



Type: Magazine Article

The Eight Witnesses

Author(s): Andrew Jenson

Source: *The Historical Record*, Vol. 7, Nos. 8-10 (October 1888), pp. 609-622

Published by: Andrew Jenson

Abstract: A biographical sketch of each of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon (with the exception of Hyrum Smith, and Joseph Smith Sr.). Underscores the fact that the witnesses never denied their experience of handling the plates. Mary Musselman Whitmer, the mother of the five Whitmer sons who were witnesses, is also identified.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Devoted Exclusively to Historical, Biographical, Chronological and Statistical Matters.

"What thou seest, write in a book." REV. 1:11.

Nos. 8-10.

OCTOBER, 1888.

VOL. VII.

THE EIGHT WITNESSES

Of the important dates which are lacking in the early history of the Church, there are perhaps none that are missed more than those which could give the exact time when the plates of the Book of Mormon were shown to the witnesses, who testified of its divinity. It is supposed that the Three Witnesses saw the plates in the latter part of June, 1829, shortly after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had removed to Fayette, Seneca County, New York, from their former home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, but it may have been in the month following. The Eight Witnesses, according to the history of Joseph Smith, saw them soon afterwards; hence that must have been sometime in July, 1829. In Lucy Smith's history of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, page 140, it is recorded in substance, that a few days after the Three Witnesses had seen the plates in a grove near Whitmer's house, in Fayette, Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and some of the Whitmers came to visit Joseph's parents at Manchester, Ontario County. Another object of their visit was to make some arrangements about getting the Book of Mormon printed in the adjacent

town of Palmyra. "Soon after they came," writes Lucy Smith, "all the male part of the company, with my husband (Joseph Smith, sen.), Samuel and Hyrum (two of the Prophet's brothers), retired to a place where the family were in the habit of offering up their secret devotions to God. They went to this place, because it had been revealed to Joseph that the plates would be carried thither by one of the ancient Nephites. Here it was that those Eight Witnesses, whose names are recorded in the Book of Mormon, looked upon them and handled them." Of this they bear record in the following plain words:

"The Testimony of Eight Witnesses.

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the

world that which we have seen; and we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER,
 JACOB WHITMER,
 PETER WHITMER, jun.,
 JOHN WHITMER,
 HIRAM PAGE,
 JOSEPH SMITH, sen.,
 HYRUM SMITH,
 SAMUEL H. SMITH."

CHRISTIAN WHITMER,

The eldest son of Peter Whitmer, sen., and Mary Musselman, was born January 18, 1798, removed while quite young with his parents from Pennsylvania to Seneca County, western New York, where he married Anne Schott February 22, 1825, and established himself as a shoemaker. He was among the number who first embraced the fulness of the gospel as revealed through the youthful Prophet, and was baptized together with his wife in Seneca Lake, April 11, 1830, by Elder Oliver Cowdery. This was only five days after the Church was organized. In 1831 he removed with the rest of the Whitmer family and the Saints generally from New York State to Ohio, and the following year to Jackson County Missouri, where he, in a council of High Priests held August 21, 1833, was ordained to the High Priesthood. He passed through all the scenes of persecutions and mobbings which took place in that part of the country until he, in connection with the rest of the Saints, was driven out of Jackson County in November, 1833. He settled temporarily in Clay County. July 3, 1834, he was chosen as one of the High Councilors of the Church in Missouri. This position he occupied until his death which occurred in Clay County, November 27, 1835. For several years before his demise he suffered considerably from lame-

ness, having an ugly sore on one of his legs, which was the direct cause of his early death. He was faithful and true until the last, and always bore a strong testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. He left no children. After his demise his wife returned to her parents in New York State, where she married again, but was divorced from her second husband. She died many years ago in Seneca County, New York.

JACOB WHITMER,

The second son of Peter Whitmer, sen., and Mary Musselman, was born in Pennsylvania January 27, 1800, removed with his parents to New York State when a boy, and married Elizabeth Schott, September 29, 1825, with whom he had nine children. Of these seven are now dead. He was one of the first who became convinced that the principles revealed by the Prophet Joseph were true, and was, together with his wife, baptized by Oliver Cowdery, in Seneca Lake, April 11, 1830, a few days after the Church was organized. With the rest of the Whitmer family he removed to Ohio in 1831 and subsequently settled in Jackson County, Missouri, from whence he was driven by a mob in 1833. He was also identified with the Church in Clay and Caldwell counties. In the latter county he acted a short time as a temporary High Councilor and also as a member of the building committee for the erection of the Lord's House at Far West. He severed his connection with the Church in 1838, after which he settled near Richmond, Ray County, where he remained until his death which occurred April 21, 1856. He was then 56 years 2 months and 26 days old. He was a shoemaker by trade and also owned a little farm at the time of his

