told Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith in September 1878 that he also saw the sword of Laban and the Liahona, which he called the directors.<sup>74</sup> "I heard the voice of the Lord," he said, "declaring that they [the plates] were translated by the gift and power of God."<sup>75</sup> Martin Harris was not with them; he concluded.

Edward Stevenson called on Whitmer on more than one occasion. In December 1877, Whitmer told Stevenson that the angel placed "upon a table before them the plates of gold, also the brass plates," and the other objects

mentioned above.<sup>76</sup> Again in 1881, he told a *Kansas City Journal* reporter essentially the same story.<sup>77</sup>

In what is now known as the William H. Kelley/G. A. Blakeslee interview conducted in 1882, Whitmer said that he, Cowdery, and Smith, sat on a log and talked for a while. Then they knelt in prayer, Joseph being the mouth. When the Prophet concluded his prayer, they again sat on the log talking. As a light descended encircling the three men an angel came and said, “[David], Blessed is he that keepeth His commandments.”<sup>78</sup> Then a “table was set before us,” he continued, “and on it the records were placed.”<sup>79</sup> Whitmer mentions plates, the Liahona, and the sword of Laban, but says nothing—if Kelley and Blakeslee recorded the interview accurately—about the Urim and Thummim. He told the two men that he heard the voice of God declare the translation to be correct.<sup>80</sup>

When interviewed by J. W. Chatburn, Whitmer said, “These hands handled the plates, these eyes saw the angel, and these ears heard his voice.”<sup>81</sup> James H. Moyle’s interview with Whitmer appeared in the *Church News*, August 1941.<sup>82</sup> He remembered Whitmer told him “that he did see and handle the plates; that he did see and hear the angel and heard the declaration that the plates had been translated correctly; that there was absolutely nothing prevent his having a full, clear view of it all.”<sup>83</sup> Soon after talking to Whitmer, the recent graduate of the University of Michigan law school recorded in his diary what the witness said. Moyle wrote that “he was somewhat spiritual in his explanation and not as materialistic as I wished.”<sup>84</sup> Whitmer believed that what he saw and heard “was through the power of God.”<sup>85</sup> Hence the experience had a definite spiritual quality. He told Nathan Tanner Jr. that his natural eyes “had to be prepared” to see the plates and that he was “overshadowed by the power of God.”<sup>86</sup> Thus his experience was indeed spiritual in nature.

Whitmer, in 1878, told P. Wilhelm Poulson that part (about half, he later testified) of the book (i.e., plates) was sealed and that the sealed portion appeared “as solid to my view as wood.”<sup>87</sup> The plates, he said, were eight inches wide and six or seven inches long and were bound together by three rings.<sup>88</sup> In the same interview, he said that the plates were returned to a cave where they are to remain until “the time arrives” for the sealed portion to be translated.<sup>89</sup> He also related that he had seen the stone box “in which the plates were stored” and that it was located on the “side of the hill, and a little down from the top.”<sup>90</sup>

Again, in 1885, he told a correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* that Joseph Smith took Whitmer and Cowdery to the Hill Cumorah where they personally viewed “the receptacle in which Moroni . . . had concealed the history of his father.”<sup>91</sup> As early as 1875 Whitmer told a *Chicago Times* reporter that he had seen the stone box three times and that it had been washed “down to the foot of the hill.”<sup>92</sup> As to what happened to this sacred object after that does not say.

Over the years Whitmer’s testimony as to what he saw when in the company of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery remained for the most part consistent. In each interview in which he broached the subject of what he experienced near the end of June 1829, he testified that he saw the plates and an angel and heard the voice of the Lord declaring the translation to be correct. On most occasions he also said that the plates were on a table together with the sword of Laban, the brass plates, the Urim and Thummim, the Liahona, and the breastplate. I examined all the known interviews with Whitmer and tabulated what he said he saw in arriving at this conclusion.

Historians should be aware that in all the Whitmer interviews the risk is high that some of what we read reflects the words and biases of the individual reporter. In no case do we have the unabridged words of Whitmer himself

The document that Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and Whitmer signed, which appears in each copy of the Book of Mormon, succinctly reports “that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon.”<sup>93</sup> While Whitmer sometimes testified that he handled the plates and at other times that he did not, David Whitmer’s testimony remained impressively consistent over the years.

