

*In contrast to traditional LDS church history, the first baptisms, the founding meeting, the ordinations of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and the revelations of 6 April 1830 all took place in Manchester, New York. Peter Whitmer Sr.'s log home in Fayette was afterwards the site of the first three Church conferences, as well as the organization of the Fayette branch on 11 April 1830. For these important conferences, it should retain a fundamental historical and sentimental position, but not for the location of its organization.*

# AN APPRAISAL OF MANCHESTER AS LOCATION FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

By H. Michael Marquardt

THE EARLIEST ACCOUNTS OF  
THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH  
AT THE HYRUM SMITH LOG CABIN IN  
MANCHESTER, NEW YORK

**A**SK MOST LATTER-DAY SAINTS when and where the Church was organized and most will say that it was founded on the sixth of April 1830 at Fayette, New York. This tradition is taught in Church curriculum and official periodicals.<sup>1</sup> However, a lesser-known and earlier tradition places the principal organizing meeting in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, on 6 April 1830. The sources and documents relating to this location are relatively extensive and derive from both Mormons and non-Mormons who were present on that day in 1830.

Although technically the process of organizing the Church began with baptisms in May and June 1829 and culminated with the first Church conference in June 1830, no formal ecclesiastical organization occurred before the 6 April 1830 meeting.<sup>2</sup> There was discussion of the need to organize the Church. For example, prior to his arrival at Hyrum Smith's Manchester residence in the spring of 1830, Joseph Smith Jr. explained to supporter Joseph Knight Sr. that "there must be a Church formed But did not tell when."<sup>3</sup>

One of the earliest printed accounts of the organization of the Church was in the Book of Commandments. In July 1830, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, a number of Joseph Smith's revelations were arranged and copied with the assistance of John Whitmer. This included what became known as Chapters 2-27 of the Book of Commandments. In 1831, the revelations and their headings that were prepared for publication were put in chronological order before Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Ohio for Independence, Missouri. On 20 July 1833, the press, which was printing the revelations in book form, was destroyed and a number of yet-to-be-completed Book of Commandments were put together and used by early ministers of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

The Book of Commandments contains six revelations that it said were given in Manchester Township on 6 April 1830. Each revelation was addressed to a person who was at the organizational meeting: Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., Joseph Knight Sr., and Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>5</sup> However, when republished in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, the text of five of the six revelations were amalgamated into a single revelation, and the reference to

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location where the revelations were dictated was deleted.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the Book of Commandments, all references to the Church of Christ (the name of the Church at the time) in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (1832-33) refer to the township of Manchester as the location where the Church was organized on 6 April 1830.<sup>7</sup> For example, *The Evening and the Morning Star* of April 1833 reported: "Soon after the book of Mormon came forth, containing the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church was organized on the sixth of April, in Manchester; soon after, a branch was established in Fayette, and the June following, another in Colesville, New York."<sup>8</sup>

As to the identity of the six members present<sup>9</sup> at this foundational meeting, two early lists made in 1842-43 exist, but there may have been no actual roll call made at the time, and the names on the lists have slight variations. Brigham Young identifies "The names of thouse [sic] present at the organization" on 6 April 1830 as Joseph Smith Sr., Orrin Rockwell, Joseph Smith Jr., Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, and Oliver Cowdery.<sup>10</sup> In *Mormonism in All Ages* (1842), the list includes Joseph Smith Sr., Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Knight Sr., and Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>11</sup> This list is essentially the same as Young's except that Joseph Knight Sr. is mentioned in place of Orrin Rockwell. By Knight's own account, we know he was there, but he had not been baptized at the time. Knight said that at this meeting Joseph Smith Jr. received a revelation for the group. Knight recalled, "They all kneeled down and prayed" and Joseph Jr. "ex[h]orted them to Be faithfull in all things."<sup>12</sup> The names mentioned in Joseph Smith's manuscript history of the Church included Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Lucy Smith, Martin Harris, and a member of the Rockwell family, Sarah Rockwell.

It is unlikely that Lucy Smith or Sarah Rockwell would be counted as one of the original six even though they were present. More likely, the six original members were Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith (these four members had been baptized in 1829), Joseph Smith Sr., and Martin Harris (who were baptized the day the Church was organized).<sup>13</sup>

Years later, around 1858, a number of lists of those who were baptized in May-June 1829 and/or reported to have been present at the 6 April meeting were compiled and discussed by members of the LDS church.<sup>14</sup> These lists usually included the names of Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, and Hyrum Smith. These compilations were initiated over twenty-five years after the foundational meeting. Since there are no minutes of the meeting held on 6 April, it may be helpful to reconstruct some of the events.

Lucy Mack Smith mentions in her history that in 1829 her family had moved out of the frame house, which belonged to Lemuel Durfee and his heirs, and went back into their previous log house in the township of Manchester where Hyrum Smith and his family had been living.<sup>15</sup> In this building, Oliver Cowdery prepared the Book of Mormon printer's manuscript in 1829-30 and here individuals visited the Smith family until the Smiths moved to Waterloo, NY in the fall of 1830. Thus,

according to William Smith, the location of the organization meeting of the Church was at Hyrum Smith's "small log-house" in Manchester.<sup>16</sup> Circumstantial evidence places Hyrum Smith in the Palmyra, Manchester, vicinity on 7 April 1830. Hyrum Smith signed a note to Levi Daggett (of Palmyra) "dated 7th April, 1830 for \$20.07," which showed that he was in the area the day following the Church's organization.<sup>17</sup>