demise. One of his sons, David P. Whitmer, was a lawyer of considerable prominence and served one or more terms as mayor of Richmond. His only living daughter, Mrs. Mary Ann Bisbee, widow of the late J. P. Bisbee, lives near Richmond, Missouri, and has been a widow for a number of years. John C. Whitmer, his only remaining son, also lives about a mile south of Richmond. He is the custodian of the original Church record which his uncle John Whitmer refused to give up to the proper authorities, and he also presides over the so-called "Whitmer Faction" or the Church of Christ, who believe in some of the doctrines taught by the Prophet and reject others. John C. Whitmer testified to the writer of this article in September, 1888, as follows: "My father (Jacob Whitmer) was always faithful and true to his testimony in regard to the Book of Mormon, and confirmed it on his death-bed." From other sources it is known that Jacob Whitmer ever remained firm and steadfast to his testimony of the divinity of that sacred record, of which he was permitted to be so important a witness.

PETER WHITMER, JUN.,

Fifth son of Peter Whitmer, sen., and Mary Musselman, was born September 27, 1809. Soon after Joseph's arrival at Fayette from Pennsylvania in the summer of 1829, Peter became a zealous friend of the Prophet and an able assistant in the work of God, and he desired most earnestly that Joseph should inquire of the Lord for him in order that he might know his duties and the Lord's will concerning him. The Prophet did so through the Urim and Thummim, and received a revelation commanding

Peter to preach repentance to this generation. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 16.) This was in June, 1829. About the same time he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake, being at that time about twenty years of age.

In September, 1830, he was called by revelation (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 30) to preach the gospel, together with Oliver Cowdery, and in the following month he was chosen by revelation to accompany Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery and R. Ziba Peterson on a mission to the Lamanites. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 32.) They started for the West soon afterwards, and had an eventful journey, fraught with many hardships and much suffering. In Kirtland, Ohio, they raised up a large branch, after which they traveled nearly one thousand miles through mud and snow, mostly on foot, to Jackson County, Missouri, where they arrived in the early part of 1831. (See pages 385-389.)

While Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery commenced a mission among the Lamanites across the borders, Peter Whitmer, jun., and another missionary companion found employment as tailors in the village of Independence, remaining there until the arrival of Joseph Smith and a number of the brethren in July following. Subsequently Peter Whitmer, jun., took an active part with the Saints in Jackson County and still later in Clay County. He died on a farm about two miles from Liberty, Clay County, September 22, 1836, and was buried by the side of his brother Christian, who died about ten months previous. He had been consumptive for a number of years previous to his demise. He left a wife and three children, all

daughters, one of them being born after his death. One of his daughters now lives in Richmond, Missouri, another in Fort Scott, Kansas, and the third one in Moberly, Randolph County, Missouri. Like all the other witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Peter Whitmer, jun., was true and faithful to his testimony till the last.

JOHN WHITMER,

The third son of Peter Whitmer, sen., and Mary Musselman, was born August 27, 1802. He was baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake in June, 1829, soon after Joseph Smith's arrival in Seneca County from Pennsylvania. His brothers David and Peter were baptized about the same time.

John Whitmer assisted Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery considerably in writing while they were translating the latter part of the Book of Mormon in his father's house. In the meantime he became very zealous in the work, and, according to his earnest desire, Joseph inquired concerning him through the Urim and Thummim, and received a revelation in which he was commanded to declare repentance and bring souls unto Christ. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 15.) He was closely connected with the Prophet in his early administrations, and accompanied him on his first missionary trips to Colesville, Broome County, where a large branch of the Church was built up in the midst of considerable persecution. He was also present at the little meeting at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in August, 1830, when the revelation concerning the Sacrament was given. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 27.)