### **David Whitmer and Other Early Mormon History**

In 1887, David Whitmer published his pamphlet *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. In this small publication he defended the Book of Mormon, condemned plural marriage, and then gave his version of events that transpired in early Mormon history. Whitmer believed that the introduction of the office of high priest was wrong and originated with Sidney Rigdon. He objected to changes in the revelations and the hierarchical nature of church government. He told some of those who talked with him that he never heard of the coming of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John until 1835. Critics of the church and its priesthood have sometimes used Whitmer to flesh out arguments against angels conferring authority on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.<sup>94</sup>

A close look at the historical record discloses that Whitmer’s memory may have betrayed him with respect to the restoration of the priesthood by John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. As early as 1823, the Prophet learned that “the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some.”<sup>95</sup> Joseph Smith first wrote of this event in 1832, and Oliver Cowdery offered the first detailed, recorded account in 1834.<sup>96</sup> Even William E. McLellin, under a journal entry of 25 October 1831, writes of “the high priesthood” and the “lesser priesthood,”<sup>97</sup> suggesting that he knew of two priesthoods in the church.<sup>98</sup>

David Whitmer himself was not free from inconsistency when recounting his views on the priesthood. For example, David H. Cannon reported that in 1861 when he visited Whitmer, the two men with others stood beside the grave of Oliver Cowdery. Whitmer declared that he had heard Oliver say, “I know the Gospel to be true and upon this head has Peter, James, and John laid their hands and conferred the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood.”<sup>99</sup> Whitmer also displayed for the group how this was done. While the historicity of the restoration of priesthood authority is complex and the documentation not nearly as clear as we would prefer, certainly David Whitmer’s testimony that casts doubt on the appearance of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John should not be accepted as true, especially in light of what he told Cannon.

Whitmer probably made other historical errors as well. He was mistaken in affirming that the manuscript given him by Oliver Cowdery was the “original” Book of Mormon manuscript. All historians agree that what he possessed was the second or printer’s copy. His assertion that Missouri’s Danites originated with Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon is problematic and one with which many good historians would quarrel.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, we have seen that his assertions that Joseph Smith did not have the Urim and Thummim after the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, that he did not have the plates as he translated, or that he translated only by means of a stone placed in the bottom of a hat can be seriously questioned.

Whitmer at times spoke of the ignorance of Joseph Smith. Emma, he said, told him that the Prophet could not pronounce Sariah correctly and did not know that Jerusalem was a walled city.<sup>101</sup> Grant Underwood, in contrast, has shown that the Prophet was rather remarkable in his biblical knowledge,<sup>102</sup> not all of which was obtained as he worked on his translation of the Bible.

Still, Whitmer does provide valuable information for historians with respect to the organization of the church. He said that “it was about Diner time at Peter Whitmers [Sr.] house, there was present about 40 or 50 Persons Most Members of the Church at Fayette N York.”<sup>103</sup> Only six persons signed the official document (which has not yet been found) incorporating the church, yet there were many others who participated in the events of that day.

David Whitmer in many ways was a remarkable man. Historians of Mormon beginnings are grateful that he spoke so often and in such detail about the seminal events in early Latter-day Saint history. However, care and corroborating documentation must be applied before we can accept his recollections as reality.

At least two problems are glaringly present in the things he said he remembered. First, most conversations with him took place fifty years or more after the events happened. It is difficult, if not impossible, to have a high accuracy of recall after such time lapses. Second, what he said, or did not say, comes to us through the pen of reporters, most of whom did not believe in Mormonism, or through believers, who, like the reporters, may have had an agenda of their own as they talked with him. Thus only when he publicly replied to inaccurate reporting, and he sometimes did, can we be confident that the information reflects what he really said. Richard L. Anderson points out that in transcribing one of the Edward Stevenson interviews, Lyndon Cook misreads the manuscript and has Whitmer stating that the guardian of the plates “was under one of the beds,” not at the “shed,” as is clear from the original manuscript.<sup>104</sup> And we have already learned that a Whitmer interview by Edward Stevenson published in the *Instructor* names the “mysterious stranger” as Moroni, while Stevenson’s diary claims that the stranger was one of the Three Nephites. Finally, Whitmer sometimes spoke of things on which he had no personal knowledge. For example, he did not look into the Urim and Thummim nor a seer stone and see for himself what appeared thereon. Therefore, his testimony as to precisely “how” the Book of Mormon was translated is hearsay. Only Joseph Smith could testify about the actual translation process, and he did not tell us much more than that was done “by the gift and power of God.”<sup>105</sup>

Scholars would be well-advised to study what David Whitmer said with the same care and attention to detail that has characterized the examination of the historical documents authored by Joseph Smith. To rely solely and unquestioningly on David Whitmer for our knowledge and interpretation of early Latter-day Saint history does neither the cause of Mormon history nor David Whitmer himself the justice they deserve.

