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Part 1: A History of Ideas: The Geography of Book of Mormon Events in Latter-day Saint Thought

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The approach to the record of the past known as the history of ideas takes the position that the apparent stream of thought or argument about an area of knowledge can be analyzed usefully by considering that the component concepts or notions in that stream have been produced by individual minds acting in given sociocultural settings at identifiable moments in time. The development of notions as they are visible down through time in the documents can be considered analogous to tributary streams running into a river system. The river itself may exhibit tortuous channels, eddies, backwaters and sinkholes in the sand in addition to receiving additions to its flow. For example, it is likely that some one person at one moment in history came up with the idea that the Magdalena River was the river Sidon, then that point was picked up by others. Another person at another moment first stated that the Usumacinta River was the Sidon, whereupon the two ideas were put into competition. And so on.

By isolating such contributions to thought, we may be able to clarify why certain geographical propositions flourished and others did not in terms of the intellectual, communicative and social settings of those who paid attention to these matters. Taken all together, such analyses have the potential to illuminate the channeling forces that have kept the stream of thought running within its evident banks instead of taking other lines. Only by trying to do this will we learn whether there is value in the picture produced that may free us of some unproductive historical predispositions. At the least we should be able to see better how far we are from the head of the river, and we may even glimpse its mouth. (Of course, those who do not accept the Book of Mormon as an authentic ancient document would say that this whole stream runs into an intellectual dead sea where nothing lives!)

Most historical material of interest here is organized not in terms of individual notions, ideas or geographical motifs but of "models." Each of those who have thought and written on the geography of Book of Mormon events has tended to develop a relatively consistent picture of the features fitted together. Such a picture I term a model. Thus the "Driggs 1925 Model" referred to later on consists of that set of geographical ideas represented in a brochure first printed (as far as I can tell) by Jean Russell Driggs in Salt Lake City in 1925. Since I am interested in the history of ideas, not just a publishing history, in cases where I am aware that a person crystallized a certain idea or constellation of ideas prior to the earliest formal publication accessible to me, I have dated the model from the earlier moment rather than from the publication date.

At the moment, I am satisfied mainly to track models rather than the component ideas or features composing them. Part 2 summarizes 70 models, and to deal with that sequence is difficult enough. Yet there are hundreds of component ideas within those. Analysis of their interrelations would be a far more difficult task. Ultimately it could be done. I shall follow certain of ideas through the sequence of models, but that treatment is largely illustrative. Thus the title of this section is "A History of Ideas," not "*The History of Ideas.*" To complete the latter is a task that I do not expect to get round to, and perhaps it does not even deserve doing. But I shall begin and see what enlightenment comes from the effort.

Note that two kinds of models are considered. An "external" model interprets Book of Mormon events as having occurred at a particular place in the western hemisphere. It provides a correlation between geographical features in the scriptural text and some specific American scene. We shall see that a large majority of the models published up until now have been external models. The other kind is, of course, "internal." Here the information in the text is analyzed and related with no reference to an external correlation; that is, constructing an internal model in the strict sense means ignoring all considerations of areas, rivers, isthmuses, ruins, etc. locatable on a map of the Americas. A number of such exclusively internal models have been published.

Methodologically it should be obvious that two separable steps should be involved here. A person ought initially to prepare an internal model, and only then correlate that with features externally locatable. Actually, it is questionable if this ideal procedure has ever been followed in purity. What is more typical, and harder to do, has been to begin considering the topic with certain notions about internal geography in mind—but without making them very explicit, let alone complete—and then switching attention to presumed givens about external correlation. The result is that assumptions about internal relationships get colored by assumptions about external relationships, and vice versa. The result is usually a mishmash where it is not clear which relationships came first in logical process. My summaries specifically distinguished the purely internal models (nine of them) which do not purport to relate to any external scene.

The models summarized and considered include those coming from persons in the tradition of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is obvious in examining these that the originators paid attention to the more abundant LDS literature, hence ideas passed in the one direction without much regard to denominational boundaries. There is less evidence that RLDS views have had much circulation or effect among LDS writers.

Let us proceed by working through time from 1829 to the present, identifying periods of unusual interest and change in the consideration of geography and seeing what models and concepts originated and flourished when.

