



Type: Magazine Article

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## Time Involved in Translating the Book of Mormon

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Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (February 1935), p. 49

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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**Abstract:** That the bulk of the translation was done from 7 April 1829 to June 1829 is evidence that the Book of Mormon was of divine origin. The book agrees in doctrine with the Bible and with archaeological facts that were virtually unknown in backwoods New York in 1830.

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# Time Involved in Translating the Book of Mormon

By Dr. Frederick J. Pack

[Editor's note: The following article is a stenographic copy of a short talk given by Dr. Pack at a recent meeting of the General Board of the Deseret Sunday School Union, at Salt Lake City. We regard it as well worth publishing in *The Instructor*.]



Dr. Pack

Concerning the length of time involved in translating the Book of Mormon: Joseph Smith received the plates from the Angel Moroni September 22, 1827, and almost immediately thereafter went to Harmony, Pennsylvania, some seventy-five miles to the south-eastward. During the early part of this winter the Prophet transcribed a few of the characters present on the plates and translated an even smaller number. In the latter part of February, 1828, Martin Harris took some of these transcriptions to New York. Slightly later in the same year the Prophet translated sufficient of the record to make 116 pages of manuscript, Martin Harris acting as scribe. This manuscript was lost in the summer of 1828. Little or no further translating was done until the beginning of April, 1829.

Oliver Cowdery arrived at the Prophet's home in Harmony, April 5, 1829, and two days later, April 7, assumed the position as scribe to the Prophet. Thereafter the work of translation proceeded more or less without interruption until the early part of June. At this time the Prophet and Oliver moved from Harmony to Fayette, New York. The remaining part of the Book of Mormon was translated at the Whitmer home, this place.

It is apparent from a revelation (Section 17 of the Doctrine and Covenants) given un-

der date of June, 1929, that at that time the Book of Mormon had been translated to the place where the promise is made that witnesses should be provided. This promise appears on page 487 of the Book of Mormon. In other words, from the 7th of April to some time not later than the close of June, 487 pages of the Book of Mormon were translated.

This is equivalent to nearly six pages per day. It is also equivalent to 3,100 words per day. It is equivalent to writing two gospel doctrine lessons per day. It must be remembered, too, that the Prophet had other duties besides those relating to the translation. He preached many sermons. Many people came to see him. He received eleven revelations. Not taking into account any of these outside duties, however, he translated 3,100 words every 24 hours for a period of 85 days. This is the equivalent, as I have said, to the writing of two gospel doctrine lessons every 24 hours. It is the equivalent, Dr. Wahlquist, to writing your book in 17 days. It is equivalent to writing the entire *Instructor* for one year in 140 days. It is equivalent to writing all the lessons for all the departments for the entire year, in 150 days. It is equivalent to writing all the material in *The Instructor*, all the material in the quarterlies for all departments of the Sunday School, Dr. Wahlquist's book added, in ten months, giving 60 days for vacation.

My point is that this young man, at the age of twenty-three—or at any other age—could not accomplish this great work without divine help. Moreover, let me warn against any hasty conclusion that the material written by this boy prophet did not conform to exacting requirements. Indeed, quite to the contrary, it had to agree precisely with biblical doctrine, and it had to agree—at least not be out of harmony—with the findings of archeologists in America. The latter was of course the most exacting of the requirements, since very little was known concerning American archeology at that time. I mention, therefore, that these truths point clearly to the divinity of the work and mission of Joseph Smith.

And I will show unto this people that I had other sheep, and that they were a branch of the house of Jacob; and I will bring to light their marvelous works, which they did in my name; yea, and I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them, and, behold, they shall not deny that which you have received, but they shall build it up, and shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me.

—*Doctrine and Covenants* 10:60, 61, 62.