

DAVID WHITMER COLLECTION

The preservation of the Manuscript [p. 6] is remarkable especially considering that it came through so many hard and unprotected Journeys[.] In the first edition there are 588 pages.

David Whitmer Sen. is 5 feet 10, in height, is of fair complexion[,] long face, and rather of an intellectual cast. He lives in a some what small 2 story house.

His doctrine is a holding fast to first principals he firmly maintains the truth of his statement in the Book of Mormon. [p. 7]

[2. Address, 22 March 1908]

... From my boyhood I had read the Book of Mormon, and during my study of the same, found it nothing but that which is virtuous, pure and ennobling—a great and wonderful history of a pre-historic people who lived on this continent in former ages. I was always interested in utilizing such opportunities as were given me to demonstrate its divinity, to know whether or not I might be deceived, and whether my parents, grandparents and friends were likewise deceived. Therefore, on my way home from school in 1885, I took advantage of the opportunity to visit David Whitmer, another of the Three Witnesses, then an old, gray-haired man, bowed in years and expecting almost any time the summons to call him thence to his eternal reward. As I left the train in the little village of Richmond, Missouri, I inquired of those whom I met: What kind of a man is David Whitmer? From all I received the same response, that he was a good citizen, an honest man, and that he was highly respected in the community. I went to his humble home, for it was a humble home, and I told him of my origin, my belief, and as a young man starting out in life I wanted to know from him, older than my grandfather, what he knew about [p. 366] the Book of Mormon, and what about the testimony he had published to the world concerning it. He told me in all the solemnity of his advanced years, that the testimony he had given to the world, and which was published in the Book of Mormon, was true, every word of it,

at their request is doubtless true as to the copy which David Whitmer had. The writing itself indicates that. Joseph Fielding Smith, church historian, says his father said that in his interview and that of Orson Pratt, David Whitmer admitted that the three witnesses signed the original manuscript” (quoted in Sessions 1975, 461-62; see also VI.A.7, DAVID WHITMER INTERVIEW WITH ORSON PRATT AND JOSEPH F. SMITH, 7-8 SEP 1878). Whitmer was unaware that two manuscript copies of the Book of Mormon had been made and that the manuscript in his possession was the second copy that Cowdery had prepared for the printer.

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES HENRY MOYLE, 1885

and that he had never deviated or departed in any particular from that testimony, and that nothing in the world could separate him from the sacred message that was delivered to him. I still wondered if it was not possible that he could have been deceived. I wondered if there was not something in that psychological operation which some offer as the cause of these miraculous declarations and by which he could have been deceived—although there were three witnesses present besides the Prophet Joseph Smith, who saw and heard the same mighty and solemn truths; so I induced him to relate to me, under such cross-examination as I was able to interpose, every detail of what took place. He described minutely the spot in the woods, the large log that separated him from the angel, and that he saw the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, that he handled them,⁹ and that he did hear the voice of God declare that the plates were correctly translated. I asked him if there was any possibility for him to have been deceived, and that it was all a mistake, but he said, “No.” I asked him, then, why he had left the Church. He said he had not, but the Church had left him. He said that his faith in the fundamental principles of the gospel, which had been revealed prior to the year 1835, had never been changed; that he was still devoted to them and believed in them just as much as he ever did, and was trying to live those principles and exemplify them in his life. He said he knew Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that through him had been restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. To me this was a wonderful testimony. ...

[3. *Reminiscence*, 24 November 1928]

... It was my privilege to hear from the lips of David Whitmer himself in 1885 the solemn and unqualified declaration that he did see the Angel of God, when he presented to the Three Witnesses the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and heard him say that they had been translated correctly. In his testimony to me about three years before his death, he also said in all solemnity that though he was alienated from him, because he had fallen, nevertheless Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and did receive revelations from heaven. He was an old man, respected by his neighbors, well preserved, and intelligent. I [was] a boy, leaving college, just entering upon life's activities, reverently and pathetically appealing for the truth, as he, in his eighties, with hair perfectly white, was contemplating the end of his

9. The assertion here that Whitmer handled the plates is contradicted by Moyle's diary, which states that “Mr D[avid]. Whitmer Sen did not handel the plates. Only seen <saw> them” (see above).