Lucy Smith fondly remembered the baptisms of her husband Joseph Sr. and Book of Mormon financier Martin Harris on 6 April, noting that

in the spring Joseph [Jr.] came up and preached to us after Oliver got throu[g]h with the Book [my] Husband and and [sic] Martin Harris was ba[p]tized. Joseph stood on the shore when his father came out of the water and as he took him by the hand, he cried out, Oh! my God I have lived to see my father baptized into the true church of Jesus Christ and he covered his face in his father[']s bosom and wept aloud for joy, as did Joseph of old when he beheld his father coming up into the land of Egypt, this took plaace [sic] on the sixth of April 1830, the day on which the church was organized.<sup>18</sup>

Although Lucy does not allude to her own baptism that same day, Manchester resident C. R. Stafford does.<sup>19</sup>

Joseph Knight Sr., a friend of the Smith family, transported Joseph Smith Jr. from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to the residence of Joseph's father and brother Hyrum in Manchester. Knight described the baptism and his visit of several days:

Now in the Spring of 1830 I went with my Team and took Joseph out to Manchester to his Father. . . . I stay[e]d a few Days wa[i]ting for some Books [of Mormon] to Be Bound. Joseph said there must Be a Church B[u]iltup. I had Be[e]n there several Days. Old Mr Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod [forward] to Be Babtise[d] for the first. They found a place in a lot a small Stream ran thro and they ware Babtized in the Evening Because of persecution. They went forward and was Babtized Being the first I saw Babtized in the new and everlasting Covenant.<sup>20</sup>

A number of persons from the Manchester area also related the first baptisms at the Church organization. C. R. Stafford, a neighbor of the Smiths, recalled that as a young man he "saw old Jo Smith [Sr.], his wife and Mrs [Sarah W.] Rockwell baptized by prophet Jo Smith."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, it is not entirely clear who performed the baptisms: Joseph Jr., Oliver Cowdery, or both of them. Martin Harris remarked that at least he was not baptized "untill the church Was organised by Joseph Smith the Prophet then I Was Babtised by the Hands of Oliver Cowdery."<sup>22</sup>

Manchester area resident Benjamin Saunders, another friend of the Smiths, remembered the "Smiths held meetings at their house. I was there when they first baptized. Oliver Cowd[e]ry did the baptizing. Old brother Smith was baptized at that time and I think old Mrs Rockwell."<sup>23</sup>

The place of baptism was in Crooked Brook, a stream in the northwest lot of Manchester township running past the Smith

residence to Palmyra. Joseph Knight Sr., a resident of Colesville, New York, mentioned that the baptisms occurred in "a small Stream."<sup>24</sup> Tradition has it that the Smiths dammed up the Crooked Brook (later Hathaway Creek) in order to have enough water to baptize Joseph Smith Sr., Martin Harris, Lucy Mack Smith, and Sarah Rockwell.<sup>25</sup> *A History of Ontario County, New York and Its People* mentions this stream: "Crooked brook, of Mormon fame, runs through the northwest part of the town, and it was in the waters of this stream that the Mormons baptized their early Saints. Dr. Stafford, an old resident of the village of Manchester, was present at the first baptism."<sup>26</sup> The Stafford and Rockwell families were residents of the township of Manchester and lived within a mile of the Smith house.<sup>27</sup> With the baptisms and confirmations on 6 April, the Church was organized in Manchester and those baptized became members of the Manchester church (branch).

In 1839, when Joseph Smith Jr. and scribe James Mulholland compiled the opening portion of his history, he recorded that the organization took place at Father Whitmer's house (Peter Whitmer Sr. lived in the township of Fayette) and that a revelation (now Doctrine and Covenants 21) was also received there.<sup>28</sup> This record was chronologically incorrect since the meetings at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, occurred after the 6 April meeting in Manchester. Except for the wording "about the same time" in Joseph Smith's history, his description fits those of his mother's, C. R. Stafford's, Benjamin Saunders's, and Joseph Knight Sr.'s. As published in 1842, Joseph Smith recalls, "Several persons who had attended the above meeting [6 April 1830], became convinced of the truth and came forward shortly after, and were received into the Church; among the rest, my own father and mother were baptized to my great joy and consolation, and about the same time, Martin Harris and A. [sic] Rockwell."<sup>29</sup>

James Mulholland, Smith's scribe for this portion of his history, wrote the following at the bottom of pages nine and ten of the 1839 draft: "Father Smith[,] Martin Harris baptized this evening 6th April. Mother Smith & Sister Rockwell 2 or 3 days afterward."<sup>30</sup> On the next page he recorded: "Several persons who attended this meeting, but who had not as yet been baptized, came forward shortly after. . . . Among the rest Father Smith, Martin Harris[,] Mother Smith."<sup>31</sup> The manuscript version behind the *Times and Seasons* edition of the "History of Joseph Smith" included the words, "among the rest My own Father and Mother were baptized to my great joy and consolation, and about the same time, Martin Harris and a [blank space] Rockwell," omitting a name or initial altogether.<sup>32</sup>

The words "about the same time" are not as precise as the earlier history draft. Father Smith was baptized on 6 April as was Martin Harris. Curiously, while the final version poorly recounts the events, the earlier, even less-consistent draft reported that Mother Smith was baptized "2 or 3 days afterward," and the very next page reported that the baptism occurred at the same time as Father Smith's and Martin Harris's. But Sister Rockwell's name was not included among the other three persons who were baptized. The manuscript version from which the

*Times and Seasons* printing comes includes only the last name "Rockwell," evidently referring to Sarah Rockwell. At a later time the name "Orrin Porter" was added in the blank space by someone other than James Mulholland after the *Times and Seasons* printing in November 1842. But it is clear Joseph Sr. and Lucy Smith were baptized in Manchester along with Martin Harris and Sarah Rockwell. Stafford and Saunders witnessed this.

