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## Martin Harris Comes to Utah, 1870

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**Abstract:** Martin Harris, as an old and destitute man, was found in Kirtland, Ohio, by Latter-day Saint missionaries traveling to and from their missions in the eastern United States and Europe. He eventually returned to Utah and was reunited with his family, who had crossed the plains in the 1850s. Instrumental in bringing Martin back to the Church was Edward Stevenson of Ogden, Utah. Martin arrived in Utah in 1870 and resided in Cache Valley with his son Martin Harris Jr. and family until Martin Sr.'s death in 1875 at age ninety-two.

This is an excerpt from the biography *Martin Harris: Uncompromising Witness of the Book of Mormon* by Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter, published in 2018 by BYU Studies. Martin Harris is an important figure in Mormon history because of his supporting role in the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon.



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# Martin Harris Comes to Utah, 1870

*Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter*

*[The following is an excerpt from chapter 14 of the new biography Martin Harris: Uncompromising Witness of the Book of Mormon by Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter. This biography, published by BYU Studies, will be available in October 2018. For further information, see the advertisement on page 208 of this issue.]*

While returning from a mission in the Eastern States to his Salt Lake City home, fifty-year-old Elder Edward Stevenson<sup>1</sup> arrived by stagecoach in Buffalo, New York, on February 10, 1870. Here he

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1. Edward Stevenson (May 1, 1820–January 27, 1897) was born at Gibraltar, British Territory, where his father was employed by the British government. He was the son of Joseph and Elizabeth Stevens Stevenson. He migrated to America in 1827 and first heard the gospel preached by Elders Jared Carter and Joseph Woods. He was baptized into the Church by Japheth Fosdick on December 20, 1833, in Silver Lake, Michigan. He was sustained as one of the First Seven Presidents of the Council of Seventy on October 7, 1894, and set apart by Brigham Young Jr. on October 9, 1894. He passed away at his Salt Lake City home on January 27, 1897. See Edward Stevenson, Journals, MS 4806, Edward Stevenson Collection, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; Joseph Grant Stevenson, “The Life of Edward Stevenson, Member of the First Council of Seventy, Friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955); Leonard J. Arrington, “Edward Stevenson,” Leonard J. Arrington Papers, box 94, fd. 8, Merrill-Cazier Library Special Collections and Archives, Utah State University, Logan, Utah; Orson F. Whitney, *History of Utah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1904), 4:115–16.

purchased a ticket for “Chicago via Crestline & Gallian” [Crestline and Galion, Ohio]. As he journeyed west, he stopped over not far from Kirtland, Ohio, with the view of visiting the first Mormon temple and the hope of finding Martin Harris. On February 11, while making his way to Willoughby, Ohio, he walked the two and a half miles to Kirtland.<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, like Elders David Dille and Thomas Colburn before him, had previously been acquainted with the Book of Mormon witness. Stevenson recalled, “While I was living in Michigan, then a Territory, in 1833, near the town of Pontiac, Oakland Co., Martin Harris came there and in a meeting where I was present bore testimony of the appearance of an angel exhibiting the golden plates and commanding him to bear a testimony of these things to all people whenever opportunity was afforded him to do so.”<sup>3</sup> Now, thirty-six years later, Stevenson met with Martin once again on February 11, 1870. He saw him coming out of the Kirtland Temple and observed, “He took from under his arm a copy of the Book of Mormon, the first edition, I believe, and bore a faithful testimony.” He

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2. Edward Stevenson, Journals, 8:8 (February 11, 1870). The original entry reads, “Fri 5 AM arrived at Willoby 2½ Miles from Kirtland & Walked Thare & fond [Ira] Bond Temple Keeper & Martin harris Who Bore testimony of the angle [angel] Records & the Truth &c took through the Temple.” Edward Stevenson, letter, in *Deseret News*, August 10, 1870, 3. At the time of Stevenson’s visit, a Kirtland Temple Registry Book was being kept for visitors to sign. It doesn’t appear that Stevenson signed the book at that time. However, while at the temple again on August 7, 1870, he wrote, “August 7 1870 Edward Stevenson visited the Temple Feb 11-1870 & also on the 7th of August 1870.” See Kirtland Temple Registry, book 1, p. 51, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri. M. Wilford Poulson explained that this register was kept from June 25, 1866, to April 8, 1884, containing 318 pages. See “M. Wilford Poulson interviewed George Levi Booth about the Kirtland Temple and Other Matters, August 20, 1932,” M. Wilford Poulson Collection, ms. 823, box 6, fd. 4, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

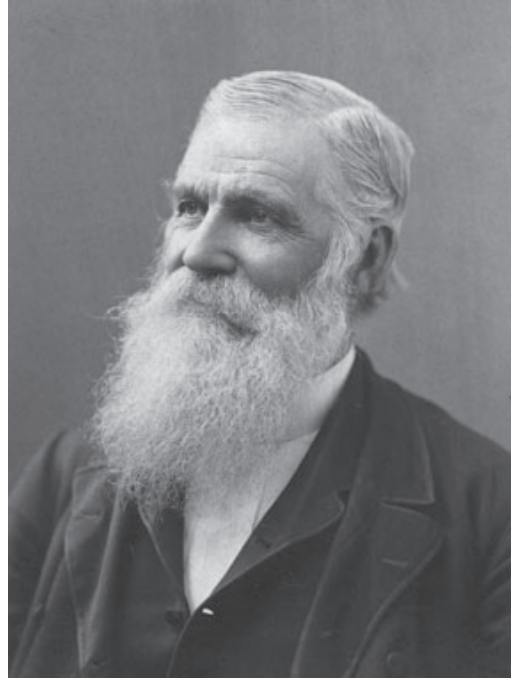
3. Edward Stevenson to the editor of the *Deseret News*, November 30, 1881, published as “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 762. A year later, in October 1834, Edward Stevenson had the opportunity of meeting Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer at Pontiac, Michigan, and hearing the testimony of those witnesses. See Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:168–69 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*); Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1893), 4–5; Bertha S. Stevenson, “The Third Witness,” *Improvement Era* 37 (August 1934): 458.

heard Martin say “it was his duty to continue to lift up his voice as he had been commanded to do in defence of the Book that he held in his hand, and offered to prove from the Bible that just such a book was to come forth out of the ground.” Martin confessed to Stevenson that “he was daily bearing testimony to many who visited the Temple.”<sup>4</sup>

