

Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*. Vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. Series editors: Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008. xlvii, 506 pp. Maps, geographical and biographical directories, editorial notes, photographs, charts. Cloth: \$49.95; ISBN 978-1-57008-849-0

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Journals, Volume 1 is the first volume in a three-volume set of journals kept for Joseph Smith, founding president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This handsome book is the inaugural volume in the Joseph Smith Papers project that church scholars have been working on for the last number of years. This is an official publication, massive in its scope and a welcome addition to historical documents in the study of the history and scriptures of the Latter-day Saints. Additional information on the project, including color images and an index to this volume, can be found on its web site at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/Default.htm>.

This book contains reference materials, illustrations, source notes that include dimensions, the names of the scribes of each journal, and other useful information about the volume. The paper and binding are library quality, designed for long use. Likewise the historical introductions give an overview of events that occurred during the time period of each journal. There is some repetition in the introductions if the book is read straight through, although the overlap is useful for readers looking at a particular document or period.

It is important to read the pages on the editorial method, especially for the transcription symbols (lix-lxiv), with which the reader of the text will need to be familiar. Though transcribers of documents will not agree precisely on the way to present a handwritten text, this volume of the pre-Nauvoo journals of Joseph Smith will be the standard.

The five journals printed in this volume are: (1) Journal, 1832–34; (2) Journal, 1835–36; (3) Journal, March-September 1838; (4) Journal, September-October 1838; and (5) Journal, 1839. The first journal's opening entries are in Joseph Smith's hand, which he kept sparingly during the early years of the Church. The second journal includes a few entries by Smith (62, 64, 135); and the rest are by scribes. Each of the 1838–39 journals was kept by a scribe who reported Smith's activities, usually from a distance. These journals were used as a source for the multivolume manuscript history of the Church, commenced in 1838–39, but not completed until the 1850s. The opening entry of the 1832–34 journal includes these words written by Joseph Smith: "Joseph Smith Jrs Book for Record Baught on the 27th of November 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute account of all things that come under my observation &c— — oh may God grant that I may be directed in all my thoughts Oh bless thy Servent Amen" (9).

Thus began Joseph Smith's attempt to keep a record of his activities and preserve letters sent from Church headquarters. Record-keeping had actually started in 1830—an effort to which Joseph Smith attached considerable importance—but now he started working on a brief history of his life, making his record in what would become the first of two letter books. Joseph Smith commenced this attempt on November 27 but stopped a few days later on December 6, 1832. The record recommences, again in Joseph's hand, in October 1833 in preparation for a Church mission to Upper Canada. Smith wrote entries in a narrative style reflecting what occurred on the trip. This style was continued by Sidney Rigdon who at times is off by one day in dating the

events he is recording. Smith and Sidney Rigdon took turns in keeping the record until they arrived back in Kirtland. Oliver Cowdery dates that return, in Joseph's voice, at November 4 "at 10, A.M. found my family all well according to the promise of the Lord. for which blessings I feel to thank his holy name; Amen" (16).

Accounts of important meetings were copied into the journal at a later date, including the January 11, 1834, meeting of the United Firm (25–26), and events connected with Philastus Hurlbut's opposition to Joseph Smith on March 13 and 18 and June 21, 1833 (27). Smith, brought suit against Hurlbut for threatening his life, and in preparation for the civil court trial, wrote that he was a wicked man and hoped that the Lord would "deliver him to the fowls of heaven and his bones shall be cast to the blast of the wind" (37). Hurlbut died in 1883 at the age of seventy-four. As Joseph Smith's earliest journal, it contains the greatest percentage of entries in his own handwriting but also launched the pattern that later became standard of having scribes record his activities.

