

A Visit to David Whitmer by Edward Stevenson

Source: Edward Stevenson, "A Visit to David Whitmer,"
Juvenile Instructor 22 (15 Feb 1887):55.

[page 55] 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 further 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 degrees 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.