Joseph Knight Sr., who brought Joseph Jr. in his wagon to Manchester at the end of March 1830, also witnessed Joseph's joy, also described by Lucy Smith, when her husband was baptized at Manchester:

TIMELINE FOR NEW YORK	
<i>Palmyra, New York</i> 26 March 1830	<i>Wayne Sentinel</i> advertises the Book of Mormon for sale
<i>Manchester, New York</i> [26-31] March 1830	Joseph Smith arrives in Manchester with Joseph Knight Sr.  Revelation for Martin Harris
6 April 1830	Church of Christ is organized  Six revelations received Oliver Cowdery ordained an elder Joseph Smith Jr. ordained an elder, also a prophet and seer, by Oliver Cowdery Joseph Smith Sr., Lucy Mack Smith, Martin Harris, and Sarah Rockwell are baptized
<i>Fayette, New York</i> 11 April 1830	Fayette branch of Church is established  Revelation is received on individuals who had been baptized in another Christian church Oliver Cowdery delivers first public discourse Baptisms are performed
18 April 1830	Baptisms are performed
9 June 1830	First conference of Church is held Articles and Covenants are presented to Church Baptisms are performed

There was one thing I will mention that evening that old Brother Smith and Martin Harris was Baphtised. Joseph was fil[le]d with the Spirit to a grate Degree to see his Father and Mr Harris that he had Bin [been] with so much he Bast [burst] out with greaf and Joy and seamed as tho the world Could not hold him. He went out into the Lot and appear[e]d to want to git out of site of every Body and would sob and Crie and seamed to Be so full that he could not live. Oliver and I went after him and Came to him and after a while he Came in. But he was the most wrot upon that I ever saw any man. But his joy seemed to Be full.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, his joy resulted from the baptisms of Martin Harris and Joseph Smith Sr., which Lucy Smith placed on 6 April.

Also on 6 April a revelatory message was given at Manchester instructing Joseph Jr. to proceed with the first ordinations in the new church. It stated that there should be a record kept in the Church calling Smith “a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church. . . . Wherefore, it behooveth me, that he should be ordained by you, Oliver, mine apostle; This being an ordinance unto you, that you might be an elder unto this church of Christ, bearing my name.”<sup>34</sup>

It is clear Joseph Jr. ordained Oliver Cowdery an elder and Cowdery ordained Joseph Smith a seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and first elder in the Church of Christ. From the day the Church was organized and Joseph Smith Jr. was ordained, the source of authority in the Church came from the hands of Smith. Joseph Jr. stated: “I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an Elder of the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,’ after which he ordained me also to the office of an Elder of said Church.”<sup>35</sup> Joseph and Oliver thus became the first and second elders on 6 April 1830.

Joseph Knight Sr., who was at the Smith home in Manchester, was present when this revelation was received. He wrote: “On the sixth Day of April 1830 he Begun the Church with six members and received the following Revelation[,] Book of Covenants [1835 edition,] Page 177. They all kneeled down and prayed and Joseph gave them instructions how to B[u]ild up the Church and ex[h]orted them to Be faithful in all things for this is the work of God.”<sup>36</sup>

Joseph Smith Jr.’s ordination as prophet and seer was the highlight ordinance on the day of the Church’s organization. William E. McLellin, who visited Oliver Cowdery in July 1847, recorded the following: “While I was on a visit with O. Cowdery, during the past summer, I asked him, to what did you ordain Joseph on the 6th of April, 1830? He answered, I ordained him to be a Prophet, Seer, &c., just as the revelation says.”<sup>37</sup>

This same revelation stated firmly the Church’s organization: “Which church was organized and established in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month, which is called April.”<sup>38</sup> This is the same revelation Joseph Knight Sr. clearly remembered being received when he was present at the Smiths’ cabin in Manchester.

## ACCOUNTS OF THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION AT THE WHITMER FARMHOUSE IN FAYETTE, NEW YORK

**A**CCOUNTS THAT PLACE THE Church’s organization in Fayette, New York, first appear later than the Manchester sources and conflict with eyewitnesses to the Manchester narratives.

The earliest instance of Fayette, New York, being cited as the location of the organization meeting occurred four years later in Kirtland, Ohio. The May 1834 edition of *The Evening and the Morning Star* contains probably the earliest reference to Fayette as the location of the 6 April events. The change in location appears in the minutes of an “Elders of the church of Christ” conference held on 3 May 1834, at which Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery were present together with Frederick G. Williams, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney, who were the leading elders of the Church and members of the Kirtland United Firm. The minutes report that it was decided that the Church should be known thereafter by the name The Church of the Latter Day Saints. The minutes also stated that the “church was organized in the township of Fayette, Seneca county, New-York, on the 6th of April, A.D. 1830.”<sup>39</sup>

The Fayette location persists in both the introductions to the current LDS Doctrine and Covenants 21 and the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants 19, and is based in part on the 1839 manuscript history that places the location at Fayette.<sup>40</sup> This revelation matches Joseph Smith Jr.’s original date as to when the text was originally produced—“April 6, 1830.”<sup>41</sup> The 1876 edition of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants also reported that this revelation was “given at Fayette, New York,” on 6 April.<sup>42</sup>

Though some interpreters may find ways of transporting *believers* to Fayette from Manchester, there are enormous difficulties in attempting to do the same with those who were friendly unbelievers, who were unbaptized and yet were witnesses to the events of that day. There is no documentary evidence nor any good reason to conclude that non-believers traveled from Manchester to Fayette to witness something in which they had no spiritual stake. Additionally, there is no evidence that Oliver Cowdery was at Peter Whitmer Sr.’s farm in the township of Fayette on 6 April. Neither is there any indication that David Whitmer was in Manchester on the day the Church was organized. The information that Oliver Cowdery was at the Smiths’ residence comes from then non-member Joseph Knight Sr. and member Martin Harris. Harris stated that he was baptized by Cowdery. Cowdery also ordained Joseph Jr. a prophet and seer in accordance with instructions received on the organizational day.