In September, 1830, he was called by revelation to preach the gospel and to labor continuously in the interest

of Zion (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 30), and on March 8, 1831, he was chosen by revelation to labor as a historian for the Church. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 47.) Again in November, 1831, he was called by revelation (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 69) to accompany Oliver Cowdery to Jackson County, Missouri, with the revelations which he previously had assisted Joseph in copying and preparing for printing. He was also one of the "seven High Priests sent up from Kirtland to build up Zion," to stand at the head of the Church in Jackson County, Missouri, and at the time of the persecutions was a member of the committee who negotiated with the mob and agreed that the Saints should leave Jackson County. Later we find his name attached to petitions addressed to Governor Dunklin, of Missouri, praying for redress and protection against mob violence. In Clay County he was again quite active and his name appears in connection with several important documents and correspondences of the Church at that time. Next his brother David, John was the most prominent and able man among the Whitmers, and rendered efficient service to the Church in various ways, as long as he remained faithful. July 3, 1834, he was ordained one of the assistant presidents of the Church in Clay County, his brother David being ordained president on the same occasion. Some time afterwards John paid a visit to Kirtland, Ohio, where he acted as a High Councilor and took an active part in the affairs of the Church as one of the presiding officers from Missouri. He was present at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and received his blessings and anointings

under the hands of the First Presidency, after which he returned to Missouri. At a meeting of High Priests held in Far West, Missouri, April 7, 1837, he was appointed to act as a member of a committee for the sale of town lots in Far West.

At a conference held in Far West, November 7, 1837, objections were made to John Whitmer as one of the assistant presidents of the Church in Missouri, but after he had made confessions he was temporarily sustained in his position. On February 5, 1838, however, he was finally rejected, together with David Whitmer and William W. Phelps, the other two presidents of the Church in Missouri. John was excommunicated from the Church by the High Council at Far West, March 10, 1838, "for persisting in unchristian-like conduct," for (in connection with David Whitmer and William W. Phelps) having kept \$2,000 of Church funds, which had been subscribed and paid in by members of the Church for building the Lord's House in Far West, etc.

After his excommunication from the Church, John Whitmer refused to deliver the Church documents in his possession to the proper authorities, which gave occasion for quite a severe letter from Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. The records, however, were never obtained; they are now in the custody of John C. Whitmer (a nephew of John Whitmer), who resides in Richmond, Clay County, Missouri.

After the fall of Far West, John took advantage of the cheap rates at which the lands, which the Saints were compelled to leave, could be bought; and he succeeded in purchasing the principal part of the old town-

site. When he died at his residence at Far West, July 11, 1878, he was known as an extensive farmer and stock-raiser. Although he never joined the Church again, after his excommunication in 1838, he was always true to his testimony in regard to the Book of Mormon. Even in his darkest days, and at the time he first turned his back upon the Church and the Prophet Joseph, he declared in the presence of a number of Missourians—enemies to the work of God—that he knew the Book of Mormon was true. (See page 458.) His nephew, John C. Whitmer, of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, who was with him a few days before his death, testifies that he bore testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon until the last, which is corroborated by many others who visited him on various occasions previous to that.

John Whitmer was the father of four children, three sons and one daughter. One of his sons died when about ten years old and another was killed in the late civil war. His only remaining son, Jacob D. Whitmer, lives on the old Far West site, and owns one of the best farms in that part of the country, including the Temple Block, which he has inherited from his father. John's only daughter also lives in Far West, on the old homestead, a little east of Jacob D. Whitmer's residence.

HIRAM PAGE

Was born in the State of Vermont in the year 1800. He commenced to study medicine when quite young, and traveled considerably in the State of New York and Canada as a physician. Finally he located in Seneca County, New York, where he became acquainted with the Whitmer family,

and finally married Catherine Whitmer November 10, 1825, with whom he had nine children. Having become a firm believer in the fulness of the gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph, he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery, in Seneca Lake, April 11, 1830. His wife was baptized at the same time. Soon afterwards he came in possession of a stone by which he obtained certain revelations concerning the order of the Church and other matters, which were entirely at variance with the New Testament and the revelations received by Joseph Smith. This happened at a time when Joseph was absent, and when he heard of it, it caused him much uneasiness, as a number of the Saints, including Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family, believed in the things revealed by Hiram Page. At a conference held September 1, 1830, when Joseph presided, this matter was given close attention, and after considerable investigation Hiram Page as well as all the other members who were present, renounced everything connected with the stone. The Lord also said in a revelation that the things which Page had written from the stone were not from him. (Doc. & Cov., Sec. 28.)