Earliest Period, 1829-1842

Reconstructing thought on geography before the Nauvoo period is particularly difficult because the existing records of what was being said at that time are so few. What is recorded gives the impression that a single, "obvious" model of the geography of Book of Mormon events prevailed. (See General 1830 Model.) It seems to have considered the entire hemisphere as the Nephite-Lamanite scene, with North America the land northward and South America the land southward. That Panama was considered the narrow neck of land is less clear, but probable nevertheless. The evidence for this model comes from a handful of statements from the 1829-1842 period (see Appendix A); despite their brevity, they appear to be consistent.

Given the level of secular knowledge manifested by Joseph Smith and his associates at that time, we are safe in supposing that their combined knowledge of the geography of the western hemisphere was limited and probably unclear. That was true of virtually all Americans, of course, and those living on the frontier had even less knowledge than others. Even the form and character of the territory that would become the continental United States over the next two generations was vague to all but a few scholars, and "Oregon" and "California" were barely conceived of as real places, let alone Peru, "Darien" (Panama) or "Guatemala."

To the saints, the one sure fact was that the plates had come out of the hill in New York, therefore, it was felt, that must have been the scene of the final Nephite battle. Furthermore, there is no evidence that early Latter-day Saints, any more than other frontier people of the time, differentiated among "Indians." An Indian, anywhere in the United States and by extension anywhere in the hemisphere, was considered generically pretty much like any other Indian (a view that still prevails in the 20th century among a substantial portion of the American population). Consequently, a Lamanite was a Lamanite to a Book of Mormon believer in the 1830's. Ignorance of the actual ethnological variety among New World peoples that later research would reveal left the early saints confirmed in their vague unitary, hemispheric geography. Meanwhile nothing in the revelations to Joseph Smith (e.g., Doctrine and Covenants 28:8; 32:2; 49:24; and 54:8), given to the Church members "after the manner of their language" and understanding (D. & C. 1:24), gave them reason to question their assumptions of Lamanite/Indian homogeneity and hemispheric unity.

We must also realize that the Book of Mormon was not an object of careful study in the early days of the Church, in fact it was referred to surprisingly little (see Grant Underwood, "Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology," *Dialogue* 17 (3, Autumn 1984): 35-74). The scripture anchored faith and clarified aspects of theology, but it was not studied systematically, let alone critically, as history or geography. For example, even Orson Pratt, who was one of the best informed and had one of the most logical minds

among Latter-day Saints of his day, was unaccountably cavalier in these matters. Still in 1868 he supposed that the Jaredites brought “elephants, cureloms and cumoms (very large animals)” with them across the Pacific Ocean on their barges! (see Appendix A). He also taught that Omer (Ether 8) and a few families alone from among the Jaredites “were saved, while all the balance, consisting of millions of people, were overthrown because of their wickedness” (see Appendix A). And he held the view, probably universal among his associates, that Moroni deposited the plates of Nephi which his father Mormon had given him in the hill of the final battle. More exacting reading of the scriptural text shows us today that the text justifies none of these ideas; they all are highly unlikely or are contradicted outright by the record.

This failure to study the Book of Mormon with care was joined with limited knowledge of the external world to prevent anything like the kind of careful study of the geography that is possible today. Besides, the predominant objectives of 19th century Mormonism—to gather and establish the Church in a safe home base and to preach the gospel—turned the attention of most people in directions that did not call for and did not really allow “analyzing” the scripture. Anyway, whatever efforts at thoughtful study went on had to be sandwiched among urgent, time-consuming duties like missionary labors and eking out a living on the frontier.

Another factor clearly was the sheer smallness of the number of minds at work studying the Book of Mormon in any degree. For at least the first 50 years of the Church’s existence, virtually everyone who thought in detail about and then put their thoughts in print on any gospel topic were few in number. They were almost all known personally to each other and were concerned with unity, not alternative views. There was no source of nor room for variant points of view, let alone criticism. No one would have thought of questioning Joseph Smith or whoever it was who indicated that “the ancient City of Manti” had once been located in Missouri (see Appendix A). (It is obvious enough nowadays to Book of Mormon students that since Book of Mormon Manti was in the land southward and near the head of north-flowing river Sidon, a location in Missouri is out of the question.) Nor did anybody, it appears, comment to Brother Pratt that the Book of Ether fails to say anything about elephants or cumoms on the barges (the vessels were, after all, only “as long as a [temperate zone] tree”—Ether 2:17). Even if the incongruity of Pratt’s assertions had been detected by an alert reader, there was no medium nor atmosphere to allow pointing it out. Brigham Young took on Pratt for doctrinal unorthodoxy, and that alone was traumatic for the leadership structure; to have people pointing out relatively minor, “scholarly” errors like the elephant business would have been more than the social and belief structure of those early days could have put up with (see Gary James Bergera, “The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversies: Conflict within the Quorums, 1853 to 1868,” *Dialogue* 8, 2, Summer, 1980, pages 7-49). LDS

