

**Michael Hubbard MacKay, Gerrit J. Dirkmat, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and William G. Hartley, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828-June 1831*.** Volume one of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow, general eds. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013. 558 pp. Hardback: \$54.95. ISBN-13: 978-1-60907-577-4.

*Reviewed by H. Michael Marquardt*

*Documents, Volume 1: July 1828-June 1831*, is divided chronologically into five parts. Except for the introductions, footnotes and end material, it contains transcripts of 89 documents. The transcriptions for the most part are good. Notwithstanding the agreement of Josiah Stowell and others found in Appendix 1, it is noticeable that no emphasis is given to historical documents in the early life of Joseph Smith (JS) prior to his first recorded revelation of July 1828. For example, Smith's known activities and his treasure seeking adventures are omitted. The documents for the period 1819-1827 are listed elsewhere in the review.

The book proposes that after the Joseph Smith Sr. household moved in with Hyrum Smith's family in the log house, this structure was located in the township of Palmyra, Wayne County, New York. Yet during the period between April 1829 and October 1830, before the families removed to the New York counties of Seneca and Broome, visitors and documents refer to the Smiths' residence as being in Manchester, Ontario County.

The location of the Smith families is important since the volume repeatedly wants the reader to believe that Palmyra was the place where the log house was located. The editors/authors want to divert where the Church of Christ was established on April 6, 1830. The way they do this is first, to change the date of LDS D&C 19 from March 1830, received at Manchester, New York, to the summer of 1829. Second, in connection with Hyrum Smith's residence, they maintain that the house was located in the Township of Palmyra. One reason they do this is because the volume uses a later account for the location of the church organization as occurring in Fayette, New York. They do not follow the earliest sources that proclaim that the church was organized in Manchester.

Though there are no known minutes of the April 6 organizational meeting, it was held in Manchester. What the volume editors want the reader to think is that anyone who says the church was organized in Manchester, at the Smiths' residence, would be stuck with that location being in Palmyra. The book does not refer to the U.S. Census for 1830 that enumerates the Smiths in Manchester.

Volume 1 introduction starts with Joseph Smith obtaining "a set of gold plates on 22 September 1827, written in an ancient language" (xxv). The editors state that Smith "did not claim to translate the Book of Mormon through his own knowledge of ancient languages" (xxix). There are a few pages that propose to tell how JS would work on his "translation." The idea was stated that there were "two separate instruments" used: two stones ("interpreters" or "spectacles") and "seer stones" or a "seer stone" placed in a hat. What was placed in the hat was called by the biblical term Urim and Thummim. An early reference to "spectacles" was found in the elusive issue of the *Palmyra (NY) Freeman* of August 11, 1829, now referenced in this volume. The authors do not state whether JS used the gold plates during the translation process.

The revelations produced by Joseph Smith for individuals and the church, are explained matter of fact:

Smith did not feel that the revelatory texts he produced were beyond refinement; he made revisions to many of the revelations and authorized others to edit them for publication. . . . Aside from making editorial changes, Joseph Smith at times greatly expanded the revelations themselves. (xxviii)

Not mentioned, but in the same light, Smith redacted the story of the early years of his life including background events associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith's next work was a "three-year project" of revising or making a "translation" of the King James Version of the Bible. Discussing Smith's revision of the Bible, this introduction states, "This was not a translation in the usual sense; he did not render the earliest Hebrew or Greek texts into English" (xxxii). This is an important statement, inasmuch as Smith's revision was his commentary for the church members.

When quoting from William E. McLellin's 1849 publication on JS delivering revelations (xxxiii), the authors do not disclose that McLellin also included David Whitmer's inspired 1847 revelations in his description.

Part 1: July 1828-March 1829 (3 items)

The editors state that "No JS documents created before the fall of 1827 have survived" (3). A note does mention the possibility of a November 1, 1825 printed agreement found in Appendix 1. However, there were significant pre-autumn-1827 records that mentioned Joseph Smith, which the volume fails to include:

A) 1819 Case of Joseph Smith [Sr.] vs Jeremiah Hurlbut, January 22, 1819. JS Jr testifies on behalf of his father. Record of Joseph Smith Sr., summer 1818, "To Joseph half Day Drawing hay 0.25." Ontario County Records Center and Archives, Canandaigua, New York.

B) 1826 Bill of Justice Albert Neely, "same [i.e. The People] vs Joseph Smith The Glass looker March 20, 1826." Chenango County Office Building, Norwich, New York.

C) 1826 Bill of Constable Philip De Zeng, "Serving Warrant on Joseph Smith & travel." Chenango County Office Building, Norwich, New York.

D) Docket Book of Albert Neely (original not extant, printed text only).