In 1831 Hiram Page removed to Kirtland, Ohio, where he remained until the following year, when he settled in Jackson County, Missouri, near the town of Independence. During the persecutions of the Saints in Jackson County in 1833, he was selected, together with three others, to go to Lexington to see the circuit judge and obtain a peace warrant. Upon their affidavits, Judge John F. Ryland issued writs against some of the ring-leaders of the mob, to be placed in the hands of the Jackson County sheriff,

but these writs never accomplished any good.

After the expulsion from Jackson County, Page took an active part with the Saints in Clay County, and in 1836 became one of the founders of Far West, Caldwell County.

In 1838 he severed his connection with the Saints and subsequently removed to Ray County, where he remained until the end of his earthly career. He died August 12, 1852, on his farm, near the present site of Excelsior Springs, about 14 miles northwest of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, and near the boundary line between Ray and Clay counties. Of his nine children only four are now alive. His eldest living son, Philander Page, resides two and a half miles south of Richmond. Another son lives near by, and a daughter resides in Carroll County, Missouri.

To the writer of this article Philander Page testified in September, 1888, as follows: "I knew my father to be true and faithful to his testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon until the very last. Whenever he had an opportunity to bear his testimony to this effect, he would always do so, and seemed to rejoice exceedingly in having been privileged to see the plates and thus become one of the Eight Witnesses. I can also testify that Jacob, John and David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery died in full faith in the divinity of the Book of Mormon. I was with all these witnesses on their death-beds and heard them all bear their last testimony."

John C. Whitmer, a nephew of Hiram Page by marriage, testifies: "I was closely connected with Hiram Page in business transactions and other matters, he being married to

my aunt. I knew him at all times and under all circumstances to be true to his testimony concerning the divinity of the Book of Mormon."

JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.,

Father of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was born July 12, 1771, and died September 14, 1840. (See pages 89 and 90.)

HYRUM SMITH,

The Patriarch, and a brother of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was born February 9, 1800, and was martyred June 27, 1844. (See page 71.)

SAMUEL HARRISON SMITH,

The fourth son of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack, was born in the town of Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont, March 13, 1808. In his early life he assisted his father in farming. He possessed a religious turn of mind, and at an early age joined the Presbyterian Church, to which sect he belonged until he visited his brother Joseph in Pennsylvania in May, 1829, when Joseph informed him that the Lord was about to commence his latter-day work. He also showed him that part of the Book of Mormon which he had translated, and labored to persuade him concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ, which was about to be revealed in its fulness.

Samuel was not, however, very easily persuaded of these things, but after much inquiry and explanation he retired and prayed that he might obtain from the Lord wisdom to enable him to judge for himself; the result was, that he obtained revelation for himself sufficient to convince him of the truth of the testimony of his brother Joseph.

May 15, 1829, having been commanded of the Lord, Joseph Smith and

Oliver Cowdery were baptized, and as they were returning from the water to the house, they overheard Samuel engaged in secret prayer. Joseph said that he considered that a sufficient testimony of his being a fit subject for baptism; and as they had now received authority to baptize, they spoke to Samuel upon the subject, and he went straightway to the water with them, and was baptized by Oliver Cowdery, he being the third person baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ in the last dispensation.

He was present at the organization of the Church, April 6, 1830, and was one of the six who at that time constituted the members of the Church. He was ordained to the Priesthood on that day.

On the 30th of June following the organization of the Church, he took some Books of Mormon and started out on his mission, to which he had been set apart by his brother Joseph, and on traveling twenty-five miles, which was his first day's journey, he stopped at a number of places in order to sell his books, but was turned out of doors as soon as he declared his principles.

When evening came on, he was faint and almost discouraged, but coming to an inn, which was surrounded with every appearance of plenty, he called to see if the landlord would buy one of his books. On going in, Samuel inquired of him, if he did not wish to purchase a history of the origin of the Indians.

"I do not know," replied the host, "how did you get hold of it?"

"It was translated," rejoined Samuel, "by my brother from some gold plates that he found buried in the earth."

"You d—d liar," cried the landlord, "get out of my house—you shan't stay one minute with your books."

Samuel was sick at heart, for this was the fifth time he had been turned out of doors that day. He left the house, and traveled a short distance, and washed his feet in a small brook, as a testimony against the man.

He then proceeded five miles further on his journey, and seeing an apple tree a short distance from the road, he concluded to pass the night under it; and here he lay all night upon the cold, damp ground.