thought was monolithic in pioneer times. Yet the same factors that so greatly constrained the range of thought in early Utah were already powerful in the first decade of the Church's existence. Thus no trace of an alternative model of geography can be detected and probably none existed. In relation to the geography of Book of Mormon events, the Latter-day Saints in the first decade were as straightforwardly "obvious" or naive in their interpretation as they were in regard to many doctrines. Only later would their views open up to allow recognizing that they could move to a broader viewpoint that allowed alternatives.

1842-?

An abortive opening up in regard to geography began when J. M. Bernhisel in late 1841 sent from the east to Joseph Smith a copy of John Lloyd Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (Vol. 1, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841), a sensational "best-seller" in both the United States and England. It stimulated lengthy treatment in the Nauvoo *Times and Seasons*. The September 15, 1842, issue included a lengthy extract from the book, then the October 1 issue continued:

Since our 'Extract' was published from Mr. Stephens', Incidents of Travel etc., we have found another important fact relating to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Central America, or Guatemala is situated north of the Isthmus of Darien and once embraced several hundred miles of territory from north to south.— the city of Zarahemla, burnt at the crucifixion of the Savior, and rebuilt afterwards, stood upon this land as will be seen from the following words in the book of Alma: And now it was only the distance of a day and half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi, and the land of Zarahemla was nearly surrounded by water: here being a small neck of land between the land southward...(Page 915).

The phrasing I have emphasized makes clear that the newly-received volume was a direct spur for constructing a different model of where the major Nephite cities lay than had prevailed before.

A year later the word was still the same:

Mr. Stephens great developments of antiquities are made bare to the eyes of all the people by reading the history of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. They lived about the narrow neck of land, which now embraces Central America, with all the cities that can be found

... . Read the destruction of cities at the crucifixion of Christ, pages 459-60. Who could have dreamed that twelve years could have developed such incontrovertible testimony to the Book of Mormon? (See Appendix A.)

The authorship of the words in the newspaper is not clear. John Taylor was the managing editor at that time, although Joseph Smith had announced himself to be the formal editor and responsible for content and policy (see

Appendix A). The euphoria over the Stephens book must at least have had Joseph's approbation, for he had already waxed enthusiastic about the volume in a letter he sent in November 1841 thanking Bernhisel for the gift (see Appendix A).

An 1849 statement by Orson Pratt made clear anew how strongly the volume had impacted the LDS circle in Nauvoo:

No one will dispute the fact that the existence of antique remains in different parts of America was known long before Mr. Smith was born. But every well informed person knows that the most of the discoveries made by Catherwood and Stephens were original. . . . Now the Book of Mormon gives us the names and locations of great numbers of cities in the very region where Catherwood and Stephens afterwards discovered them. (See Appendix A.)

The year before Pratt had said in the *Millennial Star*:

"[The Book of Mormon says that] in the 367th year after Christ, 'the Lamanites'—the forefathers of the American Indians—took possession of the city of Desolation'—which was in Central America, near to or in Yucatan . . . the Nephites being the Nation who inhabited the cities of Yucatan.

.....

In the 384th year, the occupants of Yucatan and Central America, having been driven from their great and magnificent cities, were pursued by the Lamanites to the hill Cumorah in the interior of the state of New York, where the whole nation perished in battle. (See Appendix A.)

So impressed was Pratt with Stephens' writings that later when he edited the *Star* (1865-66), he printed a long series of extracts from Stephens' volume 2, which had been published in 1843.

It is not clear, however, that these enthusiasts for Stephens' findings consistently worked out the geographical implications of what they were saying. We can see in retrospect that by placing Zarahemla in Guatemala and the city of Desolation in or near Yucatan, they had come up with a different model of geography for Book of Mormon events than the one innocently held in the 1830's, where, it appears, Zarahemla was supposed to be in South America. As the Nephite capital was located in the land southward, if it was now supposed to be in Guatemala, that meant that the narrow neck of land had to be north from there, seemingly in Mexico. Panama could not be the neck. So what role did South America play in the new thinking? We do not know whether the minds of those in Nauvoo involved in the discussion got around to that question because nothing further has survived in the documents.