### “A Great Desire to See Utah, and His Children”

Although Elder Stevenson recognized the power of Martin’s testimony, the meager circumstances in which he found the elderly man left him with a sense of pity for the once prosperous farmer. Edward Stevenson was moved to bear witness to Martin of the truthfulness of the Latter-day work—a witness he had gained “through obedience to the Gospel.”<sup>5</sup> Stevenson further stated, “I felt to admonish him to the renewal of his duties and more advanced privileges of gathering to Zion and receiving his endowments and blessings.” Martin was impressed by the power that attended the elder’s testimony and boldly declared that “whatever befell him he knew that Joseph was a Prophet, for he had not only proved it from the Bible but that he had stood with him in the presence of an angel, and he also knew that the Twelve Apostles were chosen of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Upon Stevenson’s return to Utah, thoughts of Martin Harris continued to surface. Rather than ignore what he believed to be inspired impressions to act, he wrote to Martin recalling the circumstances of their meeting in Kirtland. Martin soon responded with a letter of his own,



Edward Stevenson. Courtesy Church History Library.

4. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 762–63.

5. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763.

6. Stevenson, Journals, February 11, 1870; Edward Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” *Millennial Star* 48 (June 7, 1886): 366.

stating: “When I read your letter I had a witness for the first time that I must gather with the Saints to Utah.”<sup>7</sup> A series of letters passed between the two men,<sup>8</sup> “and in every letter that he afterwards received from Martin the aged brother communicated a still stronger desire to come.”<sup>9</sup>

On June 12, 1870, Stevenson wrote to Martin assuring him that “you need not fear about your Being Delivered from the coutry where you now are for I have Raised the money to fetch you here to your Eldest Sons home Who is anxious to See you & So are meny others.” At the end of the letter, Stevenson writes, “There is A Probability that I may come Down after you myself Bro Brigham told me Just before he Went North to Bear Lake that if I Went Down after you he would help 25 Dollers.”<sup>10</sup> Stevenson shared with Brigham Young Martin’s letter(s) expressing a wish to gather. After reading the correspondence, President Young, through his counselor George A. Smith, suggested that Stevenson set up a subscription fund to financially assist Martin Harris on his journey to the Salt Lake Valley. Stevenson liked the proposition and went to work soliciting the necessary monies. President Young was among the immediate contributors and gave twenty-five dollars toward the cause. Others also contributed, and soon a collection of nearly two hundred dollars was raised.<sup>11</sup> Martin’s previous dialogue with Elder William H. Homer in 1869, that “I should like to visit Utah, my family and children,”<sup>12</sup> was about to be realized.

With the necessary funds at his disposal, Edward Stevenson boarded a railroad car in Salt Lake City bound for Kirtland on July 19, 1870. When he reached Des Moines, Iowa, he forwarded a letter to Martin alerting him of his progress:

Mr. Martin Harris, Dear friend & Brother your letter of 25 [June?] came to hand this morning[.] Pleased to hear you are well & anxious to be on

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7. Journal History of the Church, May 27, 1884, 7 (chronology of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), Church History Library; [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE342443](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE342443), image 120.

8. Andrew Jenson, “The Three Witnesses,” *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1886–90), 6:215.

9. “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763.

10. Edward Stevenson to Brother Harris, June 12, 1870, in possession of Trace Mayer, Henderson, Nevada.

11. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763; Bertha S. Stevenson, “The Third Witness,” *Improvement Era* 37 (August 1934): 458–59.

12. Homer [Sr.], “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470.

the Westward Track & I Expect soon to be in the same moad [mode]. I am well & arrived from Ogdon to this place [Des Moines] 3 days time[.] Saw your Nephewe Who Lives in Ogdon [probably Martin Henderson Harris] all was well also I Saw your Son & Daughter [in] Salt Lake City[.] Read your letter to them they are so Pleased that you are coming to see them they were well [and] send their Love to you.<sup>13</sup>

Stevenson first elected to make a hurried trip through Ohio to Palmyra in western New York and visited the Hill Cumorah at Manchester before calling “for [his] charge at Kirtland.”<sup>14</sup> By August 7, Stevenson finally reached the agrarian community of Kirtland and there found Martin “anxiously waiting” for him.<sup>15</sup>

Martin, age eighty-eight, having no real wealth to speak of, was then living on the goodwill and charity found in the household of Joseph C. Hollister, age eighty-four, and his wife, Electa Ann Stratton Hollister, age sixty-six.<sup>16</sup> Hollister owned lot no. 1, directly west of the Kirtland Temple on the south side of Whitney [now Maple] Street. He had purchased the property from Lyman Cowdery, then of Elkhorn, Walworth County, Wisconsin, on March 14, 1859.<sup>17</sup> The temple was thus readily

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13. Edward Stevenson to Martin Harris, July 28, 1870, copy in Stevenson, *Journals*. The son and daughter are not named in the Stevenson letter; however, a son and daughter were living with their mother, Caroline Young Harris Davis, right there in the Salt Lake Seventeenth Ward. John Wheeler Harris, age twenty-four, and Ida May Harris, age fourteen, are in all probability the children referred to. See United States Federal Census for 1870, Salt Lake City, Utah 17th Ward, taken July 2, 1870, enumeration of the Catley Davis household. Martin's daughter Julia Lacothea (Lacothea) Harris Davis had just died the previous year on February 6, 1869, in Salt Lake City.

14. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 366.

15. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 366. The day after his arrival, Stevenson learned that the Kirtland Temple was available for religious meetings. He secured the temple and preached on that Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. At the conclusion of his sermon, those in attendance voted to return for a second meeting that afternoon at 5:00 p.m. According to Stevenson, the second one was “well attended.” See Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 366; penned note on meeting times by Edward Stevenson, Kirtland Temple Registry, book 1, p. 51, August 7, 1870.

16. Joseph Hollister, United States Federal Census, 1870, Kirtland Township, Lake County, Ohio; Joseph C. Hollister and Electa Stratton Hollister had married the previous year, March 3, 1869. See Marriage Record, 1869, p. 34, Lake County Ohio Probate Court, West Annex, Painesville, Ohio.