Examination of Joseph Smith, March 20, 1826, to be included in the first volume of the Legal and Business Records series of the JS Papers. Joseph Smith ("Prisoner") made the following statement in his defense as a treasure seer before Justice of the Peace Albert Neely:

Prisoner examined: says that he came from the town of Palmyra, and had been at the house of Josiah Stowel[1] in Bainbridge most of time since; had small part of time been employed in looking for mines, but the major part had been employed by said Stowel[1] on his farm, and going to school. That he had a certain stone which he had occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the

bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel[1] several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel[1] had been engaged in digging for them. That at Palmyra he pretended to tell by looking at this stone where coined money was buried in Pennsylvania, and while at Palmyra had frequently ascertained in that way where lost property was of various kinds; that he had occasionally been in the habit of looking through this stone to find lost property for three years, but of late had pretty much given it up on account of its injuring his health, especially his eyes, made them sore; that he did not solicit business of this kind, and had always rather declined having anything to do with this business.

First printed in Charles Marshall, "The Original Prophet. By a Visitor to Salt Lake City," *Fraser's Magazine* 7 (February 1873):229.

E) Receipt by Joel and Levi Thayer of Joseph Smith Jr. to Abraham Fish's account, Palmyra, New York, March 10, 1827. Receipt listed in Calendar of Documents, 392. JS pays \$4.00 to the account of A. Fish at the Joel and Levi Thayer's store on Main Street: "Rec[eive]d of Joseph Smith Jr Four dollars which is credited to the account of A[braham]. Fish." Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library.

F) Account Book of Lemuel Durfee, entry for August 1827: "august Credit by Joseph Smith [Sr.] by Mo[w]ing three days & Joseph Smith, Ju Jnr. two days Mowing & Hiram Smith one day Mowing even." Palmyra's King's Daughters Free Library, Palmyra, New York.

Part 2: April 1829-March 1830 (23 items)

In a footnote the editors explain that the JS history may have skipped a few months. "During the period from June 1829 to the end of March 1830, only one JS revelation is known" (the Canadian copyright revelation). They are able to state this because they suggest that LDS D&C 19, traditionally attributed to March 1830, was somehow actually given during the summer of 1829 (27n32; nonetheless stipulating, "though possible Mar. 1830" [85]).

The authors say, "By the end of March, when "JS returned to Palmyra in company with Joseph Knight Sr." and "their arrival in Palmyra" (28) the pair met Martin Harris. This idea that the Smith home was located in Palmyra is repeated again and again to make the reader believe their assertion. Joseph Knight's reminiscence is clear that in the spring of 1830 he took JS "out to Manchester to his Fathers." Again volume 1 says that "JS soon left for Fayette, where the church was organized on 6 April 1830" (28). Knight and Smith "arrived in Palmyra in late March" (106). This is incorrect as the only source is Joseph Knight's account, and he mentions that he took JS to Manchester and witnessed Joseph Sr.'s baptism.

A further example of this editorial diversion occurs when the authors discuss letters written by Oliver Cowdery from Manchester to Joseph Smith on November 6 and December 28, 1829. "At the time he wrote this letter," they claim, "Cowdery was likely at the Hyrum Smith residence in Palmyra. If this is the case, the letter was written in Palmyra, not in Manchester" (98n382, 103n407).

Concerning the revelation to sell a copyright of the Book of Mormon in Canada the book says that "Hiram Page recalled that a small group of church leaders were assembled at the Smith

log home in Palmyra Township when this revelation came” (109). What Page wrote, spelling not corrected, is that “it was told me we were to go by revelation but when we had assembled at father Smiths; the[re was] no revelation for us to go but we were all anxious to get a r[evila]tion to go; and when it came we were to go to kingston,” nothing about Palmyra. In fact the revelation was received at Manchester, Ontario County as the copy of the revelation states. Besides this the Smith’s log home was located in Manchester as Hyrum Smith was taxed in 1830 for 15 acres on Lot 1. The editors do not mention anything concerning the use of the 1830 U.S. census for Manchester in the book. The census does list Joseph Smith [Sr.] as living in Manchester along with his neighbors.

Another indication that the authors were not careful is when they say that “Joseph reportedly enquired of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim and according to [David] Whitmer received a revelation” (110). Whitmer did not mention the use of Urim and Thummim but said that “Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it ... the following revelation came through the stone.”

Again it is stated, “Page, however, left no indication in his recollection that he was bitter about the revelation or his trip to Canada.” The reason Hiram Page wrote to William E. McLellin was that he considered that Joseph erred in this and other revelations and had a desire for filthy lucre. The volume is correct that those who went to Canada “failed to obtain a copyright.”