## DAVID WHITMER'S PROBLEMATIC ACCOUNT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

**S**OME HISTORIANS HAVE LOOKED to David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to solve the problem of the two sites for the Church's organization, but it appears that he has blended the 6 April meeting in Manchester with the June and September Church conferences held at Fayette.

Whitmer was supposed to have been present at the meeting held on 6 April.<sup>43</sup> In 1887 he wrote that on 6 April 1830 "the first error was introduced into the Church of Christ, and that error was Brother Joseph being ordained as 'Prophet[,] Seer and Revelator' to the church."<sup>44</sup> Whitmer also wrote:

Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the "Church of Christ," in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N.Y.; one at Manchester, N.Y., and one at Colesville, Pa.[sic] It is all a mistake about the church being *organized* on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully *organized*—spiritually—before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land. . . . Now brethren, how can it be that the church was any more organized—spiritually—on April 6th, than it was before that time? There were six elders and about seventy members before April 6th, and the same number of elders and members after that day.<sup>45</sup>

Clearly not a dependable record, David Whitmer's statement contains many factual errors. Whitmer stated that there were three branches of the church organized prior to 6 April, that there were six elders and about seventy members before that day, and that the Church was organized at least spiritually before 6 April 1830. In contrast, the Far West Record set the number of members at the time of the first conference of the Church on 9 June at twenty-seven.<sup>46</sup> The dates for congregations, or churches, being established in Manchester, Fayette, and Colesville, New York, does not fit Whitmer's description. Whitmer's statement that the Church was organized according to the laws of the land could ostensibly mean in accordance with the freedom of religion clause amended to the U.S. Constitution in 1791. But if his statement is interpreted to

mean that the Church was organized according to the laws of the state of New York, then this is also incorrect since the Church of Christ was organized and established as an unincorporated body of believers.<sup>47</sup> There were no known marriages performed in New York by ministers of the new church, no property that belonged to the Church, and thus no compelling reason to organize in accordance with the laws of the land.

Though early Church member David Whitmer implies that he was present on the 6 April meeting, his statements describe events which occurred not on 6 April, but at his father's home at Fayette. A close examination of David Whitmer's statements and recollections reveal that at certain times he was recounting the events and the number of members and elders at the first conference of the Church held at Fayette on 9 June 1830. Edward Stevenson recorded an interview with Whitmer in January 1887, in which Whitmer mistakenly told him: "On the 6th of April, 1830, 6 elders were at Peter Whitmer's. David's father's 2 rooms were filled with members[,] about 20 from Colesville, 15 from Manchester church and about 20 from around about Father Whitmers. About 50 members and the 6 elders were present."<sup>48</sup> The Colesville branch of the Church was not organized until the latter part of June 1830 when baptisms commenced in the area. The earliest possible date when the Colesville church could have been represented at a conference in Fayette would have been the meeting of September 1830, the second conference of the Church.

Additionally, although David Whitmer has been quoted as saying that six elders were present on 6 April, he could have been recalling the later branch meeting at Fayette, not necessarily the organizational meeting in Manchester. He seems to be trying to recall the names of six members/elders who had gathered at Fayette. By 9 June 1830, at the first conference of the Church held at Fayette, the six elders are listed as: Joseph Smith Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson. Four of these six received licenses on 9 June, while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery probably received theirs at Manchester on 6 April. These four elders may have been ordained in April.

Another indication that David Whitmer was recalling a June meeting is that J. W. Chatburn, who visited Whitmer in the early 1880s, recorded that Whitmer "said that he baptized fourteen in Seneca Lake, a few days before the Church was organized. I asked his wife [Julia Ann Jolly Whitmer] if she was present when the Church was organized on April 6th, 1830. She replied, Yes; and was a baptized member at that time."<sup>49</sup> However, the history of the Church lists at least eleven persons who were baptized on 9 June (including Whitmer's future wife Julia Jolly) by David Whitmer.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, the date of 6 April is incorrect since David Whitmer said there were six elders present. The only time there could have been six elders in the Church would have been prior to the 9 June 1830 meeting when Samuel H. Smith became the seventh elder of the Church.<sup>51</sup> Whitmer recalled these events over forty-five years later; if his statements cannot be corroborated from other earlier sources, then they must be laid aside because of insufficient evidence.

## POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CHANGE IN ORGANIZATION LOCATION AND THE CHANGE IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

**T**HE CONFUSION REGARDING THE place where the Church was organized occurred at the same time the name of the Church (Church of Christ) was changed in 1834. Perhaps the connection between them relates to the Church's desire to relieve its financial pressures.

In the Book of Mormon, the simple title "Church of Christ" identifies the Church as Christ's church.<sup>52</sup> In 1829 Oliver Cowdery produced a document which stated that the "Church shall be called The Church of Christ."<sup>53</sup> Other Christian churches were also named the Church of Christ before 1829. This name adopted for Joseph's church was confirmed in a revelation given on the day of its organization.<sup>54</sup>

However, at a meeting on 3 May 1834 it was moved and seconded "that this church be known hereafter by the name of THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS."<sup>55</sup> It would undoubtedly take a strong reason for changing the revealed name of the Church of Christ to that of The Church of the Latter Day Saints. That Church members were called Saints and therefore followers of Christ raises the question of why Church leaders made a name change since they were already considered Saints in Joseph Smith's revelations prior to 1834.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, not only was the name of the Church changed at this meeting, but it is the first known time that Fayette was stated as the location of the 6 April 1830 organizational meeting.