17. Lyman Cowdery and Eliza, his wife, to Joseph C. Hollister, March 14, 1859, and recorded April 5, 1859, lot no. 1, block no. 113 in the city Plat, Kirtland,

accessible to Martin within a matter of a few rods. Paradoxically, Joseph Hollister's wife, Electa Ann, and her former husband, Hiram Stratton, had once owned lot no. 2, next door, which they had previously sold to Martin Harris in 1857.<sup>18</sup> Both Electa Ann and her husband, Hiram Stratton, had been early members of the Mormon congregation in Kirtland.<sup>19</sup> We do not know what association Joseph C. Hollister may have experienced with the Church, but his father, Asahel Hollister, "died in full faith of that doctrine" at Kirtland in 1839. Joseph's brother Lehasa Hollister had at one time served as second counselor in the Kirtland elders quorum presidency, and John Hollister was ordained a priest in 1836.<sup>20</sup> It is likely, given these circumstances, that Joseph Hollister too had once been closely associated with the faith. In any instance, there were obviously some extended ties affecting the charitable care proffered to Martin in the Hollister home at this time.

Martin was "elated with his prospective journey" and expressed confidence that neither age nor health could deter its success. To prove the matter, he boasted of having recently worked "in the garden, and dug

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Ohio, being in range 9, township 9, tract 1, containing one half acre of land, Lake County Deed Record Book P, 89–90, Lake County Recorder's Office, Administration Building, Painesville, Ohio.

18. Hiram and Electa Stratton to Martin Harris, lot 2, October 20, 1857, Lake County Deed Record Book N, 589–90. Martin was well acquainted with the Strattons.

19. Hiram Stratton had marched with Martin Harris in Zion's Camp in 1834. See James L. Bradley, *Eternal Perspective of Zion's Camp* (Logan, Utah: By the author, 2004), 136, 181. He was called and ordained a Seventy. "Minute Book 1," 165, 179, Church History Library, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-1/169>. Stratton joined with the Strangites in 1846. See Frank J. Young, comp., *Strangite Mormons: A Finding Aid* (Vancouver, Wash.: By the author, 1996), 192. Electa Ann Willard Stratton Hollister joined the LDS Church as early as 1833 and moved to Kirtland. In April 1866, she affiliated with the RLDS faith in Kirtland. She died in the home of her daughter, Mrs. Mary L. Judd at Kirtland on May 28, 1891. See Electa Ann Stratton obituary, *Saints' Herald* (Lamoni, Iowa), June 27, 1891, 419–20; Susan Easton Black, comp., *Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 5:659; Janet Lisonbee, *Mormon Graves in Kirtland: A Biographical Dictionary of Early Saints Buried in the Kirtland Area* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2009), 40–41.

20. "Asahel Hollister," in Lisonbee, *Mormon Graves in Kirtland*, 74; "Lahasa Hollister," in *Kirtland Elders' Quorum Record 1836–1841*, ed. Lyndon W. Cook and Milton V. Backman Jr. (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1985), 46–47, 52, 57–58, 88; "John Hollister," in "Minute Book 1," 210.

potatoes by the day for some of his neighbors.”<sup>21</sup> He later confided to Edward Stevenson that in preparation for his forthcoming departure for the west he experienced a most taxing incident. In the process of going from house to house to bid longtime friends farewell, he became “bewildered, dizzy, faint and staggering through the blackberry vines that [were] so abundant in that vicinity, his clothes torn, bloody and faint, he lay down under a tree to die. After a time he revived, called on the Lord, and finally at twelve midnight, found his friend, and in his fearful condition was cared for and soon regained his strength.” Martin believed that the incident was a “snare of the adversary to hinder him from going to Salt Lake City.”<sup>22</sup>

Martin recited another incident to Edward Stevenson. From the recorded description, it is difficult to distinguish whether this event was in any way associated with his departure or if it happened “on one occasion.” It may have been an earlier snare designed to entrap him. During their journey west, he confided in Edward Stevenson:

On one occasion several of his old acquaintances made an effort to get him tipsy by treating him to some wine. When they thought he was in a good mood for talk, they put the question very carefully to him: “Well, now, Martin, we want you to be frank and candid with us in regard to this story of your seeing an angel and the golden plates of the Book of Mormon that are so much talked about. We have always taken you to be an honest, good farmer and neighbor of ours, but could not believe that you ever did see an angel. Now Martin, do you really believe that you did see an angel when you were awake?” No, said Martin, I do not believe it. The anticipation of the delighted crowd at this exclamation may be imagined. But soon a different feeling prevailed when Martin Harris, true to his trust, said, “Gentlemen, what I have said is true, from the fact that my belief is swallowed up in knowledge; for I want to say to

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21. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763.

22. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763. A slightly different account appears in Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 366. In this latter account, Martin Harris related that “he went to bid adieu to some old friends previous to his departure. His way led him through a woodland field, in which he lost his way. Wandering about, he became bewildered, and came in contact with briars and blackberry vines, his clothes were torn into tatters, and his skin lacerated and bleeding. He laid down under a tree in despair, with little hope of recovery. It was about midnight, when he was aroused, and called upon the Lord and received strength; and about one o’clock, a. m., he found his friends. When he related this circumstance he said the devil desired to prevent him from going to Zion.”



you that as the Lord lives I do know that I stood with the Prophet Joseph Smith in the presence of the angel, and it was in the brightness of day.”<sup>23</sup>

With that same determination, he claimed that nothing could prevent him from going west—not bewilderment or designing friends. No matter the difficulty, he would board a train bound for Zion in the Rocky Mountains. Believing his stubborn tenacity, Stevenson sent a letter to the *Deseret News* on August 10, 1870, informing the editor of their travel plans:

Martin Harris, who still lives here, is tolerably well, and has a great desire to see Utah, and his children that live there; and although the old gentleman is in the 88th year of his age, he still bears a faithful testimony to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, being one of the three original witnesses. He says he saw the plates, handled them and saw the angel that visited Joseph Smith, more than 40 years ago. I have made arrangements to immigrate him to Utah, according to his desire, and will start in about two weeks.<sup>24</sup>

Before their departure, Stevenson fulfilled an earlier promise to Ira Bond, who held the keys to the House of the Lord, to preach in the Kirtland Temple.<sup>25</sup> Stevenson gave two sermons to assemblies while in the community. He took occasion to sign the Kirtland Temple Registry book with an interesting inscription in which he listed the current date, but also confirmed the date of his first visit back in February 1870. He wrote: “Aug 7, 1870 Elder Edward Stevenson visited the Temple Feb 11-1870 & also on the 7th of Aug 1870 & Preached at 11. O clock & at 5 P.M Sunday the Doctrines of Joseph Smith as Revealed to him By the Angle [Angel].”<sup>26</sup> Stevenson described the condition of the temple at the time of his two discourses:

The building is in a fair state of preservation, having been repaired, new roof and re painted, and the windows replaced. The walls, upon which were inscribed the names of many travelers who passed this way

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23. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 367. Martin then went on to explain that “although he drank wine with them as friends, he always believed in temperance and sobriety.”