Matthias F. Cowley, after talking with David Whitmer, was impressed that he (Whitmer) stood in the same position to the Book of Mormon as the sectarians did to the Bible. Whitmer told him that the “Book of Mormon contained all that is necessary to guide us till the Savior comes.”<sup>106</sup> Whitmer did not understand the essential core of the restoration. Joseph Smith was a prophet through whom God spoke and would continue to speak, and David did not seem to grasp the importance of continuing revelation if the little stone from the book of Daniel was to increase in size as it rolled forth. Thus he was left behind clinging to his Book of Mormon, insisting that Joseph Smith’s introduction of a priesthood hierarchy and changing of revelations caused God to reject him. David Whitmer, though a good, honest man, was mistaken in his assessment of the post-1835 Joseph Smith. Mormonism would not have endured had its leaders relied solely on the Book of Mormon.

## Notes

1. See Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991). Cook compiled approximately 80 percent of the known Whitmer interviews and for the most part reproduces them accurately. Richard L. Anderson does point out a few errors in Cook’s editing of the interviews in his review

in the *Journal of Mormon History* 20/1 (1994): 186–93. Following Anderson’s lead, I have tried to use only the reliable portions of the interviews Cook published.

2. See David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: David Whitmer, 1887).

3. See Anderson, review of *Whitmer Interviews*, 191.

4. See James B. Allen, “Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision: What Do We Learn From Them?” *Improvement Era* (April 1970): 4–13; James B. Allen, “Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61; Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 31–42; Dean C. Jessee, “The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *BYU Studies* 9/3 (1969): 275–94; H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, *Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1994); Richard L. Anderson, “The Reliability of the Early History of Lucy and Joseph Smith,” *Dialogue* 4/2 (1969): 13–28; Richard L. Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reappraised,” *BYU Studies* 10/3 (1970): 283–314; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Roger I. Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s Early Reputation Revisited,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 4/3 (1980): 71–108, and 4/4 (1980): 72–105; *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989).

5. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 210.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, 60.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 60–61.

12. *Ibid.*, 113.

13. *Ibid.*, 61.

14. *Ibid.*, 150.

15. Cf. Richard L. Anderson, “Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences,” *BYU Studies* 9/3 (1969): 373–404.

16. See *Latter-day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 1 (July 1835): 155–59; 2 (October 1835): 195–202.

17. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 61.

18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. See *ibid.*
21. Ibid., 26.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 27.
24. See *ibid.*
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 49.
27. Ibid., 191.
28. Ibid., 213.
29. Ibid., 123.
30. Ibid., 27.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 182.
33. See *ibid.*, 214, 218.
34. See *ibid.*, 218.
35. See *ibid.*
36. Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 31
37. See Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 154–55.
38. See *ibid.*, 155.
39. For important background on the translation process, see Stephen D. Ricks, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Book of Mormon” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 1. See also Richard L. Anderson, “By the Gift and Power of God,” *Ensign* (September 1977): 78–85; John Welch and Tim Rathbone, “The Translation of the Book of Mormon: Basic Historical Information” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986); and Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 79–113.

40. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 172–73.
41. *Ibid.*, 191.
42. *Ibid.*, 211.
43. *Ibid.*, 174.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. See *ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, 10 (published in 1879).
48. *Ibid.*, 53.
49. *Ibid.*, 62.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, 108.
52. *Ibid.*, 115.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Ricks, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Book of Mormon,” 4.
55. See *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 234.
56. See Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: Published for Orson Pratt by S. W. Richards, 1853), 91–92, quoted in Richard Van Wagoner and Steven Walker, “Joseph Smith: The Gift of Seeing,” *Dialogue* 15/2 (1982): 62.
57. A. W. Benton, “Mormonites,” *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate* n.s. 2/15 (9 April 1831), quoted in Ricks, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Book of Mormon,” 2–3.
58. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 14; see *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1833.
59. Anderson, review of *Whitmer Interviews*, 190.
60. Ricks, “Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Book of Mormon,” 3.
61. See Royal Skousen, “Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30/1 (1990): 44.

62. See Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 124–25; and Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 29.

63. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 173.

64. *Ibid.*, 191.

65. Charles D. Tate Jr., "John H. Gilbert's Work on the Book of Mormon," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History*, New York (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1992), 113.

66. *Ibid.*, xiii.

67. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 79.

68. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 181.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*, 229.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, 25–26.

75. *Ibid.*, 26.

76. *Ibid.*, 15.