Yet there is one additional hint that the new model was being rationalized. It involves the much-cited statement about Lehi landing at 30 degrees south in Chile. This had been written in the hand of Frederick G. Williams, and there is reason to think that it may date to the time of the Kirtland Temple

dedication (1836), although the matter is far from clear (see F. G. Williams III, "Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams Statement, *FARMS Paper* WIL-88, and Appendix A). Given the whole-hemisphere scope of the interpretation of the geography of Book of Mormon events prevailing before Nauvoo, it seems quite likely that the belief was general that Lehi landed in southern South America, whatever revelational status the Williams statement had. So it must be significant that the same *Times and Seasons* presenting the Stephens' material also stated that ". . . Lehi went down by the Red sea to the great Southern Ocean, and crossed over to this land, and landed a little south of the Isthmus of Darien [Panama] . . ." (emphasis added; see also Appendix A). Now that puts the landing nearly three thousand miles north of the Williams statement. It is evident that it was Stephens' data that produced this drastic modification in the idea of where Lehi had landed. So it seems possible that if we knew all that was being thought in Nauvoo in 1842-1843, we might discover that northern South America had come to have a greatly reduced role in their interpretation of Nephite geography. On the other hand, we might find that they had not got around to thinking much about the matter at all. In fact, whether the 1842 stir left behind it any permanent effect on the view of most Latter-day Saints is questionable. A generation later (1868) we find Orson Pratt with Bountiful and Zarahemla back in Colombia and once more he has Lehi landing in Chile (see Appendix A). We lack documentation to know what was going on in the minds of the very few people who thought about these matters, and the membership of the Church at large likely never even realized that the geography was under discussion. In any case, the whole topic must have seemed abstruse and unimportant after the death of Joseph and especially from 1846 on when practical pioneering became the order of the day.

The significance of the events surrounding the 1842 *Times and Seasons* Model is at least threefold:

1. It let anyone then concerned and those of us now interested know that it was legitimate to consider alternatives to the "obvious" hemispheric model, and that on the basis of external discoveries by gentile scholars.
2. It communicated that the issue of where the Nephite cities lay had not been settled by revelation before 1842.
3. The failure of the 1842 model to become fully accepted among the Saints also shows that neither was *it* put forward as based on revelation.

1850-1879

In the early pioneering period in Utah no attention seems to have been given to this subject, as shown by a complete absence of significant printed statements for more than fifteen years. The first evidence of renewed interest is from 1865, when Orson Pratt, presiding in England and editor of the *Millennial Star*, began printing excerpts from John Lloyd Stephens' second book. Articles and editorials by him in subsequent years (see Appendix A)

give us a glimpse of his views on geography at that time. It may be that few others were thinking on the matter with him, but the wide readership of the *Star* at the time, even among immigrants and former missionaries then in Utah, must have brought his perspective forward and established it as the new “obvious” scheme. There were few if any challengers to him among Latter-day Saints as the most respected interpreter of secular thought and reasoned analysis in relation to the gospel.

His geographical scheme for Book of Mormon events (Pratt 1866 Model) probably was much like the General 1830 Model. We cannot be sure how similar they were because our knowledge of that earliest picture is very incomplete. I count his 1866 viewpoint as a new model so as not to assume a connection that has not been demonstrated. After all, his obvious interest in Stephens and the *Times and Seasons* position might (should) have separated him in some ways from the earlier general view. Either he forgot entirely about or ignored the Nauvoo development and its implications for geography, or else somehow he incorporated some of it into his 1866 model in ways not now apparent.

However he handled the *Times and Seasons* material, by 1866 (see Appendix A) we see him using the full hemisphere for the Nephite scene. Expression of this model culminated in the footnotes he prepared for the new division into chapters and verses which he prepared for the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon. That authoritative platform resulted in his ideas becoming standard among most Latter-day Saints by the turn of the century. Because his notions were printed as footnotes in the scripture, they were accorded a quasi-inspired status in many minds. Yet he made it evident to those who would read carefully that the scheme was a construct of his own mind. For example his note at Omni verse 12 said, “The land of Nephi is supposed to have been in or near Equador, South America” (emphasis added). His note for verse 13 continues in this tentative mode: “The land of Zarahemla is supposed to have been North of the head waters of the river Magdalena” (emphasis added). Again at Alma 2:15 he says, “Supposed to be the river Magdalena” (emphasis added). He was not so tentative elsewhere, as at Helaman 3:8 where he labels the sea south of the scripture the “Atlantic, South of Cape Horn” and the sea north the “Arctic, North of North America.” At Mormon 6:2 he simply says, “The Hill Cumorah is in Manchester, Ontario, N.Y.” Meanwhile one wonders whether those footnotes would have survived without more qualification had Brigham Young not passed away two years before publication of the new edition. His skepticism about some of Pratt’s views might have led him to demand more cautious statements although perhaps not disagreeing in general with the model (see Appendix A).