I wonder whether economic factors may have influenced the Church leaders to change the Church's name to the Church of the Latter Day Saints and to move the organizational meeting to Fayette. At the time, Church leaders were concerned about obtaining donations to pay for the debts of the United Firm, to commence work on the Kirtland Temple, and to provide funds for the forthcoming march of Zion's Camp to Missouri. Less than a month prior to these two changes the United Firm was dissolved and separated into two firms, one in Missouri and one in Kirtland, and members of the Firm in Kirtland were instructed to divide up the properties.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, on 5 May 1834, the land designated for the Kirtland Temple was transferred to Joseph Smith Jr. and his successor in the office of the Presidency of the Church.<sup>58</sup> By 1835 the identities of United Firm members were disguised in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants by substituting pseudonyms for their given and surnames.<sup>59</sup> Could these actions reflect an attempt on the part of Church leaders to put off their creditors?

In a revelation received 23 April 1834, shortly before the change in name and location, these instructions were revealed: "Therefore, write speedily to New York, and write according to

that which shall be dictated by my spirit, and I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, that it shall be taken away out of their minds to bring afflictions upon you."<sup>60</sup> Thus the name and location may have been changed to avoid a lawsuit.

Unfortunately, there are no known extant letters written by Joseph Smith Jr. between 23 April and 5 May 1834, the time when he left Kirtland with Zion's Camp, and the existing evidence is too sketchy to reach any definitive conclusions. However, with this historical background historians can begin to outline a plausible motive for the name change and post facto relocation to Fayette.

## OTHER REASONS FOR THE CHANGE IN LOCATION AND CONTINUING USES OF BOTH LOCATIONS

**P**ERHAPS THE CHANGE IN location was the result of the community's memory combining two important events into one, not an uncommon occurrence. The date 6 April had become important in the minds of the early Saints as well as various events at the Whitmer home.

On 11 April 1830, five days after the organization of the Church in Manchester, Oliver Cowdery delivered "the first public discourse." On this day the Fayette branch of the Church was organized and Oliver Cowdery performed six baptisms.<sup>61</sup> The Fayette branch was established the Sunday after the Manchester organizational meeting, held the previous Tuesday. There is no indication that any meeting took place in Fayette township before the 11 April Sunday service. Joseph Smith Jr. received a commandment concerning persons "who had previously been baptized" in other Christian churches, saying they would have to be rebaptized for admission into the newly founded church.<sup>62</sup> Like the 6 April meeting, the 11 April meeting has no extant minutes. However, the 1839 manuscript history does list baptisms performed on this day.<sup>63</sup> A week later, on 18 April, another baptismal service was held at Fayette where Oliver Cowdery performed seven baptisms in Seneca Lake.<sup>64</sup> The manuscript history for the 11 April meeting and for the 18 April baptisms lists no one baptized who lived in the Manchester/Palmyra area, so they were probably two discreet events.

The next meeting mentioned in the manuscript history was the first conference of the Church, which consisted of the branches of Manchester and Fayette, that was convened in the Township of Fayette on 9 June. A copy of the minutes reads: "Minutes of the first Conference held in the Township of Fayette, Seneca County, State of New York."<sup>65</sup> Joseph Jr. read "The Articles and Covenants of the church of Christ" which

had been prepared by the elders of the church.<sup>66</sup> The minutes of this meeting state that they were “received by unanimous voice of the whole congregation, which consisted of most of the male members of the Church.”<sup>67</sup> The Articles and Covenants were submitted to the Church as a confession of faith of the members of the Church of Christ. The members agreed that the statement reflected their beliefs, including the callings of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, the Book of Mormon, and what were to be the beliefs and practices of the infant church. The members accepted the Articles and Covenants by raising their hands. This important document refers to events which took place two months earlier at Manchester: “Which commandments were given to Joseph, who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church; And also to Oliver, who was also called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church, and ordained under his hand.”<sup>68</sup> By their ordinations as the first two elders at the 6 April 1830 meeting, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were apostles of Jesus Christ.<sup>69</sup>

At the time of the first Fayette conference of the newly founded church, prospective members from Manchester Township were baptized after the conference. They were: Jerusha Smith (Hyrum Smith’s wife), Katherine Smith, William Smith, Don Carlos Smith, Peter Rockwell, Caroline Rockwell, and Electa Rockwell (children of Sarah W. Rockwell).<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps another reason for the change of the location of the Church’s organizational meeting to Fayette was that the events which happened in Fayette were considered of greater importance to the Church as a whole. For instance, the writing and acceptance of the Articles and Covenants, the issuing of licenses for lay ministers to preach, and the meeting of the first conference of the Church became key events as time passed and the meeting became sacred time for the community. While it was known and published until 1833 that the Church was organized in Manchester, the important fact from the beginning was that the actual date of that meeting was 6 April 1830. Some of the licenses for those holding offices in the Church were written on 9 June and give the date of 6 April as the date the Church was organized and established.<sup>71</sup> In fact, all known licenses written during the early years of the Church, while giving the date of 6 April 1830 as the day the Church was organized, give no location for the events of the day.

