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That Which You Have Translated, Which You Have Retained

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THAT WHICH YOU HAVE TRANSLATED, WHICH YOU HAVE RETAINED

Clifford P. Jones

Abstract: *I propose that our current Words of Mormon in the Book of Mormon was originally a second chapter of the book of Mosiah following an initial chapter that was part of the lost 116 pages. When Joseph Smith gave the first 116 pages to Martin Harris, he may have retained a segment of the original manuscript that contained our Words of Mormon, consistent with the Lord's reference "that which you have translated, which you have retained" (D&C 10:41). A comprehensive review of contextual information indicates that the chapter we call Words of Mormon may actually be the first part of this retained segment.*

In Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord uses the term "that which you have translated, which you have retained" (D&C 10:41) as he provides a solution to the problem caused by the loss of the 116-page manuscript. The Lord's solution is to replace the lost text with the small-plate record, followed by the balance of the translation, beginning with "that which you have translated, which you have retained." I propose that this term refers to a segment of text translated before the loss but retained by Joseph Smith and that Words of Mormon, the text that now follows the replacement small-plate record, is the first part of this retained text. In other words, Words of Mormon once followed immediately after the lost text. It is the earliest part, still in existence, of Joseph Smith's translation of Mormon's abridgment of the large-plate record.

My paper begins by putting this proposal in the context of the scholarly landscape for the order of Book of Mormon translation. It then reviews historical information about the lost manuscript, the rest of the original manuscript, and the printer's manuscript. After this review, it walks through six considerations which support a conclusion that the retained text — the segment of text that once followed immediately after

the lost text — begins with Words of Mormon. First, traces of evidence, including four edits made by Oliver Cowdery to the printer’s manuscript, support the premise that Joseph Smith held back previously translated pages that weren’t lost. Second, a structured comment (a resumptive structure) found in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 indicates that a large block of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record (the lost text) is missing right before the beginning of Words of Mormon. Third, a part of this resumptive structure indicates that the last event mentioned in the lost text once supplied foundational context for the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, including antecedents for the terms *this king Benjamin*, *these plates*, and *this small account* in Words of Mormon 1:3. Fourth, textual analysis of Words of Mormon 1:3–6 suggests that Mormon wrote Words of Mormon before he wrote the following part of his abridgment. Fifth, linguistic analysis indicates that the term *about to* in Words of Mormon 1:1 can be read to support this conclusion. Sixth, the simple directives in Section 10 support my view that the retained text begins with Words of Mormon.

The Scholarly Landscape for the Order of Book of Mormon Translation

Over the years, a variety of views have been expressed about the order in which the books of the Book of Mormon were translated.¹ In recent decades, most scholars have adopted a Mosiah-first view, holding that when translation resumed after the loss of the 116 pages, it began at the beginning of the Book of Mosiah, then continued from there through the balance of the writings of Mormon and Moroni, including the title page. These scholars believe that the small-plate record was translated next, ending with Words of Mormon.² In 2012, Jack M. Lyon and

1. See Brent Lee Metcalfe, “The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 396–407.

2. See, for example, J. B. Haws, “The Lost 116 Pages Story: What We Do Know, What We Don’t Know, and What We Might Know,” in *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, ed. Dennis L. Largey, Andrew H. Hedges, John Hilton III, and Kerry Hull (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 81–102; Matthew Roper, “A More Perfect Priority?,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 362–68; Eldin Ricks, “The Small Plates of Nephi and the Words of Mormon,” in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., ed., *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, to Learn with Joy* (Provo, UT:

Kent R. Minson published a modified Mosiah-first view which suggested that verses 12–18 of Words of Mormon were originally part of the book of Mosiah, so these verses were translated first. They agree that the balance of the translation took place in the order described above, ending with verses 1–11 of Words of Mormon.³

This paper suggests that the entire chapter we call Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah. This entire chapter and some of the next chapter (which is now subdivided into Mosiah chapters 1–3) were translated before the loss of the 116 pages and retained by Joseph Smith. When translation resumed, it began at the end of this retained segment, continuing through the balance of the writings of Mormon and Moroni and then through the small-plate record, ending with the book of Omni. In a nutshell, I propose an expanded Mosiah-first view. Words of Mormon, in its entirety, is the original second chapter of Mosiah.

Historical Background:

The Lost Manuscript, the Rest of the Original Manuscript, and the Printer’s Manuscript

Joseph Smith began to translate the ancient Nephite record by “the gift and power of God” in April 1828 in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Joseph’s wife Emma served as his initial scribe.⁴ Soon, Martin Harris replaced Emma as the principal scribe. Book of Mormon manuscripts weren’t transcribed onto loose sheets of paper. Instead, several sheets of paper (usually about six of them) were folded together, once down the middle, to form a simple booklet called *a gathering*, so each gathering contained

Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 216n3; Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2, *Jacob through Mosiah* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 120; John W. Welch, “The Miraculous Timing of the Translation of the Book of Mormon,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 121–25; and Brant A. Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide: Responding to Lyon and Minson’s ‘When Pages Collide,’” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013):105–109, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/when-hypotheses-collide-responding-to-lyon-and-minsons-when-pages-collide/>.

3. See Jack M. Lyon and Kent R. Minson, “When Pages Collide: Dissecting the Words of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (December 2012): 132.

4. *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 1:49.

about 24 pages. After a gathering was filled with writing, it was stitched together at the fold.⁵

After two months of translation, in mid-June 1828, it appears that the translation filled five gatherings, four with six sheets (24 pages each) and apparently one gathering with five sheets (20 pages), for a total of 116 pages, as Royal Skousen has proposed,⁶ as well as some additional pages in an incomplete sixth gathering not given to Martin Harris.⁷ If so, the term *that which you have translated, which you have retained* may refer to these pages in this incomplete gathering — a gathering in process that wasn't yet ready to be stitched together.⁸ At this point, Joseph paused the work of translation to care for Emma, who was about to give birth.⁹

As the work of translation neared this stopping point, Martin planned to spend a few days at his home in Palmyra, New York. As that day approached, he repeatedly asked for permission to take along the completed manuscript to show it to certain family members. With each request, Joseph prayed for direction. Twice the answer was no. After a third petition, however, the Lord no longer denied the request.¹⁰ Although Joseph let Martin take 116 pages of manuscript (probably all completed gatherings), I assert that Joseph retained some translated

5. Gardner, "When Hypotheses Collide," 108.

6. Royal Skousen, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and Brigham Young University, 2001), 34–36.

7. Skousen proposes that this incomplete gathering "probably included the following portions from the beginning of the original Mosiah: [part] of chapter I, all of chapter II, and perhaps the beginning of chapter III." (Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 139; see also Skousen, *Original Manuscript*, 35.) I assert that the incomplete gathering included all the original second chapter of Mosiah and continued into some of the third.

8. Lyon and Minson were the first to suggest that the retained pages were the completed part of an incomplete gathering. See Lyon and Minson, "When Pages Collide," 127.

9. *Saints*, 1:49. See also "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 10, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/12> (hereafter "History, 1838–1856"; and Historical Introduction to "Revelation, July 1828 [D&C 3]," The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-july-1828-dc-3/1> (hereafter "July 1828").

10. *Saints*, 1:50–51. See also "History, 1838–1856," 9–10 and Historical Introduction to "July 1828."

text in an incomplete gathering (see Doctrine and Covenants 10:41), consistent with Lyon and Milton’s proposal.

About a day after Martin left, Emma gave birth to a son who was either stillborn or died shortly after birth. Joseph cared for a very weak Emma beyond the date when Martin was to return with the manuscript. In early July, as Emma recovered, and with her encouragement, Joseph went to his parents’ home in Manchester, New York (near Palmyra), where he learned that the 116-page manuscript was lost. He then returned to Emma in Harmony, Pennsylvania.¹¹

Later that month (July 1828), Joseph received the revelation in Section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In it, the Lord explains that because of Joseph’s error, he has lost the privilege of translation for a season, but if he will repent, he will be able to translate again.

After the loss, Joseph Smith wondered whether, when he eventually reached the end of the record, he should retranslate the lost portion. The Lord answered this question in the revelation published as Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is not clear, however, whether this revelation was received shortly after the loss in 1828, after translation had resumed in 1829, or a combination of both. The heading for Section 10 says that it was given “likely around April 1829, though portions may have been received as early as the summer of 1828.” The editors for the Joseph Smith Papers Project note that “assigning a date to this revelation is problematic” and suggest that “although [Joseph Smith] may have received the first portion of the revelation in the summer of 1828, it was not actually written down until April or May 1829, along with the rest of the text.”¹²

In this revelation, the Lord explains that the lost portion of the manuscript is not to be retranslated (see D&C 10:30). Rather, the Lord reminds Joseph that the lost manuscript mentioned a separate account, written on the small plates¹³ of Nephi. Rather than retranslating the lost

11. Ibid. See also “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [1], bk. [1],” pp. [1]-[7], bk. 7, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/81>.

12. Historical Introduction to “Revelation, Spring 1829 [D&C 10],” p. 22, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-spring-1829-dc-10/1> (hereafter “Spring 1829”).

13. The phrase *plates of Nephi* in this revelation refers specifically to the plates we now call the small plates of Nephi. These small plates are the only *plates of Nephi* included among the plates that Joseph Smith received from Moroni. Therefore, they were the only *plates of Nephi* available for Joseph to translate. J. B. Haws’s reading

portion, the Lord directs Joseph to “translate the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). Thus the small-plate account, which would be translated last, would become the “first part” (D&C 10:45)¹⁴ of the Book of Mormon.

The privilege to translate was eventually restored, and no later than March 1829, Joseph resumed the translation.¹⁵ The evidence, including textual analysis and historical sources, indicates that the translation

of the term *plates of Nephi* in Section 10 appears to be correct. In this revelation, this term consistently refers to the small plates. Haws’s rationale, however, doesn’t recognize that Words of Mormon, whose three uses of the term *plates of Nephi* clearly refer to the large plates of Nephi, was translated before this revelation was received. (See Haws, “Lost 116 Pages Story.”)

14. In D&C 10:45, after the words “first part,” it appears that the Lord uses the word *of* with the meaning *from* or *out of*. This meaning, common in Early Modern English, is now obsolete. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “of, prep.,” sense 3, updated March 2004, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/130549?rsk=ey=bMNWpC&result=3&isAdvanced=false>. This wording indicates that the Lord gave to Joseph Smith the specific words of this revelation, and not merely ideas. This is consistent with the findings of research done with respect to this and other sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. See Stanford Carmack, “On Doctrine and Covenants Language and the 1833 Plot of Zion,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 26 (2017): 297–380, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/on-doctrine-and-covenants-language-and-the-1833-plot-of-zion/>. These findings are similar to findings about the English in the Book of Mormon. Carmack and others have shown that 1820s American English is not the source of the English in the Book of Mormon, which is “full of [Early Modern English] ... [and] also contains touches of modern English and late Middle English.” Stanford Carmack, “Why the Oxford English Dictionary (and not Webster’s 1828),” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 68, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/why-the-oxford-english-dictionary-and-not-websters-1828/>. In other words, as Royal Skousen explains, “the text of the Book of Mormon is uniquely archaic and generally dates from Early Modern English. The vocabulary of the Book of Mormon turns out to be one to three centuries older than that of Joseph Smith’s time.” Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack, *The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, vol. 3, The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, part 3: The Nature of the Original Language*, (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2018), 11. Because of these findings, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), not the 1828 Webster’s dictionary, is the best tool available today for ascertaining the meaning of the language of the Book of Mormon and some terms in the Doctrine and Covenants.

15. See Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 121.

resumed right where it had left off.¹⁶ If, as my paper asserts, Joseph had retained an incomplete gathering, with several translated pages and some blank pages, which retained text became the beginning of the original manuscript, the first post-loss entry was written on the very next line of that incomplete gathering. Little new translation occurred, however, until Oliver Cowdery took over as scribe on April 7, 1829.¹⁷

To obey the revelation in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith continued translating the writings of Mormon and Moroni, and then translated the small-plate record. The Lord had explained that the small-plate record, which was translated last, would replace the lost text, which was translated first. Consequently, page numbering was restarted as the original manuscript continued with the small-plate record.¹⁸ The entire original manuscript was completed by June 30, 1829.¹⁹ Both the printer's manuscript and the Book of Mormon are assembled in the order designated by the Lord, which differs from the order in which the original manuscript was received. Both the printer's manuscript and the 1830 Book of Mormon begin with the title page and a preface, followed by the small-plate account. In all editions of the Book of Mormon, the small-plate account is followed by the retained text, which is, in turn, followed by the balance of Mormon's writings and the writings of Moroni.

A portion of the original manuscript and virtually all of the printer's manuscript still exist today:

Joseph Smith preserved both the original manuscript and the printer's manuscript, or second copy, well past the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. He placed the original manuscript in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in 1841,

16. Ibid., 102–25; and Historical Introduction to “Spring 1829,” 22; Don Bradley, “A Passover Setting for Lehi’s Exodus,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 34 (2020), 121n3, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/a-passover-setting-for-lehis-exodus/>; and Kyle R. Walker, “Katharine Smith Salisbury’s Recollections of Joseph’s Meetings with Moroni,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2002), 16.

17. “History, 1838–1856,” 13.

18. See Skousen, *Original Manuscript*, 33. See also Royal Skousen, “The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo UT: Religious Studies Center, 1993), 69, https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/sites/default/files/archive-files/pdf/skousen/2018-08-13/royal_skousen_the_book_of_mormon_critical_text_project_1993.pdf.

19. See Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 125.

and it was removed in 1882. Though significantly damaged, about thirty percent of this manuscript is extant, most of which is held at the Church History Library. The printer's manuscript was in Oliver Cowdery's custody until his death in 1850, followed by David Whitmer's custody until his death in 1888. It was eventually sold to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and is held at the Community of Christ Library-Archives.²⁰

Page numbers are found on extant pages of both the original and printer's manuscripts. Royal Skousen notes, "In the original manuscript, Oliver Cowdery seems to have always written the page number in the upper corner of each page and on the outer edge of the page. (He also followed this same placement of the page number in the printer's manuscript.)"²¹ In the Joseph Smith Papers, the Source Note for the printer's manuscript indicates that each page of the printer's manuscript was paginated except for the two introductory pages and the first leaf. "[Oliver] Cowdery numbered his pages on the upper right corner of the recto pages and the upper left corner of the verso pages. Hyrum Smith and [another scribe] paginated in the upper left corners for both recto and verso pages."²²

Despite the loss of much of the original manuscript, Skousen believes the consistent numbering of extant pages makes it safe to assume that other pages were numbered as well:

Unfortunately, there are no extant page numbers in the original manuscript for the translation of the plates of Mormon and Moroni (from the lost book of Lehi through the book of Moroni). In each case where part of a page is extant, the upper outer corner is missing. The upper inner (or gutter) corner of the page is generally extant for fragments from Alma, but in each extant instance Oliver Cowdery did

20. "Joseph Smith as Revelator and Translator," Revelations and Translations Series Introduction, The Joseph Smith Papers, n32, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/intro/revelations-and-translations-series-introduction?p=1&highlight=original%20manuscript#5857413111248073827>.

21. Skousen, *Original Manuscript*, 33.

22. Source Note for "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829–circa January 1830," The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/printers-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829-circa-january-1830/1#source-note> (hereafter "Printer's Manuscript").

not write the page number near the gutter. It is nonetheless safe to assume that these pages were numbered since evidence elsewhere consistently supports this practice. For instance, Joseph Smith knew there were 116 pages of lost manuscript (the book of Lehi), which implies that his scribes had been numbering the pages as they wrote down his dictation. ...

