

Left: President David O. McKay, Wilford Wood and Church Historian, Joseph Fielding Smith examining the Church documents brought back from Illinois.

Below: Charles E. Bidamon shown delivering the notarized bill of sale for the documents to Wilford C. Wood.



For some time past Wilford Wood has been running the following display notice in the *Nauvoo Independent*:

Joseph Smith, Mormon Prophet. Any one having authentic deeds, abstracts, letters, documents, publications, relics, pertaining to Mormon Prophet, write Wilford C. Wood, Woods Cross, Utah.

In response to this advertisement, there came from Mr. Bidamon, dated June 28, 1937, at Wilmette, Illinois, a letter which read in part:

Wilmette, Ill., June 28, 1937.

Mr. Wilford Wood
Woods Cross, Utah

Dear Sir:

I saw your advertisement in the *Nauvoo Independent* in regard to deeds, documents,

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ILLINOIS YIELDS CHURCH DOCUMENTS

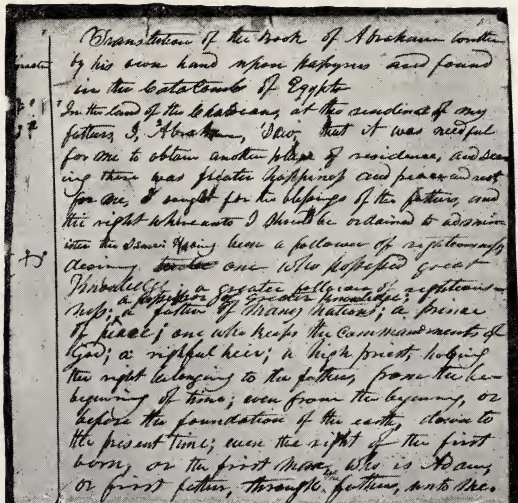
PART OF PEARL OF GREAT PRICE MANUSCRIPT AND OTHER PAPERS IN JOSEPH SMITH'S OWN HANDWRITING INCLUDED IN PURCHASE OF WILFORD C. WOOD FROM CHARLES E. BIDAMON.

By RICHARD L. EVANS

OUT OF the scenes wherein were enacted some of the happiest and some of the most tragic events in the lives of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his people, have come now to the Church a rich store of highly valued documents, pertaining to the Church and its early leaders. Many of these papers are in the handwriting of the Prophet Joseph. All of them have historical as well as sentimental value.

The recent purchase was made personally by Wilford C. Wood on his own responsibility. However, through the interest of President David O. McKay and Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, they have now found their way into Church archives, to be permanently preserved. The possessor, until the recent exchange of title to Elder Wood, was Mr. Charles E. Bidamon, of Wilmette, Cook County, Illinois, son of Major L. C. Bidamon, husband of the Prophet's widow, Emma Smith.

A fragment of the original translation of the Book of Abraham in Joseph Smith's own handwriting.





THIS LARGE STATUE OF APOLLO IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE ETRUSCAN ART TREASURES YET DISCOVERED.

rocks. At the entrance of the tombs are tombstones or markers cut out of rock, small houses or oblongs about a foot in size representing a lady, while the marker of a man was a mushroom topsy turvy some eighteen inches tall. In front of some mounds many markers are found placed in a tray of stone. Babies and small children were buried in

carved *tufo* boxes placed at the entrance of the tomb.

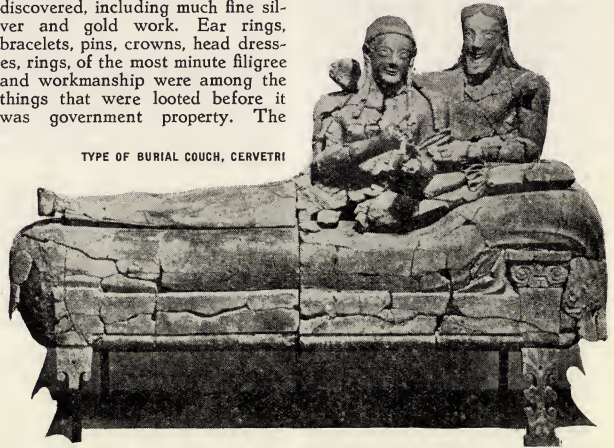
In some of the more recent tombs were some early effaced paintings and carved stone. Bas reliefs were sculptured all about the walls and on the columns. This particular type is wonderfully valuable historically as clothing, utensils, food, war implements, musical instruments, are depicted. Over the door of one are sculptured oxen heads.

Such tombs are vastly impressive. Among these tombs are found niches in which vases filled with human ashes showed the practise of cremation. In these tombs remarkable ornaments and treasures have been discovered, including much fine silver and gold work. Ear rings, bracelets, pins, crowns, head dresses, rings, of the most minute filigree and workmanship were among the things that were looted before it was government property. The

earthenware is both plain and decorated and lovely in contour and design.

And as one leaves these tombs in the evening the dying Italian sun in the west makes a glorious base of the mist and soft clouds. It is lovely to leave at sunset, and ride down the sloping hills facing the brilliant sky against the Mediterranean Sea below, to the little hamlet of Palo, once Etruscan and later the site of villas for Caesar, Pompey, Marcus Aurelius, and other great rulers—and then in the fading dusk, along the Via Aurelia to Rome, the Eternal City.

TYPE OF BURIAL COUCH, CERVETRI



ILLINOIS YIELDS CHURCH DOCUMENTS

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letters, etc., pertaining to Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet.

I have a number of documents, etc., in which the Prophet is involved.

I have also manuscript which has been identified by Elders of the Mormon Church as part of the original manuscript of the *Pearl of Great Price*. Also a silver pocket piece which was in the Prophet's pocket at the time of his assassination.

These papers came into my possession through Emma Smith, the Prophet's widow, whom my father, Major L. C. Bidamon, married. I have had numerous chances to dispose of these papers, but have not seen fit to do so.

The Mormon Church has a headquarters in Chicago of which Wilmette is a suburb, and easy of access.

If members of the Church care to come to my house and examine the documents they are welcome to do so, or I can take them to them for examination.

I do not feel inclined to put a price on

them at the present time, but would consider an offer.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) C. E. Bidamon
238 Catalpa Place,
Wilmette, Ill.

ACCORDINGLY Elder Wood, accompanied by Dr. and Mrs. W. M. Stookey, called at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Bidamon in Wilmette, Illinois, on July 10, 1937, for the purpose of examining and negotiating for the documents referred to. There was a considerable number of them, and these kindly and honorable people, who had cherished and treasured them for many years, were quite naturally reluctant to part with them, but they realized that the years were leaving them no younger and that with their

eventual passing the fate of these valuable documents would be left in doubt. And so, with characteristic generosity and sound reasoning, they agreed to yield possession for a very fair and modest consideration. The list of documents purchased, title to which was conveyed to Wilford C. Wood from Charles E. Bidamon by a notarized bill of sale, includes the following:

Part of the original manuscript from which the *Pearl of Great Price* was later compiled.

Deed of John Hatfield to Lorina Woods, Inventory of Property of Joseph Smith, Jr.

Facsimile of "Book of Abraham."
History of Joseph Smith's incarceration in Liberty, Clay County, Jail, etc.

Two pages of poems.
Kirtland bank script.
Credit statement of Joseph Smith, Jr., Nov. 8, 1839.

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