



Type: Magazine Article

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## A Visit to David Whitmer

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Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (15 February 1887), p. 55

Published by: George Q. Cannon & Sons

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**Abstract:** David Whitmer, the final surviving witness for the Book of Mormon, bore an undimmed testimony of the Book of Mormon and told of the visit of one of the three Nephites.

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was claimed for them by Joseph Smith, it is now my purpose to prove. We have first the evidence of eleven witnesses, besides Joseph himself, who saw and examined the plates.

Upon any other point than this, the testimony of any one of these men would have been deemed conclusive by all his neighbors and acquaintances, or even in a court of law. Aside from this we have the fact, which must be recognized, that unless Joseph Smith obtained the plates in the way described by him he never possessed them; for with his poverty it would have been impossible for him to obtain any such treasure. And further than this, at the hour that this record was first exhibited to him he probably had no idea that such a thing existed as engraving upon metal plates. A youth to whom printed books were a great rarity could scarcely be expected to know much of ancient and hidden modes of writing. Again, we have proof from the conduct and words of his early persecutors that he did possess a treasure of this kind—a treasure so valuable that all the avarice and hatred of whole communities were directed against him in order that men might obtain the valuables for their own sordid use. The history of his early persecution because he possessed the gold plates which bore the record now appearing as the Book of Mormon, shows that some of his wicked neighbors had knowledge which to them was convincing that he had in possession what he claimed. It will be remembered that when Joseph journeyed into Pennsylvania for the purpose of obtaining a peaceful retreat, where he could engage in the work of translation, his avaricious persecutors near Manchester, New York, fearing to see the treasure depart from their neighborhood, even went so far as to engage the law in their behalf, and search warrants were issued and served upon him by people who intended to wrest from him the treasure entrusted to his care. To this day in the region of Manchester the well-authenticated tradition exists of many of these things; and every old settler who is well acquainted knows, by general repute at least, if not by better evidence, that Joseph Smith was in possession of engraved plates.

## A VISIT TO DAVID WHITMER.

BY E. STEVENSON.

I RECENTLY had great pleasure in visiting and conversing with David Whitmer, the only surviving witness of the three whose names are prefixed to the Book of Mormon, testifying that an angel came down from heaven and laid the plates before their eyes, and they were commanded to bear witness of the truth of what they saw and knew to be correct. Though now very aged, his testimony is still undimmed, and his countenance always brightens in speaking of this most memorable event in his history. Already I had visited this witness on two previous occasions, and in neither of my visits did I find his demeanor, belief or assertions changed concerning this important matter.

On the 2nd day of this year I left Kansas City, Mo., and rode forty-two miles on the cars to Lexington Junction, where I unfortunately failed to make train connection to go five miles futher to Richmond, Ray Co., the home of him I sought. But, determined not to be baffled, I decided to walk the distance, though the cold was intense, the thermometer going to 17° below zero. I subsequently felt repaid for my pains in the pleasant reception and agreeable conversation with Mr. Whitmer.

He wore a black suit of clothes and dark close-fitting cap on his head. He appeared very noble to me, and his face seemed to beam with intelligence.

He told me that in the beginning of June, 1829, he received a letter from the Prophet asking him to come to Palmyra and convey him to his father's house, that he might there be able to work on the translation of the Book of Mormon. The journey required about three days each way, and it was necessary to put up at inns on the way. David having forgotten the names of the inns and their proprietors, Joseph looked through the seer stone and told him them. Oliver Cowdery made a note of these, and by inquiry on the journey found that the Prophet had stated correctly.

Soon after arriving at his father's, David was baptized in Seneca Lake. This was about the middle of June, and shortly thereafter he was ordained an Elder, he being the third in the Church, as he claims, to receive this ordination.

While on the return journey from Palmyra, David noticed a somewhat aged-looking man who approached them on the road. He had a very pleasant face, about which, however, there seemed something peculiar, and he carried a knapsack on his back fastened with straps which crossed his breast. David asked him to take a ride, but he declined, saying: "I am going over to Cumorah," and then disappeared very suddenly, though there was no chance for him to secrete himself in the open country through which the party was then passing. All felt very strange concerning this personage and the Prophet was besought to inquire of the Lord concerning him. Shortly afterwards, David relates, the Prophet looked very white but with a heavenly appearance and said their visitor was one of the three Nephites to whom the Savior gave the promise of life on earth until He should come in power. After arriving home, David again saw this personage, and Mother Whitmer, who was very kind to Joseph Smith, is said to have seen not only this Nephite, but to have also been shown by him the sealed and unsealed portions of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated.

THE KIND OF BOY SHELLEY WAS.—The poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley was a remarkable genius, but as a man he was by no means an example to be imitated—nor as a boy, either.

Shelley, as a small boy, was an eccentric little being. He used to dress his four sisters to represent fiends, and filling a fire stove full of inflammable fluid, and setting it aflame, he would marshal the diabolical procession to the back door. His great delight was to teach his infant brother school-boy words, and his first attempt at his knowledge of the devil was an innocent "debbie." As a boy at Eton, he would watch the livelong night for ghosts and consulted his books in order to find out how to raise one. His diet in after years was meagre enough to bring him weird fancies. Bread became his chief sustenance, and his pockets were well stored with it. A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, devouring bread at intervals amid his profound abstractions. Sometimes he ate raisins with it, and his sweet tooth was immense. Occasionally when walking in London he would suddenly dash into a baker's shop and emerge with a supply of bread, which he would break and offer a half to his companion, and very much surprised he would be when anybody refused the delicacy.