There are extant page numbers for the translation of the small plates of Nephi (1 Nephi through Omni). ... These small plates were probably translated last — that is, after the plates of Mormon and Moroni were translated. For the small plates of Nephi, the page numbers were sometimes extant (or partially extant). When extant, these numbers are always located in the upper outer corner of the page.²³

In the original manuscript, there are extant page numbers (written by three different scribes) for pages 5–7, 11–18, 20, 22, 44, and 111–14.²⁴

1. Evidence for a Retained Segment of Translated Text That Wasn't Lent to Martin Harris

It has been suggested that if the portion of Section 10 containing the word *retained* was received in 1829, then no evidence supports the view that translated text was held back at the time of the loss.²⁵ It is true that most of the physical evidence that might support this view is no longer available. The lost manuscript was never recovered, and the original manuscript pages that contained the book of Omni, the words of Mormon,²⁶ and the book of Mosiah were later lost to water damage. Nevertheless, traces of supporting evidence can still be gleaned from the extant manuscripts and revelations. While the extant evidence may not be conclusive, it supports a plausible case that Joseph Smith retained a segment of translated text at the time of the loss. I review three items of evidence.

The first is circumstantial but reasonable. The circumstances suggest that Joseph Smith was confident that exactly 116 pages were lost. A page number on the first retained manuscript page is a likely reason for this confidence. (Note, however, that it has recently been claimed that

23. Skousen, *Original Manuscript*, 33.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Don Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon's Missing Stories* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019), 87–88n14.

26. In the printer's manuscript, as here, the word *words* is not capitalized. "Printer's Manuscript," 115.

Joseph Smith’s published page count is inaccurate.²⁷ Appendix A provides evidence to counter this claim.) The second set of evidence relates to the word *retained* in Doctrine and Covenants 10:41. Whether Joseph Smith received this part of the revelation in the summer of 1828 or after translation resumed, the context suggests that the word *retained* refers to translated text held back at the time of the loss. The third set of evidence is more significant. Four edits that Oliver Cowdery made to the printer’s manuscript lend additional support to the premise that Joseph Smith had held back previously translated text, including Words of Mormon.

Confidence in a Precise Number. Common sense suggests that manuscript pages are easier to manage when they are numbered. The evidence of page numbering across the extant manuscripts, together with the practical purpose for page numbers, suggests that Emma Smith and other scribes were numbering manuscript pages even before Martin Harris arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Because virtually all extant manuscript pages are numbered, the assumption that the earliest manuscript pages were numbered may be less speculative than an assumption that they were not numbered.

Joseph Smith’s preface to the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon was written to provide a true account of the lost manuscript. Before he wrote the preface, the Lord had warned him that “servants of Satan” (D&C 10:5) who had taken the lost manuscript sought to catch Joseph “in a lie, that they may destroy him” (D&C 10:25). The Lord warned that these “wicked men” (D&C 10:8) might use the lost manuscript (which the Lord suggests was still in their control) to discredit the published Book of Mormon. As Joseph drafted the preface, he would have expected those men to jump at the chance to prove that anything he published was a lie — perhaps including a bad guess about the length of the manuscript they now held. Therefore, Joseph arguably had good reason to avoid using an inaccurate page count that these wicked men might quickly prove to be false.

Because the Lord warned Joseph of their evil intentions, Joseph had several sensible options, but publishing an unverifiable, incorrect number wasn’t really one of them. If he had estimated his page count, he could have published it as such — using a round number or a range of numbers and a word like *nearly* or *about*, to avoid any appearance of lying. A clearly described estimate would have served his purposes

27. See Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 103, which suggests that the lost manuscript may have had “far more than 116 pages” and may have been 200 or even 300 pages long.

as well as a specific number and would have avoided any claims that his published number was a lie. Nevertheless, the page count Joseph chose to publish to the world was very precise: “one hundred and sixteen pages.”²⁸ The fact that Joseph published this precise page count under such circumstances suggests either that he was foolhardy or that he knew the page count was true. If Joseph had estimated his page count based on a whole number of gatherings each with six sheets of paper folded to have 24 pages, he would not have come up with 116 pages, since this number requires six gatherings, with one gathering having only five sheets. The number 116 seems unlikely to be the result of guesswork. Joseph Smith was not foolhardy. He was a responsible man of integrity who was confident that this page count was accurate. While there may be other explanations for such confidence, the simplest seems to be that Joseph still held several manuscript pages transcribed before the loss, and the first one had been numbered as page 117.²⁹

The Context for the Word Retained. In Doctrine and Covenants 10:41, the Lord uses the term “that which you have translated, which you have *retained*.” This term refers to a segment of manuscript that was never lost. Opinions differ as to whether it refers to a segment translated *before* the loss, but *retained* (held back) rather than lost; or whether it refers to text that was newly translated months *after* the loss, and was thus *retained* (still possessed) weeks later at the time the revelation was written down.³⁰

As explained earlier, it is not clear whether Doctrine and Covenants 10:41 was received in the summer of 1828 or in May or June of 1829. If it was received in 1828, nothing new had been translated since the loss, so the word *retained* must refer to text that was translated before the loss and held back. On the other hand, if it was received in 1829 after the translation had resumed, the context still suggests that the word *retained* refers to previously translated text that was held back at the time of the loss.

The word *retained* often refers to something kept in one’s own possession when something else is lost. It means “to keep in one’s own hands or under one’s own control; to keep back; to keep hold or

28. “Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829,” Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1>.

29. By publishing this precise number, Joseph sent a clear message to the thieves, who could easily verify this number and, realizing that Joseph knew the exact length, would also realize that any attempt to substitute a false manuscript with a different page count could be proven fraudulent.

30. Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 87–88.

possession of; to continue to have.”³¹ The following sentence tends to convey this meaning: *Tom lost a baseball last week, but he’s now playing with the baseball he retained.* To most readers, this sentence suggests that Tom initially had two baseballs. He lost one and is now playing with the other. The word *retained* carries this meaning when used in the context of a loss. If Tom had obtained the second baseball *after* losing the first, words like *acquired thereafter* or *obtained later* would convey this meaning better than the word *retained*.

The word *retained* appears to convey this same meaning in Section 10. In this revelation, the context clearly refers to something lost — the lost text — which the Lord repeatedly describes as translated words that have “gone out of your hands.” The terms include “the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands” (v. 10); “those words which have gone forth out of your hands” (v. 30); and “those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands” (v. 38). Then, in contrast, the Lord refers to a different segment of text: “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (v. 41). In the context of a loss, the word *retained* doesn’t readily identify text that wasn’t translated until the work resumed several months after the loss. In this specific context, this word connotes a segment of translated text that was kept back at the time of the loss.

Four Items in the Printer’s Manuscript. Oliver Cowdery added four items to the printer’s manuscript that provide the best extant evidence that Joseph Smith held back previously translated text rather than lending everything to Martin Harris. These additions by Oliver Cowdery to the printer’s manuscript suggest that the original manuscript once held even better evidence of this retained text. Unfortunately, as explained above, 72 percent of the original manuscript was destroyed by water damage. The damage was unkind to the manuscript’s extremities. Neither its initial pages nor its final pages exist today.³² If both ends of the original manuscript were still available, there could be no confusion about whether Words of Mormon begins a segment of text held back by Joseph Smith, whether it was the first text translated after the loss, or whether it constitutes an addendum to the small-plate record. If Words of Mormon begins a segment of retained text that was translated before the loss, then it was written by Martin Harris and became the beginning text of the original manuscript. If it was the first text translated after the

31. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “retain, v.,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/164150?rskey=hea0d0&result=2&isAdvanced=false>.

32. See Skousen, “Critical Methodology,” 135-36.

loss, it was not written by Martin Harris but became the beginning text of the original manuscript. On the other hand, if Words of Mormon were an addendum to the small-plate record, it would have been the final text at the very end of the original manuscript.

After the first 116 pages of original manuscript were lost, the truncated original manuscript began with “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (see D&C 10:41). If this retained text was translated and transcribed prior to the loss, it would have been the only (remaining) writing in the original manuscript in Martin Harris’s handwriting. If the pages containing this retained text were numbered by Martin Harris, then the original page number on the first of these pages was 117. In addition, this retained gathering may have been written on a different type of paper from that used in later parts of the manuscript. Paper was obtained “at fairly frequent intervals” during the translation process. “The original manuscript shows five different kinds of paper for extant pages,” so, in particular, the paper type used for this first gathering of the original manuscript (in June 1828) may have differed from that used more than a year later (in June 1829) for the final gathering of the original manuscript.³³

The final gathering of the original manuscript — the gathering containing the final words of the small-plate record — would also have been unique. It appears that on earlier gatherings, every available line was used, and then the text flowed onto a subsequent gathering. However, it’s unlikely that the final words of the small-plate record — the last text translated from the gold plates — would have completely filled every line on every page of that final gathering. As a result, the last words on that unique gathering would likely have been followed by blank space, and perhaps by several blank pages (all remaining pages in that final gathering).

Thus, if Words of Mormon were written by Mormon at the end of the small-plate record, or on plates added to the small plates, it would have been the last text on that unique final gathering at the end of the original manuscript. It would also have been the last text translated by Joseph Smith. As such, in the original manuscript, it would likely have been followed by blank space, and perhaps by blank pages.³⁴ On

33. Ibid., “Critical Methodology,” 135–36.

34. But see Gardner, who suggests that Words of Mormon 1:1–8 was found at the beginning, and not the end, of the small-plate record, and that the verses in Words of Mormon 1:12–18 were not found on the golden plates at all but “were Joseph’s prophetic addition.” Brant Gardner, *Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture* (Provo, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2020), 124, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-3/#sub-6b>.

the other hand, if Words of Mormon is the beginning of a segment of text translated before the loss, but retained, it would also be the first (retained) text translated by Joseph Smith and would have been found at the beginning of the original manuscript. In addition, it would be written in Martin Harris's handwriting, perhaps on a different type of paper than that used at the end of the original manuscript.

As Oliver Cowdery copied the text from the original manuscript to the printer's manuscript, he would have known whether he copied Words of Mormon from the unique gathering at the very beginning of the original manuscript or from the other unique gathering at the very end. However, neither the first part nor the last part of the original manuscript exists today, so the printer's manuscript, onto which the text of the original manuscript was copied, is our earliest source for the text from these two ends of the original manuscript. It is there where we must look for clues.

The most unique juncture in the printer's manuscript may be the point where the very last words from the end of the original manuscript (the final words from the small-plate record) are followed by the very first words from the beginning of the original manuscript (the first words of the retained text). This point joins the first and last words from the original manuscript. It is also the point where the lost text would have ended had it not been lost.

Sadly, the decayed beginning and ending parts of the original manuscript removed most of the evidence that could help us identify this unique juncture. When Oliver Cowdery³⁵ copied the words from these two (last, and then first) gatherings of the original manuscript onto the printer's manuscript, their apparent meeting point fell in the middle of a page. For this reason, we might expect no evidence at all in the printer's manuscript that designates the point where the original manuscript's very last words are followed by the original manuscript's very first words.

Providentially, however, Oliver Cowdery placed a unique mark (one that occurs only once in the entire printer's manuscript) at the likely location of this pivotal point. In the printer's manuscript, Amaleki's last words in the book of Omni, "plates are full and I make an end of my speaking," fill half a line. After these words, Oliver Cowdery drew a wavy line from the word *speaking* to the right edge of the page. He then drew a second wavy line all the way across the page before he resumed

35. "Printer's Manuscript," [i].

with “The words of Mormon and now I Mormon being about to deliver up” on the first line of text after the two consecutive drawn lines.³⁶

Figure 1 shows an image of the applicable part of the printer’s manuscript, showing these two consecutive lines. Because these lines have dimmed with time, I’ve added a second, enhanced image in Figure 2.

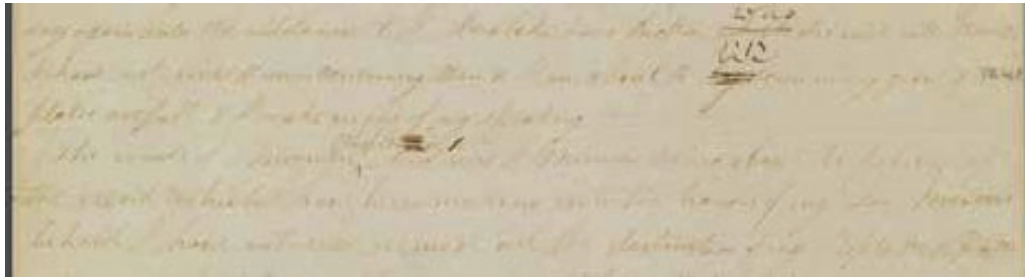


Figure 1. Printer’s manuscript showing two lines.

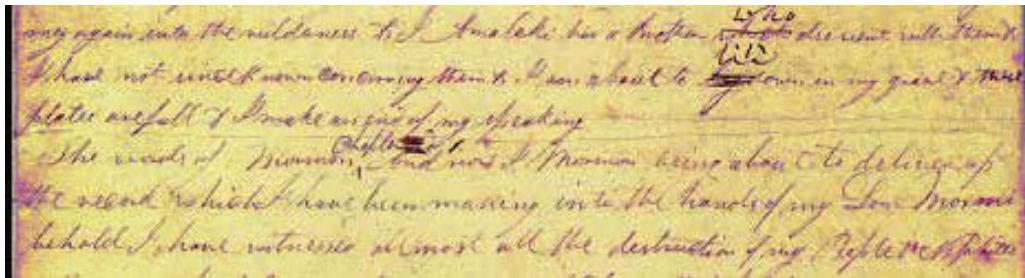


Figure 2. Enhanced printer’s manuscript showing the same two lines.

Oliver Cowdery left no record to explain the purpose of this unique mark, consisting of two consecutive wavy lines, but it appears to identify a break that Oliver deemed both important and unique. It is a more prominent and conspicuous mark than anything Oliver or other scribes placed between successive books in the printer’s manuscript. The unique nature of this mark suggests that Oliver considered the break it designates to be significant. At the very least, we can infer that this mark at the end of the book of Omni indicates that Oliver knew the book of Omni didn’t extend beyond this point. Oliver’s mark appears immediately before the heading *The words of Mormon*. I assert that the intent of Oliver’s unique mark is to designate the precise point where the final, most recently translated words from the original manuscript (at the end of the replacement small-plate record) meet the first available, earliest translated words of the original manuscript (at the beginning of the retained gathering).³⁷

36. Ibid. , 115.

37. Some may consider it serendipitous for the retained gathering to begin with a new chapter (and its heading). At least on the printer’s manuscript, it’s somewhat uncommon for a new chapter to begin on the first line of a manuscript

Two out-of-place chapter numbers were originally found in the printer's manuscript right after this mark, and both of these original chapter numbers were later edited by Oliver Cowdery. The first was the ordinal Arabic number *2d* (second).³⁸ It identified the chapter labeled "The words of Mormon." The second was the Roman numeral *III* (three).³⁹ It identified the subsequent chapter, which, in later editions of the Book of Mormon, has been subdivided into three chapters (Mosiah 1–3). The formatting of these two original chapter numbers in the printer's manuscript (an ordinal Arabic number followed by a Roman numeral) can seem odd in our day, when we are used to the uniformity of word processors and automatic paragraph numbering. Unusual chapter numbering like this, however, is common in the printer's manuscript. In

page (but see "Printer's Manuscript," pages 164, 190, 261, 252, 454, and 455, where this does happen). Royal Skousen has suggested that some text from the retained gathering could have been crossed out to avoid confusing repetition (see Skousen, "Critical Methodology," 139). Perhaps this was done, but every word on every original-manuscript gathering was precious, having been received by the gift and power of God. In addition, it's clear that God had a specific, long-term plan for dealing with the lost manuscript. It shouldn't, therefore, be difficult to concede that it would have been a small matter for God to reveal an English text that placed the heading "The words of Mormon" on the first line of the retained gathering. This view aligns particularly well with D&C 10:41–42, which doesn't mention that any retained text needs to be omitted from the Book of Mormon. As a practical matter, one might speculate that the chapter break before this heading came close enough to the end of the earlier gathering, which Martin Harris hoped to take with him to Palmyra; and he ended that gathering at that convenient break and therefore began the new gathering (the retained gathering) with the new chapter and its heading. (See "Printer's Manuscript," 453 and 454, where the scribe left an uncharacteristically large space at the bottom of page 453 and began page 454 with a book heading and new chapter.)