Reluctance to challenge the formidable reputation of Brother Pratt extended even to B. H. Roberts, no meek follower of common views, for as late as 1909 he cited Pratt and Reynolds as all but conclusive on geographical matters (“Such is the theory of Orson Pratt”—*New Witnesses for God*, vol. 2,

1909, page 162; also 140, 144, 163). Only as an afterthought, at the end of his volume 3 (1909, pages 501-503) did Roberts admit any doubt about Pratt's model.

As a whole, the geography of Book of Mormon events that prevailed during this period can be characterized as a rather narrow orthodoxy—a version of the old General 1830 model mediated primarily through Orson Pratt and of explicit concern to only a small portion of the saints.

1880-1909

Several factors combined to stimulate substantial interest and variety in geographic concerns in this period. We can suppose that the very fact of the appearance of Pratt's footnotes focused attention on the matter. The publication in the Richards and Little *Compendium* (Salt Lake City, 1882) of the statement about "Lehi's Travels," which was attributed to Joseph Smith, must have raised the matter of geography again in inquiring minds.

But the model that affected the most people no doubt was that of George Reynolds. It first appeared in the *Juvenile Instructor*, published by George Q. Cannon, whom Reynolds had served in Liverpool as immigration clerk in 1863. In Salt Lake City he was personal secretary to Brigham Young and then secretary to the First Presidency in the administrations of Presidents Taylor, Woodruff, Snow, and Smith. He was simultaneously one of the presidents of Seventy for nineteen years. It was while he was a prisoner in the Utah territorial prison from 1879 to 1881 as a result of a famous test case over polygamy that he began his work that culminated in 1899 in publication of his monumental *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*. An early fruit of his effort was the series of pieces in the *Juvenile Instructor* which ran between 15 November 1880 and 1 February 1881. Amplified somewhat, these then were published in 1888 as *The Story of the Book of Mormon*, the first popularization based on the scripture. Because of Reynolds' intimate connections with the key Church leaders and his ties with its media (he was assistant editor for the *Instructor* and associate editor of *The Deseret News*), his book quickly reached best-seller status, apparently being published five separate times within the year 1888 (twice in Salt Lake, twice in Chicago and once in Independence)!

What Reynolds did was to flesh out and somewhat rationalize the outline geography Pratt had presented in the footnotes of the Book of Mormon. He explicitly agreed with Pratt and cited the footnotes at times. And like Pratt, he presented it all as tentative in details. The Sidon river he said was "generally understood" to be the Magdalena, while the land of Desolation "is generally supposed to have embraced . . . the region known to moderns as Central America."

He noted that other men had somewhat different ideas. Speaking of the placement of the city of Nephi, he agreed with Pratt in putting it in highland Ecuador, although "other brethren have placed it considerably farther south,"

acknowledging meanwhile that the exact whereabouts “cannot be answered authoritatively.” Regarding the city Bountiful, he notes “an idea [was] held by some” that it lay on the west shore of Colombia rather than where he put it on the Atrato River.

Who those “other brethren” were is not very clear. One seems to have been Karl G. Maeser, who with student Heber Comer, mapped a model in 1880 at the Brigham Young Academy in Provo which differs in detail from Reynolds (see Comer and Maeser 1880 Model). The unknown originator of the Plain Facts 1887 Model could also have been among those referred to by Reynolds, judging by the date. But it sounds as if there were a number more.

In an influential and informative statement published in the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1890 George Q. Cannon (its publisher and first counselor in the First Presidency) told of the popularity of geographic study at that time:

There is a tendency, strongly manifested at the present time among some of the brethren, to study the geography of the Book of Mormon. We have heard of numerous lectures, illustrated by suggestive maps, being delivered on this subject during the present winter, generally under the auspices of the Improvement Societies and Sunday Schools.