### Part 3: April 1830-September 1830 (26 items)

Besides the Manuscript History of Joseph Smith which mentions at meeting at Fayette, New York on April 6, 1830, the book cites David Whitmer saying the church was “established at his father’s house in Fayette Township.” Whitmer’s recollection fits more closely with the June or September 1830 church conference rather than a small group in Manchester. Revelations printed in the Book of Commandments (in press in 1833) that had a date of April 6 (except for LDS D&C21) and others with the location of Manchester are said to be “erroneously associated with Manchester” and “erroneously associated with 6 April when first published in 1833” (113n1). This is just guess work on the part of the editors. They present no solid documentation to support such assertions.

Now comes the interesting part as the authors call the Joseph Knight Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith accounts “problematic,” expecting specific dates and lawyer-like precision. But the “unpolished and disjointed narrative” of Joseph Knight Sr., “clearly claims that Joseph Smith Sr. and Martin Harris were baptized near the Smith farm in Manchester Township but offers no concrete timeline” (114n7). The authors do not want to write that the baptisms occurred on April 6. They also state: “JS’s history nonetheless allows for the possibility that JS returned to his parents’ home shortly after the organization in Fayette. If so, the stay was a short one. JS was probably back in Fayette on 11 April, when Oliver Cowdery preached the first sermon of the church to a large crowd and baptized several people” (114).

*Documents, Volume 1* accepts the locations given in Revelation Book 1 (A Book of Commandments and Revelations). There is no suggestion that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery traveled from one location to another on the same day. There is only one location where at least four events (baptisms, ordinations, church organization and revelations) occurred, and that is Manchester.

In discussing the first of five revelations given to individuals on April 6, 1830, the book indicates that “the editors of the Book of Commandments printed the revelations separately and

gave each the date of 6 April 1830, that date appears to be in error and was dropped two years later, in 1835 . . . JS’s history and other sources suggest that the revelations date between the 6 April organization and an 11 April meeting” (131). While it is possible errors could occur in printing any text the most likely reason why specific dates and locations were omitted in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants is because that book was to be like a church manual and not like the more careful publication of the Book of Commandments. Besides Oliver Cowdery, who was present on April 6, worked on the Book of Commandments. The history of Joseph Smith was compiled using the 1835 D&C which was not attempting to be very specific in historical matters as texts were altered for that publication.

As mentioned in Part 2, the wording “likely at Hyrum’s residence in Palmyra” is repeated over and over (131n108, 132n113, 133n117, 134n126, 136n134).

The historical introduction for LDS D&C 27 presented challenges for the editors as indicated in their comments:

In his later history, however, JS said that the first paragraph of the 1835 text “was written at this time [early August 1830], and the remainder in the September following.” JS, then, affirmed that the first part should be dated August 1830 and the remainder September 1830, in which case the date of 4 September 1830 found in the earlier printed versions may have reflected the date of dictation of the second portion. (165)

The reason for this suggestion is that the 1835 publication was for church members and well over 400 words, including priesthood restoration, were added to the words of the angel. The shortest text and the exact date of September 4, 1830 is preferred by scholars prior to the words being modified. The idea that there were two portions of the revelation, as explained in JS’s history, is not historical but was used to explain the additional wording inserted in 1835.

#### Part 4: October 1830-January 1831 (13 items)

The book provides historical information from the 1831 letters of former church member Ezra Booth to Ira Eddy, published in the *Ohio Star* (203-205). This is to be commended as the Joseph Smith Papers acknowledge his insights.

In reference to LDS D&C 38 the book does point out, “At this time, JS apparently viewed Ohio as the land for his followers’ inheritance; in February 1831, he directed that all elders “who can be spared will come here [Kirtland] without delay if possible this by Commandment of the Lord as he has a great work for them all in this our inheritance. (Letter to Martin Harris, 22 Feb. 1831, herein.) (231-32n196) This helps readers to understand the gathering to Kirtland, Ohio.

#### Part 5: February-June 1831 (24 items)

In documenting a letter that Joseph Smith sent to his brother Hyrum the authors indicate that “Hyrum and his family moved from their log house in Palmyra to Newel Knight’s house at Colesville, New York.” A footnote states, “At the time, Levi Daggett, a resident of Palmyra, was attempting to collect a debt from him for shoeing horses. (Daggett v. Smith [J.P. Ct. 1830], Pierce, Docket Book, 77.)” (268n152) This provides additional evidence, ironically, that Hyrum

Smith in fact lived in Manchester rather than Palmyra, since Nathan Pierce was a Justice of the Peace (J.P.) in Manchester (522).

For the minutes of the general conference of June 3, 1831, the book states, “The absence of accounts of these manifestations in the featured text illustrates the narrow focus of many written minutes in the early church, which omitted most details of sermons and other events associated with the meetings” (322). This shows the importance of Ezra Booth’s letters in filling in events that occurred at this conference.

On the whole *Documents, Volume 1* has problems with the historical record. It does mention that Joseph Smith’s history “must be used with caution” (507). The background to the documents for the most part repeats information over and over. The errors pointed out in this review will likely not be corrected. Readers should be careful in taken everything as fact.