The next journal begins September 22, 1835, and ends with the entry of April 3, 1836. In contrast to the 1832–34 journal, the 1835–36 journal is a carefully constructed record that may have been written with an audience in mind. It began about the time that Oliver Cowdery was recording patriarchal blessings in a separate volume for Joseph Smith Sr., the Prophet's father and the first Church patriarch. Cowdery made the first entry in Josephs Jr.'s journal on September 22, 1835: "This day Joseph Smith, jr. labored with Oliver Cowdery, in obtaining and writing blessings. We were thronged a part of the time with company, so that our labor, in this thing, was hindered; but we obtained many precious things, and our souls were blessed. O Lord, may thy Holy Spirit be with thy servants forever. Amen" (61–62).

Joseph Smith also wrote an entry that same day but incorrectly recorded the date as September 23: "This day Joseph Smith, Jr. was at home writing blessings for my most beloved Brotheren <I>, have been hindered by a multitude of visitors but the Lord has blessed our Souls this day" (62). This 1835-36 journal is the longest in this volume, with 195 handwritten pages, and contains a record of events not found elsewhere. On the first page Oliver Cowdery includes the title of the work, "Sketch Book for the use of Joseph Smith, jr" (61). It is a description of this particular journal of Smith which includes minutes, revelations, letters, Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision and Book of Mormon, the days he worked on translating the Egyptian papyri that became the Book of Abraham, and both full texts and synopses of patriarchal blessings. Letters were copied into the book, and there is a partial record of the construction of the "House of the Lord" (Kirtland Temple).

Frederick G. Williams was the scribe for entries made between October 3 and 7, 1835. On October 29, 1835, Warren Parrish became Joseph Smith's scribe (76), recording daily events from Smith's dictation and possibly from written notes or a combination of both, covering the preceding three weeks (October 8–29). The October 8 entry says only: "nothing of note transpired as we now recollect" (71).

What we learn that was previously not emphasized is that there are six "marks of adhesive wafers" (53) where either notes or pages were attached to the journal page for the scribe to copy into the journal. The entry for November 12 includes instructions to members of the Council of the Twelve. Joseph assures them that he has the utmost confidence in them and announces the ordinance of washing of feet. Smith asked a question and answered it when he said, "When or wher[e] has God suffered one of the witnesses or first Elders of this church <to> fall? never nor nowhere" (96-97). Joseph emphasized: "The order of the house of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it

will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the celestial kingdom of God and enjoy it forever” (98).

On November 14 a revelation for Warren Parrish told that he should be “privileged with writing much of my word” (100), foreshadowing his scribal work with Joseph Smith on what became the Book of Abraham. For one four-day stretch when Parrish was not available, Smith wrote his own entries; Frederick G. Williams also made entries for another four days (135–38). Other identified scribes included Sylvester Smith and Warren Cowdery.

A significant number of 1836 entries describe meetings in which priesthood holders cleansed themselves for the forthcoming promised endowment with power, and many entries appear to have been dictated by Joseph Smith personally. For example on January 21, 1836, Church leaders washed their bodies in water, perfumed themselves, and later met in President Smith’s west room on the third floor of the “Chapel” (Kirtland Temple). The Church presidency anointed their heads and pronounced blessings upon them. Joseph told of receiving a glorious vision of the celestial kingdom, including the gate and the throne of God. “I saw father Adam,” Smith said, “and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, my brother Alvin” all in the highest kingdom. The voice of the Lord said that those who would have received the gospel if they had been permitted to live were heirs of the celestial kingdom. Children who died before they are accountable are saved in the same kingdom (167–68; now LDS D&C 137). Smith saw the Twelve Apostles in the celestial kingdom of God. Others also received visions that evening and the group dismissed between 1:00 and 2:00 in the morning.

The first session of the long-promised solemn assembly in the Kirtland House of the Lord was held on March 27. Joseph Smith delivered the dedicatory prayer. A few days later on April 3, Smith and Oliver Cowdery, after prayer, beheld in vision the Savior who accepted the dedication. They jointly received three visions in which the “Keys of the gathering of Israel” were committed to them by Moses, followed by the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” by Elias; and the “Keys of this dispensation,” (that is, the last dispensation) by Elijah the Prophet (219–22; now LDS D&C 110).