He noted further that “no two original investigators agree When, as in the case, one student places a certain city at the Isthmus of Panama, a second in Venezuela, and a third in Guiana or northern Brazil, . . . they cannot be thus far apart in this one important point without relative positions being also widely separate.” Consequently, “we see no necessity for maps of this character, because, at least, much would be left to the imagination of those who prepare them . . . ” (see Appendix A).

Clearly, more models were being bruited about than I have discovered in the printed record. One other indicator of this flurry of effort comes from a letter of over twenty pages written 7 March 1907 to George H. Brimhall, President of BYU, from R. Holmes of Spanish Fork, Utah (in BYU library). He had, he said, “been deeply engaged for the last twenty-one years” in the study of Book of Mormon geography, which takes us to 1886. “During the last ten years there have been so many entertained by so many men that theory after theory spring up all around the country.” In his view, “we know the whole thing is in a shape that my opinion is as good as the other fellow.” (The actual geographic observations made in this rambling item are insufficiently clear for me to detect the lines of his model.)

One thing evident in all the discussion is that neither the proponents of the many map correlations nor Elder Cannon found anything intrinsically wrong in pursuing such studies, only in the confusion and disunity that resulted. There is no trace of a viewpoint that the geography of Book of Mormon events had been settled, by Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt or anyone else. Indeed Cannon himself went on to say:

The First Presidency have often been asked to prepare some suggestive map illustrative of Nephite geography, but have never consented to do so.

Nor are we acquainted with any of the Twelve Apostles who would undertake such a task. The reason is, that without further information they are not prepared even to suggest. The word of the Lord or the translation of other ancient records is required to clear up many points now so obscure

But his hope for restraint was vain; interest seems to have continued apace.

A further manifestation of the strong interest in this topic came in 1900. At the instigation of Benjamin Cluff, President of Brigham Young Academy, an expedition was planned to "Book of Mormon lands." The destination was the Magdalena river, generally believed to have been the Sidon. It departed Provo in April on horseback. Personnel and logistical problems combined with ignorance of the conditions they faced combined to make the effort futile, but publicity was extensive. According to Cluff one result of the activity was that it "probably furnished some evidence to corroborate the theory of Anthony Ivins and other Book of Mormon authorities that the narrow neck of land spoken of in the Book of Mormon ... is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec" (Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, eds., *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny*, Provo: BYU, 1976, page 161). Also, according to the same source, some people at the time thought that Hagoth's shipbuilding site on the "sea west" was at the Yucatan peninsula, which would not, of course, comport with a Panama/Magdalena model. I should like to know more about these variant views.

Another signal of continued concern that deserves investigation was a "Book of Mormon convention" held in Provo on May 23-24, 1903 where geography was evidently argued (mentioned in the letter of Holmes to Brimhall).

Perhaps tied to that event was a movement at Brigham Young College in Logan to study geography. The "Society of American Archeology" in 1904 published a "Report: Book of Mormon Geography" in the BYC Bulletin 3(2, December). John A. Widtsoe, later an apostle but then on the BYC faculty, was a member of the Society's executive committee and the secretary was Joel Ricks. Ricks wrote the report. He would become one of the most published LDS students of the subject.

This first piece by Ricks was all based on published materials, but soon he visited Colombia. This provided his subsequent writings with photographs and an I-was-there tone which went well with readers. In 1906 he published a series of articles in *The Juvenile Instructor* which specified his model in some detail (Ricks 1904 Model). In large measure he followed Reynolds, but he moved beyond in concrete details.

Interestingly, the RLDS Church was also caught up in the activity having to do with the geography of Book of Mormon events at this period of time. In 1894 their general conference appointed a Committee on Archaeology. Its studies provided information from which G. F. Weston drafted a set of maps that first appeared around 1900 (see RLDS/Weston 1900? Model and Hanson

1948 Model). They are distinguishable from Reynolds and Pratt only in details.

I have arbitrarily assigned a closing date of 1909 to this period because that year B. H. Roberts' *New Witnesses for God*, volume 3, appeared. It contained his call for caution in accepting uncritically the common view that the statement in Richards and Little's *Compendium* claiming that Lehi landed in Chile (see below) came from Joseph Smith and was a revelation. He was so influential an "intellectual" in LDS terms at that time, that I believe his caution on this point opened the door for a wider range and more open consideration of alternatives to the dominant orthodoxy.