Although the location of Manchester as the place for the 6 April meeting had been published in both *The Evening and the Morning Star*, *A Book of Commandments*, and in pamphlets, letters, and books by many writers, Joseph Smith’s 1839 manuscript history was written as though the 6 April meeting was held at the house of Peter Whitmer Sr., who lived in Fayette Township. Later, while residing in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1842, Joseph used Orson Pratt’s 1840 pamphlet for wording in a letter to John Wentworth. Pratt had originally obtained much of his basic material from Joseph Smith. As published in the *Times and Seasons*, Smith’s letter to Wentworth is the same as the pamphlet except the word “first” was added to what Pratt had earlier published. The letter states, “On the 6th of April, 1830, the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,’ was

first organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario co., state of New York.”<sup>72</sup> In 1844, this Wentworth letter was used for a history published by Daniel Rupp.<sup>73</sup> But then in 1848 the Manchester reference in Orson Pratt’s pamphlet *Remarkable Visions* was changed to Fayette to agree with Smith’s history.<sup>74</sup>

The context of Joseph Smith’s history concerns organization and ordination. In his history, Smith stated, “we met together for that purpose, at the house of the above mentioned Mr [Peter] Whitmer [Sr.]” This follows the earlier location change made in 1834. Smith’s compiled history states: “I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an Elder of the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,’”<sup>75</sup> a Church name not used until 1838. At the beginning of the manuscript, the history is written, “In this history I will present the various events in relation to this Church in truth and righteousness as they have transpired or as they at present exist, being now the eighth year since the organization of said Church.”<sup>76</sup> Perhaps this statement unknowingly explains the difference of location in the manuscript history. The real event occurred in Manchester, but following the 1834 change of location and two changes in the name of the Church (one in May 1834 and the other in April 1838), “the various events” were told in the perspective “as they at present exist,” meaning as they were being told in 1838-39 when the history commenced. While no statement clearly explains why the post facto change in location was made, Joseph Smith’s history does account for the reference to Whitmer’s home.

The revelation instructing Oliver Cowdery to ordain Joseph Smith and designating Cowdery to be “the first preacher of this church” was given on 6 April 1830.<sup>77</sup> Besides this particular revelation of 6 April, the strongest evidence that the meeting and baptisms on the founding day of the Church took place in Manchester comes, as has been previously noted, from eye-witnesses who were there whether or not they became members of the Church. Joseph Knight Sr. drove the wagon that transported Joseph Jr. to Manchester. Lucy Smith, with her husband Joseph Sr., were residents of the township of Manchester. Lucy indicates that her son arrived home and preached to them and that she witnessed her husband’s baptism. Martin Harris was also baptized on 6 April. Harris lived in Palmyra, the next township north of Manchester. Oliver Cowdery, who was at the organizational meeting, had been living in the Smith home while the Book of Mormon was being published.

Sarah Rockwell, a neighbor who lived in Manchester, was baptized on 6 April, and this was witnessed by another neighbor of the Smith family, C. R. Stafford. Benjamin Saunders was also present when Joseph Sr. was baptized. All indications are that none of the Manchester township residents traveled to the township of Fayette on 6 April, and all those who were in any way acquainted with the events that occurred on 6 April 1830 were in no other location except Manchester. There is no indication of any lengthy travel of the participants except probably Martin Harris who would have come from his home in Palmyra. Benjamin Saunders, while a friend of the Smiths, said that he was not interested in the story of the gold plates. Saunders heard Joseph Jr. explain the story to family members

in the fall of 1827 and probably would not have traveled to Fayette (a distance of at least twenty-five miles from Manchester—a fifty-mile round trip) only to witness a few baptisms.

Because the events of 6 April were mentioned by actual participants, including non-member eyewitnesses, we can be reasonably confident that the meeting took place in Manchester, not Fayette. While present at the organization of the Church in the township of Manchester on 6 April 1830, Joseph Knight Sr. did not go forward to be baptized. But the following revelation was received for him:

A Revelation to Joseph (K.) given in Manchester, New York, April 6, 1830. Behold I manifest unto you by these words, that you must take up your cross, in the which you must pray vocally before the world, as well as in secret, and in your family, and among your friends, and in all places. And behold it is your duty to unite with the true church, and give your language to exhortation continually, that you may receive the reward of the laborer. Amen.<sup>78</sup>

Although Joseph Knight Jr. said his father did not attend the 6 April 1830 meeting,<sup>79</sup> the date, place, and text of this revelation for Father Knight, plus his own personal recollection, indicates that he was present at the meeting.<sup>80</sup>

A revelation on 6 April was also received for Joseph Sr.:

A Revelation to Joseph, the father of Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830. Behold I speak a few words unto you, Joseph: for thou also art under no condemnation, and thy calling also is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church. And this is thy duty from henceforth and forever. Amen.<sup>81</sup>

Revelations were similarly given to Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith on this day at Manchester.<sup>82</sup>

Thus some of the events at Manchester on 6 April 1830 included the baptism of four persons, prayer, confirmation by the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ordination of Joseph Smith Jr. as a prophet and first elder (apostle) and Oliver Cowdery as an elder (apostle) in the Church of Christ, and six revelations, including one confirming the events of that day in Manchester. This latter revelation gave further directions to Church members concerning their founder Joseph Smith Jr. in the following words:

Being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof, and to build it up unto the most holy faith; Which church was organized and established, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty, in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month, which is called April. Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words, and commandments, which he shall give unto you, as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me . . .<sup>83</sup>

Of the two traditions—one placing the organization in Manchester, the other in Fayette—the Manchester location occupies the earliest stratum of documentation and is reinforced by crucial eyewitness accounts from Mormons and

non-Mormons alike. The baptisms, the founding meeting, the ordinations of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and the revelations of 6 April 1830 all took place in Manchester. Despite this, Fayette was the site of the first three Church conferences: 9 June 1830, 26 September 1830, and 2 January 1831, as well as the organization of the Fayette branch of the Church on 11 April 1830.<sup>84</sup> For these important conferences, Peter Whitmer Sr.'s log home and farm should retain fundamental historical and sentimental position in Smith's Church of Christ, but not for the location of its organization.