24. Stevenson, letter, in *Deseret News*, August 10, 1870, 3; see “Kirtland, Ohio,” *Deseret News*, August 24, 1870, 341.

25. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 366.

26. Kirtland Temple Registry, book 1, p. 51. Edward Stevenson would again sign the Kirtland Temple Visitors Register along with his two companions, Andrew Jenson and Joseph Smith Black, on October 2, 1888. Kirtland Temple Registry, book 2, p. 142, Community of Christ Library-Archives; Stevenson, *Journal*, 33:59, October 2, 1888.

to see the Kirtland Temple, have been whitewashed, so that the building has quite a respectable appearance. The plastering on the outside, penciled in squares to imitate stone, of which the walls are built, stands just as it did thirty-six years ago, and scarcely any of it marred. Many travelers who pass within three miles of this place, on the Lake Shore and Michigan R. R., step off at Willoughby and visit the Temple to satisfy curiosity.<sup>27</sup>

It is most probable that Martin attended Stevenson's sermons in the temple and at some moment paid his farewell respects to the House of the Lord where he had been renewed so many times before.

Historians Barbara Walden and Lachlan Mackay observed that during his tenure in Kirtland, "Harris took an active leadership role in a variety of local Latter Day Saint groups. A number of accounts record Harris's involvement in worship services and leading tours of the temple."<sup>28</sup> Martin had had an insatiable desire to exhibit the Kirtland Temple to all inquirers and preserve the inspirational symbol which that structure represented to the world. For this task, he felt a personal proprietorship and dedicated himself to that work. Walden and Rastle commented that "Martin Harris continued to give tours of the temple until departing for Utah in 1870."<sup>29</sup>

### **Miles of Railroad Track to Travel**

Twelve days after Elder Stevenson arrived in Kirtland, he and Martin Harris boarded a westbound train for Chicago on August 19, 1870. With more than seventeen hundred miles of railroad track to travel, there were many occasions for conversation. None were more significant to Stevenson than Martin's memories of Joseph Smith. He recalled Martin reminiscing that "Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was very poor, and had to work by the day for his support, and he (Harris) often gave him

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27. Edward Stevenson, letter, in *Deseret News*, August 10, 1870, 3; see "Kirtland, Ohio," *Deseret Evening News*, August 19, 1870, p. 3, col. 1.

28. Barbara Walden and Lachlan Mackay, *House of the Lord: The Story of Kirtland Temple* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2008), 27. For an excellent survey of the groups and individuals using and occupying the Kirtland Temple in a specified time from 1838 to 1888, see Christin Craft Mackay and Lachlan Mackay, "A Time of Transition: The Kirtland Temple, 1838–1888," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 18 (1998): 133–48.

29. Barbara B. Walden and Margaret Rastle, "Restoring, Preserving, and Maintaining the Kirtland Temple: 1880–1920," *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Winter 2008): 3.

work on his farm, and that they had hoed corn together many a day.” Martin said that “[Joseph] was good to work and jovial and they often wrestled together in sport, but the Prophet was devoted and attentive to his prayers.”<sup>30</sup>

When the train arrived at the depot in Chicago on Sunday, August 21, 1870, an unexpected delay caused Stevenson and Harris to check in at the popular American Hotel for the evening.<sup>31</sup> Stevenson reported, “Several crowds gathered around to see ‘the man who had seen an angel.’ All seemed astonished to hear him relate the vision with a force and will hard to gainsay.”<sup>32</sup> After being comfortably situated in their room, Stevenson wrote to Elder George A. Smith in Salt Lake: “I am well, as also Martin Harris, who is with me, although he is now in the 88th year of his age and rather feeble. But he walks along remarkably well. . . . He stands his journey, thus far, quite well, and feels filled with new life at the idea of going to the valleys of Utah, to see his children and friends.” Stevenson also confided, “[Martin] is coming to the conclusion, after trying everything else—although he has always borne a faithful testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon—that the work of the Lord is progressing in the tops of the mountains and that the people are gathering in fulfillment of prophecy.”<sup>33</sup>

The next day, Monday, August 22, the two men boarded a westbound train. They arrived in Des Moines, Iowa, that same day.<sup>34</sup> There Stevenson again made contact with President James McClure Ballinger of the Des Moines Branch, who graciously welcomed Martin. President Ballinger invited Martin to speak at a “special meeting” of his congregation. Martin responded by bearing “testimony as to viewing the plates, the angel’s visit, and visiting professor Anthony [Anthon].” His brief mention of his visiting Professor Charles Anthon with a copy of the characters

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30. Edward Stevenson to the Editor, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. III,” *Millennial Star* 48 (June 21, 1886): 389.

31. Edward Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, p. 263, col. 1.

32. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. II,” 366.

33. Edward Stevenson to George A. Smith, August 21, 1870, in *Deseret Evening News*, August 27, 1870, p. 3, col. 1. Verifying the 21st as the day of his coming to Chicago, Stevenson wrote, “I arrived here a few hours ago, direct from Kirtland, Ohio.”