77. *Ibid.*, 63.

78. *Ibid.*, 86.

79. *Ibid.*

80. See *ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*, 92.

82. See Anderson, review of *Whitmer Interviews*, 188.

83. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 163.

84. *Ibid.*, 166–67. For a discussion of the errors Cook makes in publishing the Moyle interview, see Anderson, review of *Whitmer Interviews*, 188–89.
85. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 167.
86. *Ibid.*, 188.
87. *Ibid.*, 20.
88. See *ibid.*, 21.
89. *Ibid.*, 22. For other accounts of the return of the plates to a cave, see *Journal of Discourses*, 19:38; *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 11 December 1869, LDS Church Archives; John Whitaker diary, 6:104, LDS Church Archives; Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevenson, 1893), 14–15; *Charles L. Walker Diary*, ed. A. Karl and Katharine Larson (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:525-26.
90. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 23.
91. *Ibid.*, 173.
92. *Ibid.*, 7.
93. “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” printed in the Book of Mormon.
94. See D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 7–10.
95. Brian Q. Cannon and BYU Studies Staff, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” *BYU Studies* 35/4 (1995–96): 163.
96. See Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 14–16, cited in Cannon and staff, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 182.
97. Jan Shippo and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1994), 45, 283.
98. An excellent discussion of priesthood restoration is Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Priesthood,” *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9 (3 May 1995), and Larry C. Porter, “The Restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods,” *Ensign* (December 1996): 30–47.
99. Quoted in Cannon and staff, “Priesthood Restoration Documents,” 198, corrections in punctuation and spelling.
100. See Alex Baugh, “A Call To Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri” (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1996), 68–102.
101. See Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 126.

102. See Grant Underwood, “Joseph Smith’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Old Testament and the Latter-day Saints: Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1986), 381–413.

103. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 11; see also 14, 16–17.

104. Anderson, review of *Whitmer Interviews*, 189.

105. *History of the Church*, 1:315.

106. Cook, *Whitmer Interviews*, 91.

**Table 1. Whitmer Interviews**

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Name of Publication</b>	<b>Publication Date</b>
Thomas B. Marsh	1838	<i>Deseret News</i>	24 March 1858
Davis H. Bays	13 September 1869	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 November 1869
Henry Moon	9 January 1872	<i>Deseret Evening News</i>	10 April 1872
Eri B. Mullin	1874	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 March 1880
James Caffall	August 1874	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	15 September 1874
<i>Chicago Times</i> reporter	August 1875	<i>Chicago Times</i>	7 August 1875
Thomas Wood Smith	January 1876	<i>Fall River Herald (Mass.)</i>	28 March 1879
Edward Stevenson	22–23 Dec. 1877	Diary of Edward Stevenson, LDS Church Archives	
Edward Stevenson	22–23 Dec. 1877	Journal History, LDS Church Archives	
Edward Stevenson	22–23 Dec. 1877	Journal History, LDS Church Archives	
Edward Stevenson	22–23 Dec. 1877	<i>Salt Lake Herald</i>	2 February 1878
P. Wilhelm Poulson		<i>Deseret Evening News</i>	16 August 1878
Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith	7–8 Sept. 1878	Joseph F. Smith Diary, LDS Church Archives	
Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith	7–8 Sept. 1878	<i>Deseret News</i>	16 November 1878
Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith	7–8 Sept. 1878	Orson Pratt correspondence, LDS Church Archives	
Orson Pratt, Joseph F. Smith	7–8 Sept. 1878	Joseph F. Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives	
J. L. Traughber Jr.	October 1879	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	15 November 1879
Thomas Wood Smith	January 1876	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 January 1880
Jesse R. Badham	20 March 1881	Diary of Jesse R. Badham, RLDS Church Library—Archives	
Jesse R. Badham	20 March 1881	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 April 1881
<i>Kansas City Journal</i> reporter	1 June 1881	<i>Kansas City Journal</i>	5 June 1881
David Whitmer’s corrections to <i>Kansas City Journal</i>		<i>Kansas City Journal</i>	19 June 1881
<i>Chicago Times</i> correspondent	14 October 1881	<i>Chicago Times</i>	17 October 1881
Edwin Gordon Woolley	1882	Diary of Edwin Gordon Woolley, BYU Library—Archives	
Edwin Gordon Woolley	1882	E. G. Woolley Biography, BYU Library—Archives	
William H. Kelley, G. A. Blakeslee	15 January 1882	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 March 1882
Joseph Smith III et al.	4 April 1882	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	1 May 1882
John Morgan, Matthias F. Cowley	13 April 1882	John Morgan Diary, LDS Church Archives	
John Morgan, Matthias F. Cowley	13 April 1882	John Morgan to John Taylor	
John Morgan, Matthias F. Cowley	13 April 1882	Diary of Matthias F. Cowley, LDS Church Archives	
J. W. Chatburn	No Date	<i>Saints’ Herald</i>	15 June 1882
Moroni Pratt, S. R. Marks, et al.	30 June 1883	<i>Bear Lake Democrat</i>	14 July 1883