Why should it concern us where the Church was organized? For some it does not. Others, however, concur with T. Edgar Lyon, who queried,

But why should Latter-day Saints concern themselves with authentic history? What difference does it make to the tourist if he is told fact or fiction? Personally, I do not appreciate being victimized by someone who, while posing as an authority, disseminates error, however trivial it may seem.<sup>85</sup>

## NOTES

1. *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 43; *Church History in the Fulness of Times* [Religion 341-43], (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 67; John K. Carmack, "Fayette: The Place the Church was Organized," *Ensign* 19 (February 1989): 15-19; Vivian Paulsen, "A Day Chosen by the Lord," *The Friend* 19 (August 1989): 40-41; and Howard W. Hunter, "The Sixth Day of April, 1830," *Ensign* 21 (May 1991): 63-65.

2. *A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ, Organized According to Law, on the 6th of April, 1830*. (Zion [Independence, Missouri]: W. W. Phelps & Co., 1833), chapter 9:17 (cited hereafter as BC); also in *LDS Doctrine and Covenants* 10:67-68 (cited hereafter as D&C, and RLDS Doctrine and Covenants 3:16 (cited hereafter as RD&C). See also BC 15:1.

3. Dean Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 36, cited hereafter as *BYU Studies*. The Joseph Knight Sr. account was written after September 1835 and before his death in February 1847, and is located in the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, cited hereafter as LDS Archives. Minimal punctuation and editing have been added to clarify the account. The spelling is retained as in the original manuscript.

4. H. Michael Marquardt, "Early Texts of Joseph Smith's Revelations," *Restoration* 1 (July 1982): 8-11.

5. BC 17-22.

6. BC 17-21; 1835 D&C 45; D&C 23; RD&C 21.

7. BC 17-22; *The Evening and the Morning Star*, (Independence, MO), 1 (March 1833): 4.

8. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (April 1833): 4; see also *Evening and Morning Star*, (Kirtland, OH) reprint, (April 1833, published June 1836), 167.

9. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (January 1833): 1 and (March 1833): 4.

10. Brigham Young Diary, 1843, LDS Archives.

11. J[onathan] B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages* (New York: Platt & Peters, 1842), 22.

12. "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37.

13. *The Ensign of Liberty*, (Kirtland, OH) 1 (March 1847): 2. William E. McLellin in his list includes Lucy Smith and Martin Harris.

14. For various lists see Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, typescript, 1833-1898, 9 vols, 1983-85, (Midvale, UT: Signature Books), 5:239-40, 18 November 1858, original in LDS Archives; copy of a statement dated 11 August 1862 in Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, between pages 36 and 37, LDS Archives; see also *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, B. H. Roberts, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1959), 1:76, fn, (cited hereafter as *History of the Church*) letter of Edward Stevenson to Orson Pratt, 23 December 1877, LDS Archives; *Ensign* 10 (June 1980): 44-45 and *Ensign* 10



(October 1980): 71.

15. Lucy Mack Smith, Preliminary Manuscript, LDS Archives; 1830 Assessment Records of Manchester, NY, dated 5 July 1830, original in Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, NY.

16. William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, IA: Herald Steam Book and Job Office, 1883), 14.

17. Nathan Pierce Docket Book, 1827-1830, (8 June 1830), facing page 77, located at Manchester Town Office.

18. Lucy Mack Smith, Preliminary Manuscript. Lucy Smith dictated her history in 1844-45. The spelling is retained as in the manuscript, punctuation added.

19. *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (Oakland, CA: January 1888): 3, original publication in the Yale University Library.

20. "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 36-37.

21. *Naked Truths About Mormonism* 1 (January 1888): 3.

22. Interview of Martin Harris by Edward Stevenson, 4 September 1870, LDS Archives.

23. Interview of Benjamin Saunders, 1884, P 19, Box 2, Folder 44, Library-Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, MO.

24. "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37.

25. *New York Herald*, 25 June 1893. A photograph of Crooked Brook was taken by George Edward Anderson in 1907, see *Birth of Mormonism in Picture* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, ca. 1909), 61 and *Ensign* 8 (November 1978): 53.

26. John H. Pratt in Charles F. Milliken's *A History of Ontario County, New York and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 1:418.

27. U.S. Census, Manchester, Ontario County, N.Y., 1830, 169-70.

28. BC 22; D&C 21; RD&C 19; Preliminary Draft to History, 1839, in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee, ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:241-42, Manuscript History, A-1, 37; *History of the Church* 1:78.

29. *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 November 1842): 12. This and subsequent publications make Sister Rockwell's first initial an "A."

30. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:243 fn 1.

31. Jessee, 1:244.

32. Manuscript History, A-1, 38; Jessee, 1:303-304.

33. "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37.

34. BC 22:1, 13-14; D&C 21:1, 10-11; RD&C 19:1a, 3b.

35. Manuscript History, A-1, 37; *History of the Church* 1:77-78. The proper name of the Church in 1830 was the Church of Christ.

36. "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37. The revelation is Section 46 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants; D&C 21; RD&C 19. This document, published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants on 177-78, included no mention of where it was received.