34. Edward Stevenson to Elizabeth Stevenson, August 24, 1870, Stevenson Collection, MS 4806, box 8, fd. 8. Stevenson informed his wife on the 24th that he had just arrived in Des Moines the “day before yesterday,” which would be August 22.

taken from the Book of Mormon plates captured the attention of branch members. He recounted that after Anthon had issued him “a certificate, etc., as to the correctness of the characters, [he] asked him to fetch the plates for him to see. Martin said that they were sealed, and that an angel had forbidden them to be exhibited. Mr. Anthony [Anthon] then called for the certificate, tore it up and consigned it to the waste basket, saying, angels did not visit in our days, etc.”<sup>35</sup>

The next day Stevenson baptized Sally (Sarah) Ann Ballinger Fifield,<sup>36</sup> the forty-one-year-old sister of President Ballinger, in the Des Moines River. Seeing an opportunity to discuss the doctrine of baptism, Stevenson tried to teach Martin “the necessity of being rebaptized,” but “at first he did not seem to agree with the idea.”<sup>37</sup> Troubled by his friend’s inference, Martin claimed that “he had not been cut off from the Church, but said if that was required of him [rebaptism] it would be manifested to him by the Spirit.” The sought-for confirmation would soon be clearly manifested to him in Salt Lake City.<sup>38</sup> Members of the Des Moines Branch contributed “a new suit of clothes” to him to replace his “threadbare” garment. Concerning the act of generosity, Stevenson penned, “[This] very much helped the feelings and appearance of the old gentleman.”<sup>39</sup> To Martin, this was more than a singular gift. He was overcome by their kindness and “felt to bless them.”<sup>40</sup> To his wife, Elizabeth Ann DuFresne, Stevenson wrote from Des Moines on August 24: “Martin Harris feels first Rate & Says he finds Sutch good Saints[,] so Cheerful[.] I simply Reminded him that he would find Equally good People in Utah[.] [T]hen Says he I shall live [with] them.”<sup>41</sup>

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35. Edward Stevenson to the Editor, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret Evening News*, December 13, 1881, 4; reprinted in “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 762–63; *Millennial Star* 44 (January 30, 1882): 78–79; (February 6, 1882): 86–87.

36. Sally (Sarah) Ann Ballinger was born to Thomas Ballinger and Mary Ann Hartley on October 10, 1828, in Kentucky. She married Mark Gaylord Fifield on February 11, 1854 (probably in Iowa). Sally died on September 24, 1896, at Springville, Utah County, Utah.

37. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 367.

38. Edward Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses—Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 44, no. 6 (February 6, 1882): 87.

39. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. II,” 366.

40. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, December 28, 1881, 763.

41. Edward Stevenson to Elizabeth Stevenson, August 24, 1870, Stevenson Collection, MS 4806, box 8, fd. 8.

Stevenson escorted Martin to the office of the *Daily Iowa State Register*, where the editor listened to and then questioned Martin about his testimony of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This interview apparently took place on Thursday, August 25, 1870. The newsman, intrigued by his words, gave notice the next day, on August 26, that “Martin Harris, one of the *three witnesses* of the Mormon Bible, called at our sanctum yesterday. Mr. Harris is now in his 88th year, hale and hearty, with many interesting things to relate in reference to the finding of the tablets of the testament. We shall have occasion to mention some of these in another issue.”<sup>42</sup> As promised, in the Sunday morning edition of the *Register*, August 28, 1870, an extended account of his conversation with Martin was printed. Therein Martin spoke of the Book of Mormon and reported a valuable insight concerning Joseph Smith and the record itself. The *Register* account stated:

In September, 1828 [1827], as the story goes, Joseph Smith, directed by an angel, proceeded to a spot about 4 miles from Palmyra, New York, and upon the point of a hill extending northward, dug up a very solid stone chest within which were the tablets of gold, inscribed with the characters which no man could read. . . . Mr. Harris describes the plates as being of thin leaves of gold, measuring 7 by 8 inches, and weighing altogether, from 40 to 60 lbs. There was also found in the chest the Urim and Thummi[m], by means of which the writing upon the plates was translated, but not until after the most learned had exhausted their knowledge of letters in the vain effort to decipher the characters.<sup>43</sup>

Stevenson outlined for his wife Elizabeth his anticipated itinerary for the next several days and voiced not only his feelings of responsibility for the transport of Martin to Utah but also a response to an additional request: “I expect to be home or in Ogdon on the 29th inst[.] if all is well & Will have the Pleasure of Delivering one old father to his Children & 2 fine Women to Intended Husbands[.] So in all Probability I may do Some good to those Who are desireing good to be Done to them & as it is Written as ye do unto others So Shall it be done unto you.”<sup>44</sup> The George

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42. “A Newspaper Interview with Martin Harris,” *Daily Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), August 26, 1870, 4.

43. *Daily Iowa State Register*, August 28, 1870, 4, as quoted in letter of Claude R. Cook, curator of the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, to J. Grant Stevenson, September 28, 1954. See Stevenson, “Life of Edward Stevenson, Member of the First Council of the Seventy,” 156–57.

44. Edward Stevenson to Elizabeth Stevenson, August 24, 1870.

Beebe and Stewart families from the Des Moines Branch had asked that Edward Stevenson escort Sisters Caroline Beebe and Maggie Stewart to Salt Lake City, which he agreed to do. Because of the rush of affairs before leaving at an early morning hour, Stevenson had not finished the letter to his wife and asked President Ballinger to add a postscript to his correspondence and mail the same. Ballinger added his own note to the letter and identified the two sisters that were coming by name, stating, “They are fine girls and good Saints our little Branch has Suffered a Severe loss but we all rejoice in their deliverance.” President Ballinger also added an important word of explanation: “Tell Bro. Edward that I found the lost Hat at Atkinson Bros also that they have finished 13 of his Photographs that I kept one Sending mine instead I also will Send two of Bro. Martin Harris inclosed in this letter one for Bro Edward & one for Bro Martin.”<sup>45</sup> This opens the prospect of early photographs of Martin having been taken in Iowa during the course of his journey to Utah Territory in 1870.<sup>46</sup>

The Stevenson party departed Des Moines at 2:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 24, and headed for Ogden. There were necessarily other stops along the way for fuel and water and people to meet en route, but it was not until August 29, when the train stopped at Ogden, Weber County, Utah, that another reporter took an interest in Martin. Stevenson stated, “On the 29th of August we landed in Ogden.” He then quoted the reporter’s brief announcement in the *Ogden Junction*: “Martin Harris arrived (with Elder Edward Stevenson) whose name is known almost throughout the world as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They left Kirtland on the 19th of August.”<sup>47</sup> Martin Henderson Harris, son of Martin’s brother Emer, made a connection with his Uncle Martin from his nearby home in Harrisville. From his reminiscences, we learn:

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45. Pres. James M. Ballinger’s postscript added to the letter of Edward Stevenson to Elizabeth Stevenson, August 24, 1870, Des Moines, Iowa. Ballinger explained that Stevenson had been “too busy to finish” his letter of the 24th as expected and asked him to do so and forward their joint correspondence.