Moroni Pratt, S. R. Marks, et al. James H. Hart	30 June 1883 21 August 1883	<i>Deseret News</i> James H. Hart Notebook (see <i>Mormon in Motion: The Life and Journals of James H. Hart, 1825—1906</i> [Windsor Books, 1976], 216)	21 July 1883
James H. Hart	21 August 1883	<i>Deseret Evening News</i>	4 September 1883
James H. Hart	21 August 1883	<i>Bear Lake Democrat</i>	15 September 1883
James H. Hart George Q. Cannon	21 August 1883 27 February 1884	<i>Contributor</i> George Q. Cannon Journal, LDS Church Archives	October 1883
James H. Hart	10 March 1884	<i>Deseret News</i>	25 March 1884
James H. Hart	10 March 1884	<i>Deseret News</i>	10 April 1884
James H. Hart	10 March 1884	<i>Bear Lake Democrat</i>	28 March 1884
E. C. Briggs, Rudolph Etzenhouser	25 April 1884	<i>Saints' Herald</i>	21 June 1884
J. Frank McDowell	8 May 1884	<i>Saints' Herald</i>	9 August 1884
Herman C. Smith, William H. Kelley	19 June 1884	<i>Saints' Herald</i>	12 July 1884
Joseph Smith III et al. <i>St. Louis Republican</i>	mid-July 1884 mid-July 1884	<i>Saints' Herald</i> <i>St. Louis Republican</i>	28 January 193 16 July 1884
Zenas H. Gurley James H. Moyle	14 January 1885 28 June 1885	Gurley Collection, LDS Church Archives James H. Moyle Journal, LDS Church Archives	
James H. Moyle	28 June 1885	24 November 1928 reminiscence	
James H. Moyle	28 June 1885	<i>Conference Reports</i>	April 1930
James H. Moyle	28 June 1885	<i>Deseret News [Church Section]</i>	2 August 1944
James H. Moyle	28 June 1885	<i>Instructor</i>	1945
<i>Chicago Tribune</i> correspondent Edward Stevenson	15 December 1885 9 February 1886	<i>Chicago Tribune</i> Diary of Edward Stevenson, LDS Church Archives	17 December 1885
Edward Stevenson	9 February 1886	<i>Millennial Star</i>	8 March 1886
Edward Stevenson	9 February 1886	<i>Utah Journal</i>	10 March 1886
Nathan Tanner Jr.	13 April 1886	Nathan Tanner Jr. Journal, LDS Church Archives	
Nathan Tanner Jr. <i>Omaha Herald</i> correspondent D. C. Dunbar	13 April 1886 10 October 1886 10 October 1886?	Tanner reminiscence, LDS Church Archives <i>Omaha Herald</i> Dunbar correspondence, LDS Church Archives	17 October 188
M. J. Hubble	13 November 1886	Missouri State Historical Society, Columbia, Missouri	
Edward Stevenson	2 January 1887	Diary of Edward Stevenson, LDS Church Archives	
Edward Stevenson	2 January 1887	<i>Juvenile Instructor</i>	15 February 18
Edward Stevenson	2 January 1887	<i>Millennial Star</i>	14 February 18
Edward Stevenson	2 January 1887	<i>Juvenile Instructor</i>	1 January 1889
Angus M. Cannon	7 January 1888	Angus M. Cannon Diary, LDS Church Archives	
Angus M. Cannon	7 January 1888	<i>Deseret Evening News</i>	13 February 18
David H. Cannon	7 January 1888?	Diary of Charles L. Walker (A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, eds., <i>Diary of Charles Lowell Walker, 773—74</i> , 11 June 1894 entry)	
<i>Chicago Tribune</i> correspondent	23 January 1888	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	24 January 188
Unidentified Chicago man	[No Date]	<i>Chicago Times</i>	26 January 188
<i>Richmond Conservator</i> report	26 January 1888	<i>Richmond Conservator</i>	26 January 188
<i>Richmond Democrat</i> report	January 1888	<i>Richmond Democrat</i>	26 January 188