In the morning he arose from his comfortless bed, and observing a small cottage at no great distance, he drew near, hoping to get a little refreshment. The only inmate was a widow who seemed very poor. He asked her for food, relating the story of his former treatment. She prepared him some victuals, and after eating, he explained to her the history of the Book of Mormon. She listened attentively, and believed all that he told her, but, in consequence of her poverty, she was unable to purchase one of the books. He presented her with one, and proceeded to Bloomington, which was eight miles further.

Here he stopped at the house of one John P. Greene, who was a Methodist preacher, and was at that time about starting on a preaching mission. He, like the others, did not wish to make a purchase of what he considered at that time to be a nonsensical fable; however, he said that he would take a subscription paper, and if he found any one on his route who was disposed to purchase, he would take his name, and in two weeks, Samuel might call again, and he would let him know what the

prospect was of selling. After making this arrangement, Samuel left one of his books with him and returned home.

At the time appointed, Samuel started again for the Rev. John P. Greene's, in order to learn the success which this gentleman had met with, in finding sale for the Book of Mormon. This time his father and mother accompanied him, and it was their intention to have passed near the tavern, where Samuel was so abusively treated a fortnight previous, but just before they came to the house, a sign of small pox intercepted them.

They turned aside, and meeting a citizen of the place, they inquired of him to what extent this disease prevailed. He answered, that the tavern-keeper and two of his family had died with it not long since, but he did not know that any one else had caught the distemper, and that it was brought into the neighborhood by a traveler who stopped at the tavern over night.

Samuel performed several short missions with the books, and gave the following account of his third mission to Livonia:

"When I arrived at Mr. Greene's, Mrs. Greene informed me that her husband was absent from home, that there was no prospect of selling my books, and even the one which I had left with them, she expected I would have to take away, as Mr. Greene had no disposition to purchase it, although she had read it herself, and was much pleased with it.

"I then talked with her a short time, and, hindng my knapsack upon my shoulders, rose to depart; but as I bade her farewell, it was impressed upon my mind to leave the book with her. I made her a present of it, and told her that the Spirit forbade my taking it away. She burst into tears, and requested me to pray with her. I did so, and afterwards explained to her the most profitable manner of reading the book which had been left with her; which was, to ask God when she read it for a testi-

mony of the truth of what she had read, and she would receive the Spirit of God, which would enable her to discern the things of God. I then left her and returned home."

In December, 1830, Samuel was sent to preach in Kirtland, Ohio, and the surrounding country. In the beginning of 1831, Joseph, the Prophet, went to Kirtland to preside, accompanied by Hyrum and many of the Saints, and soon after Joseph Smith senior's family, and the Saints who were located in Fayette, near Waterloo, also moved to Kirtland.

In June, 1831, Samuel was called by revelation to go to Missouri on a mission, in company with Reynolds Cahoon. They immediately started, and while on their way called upon William E. McLellin, and preached the gospel to him and a large assembly, in a room which he procured. William being troubled about the things he heard, closed up his business and proceeded after the brethren to Missouri, where he was baptized before they arrived. This is the McLellin who afterwards became one of the Twelve Apostles.

On their route to Missouri they preached the gospel, traveling without purse or scrip, and enduring much for the want of food and rest.

When they started for Missouri, about fifty brethren set out for the same place, and when they all arrived they met on the spot for the Temple, in Jackson County, and dedicated the ground unto God.

Brothers Smith and Cahoon spent several days in Jackson County, attended several conferences, and were with Joseph when he received several revelations. While in Missouri they were required to remain together on their return mission until they reached

THE TRANSLATOR:		
Joseph Smith.....		1829
THE THREE WITNESSES:		
Oliver Cowdery.....		1830
David Whitmer.....		1831
Marin Harris.....		1832
THE EIGHT WITNESSES:		
Christian Whitmer.....		1833
Jacob Whitmer.....		1834
Peter Whitmer, Jun.....		1835
John Whitmer.....		1836
Hiram Page.....		1837
Joseph Smith, sen.....		1838
Hyrum Smith.....		1839
Samuel H. Smith.....		1840
		1841
		1842
		1843
		1844
		1845
		1846
		1847
		1848
		1849
		1850
		1851
		1852
		1853
		1854
		1855
		1856
		1857
		1858
		1859
		1860
		1861
		1862
		1863
		1864
		1865
		1866
		1867
		1868
		1869
		1870
		1871
		1872
		1873
		1874
		1875
		1876
		1877
		1878
		1879
		1880
		1881
		1882
		1883
		1884
		1885
		1886
		1887
		1888

DIAGRAM OF THE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

home, which was in September following.