46. Larry C. Porter asked J. Grant Stevenson, family genealogist, if he was familiar with that exact photograph of Martin Harris being in the Stevenson family. He said that he was unaware of its existence as such, although he showed Larry a variety of images he had collected over the years. Some of these likenesses had been obtained by him from within the family. J. Grant Stevenson, interviewed by Larry C. Porter, Provo, Utah, December 7, 2012.

47. *Ogden Junction*, as cited in Edward Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses—Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 44, no. 6 (February 6, 1882): 86.

“Uncle Martin arrived at Ogden on his way from Kirtland at his former residence to Salt Lake City and staid over night and bore his testimony to the neighbors. . . . Leander [Leander Sargent Harris, son of Martin Henderson Harris] was one that remembers his testimony which was related on that occasion.”<sup>48</sup>

**“Arrival in This City, of Martin Harris,  
One of the Three Witnesses”**

On August 30, the *Deseret Evening News* announced, “By a telegram, per Deseret Telegraph Line, received at half-past three o’clock this afternoon [August 29], we learn that Martin Harris, accompanied by Elder E. Stevenson, of this city, arrived at Ogden, by the 3 o’clock train, he comes to this city to-morrow morning [August 30].”<sup>49</sup> Newspaper reporters were understandably anxious to announce the arrival of the only witness of the Book of Mormon to enter the Salt Lake Valley. The *Salt Lake Herald* responded the morning of the 31st: “Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the book of Mormon, arrived in Salt Lake City last night, accompanied by Elder Edward Stevenson.”<sup>50</sup>

George Q. Cannon, editor of the *Deseret Evening News*, devoted a lengthy column of newsprint to his arrival. He related, “Considerable interest has been felt by our people in the arrival in this city, of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He arrived here at 7:30, p. m. yesterday, in the company of Elder Edward Stevenson.” In explanation of his lengthy stay in Kirtland after the Saints had left, the correspondent reflected Martin’s personal sentiment that “he himself has thought for years that his mission was in Kirkland, he feeling that the Lord required him to stay there and bear testimony to the

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48. Martin Henderson Harris, “Reminiscences and Journal, 1856–1876,” MS 1781, August 30, 1870, p. 48, Church History Library.

49. “Local and Other Matters,” *Deseret Evening News*, August 30, 1870, 3.

50. From an interview that took place at the *Salt Lake Daily Herald* office on September 2, 1870. An article highlighting the interview appeared the following day and also included, “Mr. Harris is now 88 years of age, and is remarkably lively and energetic for his years. He holds firmly to the testimony he has borne for over forty years, that an angel appeared before him and the other witnesses, and showed them the plates upon which the characters of the Book of Mormon were inscribed. After being many years separated from the body of the Church, he has come to spend the evening of life among the believers in that Book to which he is so prominent a witness.” “We had a call yesterday morning from Edward Stevenson . . .,” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, September 3, 1870, 3.

Book of Mormon and the first principles, which he has been earnest in doing, and he has felt reluctant to leave.” The article further states that Martin “has never failed to bear testimony to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He says it is not a matter of belief on his part, but of knowledge.”<sup>51</sup>

After an arduous journey from Ohio, Martin’s physical condition was noted by the *Deseret News* correspondent: “Martin Harris is in his 88th year. He is remarkably vigorous for one of his years, and still retains the use of his faculties, his memory being very good, and his sight though his eyes appear to have failed, being so acute that he can see to pick a pin off the ground.”<sup>52</sup> Whether reading the telegrapher’s message or the newsprint of the day, residents in the Salt Lake area were abuzz with the news of Martin’s arrival. Taking care to assure that his arrival was officially reported, Stevenson led him to the Church Historian’s office where an authoritative note was made.<sup>53</sup>

An anticipated opportunity to meet with President Brigham Young on his arrival was momentarily delayed because President Young and his party had left Salt Lake on August 27, 1870, to visit the Saints in southern Utah, and he did not return to the city until September 24.<sup>54</sup> Edward Stevenson and Martin Harris were soon invited to address the congregation gathered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle at their regular Sunday morning services, on September 4, 1870. Wilford Woodruff journalized:

I attended Meeting in the Tabernacle, Edward Stephenson had been to Kirtland & Brought up old Father Martin Harris one of the 3 witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Brother Stephenson spoke to the people 35 Minutes. Then Martin Harris arose & bore testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon. He is 88 years old & has finally Come up to Zion to lay his Body down with the Saints. He has been from the Church 33 years in a state of Apostasy & he is far behind the times yet he bears a

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51. “Martin Harris, One of the Witnesses of the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret Evening News*, August 31, 1870, 2.

52. “Martin Harris—One of the Witnesses of the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret News*, September 7, 1870, 6.

53. “Martin Harris Called at the Historians Office Accompanied by Edward Stevenson,” *Journal History of the Church*, August 31, 1870, 1.

54. “Historian’s Office Journal,” August 27, 1870, and September 24, 1870, 31:119, 131, Church History Library; Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology: A Record of Important Events pertaining to the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1914), August 27, 1870, 83.



strong testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon. He was followed  
By G[eorge] A Smith 15 Minutes.<sup>55</sup>

Only very small segments of Martin's actual testimony seem to have been recorded by various individuals on the occasion of that 10:00 a.m. meeting. His remarks were apparently brief and centered almost exclusively on a strong testimony of the Book of Mormon. However, in the proximity of that same morning delivery there is tangible evidence of an earlier and more comprehensive conversation, aside from the later address to the congregation, dictated directly to Edward Stevenson. The words in that recorded interview do not seem consistent with the content of his public address at the 10:00 a.m. session. In what would strongly suggest a separate meeting, Stevenson wrote down some important statements uttered by Martin wherein he recalled his personal experiences with sectarian religion in Palmyra, New York; his initial association with Joseph Smith; the Book of Mormon; and the emergence of Mormonism. This entire document is in the recognizable pen and ink longhand of Edward Stevenson, save for a single date at the very top of the first page in the upper right-hand corner, which has been penciled in by an unknown hand, "4 Sept 1870." Stevenson gave the same date immediately below this notation in his own handwriting.