37. William E. McLellin, ed., *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (December 1847): 42.

38. BC 22:3; D&C 21:3; RD&C 19:1c.

39. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, 2 (May 1834): 160. See *History of the Church* 2:62-63.

40. Manuscript History, A-1, 37; Jessee, 1:303.

41. BC 22:1; 1835 D&C 46; D&C 21; RD&C 19.

42. See 1876 D&C 21. The designation "at Fayette" first appeared in RD&C 19, in 1952, probably based on the LDS D&C.

43. Carmack, "Fayette: The Place the Church was Organized," 19, and Jessee, 1:242 fn 2.

44. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO, 1887), 33.

45. Whitmer, 33, emphasis in original.

46. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 3, cited hereafter as *Far West Record*.

47. There is no evidence of a legal incorporation of the Church of Christ in the State of New York. State incorporation required a fifteen-day announcement period before the meeting to incorporate and neither at Manchester nor Fayette was there that much time available before the 6 April meeting.

48. Edward Stevenson Journal, 2 January 1887, LDS Archives, as quoted in *Illustrated Stories from Church History* (Provo, UT: Promised Land Publications, 1973), 2:51.

49. *The Saints' Herald* 29 (15 June 1882): 189.

50. Manuscript History, A-1, 42; *History of the Church* 1:86. The history mentions that Whitmer performed a baptism in May 1830, see *History of the Church*, 1:84.

51. *Far West Record*, 1.

52. For the name of the Church in the two Books of Mormon, see LDS Mosiah 18:17, RLDS 9:49, LDS 3 Nephi 26:21, RLDS 12:13, LDS 3 Nephi 28:23, RLDS 13:36, LDS 4 Nephi 1:1, 26, 29, RLDS 1:1, 28, 31, LDS and RLDS Moroni 6:4.

53. "A commandment from God unto Oliver," LDS Archives.

54. BC 22:14; D&C 21:11; RD&C 19:3b.

55. *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834): 160; *History of the Church* 2:62-63.

56. For various arguments favoring the name change, see Oliver Cowdery, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834): 158-159; 2 (June 1834): 164-65; John Smith to Elias Smith, 19 October 1834, George Albert Smith Family Papers, MS 36, Box 1, folder 12, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, *Elders' Journal* 1 (July 1838): 37. See revelatory texts in the D&C for examples of members of the Church of Christ called Saints and disciples prior to May 1834.

57. "Kirtland Revelations" Book, 102-05, LDS Archives; D&C 104:19-59; RD&C 101:3-10.

58. See for example the deed recorded in Geauga Deed Records, Book 18:478-479, Geauga County, Ohio; microfilm no. 0020237, Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

59. See 1835 D&C 75, 86, 93, 96, and 98.

60. "Kirtland Revelations" Book, 107; D&C 104:81; RD&C 101:13d.

61. Manuscript History, A-1, 39; *History of the Church* 1:81. See also BC 22:15; D&C 21:12; RD&C 19:3c.

62. BC 23:1; D&C 22 heading; RD&C 20 heading.

63. Manuscript History, A-1, 39; *History of the Church* 1:81.

64. Manuscript History, A-1, 39; *History of the Church* 1:81.

65. *Far West Record*, 1.

66. BC 24:12; D&C 20:16; RD&C 17:3d.

67. *Far West Record*, 1.

68. BC 24:3-4; D&C 20:2-3; RD&C 17:1b.

69. D&C 24:32; D&C 20:38; RD&C 17:8b.

70. Manuscript History, A-1, 42; *History of the Church* 1:86. The name Porter Rockwell was written in the 1839 draft history. See Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:246, 250, 309. Apparently both Porter and Peter Rockwell were baptized on 9 June 1830.

71. Three examples of early licenses are: John Whitmer's elder license, 9 June 1830, Coe Collection, Yale University; Joseph Smith Sr.'s priest license, 9 June 1830, LDS Archives; and Edward Partridge's elder license, 15 December 1830, LDS Archives.

72. *Times and Seasons* 3 (1 March 1842): 708. This was later changed to Fayette. See *History of the Church* 4:538.

73. I. Daniel Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia. An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1844), 407. See *History of the Church* 6:428.

74. O[rson] Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840), 24. This reference was changed to Fayette in one of the 1848 printings of the booklet.

75. Manuscript History, A-1, 37; *History of the Church* 1:77-78.

76. Manuscript History, A-1, 1; *History of the Church* 1:1-2.

77. BC 22:15; D&C 21:12; RD&C 19:3c.

78. BC 21, emphasis added; D&C 23:6-7; RD&C 21:5

79. In 1862 Joseph Knight Jr. said, "My father was not there." In William G. Hartley, *They Are My Friends: A History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-1850* (Provo, UT: Grandin Book Co., 1986), 214; original in LDS Archives. This account is not correct on this point.

80. BC 21; "Joseph Knight's Recollection," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976): 37. Knight wrote, "I had some thots [thoughts] to go forrod [forward], But I had not re[a]d the Book of Morman and I wanted to oxeman [examine] a little more . . . But I should a felt Better if I had a gone forward. But I went home and was Babtised in June with my wife and familey."

81. BC 20; D&C 23:5, RD&C 21:4.

82. BC 17-19; D&C 23:1-4; RD&C 21:1-3.

83. BC 22:2-4; D&C 21:2-4; RD&C 19:1b-2.

84. *Far West Record*, 1, 3, 5 and *History of the Church* 1:84, 115, 118, 140.

85. T. Edgar Lyon, "How Authentic Are Mormon Historic Sites in Vermont and New York?" *BYU Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 349, punctuation added.