Soon after their arrival in Kirtland, they took a mission into the southern townships and counties of Ohio. Brother Cahoon returned after laboring about six weeks, but Samuel continued preaching through the winter, strengthening the churches and comforting the Saints.

In a revelation given in January, 1832, Orson Hyde and Samuel H. Smith were called to go on a mission to the Eastern country; accordingly they started in March, and traveled and preached the gospel through the States of Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine; they baptized several in Spafford, New York, in Boston and Lynne, Massachusetts, in Providence, R. I., and in Saco, Maine, preaching much from house to house, as well as in public congregations, and returning to Kirtland in November or December.

During the year 1833, Samuel preached among the churches as he had opportunity, and spent a good portion of his time laboring with his hands.

February 17, 1834, he was ordained and set apart as one of the High Council in Kirtland, in which office he officiated until he went to Missouri in 1838.

August 13, 1834, he married Mary Bailey, who was born in Bedford, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire, December 20, 1808.

Sept. 16, 1835, he was appointed, in company with David Whitmer, as a committee and general agent to act in the name of and for the Literary Firm. In the winter of 1835-36 he chopped cord wood for Lorenzo D. Young.

In 1838 he traveled in company with his brother Joseph from Kirtland to Missouri. He passed through the mobbings of that year, in Far West and Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, and his family suffered nigh unto death from exposure, as they were driven about by the mob.

He was in the Crooked River battle, and immediately after, by the counsel of President Brigham Young, with Charles C. Rich, Benjamin L. Clapp, Lorenzo D. Young and about twenty others, they fled for Illinois by the wilderness through the north part of Missouri, and the southern part of Iowa.

Messengers overtook them and informed them that General Clark had sent a company of fifty well armed men to follow them, with strict orders not to return until they had brought back the company either dead or alive.

When this word came, a halt was called, and Samuel asked what they should do in case the enemy overtook them; after a few moments' consultation the whole company covenanted with uplifted hands to heaven, that if they were overtaken they would fight till they died, and not a man would fall into the hands of the enemy alive.

They then traveled on ten miles and camped on the edge of some timber on the north side of a four-mile prairie, and they afterwards learned that their enemies camped on the south edge of the same prairie, and would have overtaken them next day, had not the Lord sent a heavy snow storm during the night; and when the brethren arose in the morning, Phineas H. Young remarked, that that snow storm was their salvation. The air was so full of snow they could

hardly find their horses to saddle them, but they soon mounted them and continued their journey as fast as they could. The storm was from the north, and in their faces; it filled their tracks in a few moments, so that Clark's men could not follow.

It was reported that this company of men on their return informed the general that they could not overtake the d—d Mormons, for they were stopped by a snow storm.

After they had got some distance on their journey, the company divided into three parts, the three brethren named falling in company with Samuel; their provisions gave out, and after spending several days without food, except eating lynne buds and slippery elm bark, they camped upon a small stream.

The company, numbering eight, held a council, and appointed Samuel president, that they might receive the word of the Lord in relation to the situation of Joseph the Prophet and those that were with him, also in relation to their families and what they were to do to obtain food; they all knelt down in a circle, and each one prayed; then the spirit of the Lord came upon Samuel, and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, he arose and said:

"Thus saith the Lord, my servant Joseph is not injured, nor any of his brethren that are with him, but they will all be delivered out of the hands of their enemies; your families are all well, but anxious about you. Let your hearts be comforted, for I the Lord will provide food for you on the morrow."

They went to bed with glad hearts and arose in the morning, when they again prayed and went out two by two to hunt for food. Brother Clapp saw several squirrels and shot at them, but could not hit them; they were only

to stay one hour; at the end of that time they all returned, except Charles C. Rich and Samuel.

Feeling very faint, one of the brethren proposed killing a horse. Brother Clapp said that when Brothers Rich and Samuel returned they would have food, as he never knew the Lord to give a false revelation to his servants; and while conversing upon the matter, the brethren made their appearance with two silk handkerchiefs tied up full of bread and dried meat.

Samuel's mind was led in a certain direction, and following it they came to an Indian camp; they made known to the Indians by signs, that they were hungry; upon this the squaw with all possible speed baked them some cakes, and gave each of them two, sending two to each of the six brethren in camp, giving them to understand that she would be glad to send more, but she had but little flour, and her papooses (children) would be hungry.