38. In the printer's manuscript, there is a dot between the 2 and the d.

39. A review of Oliver Cowdery's chapter numbers in the printer's manuscript suggests that he tended to write his Roman numerals more solidly than his Arabic numbers, sometimes apparently retracing his Roman numerals so that they tend to stand out more than his Arabic numbers. This writing style may cause all of his Roman numerals to appear to have been inserted later, while his Arabic numbers appear very similar to the surrounding text. Some numbers in the printer's manuscript may have been inserted after Oliver copied the surrounding text, but, because of this writing style, it may be difficult to determine whether he inserted a given Roman numeral earlier or later.

1 Nephi, we find *2d* followed by *III*.⁴⁰ In 2 Nephi, we find *1st* followed by *II*.⁴¹ And in Alma, we find *10th* followed by *XI*.⁴²

A likely reason for these two out-of-place chapter numbers in the printer's manuscript becomes clear as we focus on their location (right after Oliver's mark) and on the process by which chapter numbers were added to the original manuscript. Royal Skousen explains that the ancient record contained neither the word *chapter* nor chapter numbering:

Evidence from both the original and printer's manuscripts shows that Joseph Smith apparently saw some visual indication at the end of a section that the section was ending. Although this may have been a symbol of some kind, a more likely possibility is that the last words of the section were followed by blankness. Recognizing that the section was ending, Joseph then told the scribe to write the word *chapter*, with the understanding that the appropriate number would be added later.⁴³

It should be noted that the evidence supporting this description is found in the extant record left by Oliver Cowdery (and later scribes). The extant manuscripts contain many original samples of Oliver Cowdery's chapter numbering. Skousen bases his specifics on these samples, which indicate that Oliver often left a blank space and the word *chapter* at the beginning of new chapters and that he sometimes waited a long time before adding the chapter numbers.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the extant manuscripts provide almost no specifics on how Martin Harris may have added chapter numbers to the text he transcribed. One would surmise that the fundamental facts were the same. The ancient record didn't contain chapter numbering, so Joseph would have indicated chapter breaks to Martin; and Martin would have at some point added chapter numbers into those breaks. However, all original chapter numbers supplied by Martin Harris are lost. Most were lost with the lost manuscript, and any chapter numbers that Martin added to the retained text have perished with the decayed original retained gathering. Therefore, we don't have any original samples from which to infer the specific manner in which Martin added chapter numbers to the text he transcribed. There is no extant text from

40. "Printer's Manuscript," 9, 14.

41. *Ibid.*, 46, 52.

42. *Ibid.*, 201, 208.

43. Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (July 1997): 27-28.

44. *Ibid.*, 28.

which to infer how quickly he added chapter numbers or even whether it was his practice to insert the word *chapter* with each chapter number. It appears that any differences in these specifics could apply to the two out-of-place chapter numbers because they appear to have been added to the original manuscript's retained gathering by Martin Harris and later copied to the printer's manuscript by Oliver Cowdery.

We can assume that while Martin Harris was the principal scribe for the earliest part of the manuscript, most of which became the lost manuscript, Martin had added text and chapter numbers to the original manuscript through the same basic editorial process that would later be used by Oliver Cowdery and others. Using this process, Martin transcribed most of the book of Lehi, all of which would soon be lost.⁴⁵ As the translation continued, Joseph dictated the original title for the book of Mosiah and the text of its first chapter, which, it appears, were also soon lost. Royal Skousen suggests that the lost manuscript “included not only all of Lehi, but also part of Chapter 1 of the original Mosiah.”⁴⁶ As explained in more detail below, this paper suggests that all of that original Chapter 1 was lost.

When Joseph indicated the end of that original first chapter of the book of Mosiah, it appears that Martin noted the chapter break either as the last item at the bottom of a page or as the first item at the top of the next page — the first page of a new gathering he would never complete — the retained gathering. The first page of this new original manuscript gathering was page 117. It began with the chapter heading “The words of Mormon” and continued with the text we know as Words of Mormon, which, based on the out-of-place chapter numbers and other evidence detailed below, appears to be the original second chapter of Mosiah. As the translation continued, Joseph indicated the end of this second chapter and translated some of the third chapter. Then, as Martin prepared to take the completed gatherings to Palmyra to show them to family members, he added any missing chapter numbers to the manuscript, including these last two chapter numbers, *2d* and *III*, per the editorial process described by Skousen.

Martin then borrowed all completed gatherings. Unfortunately, those completed gatherings were stolen, but Joseph Smith retained the incomplete gathering that began (on page 117) with the heading “The

45. “Book of Mormon, 1830,” pp. [iii-iv], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/9>.

46. Skousen, “Critical Methodology,” 139.

words of Mormon.” When the lost manuscript was stolen, Joseph lost the power to translate for a time. When this power was restored, the work continued right where it had left off. The retained manuscript was completed, and the translation eventually proceeded through the balance of Mormon’s writings, through Moroni’s writings, and then the writings on the small plates, ending with the book of Omni.

After the original manuscript was finished, work began on the printer’s manuscript. After the title page and a preface written by Joseph Smith, it begins with the small-plate record — copied from the last part of the original manuscript. After Oliver Cowdery copied the final words from the book of Omni to the printer’s manuscript, he marked the end of the replacement small-plate text with two wavy lines.⁴⁷ He then began copying from the retained gathering at the beginning of the truncated original manuscript. He faithfully copied the text of this retained gathering as it existed on the original manuscript. However, the lost text no longer preceded this retained text, so the two chapter numbers for this text were now out of place.

Oliver Cowdery added the word *Chapter* and the first of these chapter numbers (2d) as interlinear insertions, just beneath his distinctive mark. It appears from the ink flow that this interlinear insertion, like the interlinear insertion of the word *as* later on the same page, was made fairly soon after Oliver copied the accompanying text. Perhaps both were initially overlooked, then noticed and inserted. The reason for initially overlooking the chapter number may be as inadvertent as the reason

47. Bradley suggests that Joseph’s published page count of 116 pages may have been an inaccurate guess based not on the length of the lost manuscript, but on the length of the printer’s manuscript copy of the replacement small-plate record (see Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 89). However, Joseph would have known that the replacement text doesn’t include Words of Mormon. It ends with Oliver Cowdery’s unique mark at the end of the book of Omni. Thus, the printer’s manuscript copy of the replacement text was only 114.5 pages long. If Joseph had based his page count on the length of the replacement text, he might have used the number 114 or 115, but not 116. The Historical Introduction to “Preface to the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829” mentions this theory, but also notes that “the process of preparing the printer’s manuscript and providing portions to the typesetter suggests that the printer’s manuscript may not have comprised 116 pages by the time JS wrote the preface.” If so, it would seem that Joseph must have had other reasons for giving the specific number of 116 pages, consistent with the proposals made in this paper. Preface to the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1#historical-intro>.

for initially overlooking the word *as*, but there appear to be at least two other reasonable possibilities.

One might speculate that Martin Harris designated chapters slightly differently than Oliver Cowdery tended to do, so when Oliver encountered this first chapter number, he didn't initially recognize it for what it was. Perhaps he wasn't sure what to make of the (perhaps poorly formed) *2d* at the top of the first retained manuscript page until he saw the *III* at the beginning of the next chapter. Perhaps at that point he realized that the earlier *2d* was also a chapter number, so he went back and added the word *Chapter* and this number as interlinear insertions.

A second possibility is that the chapter number *2d* wasn't found at the top of the first page of the retained gathering. The first retained page may simply have begun with the heading "The words of Mormon." The chapter number may have been the last item placed on the previous page (now lost), just as a chapter number is the last item found on page 163 of the printer's manuscript.⁴⁸ Perhaps Oliver realized (after having transcribed most of the original manuscript) that the chapter heading "The words of Mormon" necessarily started a new chapter. After he saw the *III* at the beginning of the next chapter, he knew which chapter number to insert, so he added *Chapter 2d* as an interlinear insertion after the heading "The words of Mormon."

Sometime after Oliver Cowdery faithfully copied the text of the retained gathering, including these two chapter numbers, to the printer's manuscript, he realized that edits were needed. Without the missing book title, all the text from Oliver's mark to the start of the book of Alma was orphaned — it had no book title. In addition, these retained chapter numbers were out of place because they no longer followed a chapter 1. Probably after consulting with Joseph Smith, Oliver made three reconstructive edits. He chose to treat the original second chapter, with its heading "The words of Mormon," as if it were an independent segment or book by changing its chapter number to *1*.⁴⁹ He also changed the chapter number for the original third chapter to *I* and added the book title "The Book of Mosiah" as an interlinear insertion at the head of this chapter.⁵⁰ This book title, relocated from the lost text to this new location

48. "Printer's Manuscript," 163.

49. *Ibid.*, 115.

50. See Skousen, "Critical Methodology," 137-39. See also "Printer's Manuscript," 117.

in a reconstructive edit, lacks the extended description of book contents that accompanies all other book titles in Mormon's abridgment.⁵¹

Other context corroborates the fact that the original first chapter of Mosiah is missing. Mosiah is the only book in Mormon's abridgment that doesn't begin with an account about the person for whom it is named. The book of Alma begins with an account about Alma. The book of Helaman begins with an account about Helaman, and so on. The retained portion of the book of Mosiah, however, doesn't begin with an account about the first King Mosiah. After Mormon's aside, he resumes his ongoing account, which is about King Benjamin, the son of the first King Mosiah. Mormon's abridged account about King Benjamin's father, the first King Mosiah, is missing.⁵² It seems safe to infer that the missing original first chapter of Mosiah began with the account of the first King Mosiah.⁵³

Oliver Cowdery made these reconstructive edits to his printer's-manuscript copy of Martin Harris's transcription from the retained gathering of the original manuscript. Oliver's edits altered the original chapter numbers, but as we have seen, the numbers themselves were not part of the revealed text. His edits kept intact all known revealed text that had been retained, including the heading "The words of Mormon." His reinserted book title "The Book of Mosiah" may have even restored a small sliver of revealed text that had been lost.⁵⁴ Thus, Oliver's edits provide some reconstructed structure for this remnant of text that is now bereft of the lost preceding text. As they do so, however, these edits also make it harder for readers to see that Mormon wrote the text we call Words of Mormon as the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah and not as an independent book.

Other explanations for the two out-of-place chapter numbers don't accurately account for Oliver's unique mark or for the way chapter numbers were originally added to the manuscript. The ancient record

51. The heading "The words of Mormon" was not inserted interlinearly, so we can assume it is included in its entirety, yet it has no extended description. This is another way in which it differs from all Mormon's book titles.

52. Some of the ideas presented here are based on Lyon and Minson, "When Pages Collide," 129.

53. Don Bradley has suggested that the book title "The Book of Mosiah" might be incorrect. His suggestion is discussed in Appendix A.

54. Don Bradley maintains that the lost manuscript may have included "the books of many other record keepers" between the book of Lehi and the book of Mosiah and that this book title may not have come from the ancient text. See Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 87, and related content in 85-92. Appendix A suggests that this view is incorrect.

itself is not the direct source for any chapter number in the manuscript. The numbering came through the editorial process described above. Accordingly, if there were no retained text, a new translation from the ancient record after the entire earlier manuscript was lost would not have produced a number 2 or 3 as its initial chapter number.⁵⁵ Joseph would have seen a visual indication that a prior section had ended. He would have told the scribe to write the word *chapter*, with the understanding that the appropriate number would be added later. With no prior number available due to the missing manuscript, the scribe would eventually have given the first new chapter the number 1, and there would have been less need for reconstructive edits. But the manuscript clearly contained two consecutive chapter numbers that seemed out of place. The best explanation for these two seemingly out-of-place chapter numbers right after Oliver Cowdery's unusual mark is that they were added to the retained part of the original manuscript by Martin Harris and copied to the printer's manuscript by Oliver Cowdery.

Another suggested explanation for these out-of-place chapter numbers is that one⁵⁶ or both⁵⁷ of them were mistakenly supplied by Oliver Cowdery, who may have wrongly believed that the corresponding text was a continuation of the book of Omni. In support of this suggestion, it has been proposed that “the seam between the small plates translation, Words of Mormon, and the beginning of Mosiah was no more clear for Oliver than it is for us.”⁵⁸

But the construction of the original manuscript suggests that Oliver could not have shared that confusion. He was well acquainted with the original manuscript. He knew it began with the retained segment and ended with the final text from the small plates. Oliver's mark in the printer's manuscript right after Amaleki's final words, “these plates are full and I make an end of my speaking” (Omni 1:30), appears to indicate Oliver's personal certainty about the ending of Omni's book. It seems unlikely that the person who inserted this substantial mark could have believed that the book of Omni continued after this mark. Oliver added both the word *Chapter* and the chapter number *2d* as interlinear insertions just beneath his distinctive mark⁵⁹ and just after the heading “The words of Mormon.” To insert the chapter number, Oliver had

55. But see Bradley, *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88, 276–78.

56. See Lyon and Minson, “When Pages Collide,” 132.

57. See Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide,” 114.

58. *Ibid.*, 113.

59. “Printer's Manuscript,” 115.

to focus on both his mark and this heading, which clearly identifies Mormon as the author of the following text. He would have known that the chapter number he was inserting belonged to the words of Mormon and not to the book of Omni.

Nor is it likely that Oliver mistook the next chapter (now Mosiah 1–3) for part of the book of Omni. In the first place, it too followed Omni’s final words, Oliver’s own obvious mark, and Mormon’s heading, “The words of Mormon.” Moreover, it’s likely Oliver had a unique affinity for this particular chapter. It appears that Oliver helped transcribe at least part of this lengthy chapter as he joined Joseph in the work of translation.⁶⁰ So the very first words of Joseph Smith’s dictation Oliver transcribed after arriving in Harmony, Pennsylvania on April 7, 1829, would have been within this lengthy chapter. Oliver clearly knew this chapter, probably the first he helped transcribe, could not belong to the book of Omni, which was translated almost three months later in Fayette, New York.⁶¹

In summary, the idea that Oliver Cowdery inserted the original numbers for these two chapters under the mistaken belief that they continued the book of Omni strains credulity. Oliver’s own unique mark and his personal involvement with the transcription of the text both argue against that scenario. It seems more likely that everything that happened with these chapter numbers happened purposefully. First, Martin Harris, as Joseph Smith’s scribe, transcribed this portion of the original manuscript, assigning correct numbers to these chapters — the original second and third chapters of Mosiah. Then, all 116 pages of manuscript preceding this retained portion were lost. Eventually, after the translation was completed, Oliver Cowdery copied all the replacement small-plate record from the end of the original manuscript to the printer’s manuscript. He then marked the end of that record and copied this small retained segment of Martin Harris’s transcription, with its chapter number or numbers, from the beginning of the original manuscript to the printer’s manuscript. Sometime after that, Oliver Cowdery (most likely after consulting with Joseph Smith) found it necessary to edit these chapter numbers (and insert the book title for Mosiah) to mitigate problems caused by the absence of the lost text.

The heading “The words of Mormon,” which appears at the head of the original second chapter of Mosiah, is not a book title. It is one of the occasional chapter headings (brief descriptions) that sometimes

60. See Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 121. (In the 1830 Book of Mormon, Mosiah chapter 1 comprises all of the three chapters now designated as Mosiah 1-3.)

61. *Ibid.*, 125.

introduce content within the books of the Book of Mormon. Because current Book of Mormon chapter divisions vary from those in the original text, some readers may not be aware that every such heading begins an original Book of Mormon chapter. Most original chapters don't have such headings, but each such heading (which may describe only part of a chapter or may describe multiple chapters) appears at the head of an original chapter.

A list of all such occasional chapter headings in the Book of Mormon with their capitalization from the printer's manuscript is included in Appendix B. The heading "The words of Mormon" appears to belong to this group of headings. It begins with the term *the words*, the most common term at the beginning of these headings. With only four words, "The words of Mormon" is the shortest of these headings, but there are several with six to nine words. Two factors in particular distinguish all these headings from all book titles in the Book of Mormon. First, none of these headings contains the word *book*, found in all book titles in the Book of Mormon. Second, in the printer's manuscript, all book titles are written with title capitalization, so the word *Book* is always capitalized. On the other hand, in the printer's manuscript, these occasional headings are not written with title capitalization, although, as Appendix B shows, some of them have nonstandard capitalized words and a few approach title capitalization. As a general rule, however, the words *prophecy*, *account*, *words*, etc., tend not to be capitalized in these headings.