Contextual reasons, both internal and external, for the interest in geography in this thirty-five year period are numerous. Inside the Church the death of Brigham Young in 1877 produced a reaction to the grip he had held on thinking in Deseret for thirty years. The moment coincided, of course, with increasing influence from the "outside" coming among the saints especially through the medium of local gentile businesses, press, and organizations. The effect of Latter-day Saint "higher education" must also be counted. Despite limitations on the scope of Brigham Young Academy and sister institutions of the time, they did bring together some minds able to probe beyond the sheerer orthodoxies of pioneer days. At the same time, information from the secular world about geography, traditional history and archaeology in the hemisphere was increasing markedly and becoming available through books and periodicals. While sophistication in such matters was still far off, at least some of the better students among the Latter-day Saints now encountered a degree of discipline imposed by facts about ancient America and contemporary geographical knowledge.

The publication of James A. Little and Franklin D. Richards' *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel* (Salt Lake City, 1882) tended to confirm the generally-shared and Orson Pratt's disseminated idea that Lehi's landing place had been in southern South America. In it was a statement which they headed: "LEHI'S TRAVELS.—*Revelation to Joseph the Seer.*" It says that Lehi and his party landed "on the continent of South America, in Chili, thirty degrees south latitude." (See Frederick G. Williams III, *Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams Statement*. F.A.R.M.S. Paper WIL-88, 1988.) The statement is in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams; there is reason to believe that it was written no later than 1845 and may well have come from the Kirtland era. In the cited study of the matter by Williams' great-great-grandson, evidence is given pro and con about whether the content can be considered a revelation to Joseph Smith. The conclusion is that the origin of the words remains uncertain and the statement should bear no particular weight in considering the geography of Book of Mormon events.

The fact that Little and Richards asserted that the statement originated with Joseph and by revelation nevertheless impressed people who desired the

assurance that a revelatory solution to the question of geography would provide. Four years later A. H. Cannon could unequivocally say this: "19 Q. Where does the Prophet Joseph Smith tell us they landed? A. On the coast of Chili in South America." A generation of Sunday School children memorized this. (See *Questions and Answers on the Book of Mormon*. Designed and Prepared Especially for the Use of the Sunday Schools in Zion, Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1886, page 24.)

Dan Vogel (*Indian Origins and the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1986, page 85) has asserted that the rise of alternatives to the orthodox view on geography came only with B. H. Roberts, "in the first decade of the twentieth century, when [he] questioned it for apologetic reasons." Vogel claims that the stimulus was an anti-Mormon book by M. T. Lamb (*The Golden Bible; or, the Book of Mormon. Is it from God?* New York: Ward and Drummond, 1887). Supposedly "Roberts believed that such problems [as travel distances and population growth, raised by Lamb] could only be solved by postulating a limited geographical area for Book of Mormon events." Vogel's citation to Roberts' *New Witness* 3:503, is, however, a red herring, for he makes no statement there about this matter (see Appendix A). In fact, there is no reason to believe that Roberts ever adopted a limited geography model, something others were putting forward vigorously in his lifetime. As of 1922 he still wrote as though Latter-day Saints must deal with an entire-hemisphere map. He apparently saw the possibility of limiting the Nephites scene to be worth considering but never made the transition in his own thought. Furthermore, I have found no evidence that any students of the geography topic before or after Roberts' single mention of Lamb in 1909 paid any attention to what that critic had had to say.

In summary, I see the 1880-1909 period characterized by four key points:

(1) The old unspecified orthodoxy continued by inertia among the general membership.

(2) Rather than there being a dominant belief that the questions about geographical setting had been authoritatively settled, a number of leaders and thoughtful members felt that the subject was open to legitimate study, though divisive speculation was decried.

(3) Some people felt it quite acceptable to challenge the norm, and their opinions were not proscribed on the basis of content. Most of the challenges it is true, were only in regard to details in the location of Book of Mormon lands, but at least Church leader Anthony Ivins and presumably certain others of like mind seem to have opted for a restricted Book of Mormon scene consisting chiefly of Central America.

(4) The contention by some later defenders of the orthodox model that less-than-hemispheric models are only recent innovations does not hold up. Such models appear to have been around continuously for at least a century, though not widely known for most of that time. Counting the *Times and Seasons* model as the alternative to the original, naive General 1830s scheme,

then alternatives to the Chile-to-New York correlation have been part of the LDS thought almost since the Book of Mormon was first printed.

1910-1927

B. H. Roberts set the tone for this period in this statement near the end of volume 3 of *New Witness* (see Appendix A):

I may also say that as these pages go to press the question of Book of Mormon geography is more than ever recognized as an open one by students of the book. That is to say, it is a question if Mormon views hitherto entertained respecting Book of Mormon lands have not been a misconception by reason of premises forced upon its students by the declaration of an alleged revelation [the "Lehi's Travels" statement].