When they arrived in camp all felt to rejoice; they formed a circle around the food, and asked a blessing upon it. The bread was very good, being shortened with racoon's oil. After eating, they started upon their journey and obtained food sufficient, so that none perished.

Samuel arrived in Quincy, and was there to assist his father and mother over the river on their arrival, and hired a house for them, into which he also assisted four other families of the Saints; and according to the word of the Lord unto him, his brothers, Joseph and Hyrum, were delivered, and they arrived in Quincy in April, 1839.

He, in company with Don Carlos, moved on to a farm which he rented,

near Macomb, McDonough County, Illinois, where he spent the season farming.

Elders Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor called upon them as they went on their missions to England, and held a meeting with the Saints in that place (October 11, 1839). Don Carlos preached, and was followed by Samuel, who enjoyed much of the Holy Spirit and bore a strong testimony to the truth of the work of God; he assisted the brethren upon their journey.

In September, 1840, Samuel received the following blessing under the hands of his father, Joseph Smith, sen., upon his dying bed:

"Samuel, you have been a faithful and obedient son. By your faithfulness you have brought many into the Church. The Lord has seen your diligence, and you are blessed, in that he has never chastised you, but has called you home to rest; and there is a crown laid up for you which shall grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

"When the Lord called you, he said, 'Samuel, I have seen thy sufferings, have heard thy cries, and beheld thy faithfulness; thy skirts are clean from the blood of this generation.' Because of these things, I seal upon your head all the blessings which I have heretofore pronounced upon you; and this my dying blessing I now seal upon you. Even so: Amen.

His wife Mary died January 25, 1841, after bearing to him four children, namely Susannah B., Mary B., Samuel Harrison B. and Lucy B.

In April, 1841, he was sent on a mission to preach the gospel in Scott and adjoining counties, Illinois. May 3rd, he married Levira Clark, daughter of Gardner and Delecta Clark, born in Livonia, Livingston County, New York, July 30, 1815; he preached during the summer and fall, his wife remaining with his father-in-law.

In the month of November he returned to Nauvoo, taking his family

with him, where he remained during the winter, and also the summer of 1842, during which time he worked mostly for Joseph, and harvested in the country.

In the fall of 1842 he removed to his brother William's tavern at Plymouth. In the summer of 1843 he was often at Nauvoo. In the fall he chopped wood, and prepared his farm by making fences and clearing off the timber, preaching the gospel in the vicinity as he had the opportunity.

In the spring of 1844 he cultivated his farm, and upon hearing of the imprisonment of his brothers in Carthage jail, he repaired thither on horseback to see them. While on the way he was pursued by the mobocrats; but in consequence of the fleetness of his horse, he was enabled to reach Carthage in safety, from whence he went to Nauvoo in company with the bodies of his martyred brothers, Joseph and Hyrum.

He was soon after taken sick of bilious fever, and died on the 30th of July, 1844, aged 36 years.

The following extract is from his obituary notice, published in the *Times and Seasons*:

"The exit of this worthy man, so soon after the horrible butchery of his brothers, Joseph and Hyrum, in Carthage jail, is a matter of deep solemnity to the family, as well as a remediless loss to all. If ever there lived a good man upon the earth, Samuel H. Smith was that person. His labors in the Church from first to last, carrying glad tidings to the eastern cities, and finally his steadfastness as one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and many saintly traits of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, shall be given of him hereafter, as a man of God."

His wife Levira bore to him three daughters, viz., Levira A. C., Louisa C. and Lucy J. C.

STILL ANOTHER WITNESS.

If the statements of persons who have always been considered reliable and truthful can be taken as authority, there is, besides the eleven witnesses of the Book of Mormon, still another one, who testifies to having seen the plates. This person is a woman, and if her statement is reliable, she is the only woman on earth who has ever enjoyed the privilege of seeing the holy treasure. Her name is Mary Musselman Whitmer, familiarly known as Mother Whitmer, she being the wife of Peter Whitmer, sen., and mother of five of the witnesses. Her son, David Whitmer, before his death, testified on several occasions that his mother had seen the plates, and when the writer visited Richmond, Missouri, a few weeks ago, John C. Whitmer, a grandson of the lady in question testified in the following language:

"I have heard my grandmother (Mary M. Whitmer) say on several occasions that she was shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by an holy angel, whom she always called Brother Nephi. (She undoubtedly refers to Moroni, the angel who had the plates in charge.) It was at the time, she said, when the translation was going on at the house of the elder Peter Whitmer, her husband. Joseph Smith and his wife and Oliver Cowdery, whom David Whitmer a short time previous had brought up from Harmony, Pennsylvania, were all boarding with the Whitmers, and my grandmother in having so many extra persons to care for, besides her own large household, was often overloaded with work to such an extent that she felt it to be quite a burden. One evening, when (after having done her usual day's work in

the house) she went to the barn to milk the cows, she met a stranger carrying something on his back that looked like a knapsack. At first she was a little afraid of him, but when he spoke to her in a kind, friendly tone, and began to explain to her the nature of the work which was going on in her house, she was filled with unexpressible joy and satisfaction. He then untied his knapsack and showed her a bundle of plates, which in size and appearance corresponded with the description subsequently given by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. This strange person turned the leaves of the book of plates over, leaf after leaf, and also showed her the engravings upon them; after which he told her to be patient and faithful in bearing her burden a little longer, promising that if she would do so, she should be blessed; and her reward would be sure, if she proved faithful to the end. The personage then suddenly vanished with the plates, and where he went, she could not tell. From that moment my grandmother was enabled to perform her household duties with comparative ease, and she felt no more inclination to murmur because her lot was hard. I knew my grandmother to be a good, noble and truthful woman, and I have not the least doubt of her statement in regard to seeing the plates being strictly true. She was a strong believer in the Book of Mormon until the day of her death."

THE WHITMER FAMILY.

Next to the Smith family, the Whitmers are prominently connected with the early history of the Church. Of the Three Witnesses, one (David) was a Whitmer, and another (Cowdery) afterwards married one of the

"Whitmer girls." Of the Eight Witnesses, four were Whitmers, and the fifth (Hiram Page) a Whitmer by marriage. It may therefore be proper to introduce the following, which the editor of the HISTORICAL RECORD gleaned partly from the Whitmer family record during his late visit to Richmond, Missouri:

Peter Whitmer, senior, was born April 14, 1773, and his wife Mary Musselman August 27, 1778. They had eight children, namely:

Christian, born January 18, 1798.

Jacob, born January 27, 1800.

John, born August 27, 1802.

David, born January 7, 1805.

Catherine (wife of Hiram Page), born April 22, 1807.

Peter, born September 27, 1809.

Nancy, born December 24, 1812. (She died April 19, 1813.)

Elizabeth Ann (wife of Oliver Cowdery), born January 22, 1815. (She still lives in South West City, McDonold County, Missouri, with her only living daughter, Mrs. Johnson, wife of Dr. Charles Johnson.)

The elder Peter Whitmer was a hard-working, God-fearing man, a strict Presbyterian, and brought his children up with rigid sectarian discipline. In the early part of the present century he removed with his family from Pennsylvania to western New

York, and settled on a farm in Fayette Township, Seneca County, about three miles south of Waterloo. There he built a one and a half story log house, the one in which the Church was organized on April 6, 1830, and where Joseph Smith received a number of important revelations. The house was torn down many years ago, but when the writer and his companions visited the place in September, 1888, they found several of the logs which once constituted a part of the building lying in a ditch near by; the old family well is also in existence yet. The elder Peter Whitmer and his wife were baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake, April 18, 1830. The following year the family removed to Kirtland, Ohio, and in 1832 to Jackson County, Missouri, where they subsequently suffered during the persecutions. They were also identified with the Church in Clay and Caldwell counties, but in 1838 nearly the entire Whitmer family turned their back upon the Prophet Joseph, and never afterwards became identified with the Church. Peter Whitmer, sen., died in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, Aug. 12, 1854, and his wife died in January, 1856. Their earthly remains rest in the old Richmond graveyard, side by side of their son Jacob (one of the Eight Witnesses) and their son-in-law, Oliver Cowdery.

DAVID WHITMER

David Whitmer, the last of all the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, died at his residence in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, January 25, 1888, aged 83 years and 18 days. From the *Richmond Democrat* of February 2, 1888, a weekly paper published at Richmond, we cull the following,

as an addition to what is published in the HISTORICAL RECORD, pages 203-212:

"David Whitmer was born near Harrisburgh, Pennsylvania, Jan. 7, 1805, and married Julia Ann Jolly Jan. 9, 1831. * * *

"When he was 24 years of age and working on his father's farm near Palmyra, New York, all that section of the country was more or less