The heading "The words of Mormon" appears to cover only part of the chapter it heads. Although Mormon wrote all the words in this chapter, the heading appears to refer only to Mormon's personal aside, which is found only in verses 1–8. After this aside, the chapter continues as Mormon resumes his abridgment, covering various events of King Benjamin's reign. Some of the other occasional headings also cover only part of a chapter. For instance, the heading "The prophesy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites" refers only to the first part of the original chapter it heads. After relating Samuel's prophesy, that chapter continues, covering four years of Nephite history that take place after Samuel leaves the land of the Nephites (see Helaman 13–16). Similarly, the heading "An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki and their brethren to the Lamanites" heads an original chapter that also covers some of the efforts of Ammon and King Lamoni and ends with an aside that describes Lamanite and Nephite lands (see Alma 21–22).

As explained earlier, Oliver Cowdery (probably in consultation with Joseph Smith) chose to leave the heading "The words of Mormon,"

which is part of the revealed text, alone — neither replacing it with the book title “The Book of Mosiah” nor awkwardly inserting the book title immediately before this retained heading. Because Oliver changed the chapter number to 1, this heading has, ever since, been given title capitalization and has been formatted as a book title — further obscuring the fact that the chapter it heads is the original second chapter of Mosiah. The revealed text itself, however, which was not edited, together with Oliver Cowdery’s mark and edits to the printer’s manuscript, suggest that this heading begins the retained text — the earliest extant chapter of Mormon’s abridgment of the book of Mosiah.

2. Evidence from a Resumptive Structure Indicating that Words of Mormon Follows Immediately after the Text of the Lost Manuscript

A resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 provides further evidence for the view that Words of Mormon was not found at the end of the small-plate record, but is the first part of the retained text — the original second chapter of Mosiah. A detailed explanation of resumptive structures (specialized, structured comments) was given in a recent paper that suggests the location of Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record.⁶² That paper explains how the consistent meaning inherent in resumptive structures weighs against one proffered location for the end of that abridgment. As explained in that paper, the resumptive structure is sometimes used by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni to restart an ongoing narrative that has been paused for an aside (see, for example, 1 Nephi 10:1–2; Alma 22:35–23:1; and Ether 6:1–2, 9:1,⁶³ and 13:1–2). Resumptive structures are used only a few times in the Book of Mormon,

62. See Clifford P. Jones, “The Record of My Father,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019):15–20, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-record-of-my-father/>. Resumptive structures appear to be a uniformly structured version of “the ancient scribal technique of *Weideraufnahme*, also called a resumptive repetition or epanalepsis.” For a basic description of this scribal technique found in the Bible, see Dr. Rabbi Zev Farber, “The Resumptive Repetition (Wiederaufnahme),” *TheTorah.com*, <https://thetorah.com/the-resumptive-repetition/>. For some less-structured Book of Mormon examples of this scribal technique, consider Gardner, *Labor Diligently*, 74–79, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-3/#sub-6b>.

63. I identified the resumptive structure in Ether 9:1 (and the resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10) more recently, after I had written the earlier paper.

but when they are used, they always follow immediately after asides, and they are always composed of three elements:

1. The first element always identifies the specific ongoing narrative that began long before the aside and is being resumed after the aside. The verb *to proceed*, when used in this element of a resumptive structure, always means to resume or continue.
2. The second element always recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before it was paused for the aside. This recap serves as the starting point for the resumed narrative.
3. The third element is the resumption of the narrative, which always follows right after the recap of that last event as if there had been no aside.

The following two representative resumptive structures exemplify the functions of these three elements. In each case, for clarity, the first element is bolded; the second is italicized; and the beginning of the third (which always continues in subsequent verses) is underlined.

Moroni placed a representative resumptive structure immediately after his aside about faith (see Ether 12:6–41). This structured comment resumes his account of the destruction of the Jaredites:⁶⁴

And now I Moroni proceed [continue] to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of which I have been writing. *For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether, for he truly told them of all things from the beginning of man.*” (Ether 13:1–2)⁶⁵

The first element of this resumptive structure explains that Moroni is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been writing about the destruction of the Jaredites (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). The second element recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before the aside — that the Jaredites didn’t believe Ether’s words (see Ether 12:5). The third element resumes Moroni’s narrative as if there had been no aside.

64. From the beginning, Moroni makes clear that his account is about a people who were destroyed (see Ether 1:1).

65. All Book of Mormon quotations (except those specifically from the printer’s manuscript) are from Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). This edition, while sometimes harder to read than the current Latter-day Saint edition, corresponds more closely with the actual text revealed to Joseph Smith.

As a second example, Nephi placed a representative resumptive structure immediately after his aside about his two sets of plates (see 1 Nephi 9:2–6). This structured comment resumes his account of his own reign and ministry:

And now I Nephi proceed [continue] to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings and my reign and ministry. Wherefore **to proceed [continue] with mine account**, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also of my brethren. *For behold, it came to pass that after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream and also of exhorting them to all diligence, he spake unto them concerning the Jews.* (1 Nephi 10:1–2)

In this resumptive structure, the first element explains that Nephi is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been writing about his ministry (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). The second element recaps the last event mentioned in that narrative before the aside — that Lehi finished speaking about his dream and other teachings (see 1 Nephi 8:36 to 9:1). The third element resumes Nephi’s narrative as if there had been no aside.⁶⁶

Words of Mormon 1:9–10 is strikingly similar to the above two resumptive structures (and all others) in both context and content. Mormon placed this resumptive structure immediately after his aside about the record he is making and the small plates he has found (see Words of Mormon 1:1–8). This structured comment resumes the account he is taking from the large plates of Nephi:

And now I Mormon proceed [continue] to finish⁶⁷ out my record which I take from the [large] plates of Nephi; and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God hath given me. *Wherefore it came to pass that after Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king*

66. For more information on the meaning of this resumptive structure, see Jones, “The Record,” 15–20.

67. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines one sense of *finish* thus: “To bring to completion; to make or perform completely; to complete.” The word *finish* needn’t imply that an effort is near completion. See, for example, D&C 5:4, 9:1, and 10:3, where the Lord uses forms of the word *finish* to refer to the eventual completion of the translation of the Book of Mormon, the bulk of which remained to be done. See also Luke 14:28–30 and Mosiah 13:3, 7, and 9. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “finish, v.,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/70447?rskey=YJ7NbB&result=2&isAdvanced=false>.

Benjamin, he took them and put them with the other plates.
(Words of Mormon 1:9–10, emphasis added)

This resumptive structure has the same three elements we find in all other resumptive structures. The first element explains that Mormon is resuming the ongoing narrative he had been abridging from the large plates of Nephi (before he paused that narrative to write his aside). In this case, however, all that narrative is missing from the Book of Mormon. The second element recaps the last event mentioned in the narrative before the aside — that Amaleki had delivered the small plates to King Benjamin (this does not occur in Omni, where Amaleki expresses only his *intention* in Omni 1:25 to later give the plates to King Benjamin, but the transfer of the plates is not recorded prior to Mormon’s mention of it as an accomplished fact). In this case, however, because the narrative is missing, the record of this event is no longer present before the aside. The third element should resume Mormon’s narrative as if there had been no aside, but all that narrative is missing, so this element begins the subsequent portion of Mormon’s abridged narrative — the only portion still present in the Book of Mormon.

Thus, this resumptive structure points quite precisely to a specific narrative, abridged by Mormon from the large-plate record, that is missing just before Words of Mormon. Mormon paused this narrative to write his aside. This missing narrative is the well-documented missing account that was transcribed, primarily by Martin Harris, onto the 116-page lost manuscript.

The resumptive structure places this missing account in a specific location that may surprise some students of the Book of Mormon (immediately before Words of Mormon). Without the information provided by this resumptive structure, few of us would have suggested that the heading “The words of Mormon” at the beginning of Mormon’s aside originally followed immediately after the text of the lost manuscript. Nevertheless, this location coincides with Oliver Cowdery’s mark, which was placed precisely at the point where this resumptive structure indicates the lost manuscript ended and the retained portion of Mormon’s abridgment begins. The correctness of this somewhat unexpected location is further corroborated by a solid set of relevant evidence detailed below.

Indeed, as we read Words of Mormon in light of the meaning inherent in the resumptive structure, its structural meaning gives new significance to several words and phrases in Words of Mormon. All words in Words of Mormon harmonize well with the meaning

inherent in the resumptive structure. For example, the second element of a resumptive structure always recaps the last event mentioned in a narrative paused for an aside. In this case, this second element says “Amaleki had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:10), so the resumptive structure indicates that, in text now missing from the Book of Mormon, Mormon had discussed this delivery of the small plates just before he wrote the aside that begins with the heading “The words of Mormon.”

This now-missing discussion, written by Mormon, is reminiscent of a well-known passage in the small-plate record written by Amaleki. In that passage, Amaleki tells us he *plans to* deliver the small plates to King Benjamin: “knowing king Benjamin to be a just man before the Lord, wherefore *I shall deliver up these plates unto him*” (Omni 1:25). After mentioning this plan, Amaleki then continues his small-plate account by detailing gifts of the Spirit, inviting his readers to come unto Christ, and describing one group’s failed attempt to return to the land of Nephi, followed by another group’s presumably successful attempt. After adding all this information to his small-plate record, Amaleki simply concludes the small-plate record, with no mention of the actual delivery of these plates to King Benjamin.

It’s not surprising that the small-plate record doesn’t describe the actual delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. In the first place, Amaleki had already filled the small plates, so there was no room for further explanation. In the second place, once these plates were delivered to King Benjamin, they were no longer in Amaleki’s possession, so we should expect any description of the delivery itself to be found in King Benjamin’s large-plate record. As mentioned earlier, the recap in the second element of the resumptive structure indicates that the large-plate record did, in fact, recount Amaleki’s actual delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. Mormon included this event in his abridged record just before the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8. Unfortunately for us, Mormon’s original description of this event is now missing, but the recap in Words of Mormon 1:10 indicates that this was the final event described by Mormon in the lost text.

3. Foundational Context for Mormon’s Aside Provided by His Reference to a Passage That Was Lost

The aside preceding each resumptive structure in the Book of Mormon is itself prompted by the earlier discussion of the last event before the aside. The aside in 1 Nephi 9:2–6 follows an explanation that Lehi said many

things that can't be written on "these plates" (1 Nephi 9:1). This leads into Nephi's aside about his two sets of plates. The aside in Alma 22:27–34 follows an explanation that the king send a proclamation "throughout all the land amongst all his people" (Alma 22:27). This leads into an aside about the lands of the Lamanites and of the Nephites. The aside in Ether 4:1 to 5:6 follows an explanation that the brother of Jared left the mount where he had seen the Lord and then wrote the things he had seen (see Ether 4:1). This leads into an aside about the subsequent history of what he wrote. The aside in Ether 8:20–26 follows an explanation that Jared, his daughter, and Akish formed a secret combination (see Ether 8:17–19). This leads into an aside that warns latter-day Gentiles about such combinations. The aside in Ether 12:6–41 follows an explanation that the people didn't believe the great things Ether taught, because "they saw them not" (Ether 12:5). This leads into an aside about faith in things not seen.

In the case of Mormon's aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, the resumptive structure (Words of Mormon 1:9–10) indicates that the last event discussed before the aside was Amaleki's delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. Even though this event no longer precedes the aside, it provides introductory context for the aside. In the aside itself, Mormon mentions searching for the small plates after working on his earlier abridgment. He doesn't, however, specify what induced him to initiate the search (see Words of Mormon 1:3). The event he had described just before his aside appears to supply this context. According to the resumptive structure, shortly before searching for the small plates, Mormon had abridged the large-plate description of Amaleki's delivery of these small plates to King Benjamin. Having thus learned of their existence, he searched for them, found them, and studied their engravings. As he did so, the Spirit touched him, which led him to write his aside about this spiritual experience. He added the chapter heading "The words of Mormon," identified himself, and then recounted how this exciting find and the workings of the Spirit affected him. They evoked a determination not only to include the small plates with his own record but also to base the balance of his abridgment on the small-plate prophecies (see Words of Mormon 1:4–7). Mormon's resumptive structure (Words of Mormon 1:9–10) then transitions readers back to his continuing abridgment of the large plates (with this new emphasis on these prophecies).

Early in his aside, Mormon refers to something that Amaleki had previously said about King Benjamin. Specifically, he refers to "this king Benjamin *of which Amaleki spake*" (Words of Mormon 1:3).

Mormon's words in this verse suggest this is not a reference to something written on the small plates. Just before this reference to King Benjamin and Amaleki, Mormon says, "And now I speak somewhat concerning that which *I have written*" (Words of Mormon 1:3). This suggests that Mormon is speaking about something he personally has already written. He then explains that he has been writing "an abridgment from the [large] plates of Nephi" (Words of Mormon 1:3). As we have seen, the resumptive structure tells us that this (now missing) abridged record had just mentioned that Amaleki "had delivered up these plates into the hands of king Benjamin" (Words of Mormon 1:10). Thus we shouldn't assume the small plates were Mormon's only source for things Amaleki spoke. Mormon had been abridging the voluminous large-plate record that covered the same period as the small-plate record. According to the resumptive structure, the last event Mormon covered in that (now missing) abridged record dealt with Amaleki. These words in Mormon's aside appear to refer back to the same passage recapped in the resumptive structure. They tell us that in this missing passage, Mormon had mentioned something that Amaleki had spoken about King Benjamin.

Because we have never read this missing part of Mormon's abridged record, we aren't familiar with any of its specifics. On the other hand, we know quite well that in the small-plate record (which replaced the lost text and now, in our reordered Book of Mormon, immediately precedes Words of Mormon), Amaleki mentions King Benjamin (see Omni 1:23–25). Consequently, when Mormon refers to specific words spoken by Amaleki about King Benjamin, our mind tends to jump to the specific words we remember from reading the replacement small-plate record. But Mormon didn't include the small-plate record with his own record until after he wrote his aside (see Words of Mormon 1:6). The aside discusses things Mormon himself has previously written. We would have recently read these same things ourselves, just a few verses earlier, if they weren't missing from the Book of Mormon.

One reason readers of the Book of Mormon have assumed that Words of Mormon was written as an addendum to the small plate record is that the small-plate record appears to supply context and antecedents for the terms *these plates* and *this king Benjamin* in Words of Mormon 1:3. The content of the resumptive structure, however, suggests that the missing text that once immediately preceded the heading "The words of Mormon" is the more likely source of the required context and antecedents. In addition, Doctrine and Covenants 10:38–39 suggests that this same missing text

described the small-plate account, so it also supplied the antecedent for the term *this small account* in Words of Mormon 1:3.

The term *these plates* doesn't always require an antecedent. In many Book of Mormon passages, the term *these plates* is used with no antecedent reference to a specific set of plates. In these passages, the term *these plates* consistently refers to the plates being written upon. (See, for example, 1 Nephi 9:1–5, 10:1, 19:1–5; 2 Nephi 5:4, 31–32; Jacob 1:2–4, 3:13–14, and 7:27.) One such passage adds a brief identifying phrase after the term *these plates* to confirm this meaning. In this passage, Nephi identifies content being placed “upon *these plates* which I am writing” (1 Nephi 6:1). He then refers to the set of plates upon which he is writing (the small plates) simply as “these plates” (1 Nephi 6:3, 6). In all of these passages that don't mention another set of plates, the term *these plates* refers to the plates being written upon.

Other passages, on the other hand, initially identify a set of plates other than the one being written upon. In these passages, this other set of plates becomes the antecedent for the subsequent term *these plates*. For instance, Mormon identifies “the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3) and then quotes King Benjamin, who refers to them as “*these plates* which contain these records and these commandments” (Mosiah 1:3), and later simply as “these plates” (Mosiah 1:4). In another passage, King Limhi identifies “twenty four plates which are filled with engravings; and they are of pure gold” (Mosiah 8:9), then refers to them simply as “these plates” (Mosiah 8:19).