The March-September 1838 journal or “Scriptory Book” follows the activities of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon of the First Presidency. Most of this record consists of copies of documents including letters, minutes of meetings, and revelations. Except for one revelation the handwriting is that of George W. Robinson. The record book commences on March 13, 1838, and notes the arrival of Joseph Smith and family the next day at Far West, Missouri. Included are the explanations of the book of Isaiah (239–40), and a September 4, 1837, letter that included the minutes of a conference held the previous day in Kirtland (240–45). These items are of interest as George Robinson arrived in Far West at the end of March, for a letter states “yesterday br Robinson arrived here” (247). Robinson, who was a clerk in Kirtland, would have needed to copy the various documents in this record after his arrival. The daily journal entries start on April 27 including Robinson’s words, “myself also engaged in keeping this record” (260).

A few observations can be made at this point. In a Joseph Smith letter dated March 29, 1838, and copied into the record book, he mentions the destruction of the printing office in Kirtland on January 16: “we presume to believe must have been occasioned by the Parrishites or more properly the Aristocrats or Anarchys as we believe” (246). There is no footnote here to indicate that Smith was mistaken and that the building in which the press was contained was burned by Church members and not by the rumored “Parrishites,” although it is true that Warren Parrish was no longer affiliated with Mormonism by the end of December 1837. Benjamin F. Johnson wrote in his life's story, "The printing office and material which our enemies thought to

use to bolster up a church organization opposed to the Prophet was set on fire by Bro Lyman R. Sherman and destroyed."¹

Another insight into the Scriptorium Book is a letter by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on April 9, 1838, to John Whitmer, who served as Church historian before his excommunication on March 10. They wanted a corrected version of his Church history, since “we never supposed you capable of writing a history” and “[know] your incompetency as a historian.” If they did not receive his history (which they did not), they announced their intention to write another (249). Later in the month on April 27, they commenced a draft of the early life of Joseph Smith that eventually became the history of the Church (260).

The Church trial of Oliver Cowdery is mentioned “as will be found recorded in the Church record of the city of Far West Book A,” also the trials of David Whitmer and Lyman E. Johnson in the same record (256–57). This record is a separate manuscript book from “Minute Book 2,” more commonly known as the Far West Record. The reason for the separate record is that Ebenezer Robinson wrote the original minutes, which Hosea Stout then copied into the Far West Record (“Minute Book 2”) in the early 1840s in Nauvoo.

It is always nice to read about Joseph Smith’s dogs. During a trip exploring the northern Missouri counties, he “put on his dog” after a large black wolf (271). The wolf survived the encounter by running faster than Smith’s dog. After the Fourth of July 1838 in Far West, when George Robinson wrote: “Shortly after Prests. J, Smith Jr S, Rigdon H. Smith and myself, left this place for Adam Ondi Awman [Adam-ondi-Ahman] we saw a deer or two on the way. Prest Smith set his dogs after them one of which was a gray hound which caught the deer but could not hold him, although he threw him down, yet he injured the dog so badly that he let him go, and we lost him, The race was quite amusing indeed” (276).

A highlight of this journal is contained in the historical introduction and footnotes describing the Danites, an extralegal body of men originally instructed to cleanse the Church of dissenters. Though the majority of Church members sustained Joseph Smith, some “prominent excommunicants,” such as Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, and John Whitmer, “remained in Caldwell County.” The editors explain: “Active in compelling their [the excommunicants’] departure was a new volunteer paramilitary organization of Mormon men called the Danites, of which Robinson was an officer. The Danites sought to rid the church of dissent, to ensure the fulfillment of church leaders’ directives, and later to help combat external threats against the Saints” (231).