### **"These Could Not Be My People, There Are So Many"**

Following his Tabernacle address, there were many new opportunities for Martin to speak—types and varieties of opportunities that were never enjoyed by other witnesses of the Book of Mormon because of the particular setting. Martin was beset with numerous invitations to express his experiences from the earliest days of the Restoration. It was his grandniece, Irinda Crandall McEwan, who opened her home to accommodate Martin in his moment of immediate need. She and her husband of three years, Joseph T. McEwan, a pressman for the *Salt Lake Herald*, had moved to Salt Lake City in 1870.<sup>56</sup> The McEwans provided

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55. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–84), 6:569. Martin Harris's remarks appear to have been brief, since no amount of time was ascribed to them as was the case with Stevenson and George A. Smith. See also "Sabbath Meetings," *Deseret Evening News*, September 5, 1870, 2.

56. Irinda Naomi Crandall McEwan (August 18, 1851–January 12, 1935) was the daughter of Spicer Wells Crandall and Sophia Kellogg. Her grandmother, Naomi Harris, was the sister of Martin Harris. See Theria McEwan Selman,

Martin with shelter, food, kindness, and a place to accommodate a host of visitors. “While he was there, hundreds of people came to see him, including President Brigham Young, to talk over with him the details regarding his contact with the Book of Mormon story and of the appearance of the Angel to him.” Irinda McEwan recalled, “Anyone who heard Martin Harris describe the scenes and bear his testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon could not help but be deeply impressed with his sincerity and his absolute conviction of the truth of what he was saying.”<sup>57</sup> Of those who called at the McEwan home, none was of greater significance to Martin than his estranged wife, Caroline, who then resided in the Salt Lake



Brigham Young at approximately age seventy-five. Photograph by Charles R. Savage. Courtesy Church History Library.

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“History of Irinda McEwan, 1928,” in authors’ possession; Nell Sumsion, “Notes on Genealogy of Martin Harris One of the Witnesses of the Book of Mormon,” Genealogical Society of Utah, March 21, 1930, in Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 122.

57. Franklin S. Harris, “Minutes of Harris Family Reunion,” August 3, 1928, Geneva Resort, Utah County, Utah. Franklin S. Harris, then president of Brigham Young University, recorded Irinda McEwan’s words in his summary of her speech at a Harris family reunion. See Selman, “History of Irinda McEwan.” On that same occasion, Mrs. Sariah Steele of Goshen, Utah, told of her experiences with her grandfather Martin, “whom she knew when she was a little girl. She had sat on his lap many times and heard him bear fervent testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon record and of the part he played in connection with the testimony of the three witnesses. She said that anyone who had ever come in contact with him and had heard him bear his testimony was thoroughly impressed with his sincerity and with the truthfulness of the story which he told.” See also “Minutes of Harris Family Reunion,” Franklin S. Harris Papers, ms. 340, box 2, fd. 4, Perry Special Collections.

City 17th Ward, not far from the McEwan home.<sup>58</sup> It had been over eleven years since she had seen the father of her children and tendered the companionship of her husband. Although their association would be amicable in Utah, the long-term marital separation between the two remained unchanged, and they lived apart.

Just one week after Martin's entry into the city, Anson Call asked his friend William Waddoups if he would like to meet Harris. Waddoups went to Salt Lake and was taken to the home where Harris was staying. There he had a one-on-one conversation as Martin instructed him:

“Young man, I had the privilege of being with the Prophet Joseph Smith, and with these eyes of mine,” pointing to his eyes, “I saw the angel of the Lord, and saw the plates and the Urim and Thummim and the sword of Laban, and with these ears,” pointing to his ears, “I heard the voice of the angel, and with these hands,” holding out his hands, “I handled the plates containing the record of the Book of Mormon, and I assisted the Prophet in the translation thereof. I bear witness that this testimony is true.” Martin was at this time but a combination of bones and skin. He was extremely thin. Holding out his hands he said: “When I was faithful to the Church I was a fleshy, healthy, robust man, and what you see left of me is the fruits of apostasy. Young Man, always be faithful and obedient to the presiding priesthood, and you will always be safe.”<sup>59</sup>

The careful record of Martin's days in Salt Lake City as found in the writings of Edward Stevenson is a valuable historical source. He often visited Martin in the McEwan home and frequently brought him to his own residence. There, much like on their journey to Salt Lake City, the two men spoke candidly of gospel matters. In one conversation, Stevenson reported Martin as saying that “the Spirit of the Lord had made it manifest to him, not only for himself personally, but also that he should be baptized for his dead, for he had seen his father [Nathan Harris] seeking his aid. He described his father at the foot of a ladder, striving to get

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58. Sumsion, “Notes of the Genealogy of Martin Harris,” as cited in Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 122. Caroline Davis was listed as the wife of Catley Davis (John Catley Davis was using his middle name), in U.S. Federal Census 1870, Salt Lake City, Utah 17th Ward, filed July 2, 1870.

59. William Waddoups, “Martin Harris and the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* 26 (September 1823): 980, a signed statement of William Waddoups from his comments at the “April conference of the Benson Stake at Lewiston, Utah, and also at the grave of Martin Harris, Clarkston, Utah, Saturday, April 20, 1918.”

Martin Harris born May 18, 1783.  
 at East town Saratoga Co., New York.  
 rebaptized 17<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1870 by Edward  
 Stevenson confirmed by Orson Pratt  
 and others.  
 He was first baptized by O.  
 Cowdery in 1830.

Baptismal certificate for the rebaptism of Martin Harris. Courtesy Trace Mayer.

up to him, and he went down to him taking him by the hand and helped him up.”<sup>60</sup> He reminded Stevenson of having been taught “a principle that was new to him—baptism for the dead, as taught and practiced by the ancient Saints, and especially taught by Paul the Apostle in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians: ‘Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?’”<sup>61</sup> Martin then expressed a desire to be baptized for the remission of his own sins and of being baptized as proxy for his father.