I propose that Mormon wrote Words of Mormon as a continuation of his ongoing abridgment of the large-plate record, which he wrote on plates he made with his own hands (see 3 Nephi 5:11), commonly called the plates of Mormon. If Mormon is writing Words of Mormon on the plates of Mormon, then his term *these plates*, which clearly refers to the small plates, should have been introduced with an earlier direct reference to the small plates. However, in the text of Words of Mormon, Mormon's initial reference to the small plates uses the term *these plates* with no antecedent.

This lack of an antecedent has convinced some that Mormon is writing Words of Mormon directly onto the small plates. Amaleki's last sentence on the small-plates, however, appears to contradict this idea: “these plates are full” (Omni 1:30). Possibly believing that the text of the Book of Mormon offers no viable alternative, creative students of the Book of Mormon have offered some fairly plausible work-arounds. The small plates conceivably could have had margins or other white space into which Words of Mormon

could have been inserted, or maybe Mormon added a plate or two to the small plates to accommodate Words of Mormon.⁶⁸

The resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 reveals a simpler, sounder solution to this problem. This structure shows that Words of Mormon is a continuation of the lost text. Mormon didn't need to fit Words of Mormon onto the already ancient and already full small plates. He wrote Words of Mormon onto the plates of Mormon in the normal course of his abridgment of the large plates. And he wrote it right after he had written a description of Amaleki's delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin. However, the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript removed that description (and everything in Mormon's abridgment before that description) from the Book of Mormon. The resumptive structure recaps that missing description, giving us a glimpse into the final passage of the lost manuscript. The recap in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 tells us that just before the aside in Words of Mormon 1:1–8, Mormon himself had recently written that description, which mentioned both the small plates and King Benjamin. Therefore, that earlier description of the delivery of the plates had once provided the (now missing) antecedents for the terms *these plates* and *this king Benjamin* in the aside.

Other evidence from the Doctrine and Covenants suggests that the same missing passage just before the aside also supplied the antecedent for Mormon's term *this small*⁶⁹ *account* in the aside. Like the term *this king Benjamin*, the term *this small account* presupposes an antecedent — a recent direct reference to the same account. For instance, Mormon's use of the term *an account* in Mosiah 28:17 provides the antecedent for his three uses of the term *this account* in Mosiah 28:18–19. In Words of Mormon, on the other hand, there is no antecedent for the term *this small account*. Neither is an antecedent for the term *this small account* found in the book of Omni or the resumptive structure. Fortunately, Doctrine and Covenants 10:38–39 reveals additional content from the lost manuscript. This revelation tells us that the lost text had mentioned

68. See, for example, Ricks, "Small Plates of Nephi," 216n3.

69. In Words of Mormon 1:3, the words "this *small* account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi" refer to the account written by these men on the small plates. The word *small* in this passage is in comparison with the large account, mentioned earlier in the same verse, from which Mormon was abridging his own account. Mormon sees his own abridged record, like the small-plate account, as small (see 3 Nephi 5:15 and Mormon 5:9).

“a more particular⁷⁰ *account*” (the small-plate account) of things written for the people in our day. This revelation doesn’t tell us, however, just where in the lost text this “more particular account” was mentioned. Indirect evidence, however, suggests that it was mentioned in that same final passage at the end of the lost text.

As we’ve seen, that final lost passage mentioned the small plates. It appears that Mormon learned of the existence of these plates as he studied the large-plate record and wrote that passage, so he then searched for them and found them. Mormon’s search for these plates at that specific time indicates that he did not learn about them — or the small account written on them — before that time. If Mormon had learned about this “more particular account” earlier, he probably would have searched for the small plates sooner. The timing of his search circumstantially suggests that the lost text’s description of this small account, which the Lord mentions in this revelation, was found in the same final passage. It appears, then, that the final passage of the lost manuscript originally supplied antecedents for all three terms (*this king Benjamin*, *these plates*, and *this small account*) found in Words of Mormon 1:3.

As Mormon resumes his abridgment after writing this aside, his words indicate that he is simply moving the narrative forward from the point where it had left off — Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin. The third element of the resumptive structure moves forward with the narrative from this point. First, it mentions that King Benjamin secured the newly acquired record with his other records, all of which later came into Mormon’s possession (see Words of Mormon 1:10–12). It then describes some major events of King Benjamin’s reign.⁷¹

70. The Lord refers to the small plate account five times in D&C 10:38–42, once in each verse. In verse 38, the term is “an account ... engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 39, it is “a more particular account ... given ... upon the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 40, it is “the account which is engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi,” which is “more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this [translated Book of Mormon] account.” In verse 41, it is “the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi.” In verse 42, it is “the record of Nephi.” These parallel terms indicate that this small-plate account is “a more particular account” because it is “more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this [translated Book of Mormon] account.” As explained earlier, the term *plates of Nephi* in this revelation refers specifically to the plates we now call the small plates of Nephi, because they were the only *plates of Nephi* available for Joseph to translate.

71. It seems likely that the war mentioned by Mormon in Words of Mormon 1:13–14 is also mentioned by Amaleki in Omni 1:24. If so, this war took place before,

Some scholars have suggested that Mormon’s description of these events in Words of Mormon 12–18 reviews events previously described in the lost portion of Mormon’s abridgment. However, when Words of Mormon is read in light of the resumptive structure, Oliver Cowdery’s unique mark and reconstructive edits, and other evidence outlined herein, nothing in the text suggests that Mormon had covered these events previously. Indeed, Mormon’s term *this king Benjamin*, used three times in Words of Mormon, suggests that Mormon may still be introducing King Benjamin to readers of his abridgment. Thus the final event discussed by Mormon prior to his aside (the delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin) may be Mormon’s initial reference to King Benjamin. The brief manner in which Mormon covers these events isn’t all that unusual and needn’t suggest that he covered them earlier in greater detail. Mormon’s abridgment includes other similarly brief descriptions of similar events that are not reviews of events covered previously. For instance, even though Mormon sometimes describes battles in great detail, he also sometimes mentions major, important battles only briefly (see Alma 3:20–24, 28:2–3, and 63:14–15 and 3 Nephi 2:11–17). Similarly, in two provisions, he touches only lightly on efforts to overcome Nephite contention and dissensions. One was an unsuccessful effort to end “dissensions and disturbances” (Alma 45:20–24). The other was a successful effort to convince many people to repent (Alma 62:44–52).

4. Mormon’s Choice to Focus the Balance of His Abridgment on Small-plate Prophecies

As explained earlier, many scholars believe Mormon wrote Words of Mormon after all his other Book of Mormon writings.⁷² However, textual evidence within Mormon’s aside at the beginning of Words of Mormon indicates that an important purpose of this aside is to describe two decisions, one of which affected the balance of his abridgment. After reading the small plates, Mormon was touched by the revelations and

and not after, King Benjamin’s receipt of the small plates. Mormon’s words, “and now concerning this king Benjamin” (Words of Mormon 1:12), unlike “and then it came to pass that,” don’t require a chronological account. Rather, they introduce information about King Benjamin not previously shared by Mormon. If Words of Mormon were written as a bridge to fill in a supposed time gap between the small-plate record and the book of Mosiah, it would not describe a war that happened prior to the supposed gap.

72. See Haws, “Lost 116 Pages Story”; Roper, “A More Perfect Priority?”; Ricks, “Small Plates of Nephi”; McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary*; Welch, “Miraculous Timing”; and Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide.”

prophecies they contained. It appears he wrote this aside primarily to share two related decisions with his readers. One decision was to keep the small-plate record with his own record. The other was to focus the balance of his abridgment on the small-plate prophecies and their fulfillment.

As he describes these choices, Mormon uses several terms that refer (directly or indirectly) to prophecies. In Words of Mormon 1:3–6, he uses the word *prophecies* only twice, but textual analysis can suggest that several other terms also refer to prophecies. The following highly annotated quotation emphasizes and explains these direct and indirect references:

I found this small *account of the prophets* [and their prophecies] from Jacob down to the reign of this King Benjamin, and also many of *the words of Nephi* [including his prophecies]. And *the things* [prophecies] *which are upon these plates* pleasing me because of *the prophecies of the coming of Christ*, and my fathers [who lived after these small-plate prophets, but before me] knowing [and having recorded their knowledge in the large-plate record] that many of *them* [these small-plate prophecies] have been fulfilled — yea, and I also know [and am adding my testimony here and in the remainder of my record] that *as many things* [prophecies] *as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day* has been fulfilled, and [I also know and add my testimony here and in the remainder of my record that] *as many* [of these prophecies] *as go beyond this day* [and so will be fulfilled in the future, including in the latter days] must surely come to pass — wherefore [for these specific reasons], I choose *these things* [these prophecies recorded on the small plates] to finish⁷³ my record [the balance of my abridgment] *upon them* [making these prophecies the subject or theme of the rest of my record — it will be about them],⁷⁴ which remainder of my record [the balance of my abridgment] I shall take from the plates of Nephi [the large-plate record]. And I cannot write a hundredth part of the things [doings] of my people [so this thematic focus will emphasize prophecies as I omit much of the history]. But behold [even though only a small record can be passed on], I *shall* take these plates [this refers to an act that has not already been done but will be done in the future]

73. See footnote 67.

74. *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists one sense of *upon* as “Denoting the subject of speech or writing.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “upon, prep.,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/220029?rskey=JSdlfw&result=3>.

which contain *these prophecies and revelations* [the small plates of Nephi] and put *them* [the small plates of Nephi] with the remainder of my record [the balance of my abridgment], for *they* [the small plates of Nephi] are choice unto me [because of the prophecies and revelations they contain] and I know that *they* [the small plates of Nephi] will be choice unto my brethren [for the same reason]. (Words of Mormon 1:3–6)

Two Purposes Filled by the Small Plates. Thus this passage describes the importance of the prophecies on the small plates and tells us that Mormon chose at this time to make these prophecies and their fulfillment the main topic for the balance of his abridgment. This decision, and the emphasis placed on it by Mormon, would make little sense if his abridgment were already virtually finished. On the other hand, if he is recording this choice in the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah, it is a choice that affects all the balance of his writing — everything that Mormon wrote that was not lost. (Both his statement about choosing the small plates as a source of influence in his future abridgement, and his statement about adding the small plates to his work, point to future events, whereas they would be completed acts under the traditional view of Words of Mormon being written at the end of Mormon’s work.) It would appear, then, that the Lord’s purpose in preserving these prophecies on the small plates was not only to use the small-plate record as the “first part” of the Book of Mormon, but also to inspire Mormon to focus all the remainder of the Book of Mormon on the fulfillment of these important prophecies.

Logical Inconsistencies. In this passage, Mormon discusses two concepts that can easily be confused. His term *these plates* refers to the small plates. His separate term *these things* refers to the prophecies on the small plates and not to the plates themselves. Some students of the Book of Mormon nevertheless maintain that when Mormon states “wherefore I choose *these things* to finish my record upon them” (Words of Mormon 1:5), the words *these things* refer to the small plates. Or perhaps, since the small plates were already full (see Omni 1:30), they suggest that these words refer not only to the small plates themselves, but also to an additional plate or two that Mormon may have appended to the small plates.⁷⁵ That suggestion, if true, could support the view that Words of Mormon was written upon the (perhaps augmented)

75. See Ricks, “Small Plates of Nephi,” 216n3.

small plates and was among Mormon's final writings. That suggestion, however, gives rise to two logical inconsistencies.

The first logical inconsistency arises because that suggestion is incompatible with Mormon's use of the word *wherefore*. The role of this word is to introduce "a clause expressing a consequence or inference from what has just been stated."⁷⁶ So when Mormon says, "*wherefore* I choose these things to finish my record upon them" (Words of Mormon 1:5), he is telling us that he chooses "these things" for a reason he has just mentioned. He has just used the word *things* to explain that the prophecies written on the small-plate record (the *things* which are upon these plates) please him because they are true. It would appear that these same things, the prophecies on the small plates, are the intended antecedents for the term *these things*. Mormon has just stated two clear reasons for making these prophecies the main subject of the balance of his abridgment (they please Mormon and they are true). On the other hand, nothing just stated provides any plausible reason for choosing to write anything upon any specific set of plates.

The second logical inconsistency arises for a different reason. If the words *these things* refer to the small plates, then the term *the remainder of my record* has two opposing meanings in two consecutive sentences. Thus the term *the remainder of my record*, as used in verse 5, would refer to a record written *upon* the small plates, while the identical term, as used in verse 6 without distinguishing context, clearly refers to something separate from the small plates, to be kept *with* the small plates.

There is, however, no such inconsistency if the term *these things* refers to the prophecies found on the small plates. In that case, the term *the remainder of my record* consistently refers to the extensive portion of Mormon's abridged record that is not yet written at the time he writes these words. Mormon's aside tells us that he will focus on the small-plate prophecies as he abridges the remainder of his record from the large plates of Nephi. He will keep the small-plate record (which contains those prophecies) with the prophecy-focused remainder of the abridged record, thus sharing the original prophecies themselves with the abridgment that refers to them.

So the more likely intended meaning of this passage is that Mormon is choosing the prophecies on the small plates as the subject or theme for the rest of his abridgment of the large-plate record. Our study of the remainder of Mormon's abridgment (all of his abridgment available to us today) can be

76. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "wherefore | wherefor, adv. (and n.)," <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228218?redirectedFrom=wherefore>.

greatly enhanced as we recognize this correlation between the small-plate prophecies and the carefully selected content of Mormon's abridgment.

For instance, King Benjamin's possession of the small-plate record and his recognition of the value of the prophecies it contained may be reflected in his teachings to his sons in Mosiah 1:2–9. The repeated use of the word *also* may indicate three distinct sets of plates. The first set, perhaps the small plates, is described as “*the prophecies* which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which was delivered them by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:2). After mentioning this set of prophecies, Mormon says that “he *also* taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3). After discussing this second record, King Benjamin introduces a third record, which appears to be the large-plate record, saying, “And behold *also* the plates of Nephi which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now” (Mosiah 1:6). The fact that the second and third records are each introduced with the word *also* suggests that the first description of prophecies may refer to a distinct record — the prophecies found on the small plates.

Mormon's Plan to Add the Small Plates in the Future. Mormon's aside was written after he “found” (past tense) the small-plate record (Words of Mormon 1:3) and before he resumes his abridgment (see Words of Mormon 1:5, where he says “which remainder of my record I shall take [future tense] from the [large] plates of Nephi”). In his aside, he says, “I shall take these plates which contain these prophecies and revelations and put them with the remainder of my record” (Words of Mormon 1:6). These statements seem to require that Mormon's resumed abridgment of the large plates and his addition of the small-plate record to his own are to be completed after he wrote this aside, not before. The plan to do these things in the future makes little sense if Mormon had already added the small plates to his record and is now explaining, at the end of that attached record, why he did so. At the time Mormon wrote this aside, he had not yet made the remainder of his abridged record and had not yet put the small plates with his abridged record, but planned to do so in the future. These words about what he shall do fit better in an aside written as part of the original second chapter of Mosiah than in an aside written after the small plate record is already in place at the end of Mormon's record.

5. An Appropriately Archaic Meaning for the Term *About to* in Words of Mormon 1:1

Mormon begins his aside by saying that he is “*about to* deliver up” the record he has been making to his son Moroni (see Words of Mormon 1:1). The modern meaning of the term *about to* would suggest that Mormon is on the verge of delivering a completed record to Moroni. However, as we have seen, multiple evidences in the greater context indicate that these words are found in the original second chapter of Mosiah — they were written when Mormon’s abridgment was far from complete. This context suggests the application of a different meaning for the term *about to*, one that doesn’t imply immediacy.

Royal Skousen’s in-depth study of the Book of Mormon manuscripts has found extensive archaic word usage that indicates “that the text of the Book of Mormon is uniquely archaic and generally dates from Early Modern English. The vocabulary of the Book of Mormon turns out to be one to three centuries older than Joseph Smith’s time.”⁷⁷ And while many English words and phrases have retained their meanings from that period, some meanings have shifted. Because of these shifts, the intended meaning of some Book of Mormon passages differs from the meaning that our modern vocabulary first brings to our minds. Specifically, Skousen discusses “39 lexical items that each take a distinct archaic meaning in the Book of Mormon, one that no longer exists in English.”⁷⁸ The term *about to* is one of these lexical items.