One portion of the “Scriptorium Book” was subsequently crossed out. It contained a mention of the Danites including the words “This company or a part of them ex[h]ibited on the fourth day of July.” One word, written above the first line in George Robinson’s handwriting, is not part of the printed text (see photograph p. 292). It appears to be “Revelatr” [sic]. There is no note explaining why this word was omitted in the printed transcription (293). The notes for the entry of August 7, 1838, describing the First Presidency, General Elias Higbee, and others riding together, explain that Higbee “was ‘Captain General’ of the Danites—the ranking officer in the organization” (299 note 222). The glossary gives a lengthy definition of the organization (464).

¹ “A Life Review,” Benjamin Franklin Johnson Papers, 24, LDS Church History Library. The top of the manuscript page has the note: “Printing office burned by L R Sherman.” Also in Johnson, *My Life’s Review* (Independence, Missouri: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1947), 29-30.

What we learn in evaluating these three journals is that not all historical records were written on the days indicated. Some entries were made days or weeks afterward.² In fact, most of the records we read are copies—not the original letters, minutes, or revelations. This information helps us appreciate having the records in their present form. These records are also characterized by gaps. The longest of these gaps occurs in Kirtland between April 1836 and August 1837.

The last two journals (September-October 1838 and 1839) are different than the first three. James Mulholland kept the fourth journal from September 3 to October 6, 1838. It covers ten pages, beginning with this entry: “Commenced to write for President Joseph Smith Junr on Monday the 3rd September 1838” (324). The entries are very brief. For example, the entry for September 20 states, “At home from morning untill about 10 oclock went out on horseback & returned at about sunset or rather before it—at home all evening” (328). The editors of *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*, did not include Mulholland’s personal journal, which immediately follows the closing entry in the same notebook. This first entry is: “Commenced again to write for the Church on Monday the 22nd Aprile 1839.”

The fifth journal, again kept by Mulholland, includes entries from April 16 to October 15, 1839. On May 10 he wrote, referring to Joseph Smith in third person: “Moved with his family To Commerce Hancock Co. Ill.” (338). Entries starting on June 15 contain Smith’s dictation after visiting relatives and his return to Commerce on June 26 (341–43). In June and July, Mulholland worked on a manuscript draft of Joseph Smith’s history (entries for June 11, July 3–5). Mulholland later that year copied and enlarged this draft into what became Manuscript History Book A-1, pp. 1–59 and, later still, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, published in six volumes in 1902–12, after B. H. Roberts’s editing, with a seventh volume following in 1932.

Typographical errors are few. John H. Boynton should be John F. Boynton (188 note 383) and Oliver Cowdery’s letter is misdated 1837 instead of 1838 (251 note 90). Dean C. Jessee’s earlier edition of *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 2: Journal, 1832-1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:288–300, 308–16, included a December 16, 1838, letter of Joseph Smith copied into the Scriptorium Book and an additional journal of James Mulholland covering April 22–October 23, 1839; but neither item appears in this compilation.

I was disappointed in the compiled biographical directory near the end of the book. Only a glance shows mistaken information. For example, Lyman E. Johnson died in 1859 not 1856; Luke Johnson arrived in Salt Lake Valley in September 1853 not July 1847; William E. McLellin died on March 14, 1883 not April 24; and Brigham Young was baptized on April 9, 1832 not April 15.

Journals, Volume 1 is a beautifully bound volume with high-quality paper. The typeface is easy to read. The book is a significant improvement in historiography of Joseph Smith. This is a scholarly work but simple enough for a general audience. The editors should be proud of their work. I recommend the book.

² Here are some examples demonstrating the lag between the date of an event and, set off with //, the approximate date of the event’s transcription. Page numbers are in parentheses: January 11, 1834 (25-26)//January 28, 1834; March-June 1833 (27-28)//January 28, 1834; October 8-29, 1835 (71-79)//October 29, 1835; October 23, 1835 (111-12)//November 28, 1835; March 13-19, 1838 (237)//March 29, 1838; September 3-4, 1837 (240-45)//March 29, 1838; January 12, 1838 (281-84)//July 8, 1838; July 23, 1837 (306-8)//September 3, 1838; June 15-26, 1839 (341-43)//June 26, 1839.