A joyous Edward Stevenson hurried to inform Latter-day Saint leaders and other interested persons of Martin’s desire to be baptized. Participants in the baptismal ceremony gathered at the Endowment House font on the evening of Saturday, September 17, 1870.<sup>62</sup> An official transcript of the proceedings, including the proxy baptisms performed for certain deceased Harris family members immediately after Martin’s baptism, was made a matter of record at the Church Historian’s Office. The content of the document appears under the later date of

60. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II,” 367.

61. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses—Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 44, no. 6 (February 6, 1882): 87; 1 Corinthians 15:29; “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon,” *Millennial Star* 48 (June 7, 1886): 367–68.

62. Baptismal certificate for the rebaptism of Martin Harris by Edward Stevenson. In possession of Trace Mayer, Henderson, Nevada.

Wednesday, September 28, 1870, with a penned-in explanation “From Saturday Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>,” and reads:

On the 17th day of Sept. 1870, Martin Harris who is one of the Three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was rebaptized in the font at the Endowment House, by Elder Edward Stevenson, and confirmed by Elders Orson Pratt (mouth), John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and Joseph F. Smith. Prest. George A. Smith, and Elders John D. T. McAllister [clerk], John Lyon, (blank space) Davis<sup>63</sup> and Martin’s Sister, Mrs. Naomi H. Bent also being present. Martin and his Sister were also baptized, by Bro. Stevenson for a number of their dead and were confirmed by the same brethren, Jos. F. Smith being mouth. All the brethren above mentioned being present. Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783, at East-Town[,] Saratoga Co. [Saratoga District] New York, U.S.A. He still firmly declares that his Testimony in the Book of Mormon is true. And has ever been unwavering in his faith in that book and his testimony thereto.- J. F. Smith. He was baptized by Oliver Cowdrey in 1830.<sup>64</sup>

It was highly appropriate for Orson Pratt to act as mouth in the confirmation ordinance. Martin, as one of the Three Witnesses, had been instrumental in selecting Orson Pratt to be a member of the original Twelve Apostles called at Kirtland on February 14, 1835.<sup>65</sup> Stevenson later observed, “The occasion was one which interested all present, and reminded us of Christ’s parable of the lost sheep (Luke xv), ‘Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost, I say unto you, that

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63. Claudia Harris Allan, a Harris family genealogist, feels strongly that the person identified only as “\_\_\_\_\_ Davis” is her great-great-grandmother Caroline Harris Davis, wife of Martin Harris. The recorder appears to have left a space, meaning to go back later and complete the entry but failed to do so. Claudia states: “I know that Caroline was indeed there at Martin’s baptism. The prayers she had offered for so many years had finally been answered.” See Claudia Harris Allan, *The Life of Caroline Young Harris Davis Harris 1816–1888* ([Orem, Utah]: By the author for the Daughters of Utah Pioneers National Archives, 2012), 16.

64. The reference to Saturday, September 17, 1870, actually appears under the date of Wednesday, September 28, 1870, with the inserted notation “From Saturday Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>.” See Historical Department Journal, September 28, 1870, 132–33, Church History Library; also recorded in Journal History of the Church, September 17, 1870, 1; Salt Lake Temple and Endowment Records, Baptisms, Records for the Dead, Book B 1870–71, September 12, 1870, p. 184, microfilm, Church History Library.

65. Kirtland High Council Minutes 1832–37, February 14, 1835, Church History Library.

likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”<sup>66</sup>

Following his own baptism and confirmation, Martin directly reentered the font as indicated above and was baptized by proxy for his deceased father, Nathan Harris, and his brother Solomon Harris.<sup>67</sup> His sister Naomi Harris Bent<sup>68</sup> was also baptized on behalf of their two sisters, Sophia and Lydia Harris, and also for her “Friend,” Harriet Fox Kellogg, who was the first wife of Naomi’s former husband, Ezekiel Kellogg.<sup>69</sup> She and Martin were then confirmed by the same brethren, with Joseph F. Smith being voice. This was a time of rejoicing for many to see a witness of the Book of Mormon participate in these sacred covenants.

In a cause-and-effect fashion, Martin leagued the transformation of Mormonism that he saw unfolding about him with the wide dissemination of the Book of Mormon and its principles among the people. While attending the celebration at another baptism, Martin, “with joyful feelings,” exclaimed, “Just see how the Book of Mormon is spreading.”<sup>70</sup> In this same period, he also made a similar comment in the company of Edward Stevenson, George A. Smith, and John Henry Smith while on their way to take a soothing bath in the warm mineral springs just north of Salt Lake City. As the carriage in which they were riding reached a summit, curtains were raised so that the passengers would have a

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66. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. II,” 367; Luke 15:3–7.

67. Salt Lake Temple and Endowment Records, Baptisms, Records for the Dead, Book B 1870–71, September 12, 1870, p. 184; Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. II,” 368.

68. “Naomi Harris Duel Kellogg Bent,” in *Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1998), 1:237.

69. Salt Lake Temple and Endowment House Records, Baptisms, Records of the Dead, Book B 1870–71, September 12, 1870, p. 184; “Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was rebaptized today . . .,” *Journal History of the Church*, September 17, 1870. Elder Stevenson wrote of Martin’s initial failure to understand the doctrine of vicarious work for the dead: “I wish to add that Brother Harris having been away from the Church so many years did not understand more than the first principles taught in the infantile days of the Church, which accounts for his not being posted in the doctrine of the Gospel being preached to the spirits who are departed, which was afterwards taught by Joseph Smith the Prophet.” Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. II,” 367.

70. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. III,” 390.

panoramic view of the city below. To Martin, who could see the new Tabernacle, the rising Salt Lake Temple under construction, and the expanse of the city, the scene was “wonderful.” He exclaimed, “Who would have thought that the Book of Mormon would have done all this?”<sup>71</sup> Martin was now back. Brigham Young’s prophecy “Rest assured, he will be here in time”<sup>72</sup> had been fulfilled. Martin had become the only one of the Three Witnesses or any of the Eight Witnesses to personally observe the growth of the Church in the West. For him, this was a day of great celebration.

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71. Stevenson, “Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, No. III,” 390.

72. Homer [Sr.], “Passing of Martin Harris,” 471.