In Early Modern English, the term *about to* had two meanings, only one of which continues in common use today. The still-common definition is “at the very point when one is going to do something; intending or preparing immediately to do something.”⁷⁹ The other meaning, on the other hand, conveys no sense of immediacy. Its definition is “engaged in or busied with plans or preparations to do something; planning, conspiring, or scheming to do something.”⁸⁰ In other words, in the vocabulary of the Book of Mormon, the term *about to* can describe an ongoing effort aimed toward ultimately, but not immediately, reaching a specified goal. It can indicate that one is engaged in preparatory efforts intended, in due course, to reach a specified goal.

77. Skousen and Carmack, *Nature of Original Language*, 11.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “about, adv., prep.1, adj., and int.,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/527?rskey=CVNogO&result=3>.

80. *Ibid.*

A remnant of this archaic meaning of *about to* lingers in North America, but only in negative constructions.⁸¹ I might say, “I’m not *about to* vote for that candidate,” meaning that I have no present intent or plan to eventually do such a thing. The less common meaning of *about to* is similar, but is applied in the affirmative sense. When one is *about to* do something (in the less common sense), one *does* intend to do such a thing and is actively working to that end (ultimately, rather than immediately).

The following dictionary samples from Early Modern English use this less common meaning. (Spelling has been modernized and emphasis added.)

1533: “The leech that ... sitteth by the sick man busy *about to* cure him.”

1541: “The devil hath been of long time *about to* bring in this snare for priests.”

1669: “It becomes every man, *about to* transcribe, or render the works of another in his own native tongue, neither to add anything of his own, nor to omit of the author’s.”⁸²

In each case, the term *about to* describes one who is actively moving toward accomplishing a goal or, in other words, *working to* accomplish that goal. So the substitution of the term *working to* for *about to* can suggest this meaning. For example, with these dictionary examples, this substitution results in:

“The leech that ... sitteth by the sick man busy [working to] cure him.”

“The devil hath been of long time [working to] bring in this snare for priests.”

“It becomes every man, [working to] transcribe, or render the works of another in his own native tongue, neither to add anything of his own, nor to omit of the author’s.”

Because this less common, now obsolete meaning of *about to* is foreign to modern readers, it is never the meaning that instantly comes to our mind when we first read the term *about to*. It takes mental effort to consider this archaic meaning, but it clearly applies in several Book of Mormon passages. For instance, after the treasonous Paanchi, the brother of Parhoran and Pacumeni, lost the election to be chief judge or governor over the land, he didn’t accept the voice of the people. Rather, he was busily engaged in preparatory efforts toward overthrowing the government. He wasn’t

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

only considering a future rebellion, but was already actively engaged in rebellious activity. He was *working to* incite others to rebel:

But behold, Paanchi and that part of the people that were desirous that he should be their governor was exceeding wroth. Therefore he was *about to* [working to] flatter away those people to rise up in rebellion against their brethren. And it came to pass as he was *about to* [working to] do this, behold, he was taken and was tried according to the voice of the people and condemned unto death; for *he had raised up in rebellion and sought to destroy the liberty of the people.* (Helaman 1:7–8)

The following passage, which Stanford Carmack brought to the attention of Royal Skousen, also contains language that works much better if the term *about to* means “working to.”

And now when Coriantumr saw that he was in possession of the city of Zarahemla and saw that the Nephites had fled before them and were slain and were taken and were cast into prison and that he had obtained the possession of the strongest hold in all the land his heart took courage insomuch that *he was about to* [working to] *go forth* against all the land and now *he did not tarry* in the land of Zarahemla but he did march forth with a large army even towards the city of Bountiful. (Helaman 1:22–23)

Skousen provides the following explanation of the manner in which this passage appears to reflect the archaic, earlier meaning of *about to*:

If we read this passage with our modern-day view of the expression “to be about to go forth,” we assume that Coriantumr is thinking of immediately going out to attack all the remaining Nephite lands (at the end of verse 22), yet then we are suddenly surprised by the statement (at the beginning of verse 23) that “he did not tarry in the land of Zarahemla.” Since the text just said that Coriantumr was on the verge of attacking, then why should it gratuitously add that he did not tarry? But if the expression “to be about to go forth” is interpreted with its earlier meaning, then this passage is telling us that Coriantumr was making preparations “to go forth against all the land,” which could have taken some time if he had wanted to, yet in the end he did not put off his attack

but decided to march forth promptly, without further delay, against the city of Bountiful.⁸³

This meaning also appears to apply as Nephi made tools for building a ship. His brothers saw that he was engaged in preparatory efforts toward constructing a ship. “And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock. And when my brethren saw that I was *about to* [working to] build a ship, they began to murmur against me” (1 Nephi 17:16–17). A significant effort lay ahead, but by making tools, Nephi was already engaged in plans and preparations to build a ship.

This same meaning also appears to apply when Amulek quotes words that King Mosiah wrote at a time when he, King Mosiah, “was *about to* [working to] *deliver up* the kingdom” (Alma 10:19). At the time King Mosiah wrote these words, he was engaged in preparatory efforts toward “deliver[ing] up the kingdom” to the first chief judge. The detailed account of King Mosiah’s efforts at that time (all of Mosiah chapter 29) reveals that the quoted words (see Mosiah 29:27) were written near the beginning of a major persuasive effort.

As King Mosiah begins this persuasive effort and shares the quoted words, the people have recently voted in favor of an impossible monarchy (see Mosiah 29:2–3). In the wake of this vote, King Mosiah sends “a written word” (Mosiah 29:4) among the people to teach righteous principles and convince them to adopt a new form of government. He is working to make this change, but the process takes time. As he sends out this written word, the people need to be convinced that a change is needed. All elections that might lead to the new form of government are still in the future (see Mosiah 29:37–39). Nevertheless, when successfully completed, the effort will allow King Mosiah to deliver his kingdom to Alma, who will eventually be elected to serve as the first chief judge (see Mosiah 29:41–42). Thus the words *about to deliver up* indicate that King Mosiah was busily engaged in a plan to “deliver up the kingdom” to a future chief judge.

After Mormon had abridged about 455 years of Nephite history from the large plates of Nephi, including all the book of Lehi, and was finishing the first chapter of the book of Mosiah, he encountered an important passage. This passage described Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin. Mormon added this event to his abridged record (at the end of the original first chapter of Mosiah). He then searched for, found, and read the small-plate account for the first

83. Skousen and Carmack, *Nature of Original Language*, 214.

time. As he did so, he was moved by the Spirit to keep this small-plate record with his abridged record and to focus the rest of his abridged record on the fulfillment of the prophecies he had just read. He then added an aside to his record (at the beginning of the original second chapter of Mosiah) to explain these pivotal decisions (see Words of Mormon 1:1–8). After writing this aside, he used a resumptive structure to resume his abridgment (see Words of Mormon 1:9–10).

In the aside, Mormon, who still needed to abridge about five centuries of the history of his people, writes that he is “*about to* deliver up the record which [he has] been making into the hands of [his] son Moroni” (Words of Mormon 1:1). In this context, the modern meaning of the term *about to* is out of place, but the archaic meaning, used in several other Book of Mormon passages, fits well, telling us that Mormon is *working to* deliver into the hands of his son Moroni the record he has been making. This ultimate aim motivates him to press forward. His words express a faith that is similar to that of Nephi as he forged tools, being “about to [working to]” (1 Nephi 17:16–17) build a ship. Mormon’s faith also mirrors that of Mosiah, who, near the end of his own life, taught righteous principles, being “about to [working to]” (Alma 10:19) deliver up his kingdom to a chief judge. By *working to* achieve these worthy goals, each prophet was acting in faith — showing hope for something he could not yet see. As the dictionary definition reads, each was “engaged in or busied with plans or preparations” to ultimately bring about a righteous goal.⁸⁴

6. The Lord’s Simple, Direct Instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants

An understanding that Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of Mosiah, a continuation of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record, helps us realize that the Lord’s instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants are simple and complete. They reveal all of the Lord’s straightforward plan for dealing with the lost manuscript:

84. After telling us he is *about to* [working to] deliver the record to Moroni, Mormon uses the present-tense term “I deliver these records” (Words of Mormon 1:2) to refer again to his future delivery of the record to Moroni. Mormon uses the present tense to refer to future events in other passages as well. See, for example, “I do this” (Words of Mormon 1:7) and “then do I make a record” (3 Nephi 5:17). Because Mormon’s present-tense words *I deliver these records* refer to a future event regardless of the meaning of *about to*, these words work equally well with either meaning of *about to*.

You shall translate the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words.

Behold, there are many things engraven upon the [small] plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part [the first part of the Book of Mormon, to be translated from the replacement small-plate record] of [out of]⁸⁵ the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work [the Book of Mormon]. And, behold, all the remainder of this work [the last part of the Book of Mormon, which Mormon focused on the fulfillment of the small-plate prophecies]⁸⁶ does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. (D&C 10:41–42, 45–46)

The simple instructions in this revelation seem to challenge the more complex assumption that Words of Mormon was added by Mormon at the end of the small-plate record. These simple revealed instructions explain that the narrative on the small plates of Nephi ends at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. Accordingly, the last book in the small-plate account, the book of Omni, ends at that time. These instructions never suggest that after the small-plate record reaches this point, Joseph will then encounter an additional passage called Words of Mormon, written by Mormon centuries after the small-plate record, which must also be translated to patch up what would otherwise be a troublesome time gap between the book of Omni and the book of Mosiah. These instructions certainly don't indicate that, as Brant Gardner suggests, Joseph himself will need to author a modern addition to the manuscript, not found on the plates at all, to be inserted as Words of Mormon 1:12–18 to mend such a troublesome gap.⁸⁷

85. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “of, *prep.*”, sense 3, updated March 2004, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/130549?rskey=bMNWpC&result=3&isAdvanced=false>.

86. See Words of Mormon 1:3–6.

87. But see Gardner, “When Hypotheses Collide,” 107, 115, and 117–19; and Gardner, *Labor Diligently*, 122–24, which suggest that instead, Joseph Smith wrote a “prophetic addition,” which was deemed necessary to mend such a gap. Note that in Words of Mormon 1:9, Mormon again identifies himself as the author, though that does not necessarily specify the author of vv. 12–18.

The Lord’s instructions in Section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants don’t mention any troublesome time gap, because none exists. Joseph had translated Words of Mormon, the first part of the retained text, in June 1828 — about eight months before translation finally resumed. The retained text had originally followed immediately after “an abridgment from the plates of Nephi down to *the reign of this king Benjamin*” (Words of Mormon 1:3), but that earlier part of the abridgment was lost. After that loss, Joseph Smith had faithfully resumed the translation where it had left off — after the retained text. Joseph and Oliver knew, of course, that the narrative in the retained text began in the middle of the story — with the reign of King Benjamin. The instructions in Section 10 reassure them that the lost narrative will be replaced by a different narrative taken from the small plates of Nephi. This replacement narrative will cover the same period as the lost narrative. It too will cover events “even till you come to *the reign of king Benjamin*, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41).

After receiving this reassuring revelation, Joseph continued his ongoing translation through the balance of Mormon’s writings and the writings of Moroni, ending with the title page. He then translated the replacement narrative from “the engravings which are on the [small] plates of Nephi” (D&C 10:41). When Oliver Cowdery created the printer’s manuscript, he used this replacement narrative (the last part of the original manuscript) as the “first part” (D&C 10:45) of the Book of Mormon. In all editions of the Book of Mormon, this small account, which continues “down even till you come to the reign of King Benjamin,” ends immediately before Words of Mormon. Words of Mormon is the original second chapter of Mosiah — the first part of the retained text. Because of the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, it had become the beginning of the original manuscript and, as previously discussed, Oliver marked this transition point in the printer’s manuscript with two consecutive wavy lines. This retained text begins with Mormon’s aside about the small plates and their prophecies. Then the resumptive structure in Words of Mormon 1:9–10 resumes Mormon’s abridged account (with a focus on these prophecies) right where the replacement narrative ends — at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. This solution provided by the Lord and implemented by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery is simpler than some of us have assumed.

Conclusion

The Lord’s revealed solution to the problem caused by the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript (D&C 10:38–46) tells Joseph Smith to replace that lost text with a translation of the small-plate record. The Lord says the narrative of this replacement text ends (at the end of the book of Omni) at the time of the reign of King Benjamin. The Book of Mormon is then to continue with “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41). This retained text, which begins with the chapter we call Words of Mormon, is a continuation of the lost part of Mormon’s abridgment of the large-plate record. After a brief aside, it resumes the abridged narrative right at the time when the replacement small-plate record ends — the time of the reign of King Benjamin. Oliver Cowdery left a unique mark in the printer’s manuscript at the end of the book of Omni. This mark appears to designate the point where the small-plate record ends and the retained text begins. Further evidence from the printer’s manuscript indicates that Words of Mormon, the first part of “that which you have translated, which you have retained” (D&C 10:41) is the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah.

Appendix A: Consistent, Credible Evidence that Supports Joseph Smith’s Published Page Count of 116 Pages

On page 102 of his insightful book *The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories*, historian Don Bradley maintains that Joseph Smith’s statement in the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long is inaccurate. He invites those who rely on this number to account for three facts which he believes support his claim of inaccuracy: (1) the fact that Emer Harris, Martin Harris’s brother, is reported to have said Martin scribed for *near two hundred pages* of manuscript that was lost; (2) the fact that Joseph Smith translated an average of only about two pages per day before the loss, but averaged over seven pages per day after the loss; and (3) the fact that, on average, a page in the 116-page lost manuscript would have contained about four years of historical narrative, but, on average, a page in the published portion of Mormon’s abridgment contains more details so that it contains only about two years of historical narrative.

The body of this paper relies on the accuracy of Joseph Smith’s published page count of 116 pages. This appendix reviews these three facts and proposes that each, when properly accounted for, can be reconciled with the accuracy of this number. This appendix also sustains the plausibility of Joseph Smith’s statement in the preface to the 1830

Book of Mormon that there was only one complete book in the lost manuscript — the book of Lehi.

1. Reconciling secondhand statements that might suggest a longer lost manuscript

The best evidence for the number of pages in the lost manuscript would be that manuscript itself. Unfortunately, it has never resurfaced. The next best evidence would probably be the original page number on the first page after the lost manuscript — the first retained page (see D&C 10:41). As the body of this paper explains, it is reasonable to conclude that this page was numbered as page 117 and was the first of several pages of manuscript that were translated before the loss, but not lent to Martin Harris. If so, then Joseph had this page in his possession (as the first page of the remaining original manuscript) as he wrote the preface which tells us that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long. Unfortunately, over time, water damage destroyed most of the original manuscript, including this page, so it's no longer available. Because this physical evidence no longer exists, published direct statements of firsthand witnesses are now the best available evidence of the page count. Three such statements survive, all given by Joseph Smith. The first, of course, is the preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon, in which Joseph states that the lost manuscript was “one hundred and sixteen pages” long. Joseph confirmed this same number in both of his histories that mention the lost manuscript — his 1832 history⁸⁸ and his official history.⁸⁹

It appears that Martin Harris also repeatedly confirmed that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long, but this information comes to us, perhaps with some loss of precision, through statements made by secondhand witnesses. Don Bradley alludes to such statements, saying that Martin Harris sometimes used the term “116 pages.”⁹⁰ Bradley, however, attributes Martin Harris's use of the number *116* to a tendency to “follow the lead of Joseph's terminology.”⁹¹ While the two men did tend to use some similar terminology, Martin sometimes took strong stances contrary to those of Joseph Smith. There was a period during which Martin “lost confidence in Joseph Smith” and was even excommunicated

88. See History, ca. Summer 1832, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/5>.

89. See “History, 1838–1856,” 9.

90. Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 91n19.

91. *Ibid.*

from the Church.⁹² Martin eventually rejoined the Church, but he clearly chose his own path. This unfortunate period of antagonism between Joseph and Martin is often mentioned to support the probative value of Martin's life-long witness of the veracity of the Book of Mormon. Their differences of opinion and Martin's firm stance in opposition to Joseph reveal that Martin was willing to assume responsibility for his own words. This indicates that Martin's consistent use of the number 116, like his consistent witness of the veracity of the Book of Mormon, may owe to his own independent recognition of its accuracy.

Martin's use of this number appears to have outlived Joseph Smith. The secondhand statement of William Pilkington may be one of those alluded to by Don Bradley. Pilkington immigrated to Utah in 1874 when he was 13 years old. Martin Harris Jr. soon hired the youth to work for him and live in his home. Martin Harris Sr. also lived there at the time. Pilkington lived in the Harris home during the final year of the senior Martin Harris's life. Years later, in 1934, when Pilkington was 73, he gave a sworn statement before Joseph W. Peterson. Among other things, Pilkington testified in this sworn statement that Martin Harris Sr., near the end of his life, told Pilkington that "he was the cause of the 116 pages that he had written being lost and never found."⁹³ This secondhand statement by Pilkington indicates that Martin Harris Sr. referred to 116 pages of lost manuscript during the last year of his life — 30 years after the Prophet's death.

The question to be considered is whether this sworn written statement made by a 73-year-old man who, 60 years earlier, had lived with Martin Harris for a year, accurately reflects a firsthand statement made by Martin Harris. The reliability and accuracy of this written, formally sworn statement depends not only on Martin's own credibility but also on Pilkington's credibility and on the reliability and accuracy of Pilkington's memory at the age of 73 about something that took place much earlier. Similar consideration should be given to any secondhand statement offered to suggest Martin's view of the length of the lost manuscript. In each case, the assessment is subjective. In this particular case, Pilkington's sworn recollection doesn't acknowledge the contributions of other scribes to the lost 116 pages. His statement

92. Dallin H. Oaks, "The Witness: Martin Harris," *Ensign* 29, no. 5 (May 1999).

93. "Martin Harris' Testimony of The Book of Mormon as Given to William Pilkington," LDS Scripture Teachings, Mike Day, January 23, 2017, <https://www.ldsscriptureteachings.org/2017/01/23/martin-harris-testimony-of-the-book-of-mormon-as-given-to-william-pilkington/>.

would have been more accurate had he recognized their roles. We can't be certain whether this slight discrepancy originated with Pilkington or with Harris. Nevertheless, despite the passage of time, the written, sworn statement can be deemed sufficiently reliable and credible to indicate that Martin Harris Sr., shortly before he died, stated that the lost manuscript was 116 pages long.

Martin Harris's brother, Emer Harris, spoke about the lost manuscript in his later years. It appears that Emer had no firsthand knowledge of the length of the lost manuscript, but he probably had spoken with Martin about it. Emer lived 200 miles away from Palmyra (in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania) at the time the lost manuscript was stolen.⁹⁴ He was not one of the five family members to whom Martin was given permission to show the manuscript.⁹⁵ The historical record doesn't suggest that he traveled the 200 miles to Martin's home in Palmyra to see the manuscript before it was lost.

One can assume, however, that Martin eventually explained to Emer the details of the sad story of the loss of the manuscript. Emer joined the Church in 1831, not long after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and soon moved with the Saints to Ohio.⁹⁶ About a year later, he served a mission near his former home in Pennsylvania. During most of this mission, "Emer's companion was his brother Martin."⁹⁷ Emer remained faithful to the Church his entire life. He moved with the Saints not only to Ohio but also to Missouri, to Illinois, and then to Utah.⁹⁸

On April 6, 1856, Emer Harris, then 74 and serving as a stake patriarch, spoke in a stake conference in Provo, Utah about the early history of the Church. Detailed minutes of the meeting written by the stake clerk provide us with the content of the talk. The reliability of these detailed minutes depends, in part, on the accuracy of the stake clerk's transcription of the words he heard Emer speak. The stake clerk wrote that Emer Harris said his brother had scribed for "near 200 pages"⁹⁹ of the lost manuscript. This term appears to be a simple transcription error. Rather than saying "near *two* hundred pages," it's more likely that Emer said "near *to a* hundred pages." Audibly, the two terms can be almost

94. See "Harris, Emer," People, The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/emmer-harris>.

95. Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 58.

96. "Harris, Emer," Joseph Smith Papers.

97. Oaks, "The Witness."

98. "Harris, Emer," Joseph Smith Papers.

99. Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 92.

identical. The term *near to a hundred pages* is more grammatically correct. (The transcribed term should say *nearly* rather than *near*.) Emer's use of the term *near to a hundred pages* fits well with both a lost manuscript length of 116 pages and with the fact that scribes other than Martin scribed for a portion of those pages.¹⁰⁰

We can't be certain which term Emer actually spoke, but the term *near to a hundred pages* harmonizes with everything Joseph Smith and Martin Harris are reported to have said about the lost manuscript. The audibly similar, but grammatically incorrect term *near two hundred pages*, on the other hand, paints a very different picture. If Emer actually used this transcribed term, the issue becomes whether it might accurately reflect something that Martin had said earlier to Emer. In Emer's talk, he never suggests that his term came from Martin. Even if transcribed correctly, this term may have resulted from a slip of Emer's tongue or his inability to recall the actual number at the spur of the moment. It might even represent Emer's own personal uncertainty about the precise number given by the Prophet. If any of these is the case, this odd term doesn't reflect any firsthand statement and therefore has little probative value for supplanting the Prophet's published number. Of course, one might presume that Martin once used such a term despite Emer's silence on the matter. Such a presumption would imply that this term originated with Martin, a firsthand witness. Unfortunately, such a presumption also necessarily discounts Martin's own credibility as a consistent witness.

Despite Martin's disagreements with Joseph Smith, Martin was considered an honest man and a reliable witness of the Book of Mormon because he was never willing to disavow, even in private, his published testimony of the Book of Mormon. Martin also consistently held to the 116-page length of the lost manuscript throughout his life — unless Emer actually said *near two hundred pages* and Emer was speaking for Martin as he did so. Because of Martin's reputation for consistency, including in private conversations, it seems contrary to his character for him to have said one thing in a private conversation with Emer and something else in conversations with William Pilkington and others. Martin's reputation for consistency and his multiple statements across the course of his life attesting to a 116-page lost manuscript suggest that he was not the source of the transcribed term *near two hundred pages*.

The more likely term that Emer used in stake conference that day is *near to a hundred pages*. This term is consistent with all of Martin's and Joseph's statements about the lost manuscript. If, on the other hand,

100. But see Bradley, *ibid.*, 92-95.

Emer said *near two hundred pages*, Martin's reputation for consistency suggests that this term originated independently with Emer, who had no firsthand knowledge of the length of the lost manuscript. Either way, the consistent statements of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris needn't be diminished by the report of Emer's conference talk.

Similarly, a letter written by Simon Smith in 1880 doesn't carry significant weight in challenging the accuracy of Joseph's published page count. In July 1875, just a day or so before Martin Harris Sr., passed away, his bishop, Simon Smith, paid a visit to the Harris household. Five years later, Simon Smith wrote a letter whose content has been used to suggest that Martin Harris opposed Joseph's page count. This factually inaccurate letter, however, provides no credible insight into Martin Harris's view of the length of the lost manuscript.

A little more than a year after Simon Smith visited the Harris home, Simon Smith's life changed significantly. In October 1876, Simon's first wife, Henrietta, whom he had left in England 12 years earlier when he emigrated to Utah, joined Simon's household in Clarkston, Utah, together with her children. Simon's two other plural wives and their children soon left the household. In November, Simon was released as bishop. He soon divorced his other two wives and joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. By 1880, he, Henrietta, and her children had moved back to England.

In December 1880, more than five years after the death of Martin Harris, Simon Smith wrote a letter to Joseph Smith III (the president of Simon's new church), a letter in which he shared his personal opposition to the practice of polygamy. Among other things, the letter purports to recount Martin Harris's answers to questions about polygamy posed to him by Simon Smith during the visit mentioned earlier. Several factors, however, weigh against the likelihood that such questions and answers took place at this time. A separate, more contemporaneous account of the visit written by Martin Harris, Jr. doesn't mention any discussion of polygamy. Not only was Simon himself a practicing polygamist at the time, but also Martin Harris Jr. and his plural wives were all present. It seems unlikely that Simon, an invited guest, would have raised such a contentious topic at such a tender time.¹⁰¹ Separately, on the topic of the Book of Mormon, Simon Smith's letter also claims that Martin said "that he had acted as scribe for [Joseph Smith] when

101. See Larry D. Christiansen, "Simon Long Smith: Bishop Smith of Clarkston: His Personal and Religious Odyssey," <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~utcache/history/smith/index.htm#sdendnote29sym>.

[Joseph] was translating from the plates by the Urim and Thummim *nearly one third of what is published.*"¹⁰²

This statement about the Book of Mormon cannot be true as written. Bradley recognizes this but suggests that Simon Smith may have meant to report that Martin Harris used the fraction *one-third* to represent the ratio of the length of the portion of the unpublished lost text scribed by Martin Harris to the combined length of Martin's unpublished text plus the published text. Bradley notes that this view of Simon Smith's statement could be seen as fairly consistent with Emer Harris's transcribed term *near two hundred pages*.¹⁰³ However, adding unpublished and published text to get that ratio seems questionable. While it's difficult to determine what Simon Smith intended to write, he may have intended to say that the lost manuscript had a length of about one-third the length of the published text (though one-fourth would be more accurate).

Simon Smith's nonfactual statement gives little basis for even deciphering what Simon Smith may have intended to write. It certainly isn't a reliable source for what Martin Harris may have actually said. Because the words in this letter can't be true and because they don't even mention a lost manuscript, there is little value in using them as a basis for deducing Martin Harris's firsthand views about the length of that manuscript.

Multiple well-documented statements of Joseph Smith and Martin Harris credibly and reliably support the 116-page length of the lost manuscript. If Emer Harris, in his 1856 stake conference talk, said *near to a hundred pages*, his words also support a lost manuscript with 116 pages. But even if Emer used the unlikely, ungrammatical term *near two hundred pages*, Emer didn't attribute this term to Martin. Neither should we. Doing so needlessly tarnishes Martin's well-deserved reputation as a consistent witness. Simon Smith's 1880 letter, which mischaracterizes Martin's role in the translation of the Book of Mormon and never mentions the lost manuscript, deserves little, if any, consideration in this matter. Therefore, a reasonable view of all available evidence can support a lost manuscript length of 116 pages.

Translated Pages per Day and the Sigmoid Learning Curve

Data available today doesn't allow us to map out an accurate learning curve for Joseph Smith's progress as a translator of the Book of Mormon. We know little about the process, accomplished only through "the gift and power of God." The Lord's words in Doctrine and Covenants 9:8

102. Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 94, emphasis added.

103. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

appear to suggest a need for diligent, faithful, prayerful effort that was both mental and spiritual in nature. The process would have been a team effort that involved Joseph and his scribe. It appears that, over time, the team became more proficient. The limited data from the historical record appears to be consistent with a common S-shaped learning curve (see Figure 3).

Learning curves vary based on the nature of the skills being learned. When a set of skills is easy to learn, skill acquisition is initially fast. Fast-skill acquisition is often shown in a diminishing-returns learning curve with a quick initial rise that slows over time. When a set of skills is more difficult, skill acquisition is initially slow. Slow-skill acquisition is often shown in an increasing-returns learning curve with a slow initial rise that speeds up over time.

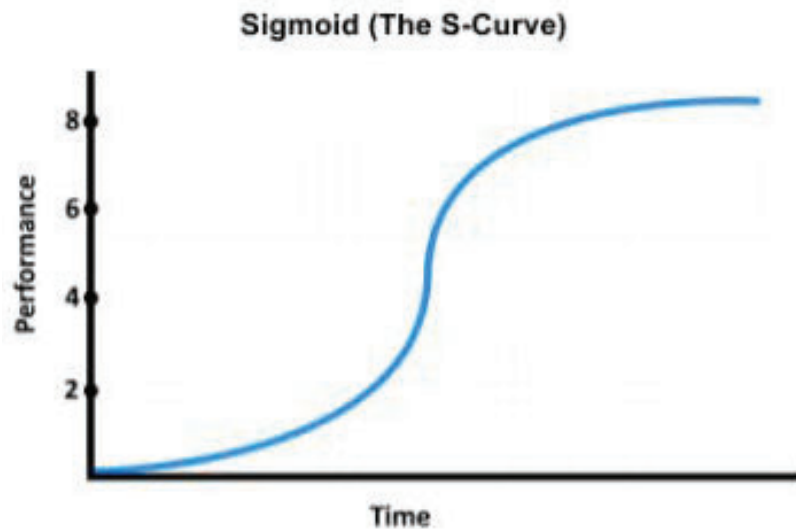


Figure 3. The S-curve that illustrates the common learning process.

A learning curve that is often used to describe the learning of a complex set of skills, however, is the increasing-decreasing returns learning curve, also known as the *sigmoid* or *S-curve*. This curve describes cases in which skill acquisition is initially slow, but this initial slow period is followed by a rapid learning period as skill acquisition becomes easier. Then, after this rapid acceleration or hypergrowth, the acceleration slows again as the skills are mastered.¹⁰⁴ In a business setting, this learning curve is described like this:

104. See, e.g., "Learning Curve Theory: The Definitive Guide 2020," Valamis, <https://www.valamis.com/hub/learning-curve>; J. M. J. Murre "S-shaped Learning Curves," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 21 (2014): 344–56, <https://>

Whenever people start new jobs or take on new responsibilities, they launch their own S-curves. At the beginning, ... progress is slow and they have limited impact. ... Then they reach an inflection point, gaining competence and confidence in their new roles, quickly accelerating their abilities, and having a progressively greater impact. ... After they've been in their roles for a certain amount of time, they reach the upper flat part of the S-curve.¹⁰⁵

The limited data we have from the historical record about Joseph's progress in receiving and dictating the sacred text to a scribe is by no means conclusive, but it can suggest an S-curve with the period of rapid acceleration or hypergrowth taking place as translation resumed after the loss of the 116 pages. Joseph's estimated average translation rate before that time was roughly two pages per day.¹⁰⁶ Afterwards, his estimated average translation rate quickly grew, so that, while working with Oliver Cowdery, he averaged seven or more pages per day.¹⁰⁷ This rapid acceleration is in line with what one might expect as experience brought Joseph and his scribe through the various stages of the sigmoid learning curve.

Several additional factors may have enhanced the acceleration. First, before resuming the translation effort, Joseph went through a humbling repentance process. This may have increased his meekness and facilitated the flow of revelation. Second, Oliver Cowdery, an enthusiastic young school teacher, replaced Martin Harris, an older, prosperous farmer, as scribe. Third, it appears that at about the time Oliver began his service as scribe, Joseph changed his translation method from a more cumbersome process by using the interpreters to a possibly simpler process by use of

doi.org/10.3758/s13423-013-0522-0; and Whitney Johnson, "Throw Your Life a Curve," *Harvard Business Review*, September 3, 2012, <https://hbr.org/2012/09/throw-your-life-a-curve>.

105. Nick Van Dam, "Disruptors of Higher Ed: Learning in the Digital Age," *BizEd*, ASCB International, March 1, 2018, <https://bized.aacsb.edu/articles/2018/03/learning-in-the-digital-age>.

106. About 122 translated pages (including an estimated 4 pages with Emma, 2 pages with other scribes, and 116 pages with Martin Harris, 110 of the 116 pages and about 6 pages of the retained segment). Martin's tenure was about 55 days (although some days and parts of days were likely spent on other necessary tasks), and we'll assume a total of 10 complete days with the other scribes (probably in stints of a few hours per session), for a total of 65 days and an average of 1.9 pages per day. See also Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 97-98 and 101-102.

107. See Bradley, *The Lost 116 pages*, 98-100.

a seer stone.¹⁰⁸ Fourth, during Oliver’s tenure as scribe, the two moved to Fayette, New York, where, as guests of the Whitmer family, they had fewer daily distractions. Together, a sigmoid learning curve and these other factors may fully account for the rapid growth in translated manuscript pages per day after the loss of the 116 pages.

Number of Years of Historical Narrative Covered on Each Manuscript Page

In the 116-page lost manuscript (primarily the Book of Lehi), an average page contained about four years of historical narrative. In contrast, an average page in the published portion of the manuscript contains about two years of historical narrative.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, a strong argument can

108. “Joseph Smith’s wife Emma, who also served as a scribe for the translation, described his use of two distinct instruments: ‘Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly, black, but was rather a dark color.’” “Joseph Smith Documents Dating through June 1831,” Introduction to Documents, Volume 1: July 1828 – June 1831, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/doc/introduction-to-documents-volume-1-july-1828-june-1831>. The “more elaborate physical setup” required with the interpreters is described in Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 46-47.

109. These numbers and those that follow are based on the following information: The historical narrative of the lost manuscript began in about 600 BC and ended with Amaleki’s delivery of the small-plate record to King Benjamin in about 155 BC. Bradley estimates that Benjamin’s reign began in about 157 BC (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 95). That seems to be a reasonable estimate. In Mormon’s aside in Words of Mormon, which follows immediately after the lost account of Amaleki’s delivery of the small plate record to King Benjamin (see Words of Mormon 1:9-10), Mormon mentions “*this* king Benjamin of which Amaleki spake” (Words of Mormon 1:3). Mormon’s use of the word *this* suggests that this is only Mormon’s second mention of King Benjamin (his first was lost with the lost manuscript). If so, we can assume that Amaleki delivered the small plates to King Benjamin quite early in his reign — near the beginning of Mormon’s abridged account of that reign. 155 BC is just two years after Bradley’s suggested date for the beginning of King Benjamin’s reign. Thus, the lost manuscript, like the small-plate record, covered about 455 years. So, on average, each lost manuscript page covered about four years. Mormon’s continuing abridgment of the large-plate record begins in that same year (about 155 BC) and continues through AD 335 with his abridgment of the record he made at age 24 (see Mormon 1:3-4 and 2:17-18). So the portion of Mormon’s abridgment included in the Book of Mormon covers about 495 years. In the printer’s manuscript, these 495 years take up about 300 pages. So, on average, each published manuscript page covers about two years. The published portion of Mosiah (including Words of Mormon) covers about 64 years in about 54 manuscript pages, so each manuscript page covers about one year. Alma covers about 31 years in about 161 manuscript

and should be made that this is a normal difference that one should expect in different books abridged by Mormon. One should not expect to find a consistent number of years of historical narrative per page across different historical books, even books written by the same author. This metric simply isn't considered by historians. Histories, including religious histories, are a function of the available historical records and an author's specific objectives. The number of years per page is an inadvertent and inconsistent product of this function.

Mormon's abridgment is more than a history. It's a testament of Jesus Christ. This purpose plays a large role in the content of Mormon's abridgment. In fulfilling this purpose, Mormon had no interest in producing a consistent number of years of historical narrative on each manuscript page. The wide variation in this metric across his writings is obvious even within 3 Nephi. In the first part of 3 Nephi (before Christ's death, chapters 1–7), an average manuscript page covers about 2.5 years of historical narrative. In the second part (including Christ's visit to the Americas, chapters 8–30), the level of detail explodes so that an average manuscript page covers only about 0.03 years (about 11 days) of historical narrative. Similarly wide variation exists across all the published books. In 4 Nephi, an average manuscript page contains about 96 years of narrative. In Alma, an average manuscript page covers about 0.19 years (fewer than three months) of narrative. In Helaman, an average manuscript page contains about two years of narrative. In Mosiah, an average manuscript page covers about one year of narrative.

This overwhelming variation (96 years is more than 3,000 times as long as 11 days) should make it clear that Mormon made no attempt to normalize the number of years per manuscript page across his writings. Among such extremes, it's completely insignificant that an average manuscript page in the lost manuscript covers about two times as many years as an average manuscript page in the published portion of the manuscript. A comparable difference is found between the fairly similar books of Helaman and Mosiah. Nevertheless, the relatively small difference between the lost manuscript and the published portion may

pages, so each manuscript page covers about 1/5 of a year. Helaman covers about 52 years in about 33 pages, so each manuscript page covers about two years. 3 Nephi covers about 34 years in about 47 pages, so each manuscript page covers about one year. 4 Nephi covers about 287 years in about 3 pages, so each manuscript page covers about 96 years. 3 Nephi chapters 1–7 cover about 33 years in about 13 pages, so each manuscript page covers about 2.5 years. 3 Nephi chapters 8–30 cover about one year in about 34 pages, so each manuscript page covers about 11 days. (1/34 of a year).

be due to two identifiable changes that affect the abridgment beginning with the account of King Benjamin.

As mentioned earlier, histories are a function of the available historical records and the author's specific objectives. At the time of King Benjamin, an important event changed the nature of subsequent historical records on the large plates. After Mormon abridged the account of that event, another event changed Mormon's specific objectives for the balance of his abridgment.

Beginning with King Benjamin, the writers of the large-plate record had a broader purpose for their writing than did the earlier writers of that record. Before Amaleki's delivery of the small plates to King Benjamin, the small plates were "for the more part of the ministry" and the large plates were "for the more part of the reigns of the kings and the wars and contentions" (1 Nephi 9:4). Afterwards, the large plates fully assumed both roles. The large-plate purpose expanded to include more of the ministry. In fact, beginning with King Benjamin, all custodians of the large plates were prophets. The first three, King Benjamin, King Mosiah, and Alma, were also political leaders. After that, several custodians of the large plates were prophets who were not political leaders. This change in purpose and authorship could have caused the latter portion of the large-plate record to contain more prophetic detail than the earlier part of that record.

More importantly, Mormon's specific objectives changed after he obtained the small plates. As I have explained in the body of this paper, after Mormon read the small-plate account, he was moved by the Spirit to focus the balance of his abridgment on the prophecies it contains. This new emphasis changed the nature of Mormon's abridgment from that point on. As he continued to record only a fraction of large-plate content, he chose to mention more details about prophecies. This change would have increased the average level of prophetic detail per page, thus lowering the average number of years of historical narrative found on each page. The relatively small difference between the average number of years covered per manuscript page in the 116 pages of lost manuscript and the published portion of the manuscript should be deemed trivial. However, the change in large-plate content and Mormon's new focus on prophecies beginning in Words of Mormon probably account for most, if not all, of this small difference.

The foregoing analysis accounts for all three facts mentioned by Don Bradley. Each can reasonably be reconciled with the accuracy of Joseph Smith's published page count.

Only One Complete Book — the Book of Lehi — Was Lost

Joseph’s preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon¹¹⁰ is only one paragraph long, but it is clearly and thoughtfully written. The historical evidence doesn’t support a claim that Joseph was pressed for time as he wrote this paragraph, which also serves as both Joseph Smith’s “first autobiographical account to appear in print” and “the first publication of any of his revelations.”¹¹¹ Within this paragraph, the description of the lost manuscript is simple and concise. It consists of fewer than 30 words, five of which, “one hundred and sixteen pages,” give the precise length of the lost manuscript, whose accuracy is discussed in both the body of this paper and above in this Appendix. The balance of this short description adds some detail: “the which I took from the Book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon.” According to this description, the name of the only complete book in the lost manuscript is “the Book of Lehi.” It was abridged by Mormon from a set of plates referred to as “the plates of Lehi.” Both of these terms, *the Book of Lehi* and *the plates of Lehi*, apparently originated with the lost manuscript. They aren’t found within the remaining text of the Book of Mormon, but similar terms in the remaining text appear to convey similar meaning.¹¹²

This preface doesn’t, however, mention the original first chapter of the book of Mosiah, which, as discussed in the body of this paper, was lost along with the book of Lehi. The failure to mention this chapter in the one-paragraph preface appears to reflect Joseph’s choice to write a less-granular description — one that is accurate at the book level, but that doesn’t mention individual chapters. The preface names the only complete book that was lost, so it is accurate at the level of detail it covers. Nevertheless, the failure to mention this lost chapter in this preface and the separate decision to edit chapter numbers in the retained text rather than bring attention to this lost chapter have had some unintended consequences.

110. “Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829,” The Joseph Smith Papers, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1>.

111. Historical Introduction, “Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1#historical-intro> on July 31, 2020. But see Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 85–86, 91, which asserts that this paragraph was “quickly” written under “time constraints” to provide a “serviceable,” but “provisional,” explanation of the loss.

112. David E. Sloan, “The Book of Lehi and the Plates of Lehi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1997): 269.

One consequence is that the lack of detailed disclosure makes it harder for readers to realize that Mormon wrote the text we call Words of Mormon as the original second chapter of the book of Mosiah rather than as an independent book. A second consequence is that the less-detailed disclosure also invites speculation about further differences between the preface's description of the lost manuscript and the lost manuscript's actual content. The evidence about lost content is discussed in detail in the body of this paper. It is consistent with the loss of one complete book, the book of Lehi, and one complete chapter, the original first chapter of the book of Mosiah. Don Bradley, however, speculates that, in addition to the book of Lehi, the lost manuscript contained "the books of many other record keepers."¹¹³

It seems unlikely that Joseph Smith's published description fails to mention multiple lost books. It's more likely that the description is accurate at the book level.

If many books were actually lost, then Joseph's description would appear to be inaccurate at the book level. It is difficult to attribute inaccuracy at this level to mere simplification. If many books were actually lost, then it would have been at least as simple to omit the reference to the book of Lehi or to mention many books without naming them. A description that mentions the loss of only one book, but fails to mention many other lost books, could be seen as misleading.

There is no need, however, to suggest that many other books were lost or that they would have filled more than 116 pages. A simple set of calculations shows that the lost 116 pages were easily long enough to describe the reigns of all Nephite leaders from Lehi through the first King Mosiah with the same level of detail that Mormon gives to all later kings. The reigns of all these later kings are described in the published portion of the original book of Mosiah (including Words of Mormon), which fills about 54 pages of printer's manuscript. These kings include Benjamin,¹¹⁴ the second Mosiah, Zeniff, Noah, and Limhi. In these calculations, Limhi's reign is counted as only half a reign because it ends early when his people join those of the second King Mosiah. So these

113. Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 87. Perhaps Bradley's reference to *the books of many other record keepers* is intended only to suggest that the book of Lehi, like the book of Mosiah, is composed of multiple records kept by multiple record keepers. If so, the proposed content for the book of Lehi suggested below may not differ substantially from what Bradley might suggest.

114. As explained in the body of this paper, it appears that the published portion of the book of Mosiah (including both Words of Mormon and Mosiah) contains virtually all of Mormon's abridgment of King Benjamin's reign.

4.5 reigns fill about 54 manuscript pages. This means that there is, on average, one reign for every 12 manuscript pages.

If the 116 lost pages likewise covered an average of one Nephite king (beginning with Lehi and Nephi, who didn't call themselves kings) every 12 manuscript pages, these pages had room to describe the reigns of 9.7 (about 10) such kings. The replacement small-plate record doesn't tell us how many generations of kings there were before King Benjamin, but we know there were seven generations of Lehi's family along Jacob's line before King Benjamin (Lehi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Chemish, and Abinadom).¹¹⁵ If we assume the same number of generations (seven) in the kingly line, then the lost manuscript had 12 manuscript pages for each of them, with more than 30 pages to spare. These extra pages might have held additional generations of kings, if any, or more detail per king than we find in Mosiah.

Thus it's reasonable to assume that the lost 116 pages had room for Mormon's abridgment of the records of Lehi, Nephi, and all Nephite kings through the first King Mosiah. The level of detail would at least have been comparable to the level Mormon gave to all later Nephite kings. The actual length of Mormon's abridgment of each leader's individual record would have varied, of course. Just the same, there is every reason to believe that the lost 116 pages of Mormon's abridgment accommodated all the reigns of kings it is said to have described. It did so at a level of detail no less than that of the book of Mosiah.

Don Bradley makes a reasonable case that the first King Mosiah began a new dynasty.¹¹⁶ This may explain the logic behind Mormon's aggregation of multiple reigns into only two books. Mormon's longer¹¹⁷ book of Lehi covers the entire dynasty begun by Lehi, and Mormon's shorter book of Mosiah covers the entire dynasty begun by Mosiah.¹¹⁸ Thus everything in Joseph Smith's preface to the 1830 Book of Mormon is plausible. The best evidence supports a lost manuscript that was 116 pages long and contained one complete book — the book of Lehi.

115. Because Nephi and Jacob were brothers (see 1 Nephi 18:7), they shared a generation. Amaron and Chemish were brothers (see Omni 1:8-9), so they also shared a generation. Amaleki the son of Abinadom was born in the days of the first king Mosiah (see Omni 1:23), so he was in the same generation as Benjamin the son of Mosiah.

116. See Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 241.

117. Based on these estimates, the book of Lehi would have been about 108 manuscript pages long — about two-thirds as long as the book of Alma.

118. Bradley's suggestion (see Bradley, *The 116 Lost Pages*, 275-84) that the book of Mosiah might actually have been called the book of Benjamin would do away with this symmetry.

Appendix B: Book of Mormon Occasional Chapter Headings with Capitalization from the Printer’s Manuscript

The following is a list of all occasional chapter headings in the Book of Mormon as capitalized in the printer’s manuscript. Some of these headings aren’t formatted as headings in the Book of Mormon, but most share a common structure. Only one uses complete sentences, and all are clearly designed to describe the following text. After each heading, I’ve added the current chapter designation followed, in italics, by the original chapter designation.¹¹⁹

The words of Jacob the Brother of Nephi which he spake
unto the People of Nephi (2 Nephi 6, *originally 2 Nephi 5*)

The burden of Babylon which Isaiah the Son of Amoz did see
(2 Nephi 23, *originally 2 Nephi 10*)

The words which Jacob the Brother of Nephi spake unto the
People of Nephi after the death of Nephi (Jacob 2, *originally
Jacob 2*)

The words of Mormon (Words of Mormon 1, *originally
Mosiah 2*)

The record of Zeniff (an account of his people from the time
they left the land of Zarahemla until the time that they were
delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites) (Mosiah 9,
originally Mosiah 6)

An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, which
was driven into the wilderness by the people of king Noah
(Mosiah 23, *originally Mosiah 11*)

The words which Alma, the high priest according to the
holy order of God, delivered to the people in their Cities and
villages throughout the land (Alma 5, *originally Alma 3*)

119. For further insights on these headers, see Stephen O. Smoot, “Notes on Book of Mormon Heads,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 40 (2020): 263–82, where they are called “markers of embedded content,” and Gardner, *Labor Diligently*, 23–37, where they are called “synoptic headers” for chapters.

The words of Alma which he delivered to the People in Gideon, according to his own Record (Alma 7, *originally Alma 5*)

The words of Alma and also the words of Amulek which was declared unto the people which was in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the Record of Alma (Alma 9, *originally Alma 7*)

An account of the Sons of Mosiah, which rejected their rights to the Kingdom for the word of God and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites. Their sufferings and deliverance according to the record of Alma (Alma 17, *originally Alma 12*)

An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki and their brethren to the Lamanites (Alma 21, *originally Alma 13*)

The Commandment of Alma to his Son Helaman (Alma 36, *originally Alma 17*)

The Commandments of Alma to his Son Shiblon (Alma 38, *originally Alma 18*)

The Commandments of Alma to his Son Corianton (Alma 39, *originally Alma 19*)

The account of the people of Nephi and their wars and dissensions in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days (Alma 45, *originally Alma 21*)

The prophecy of Nephi the Son of Helaman (God threatens the people of Nephi that he will visit them in his anger to their utter destruction except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites) (Helaman 7, *originally Helaman 3*)

The prophesy of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephites
(Helaman 13, *originally Helaman 5*)

Jesus Christ showeth himself unto the people of Nephi as
the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful
and did minister unto them. And on this wise did he show
himself unto them. (3 Nephi 11, *originally 3 Nephi 5*)

The words of Christ which he spake unto his disciples, the
twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them
(Moroni 2, *originally Moroni 2*)

The manner which the disciples, which were called the elders
of the church, ordained priests and teachers (Moroni 3,
originally Moroni 3)

The manner of their elders and priests administering
the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church (Moroni 4,
originally Moroni 4)

The manner of administering the wine (Moroni 5, *originally
Moroni 5*)

An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me Moroni (and
it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry)
(Moroni 8, *originally Moroni 8*)

The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni (Moroni 9,
originally Moroni 9)

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