The next fifteen years saw the rise of competition among a greater variety of ideas than at any time before and that competition continued into the thirties.

This relative openness showed up in an interesting way in 1921 (according to Bruce Van Orden in an unpublished paper). A new edition of the Book of Mormon had been issued the year before with the Pratt footnotes eliminated. This change must have been the trigger for a meeting in Salt Lake City in which Joel Ricks, B. H. Roberts, J. M. Sjodahl and Willard Young all made presentations on geography. Apparently nothing came of the session, but the idea of competitive presentations was novel.

Jean Driggs (see Driggs 1925 Model) conveyed the tone of the times in stating that when Roberts wrote, "the general opinion was that Lehi landed on the coast of South America, 30 degrees south latitude. At the present time the Church does not commit itself on the location of Book of Mormon lands and we are left to work out the homelands of the Nephites and Jaredites from the Book of Mormon itself."

This cautious neutrality regarding competing models is evidenced further in a statement from President Joseph F. Smith; the year is uncertain but he died in 1918 and this may have been some years earlier. He said that the Lord had not yet revealed the landing place of Lehi and his people and that if, as he was being requested, he were to approve a particular map purporting to show the landing and afterwards it was found to be in error, it would affect the faith of the people (see Appendix A).

The opening up of viewpoints was no doubt connected to a liberalizing tendency that began to be manifest in LDS thought and programs soon after Roberts' 1909 caution had come to print. By the end of World War I the trend was patent. The rise of science as a force in the life of Mormons played some role. Not only was science a byword in the newly popular urban mass media of the time, it was established in the Church schools, especially at Brigham Young University. Prominent Church leaders (Talmage, Merrill, Widtsoe, Harris) proudly wore the label, and the practical benefits of science provided a strong positive cachet. Moreover, the urbanization of the Wasatch Front area, the rising level of education among Utah saints, and the general

liberalization in American society (including Utah) in the first three decades of the century broke some of the constraints on thought carried over from pioneer days which had inhibited diversity in thought. It now seemed acceptable to espouse objectivity and calm consideration of alternative theories, even in such a sensitive area as the geography of Book of Mormon events, as long as one did not make waves in the process.

The details of who thought what in this time period remain to be filled in, but Sjordahl's popular book, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon* (The Author: Salt Lake City, 1927; see chapter 17, "A Suggested Key to Book of Mormon Geography"), gives us a partial picture. Sjordahl was in a safe position to write, as an associate of Church leaders and prominent contributor to LDS publications; nobody could consider him a kook. In fact his own model, in a "Suggested Key to Book of Mormon Geography," appeared first in the *Improvement Era* of September 1927.

Sjordahl's book respectfully summarized the Reynolds 1880 Model first, for it continued as the popular norm. Yet he granted only that it was one of five "theories." His caution was expressed in his characterization of this as "the best known theory [a term he used four times] . . . which, however Mr. Reynolds characterizes as a supposition, merely. . . ." Further showing his cool approach, after citing "opinions" of Pratt and others about Lehi landing in Chile, Sjordahl would only say, "All this is evidence that must be weighed when the question of the landing place of Lehi is considered" (page 92).

The second model he summarizes is "This [Reynolds'] Theory Modified" by Joel Ricks. Thirdly, he briefly sketches an unpublished schema by Stuart Bagley (which finally came to print in Bagley's own words in 1963—see Bagley 1927 Model). Bagley placed the land southward in Central America with the narrow neck at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec but the final battles in New York (his placement of Nephi was unique, that is, in northern Yucatan). The fourth view presented by Sjordahl was that of Willard Young, "The Central American Theory." In it Lehi's group landed in El Salvador, the Nephites and Lamanites inhabited that country, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize. The hill Cumorah was in eastern Guatemala. Finally Sjordahl gave his own picture (see Sjordahl 1927 Model), which tried to incorporate elements of all the others.

Young was one of the first generation of Mormons with formal education who broke with the geographic orthodoxy of the Pratt-Reynolds-Ricks tradition. He was Brigham Young's son, a graduate of West Point, and an internationally experienced civil engineer. After leaving his army career, he became president of the short-lived Latter-day Saints University in Salt Lake City. With strong credentials both in the Church and intellectually through his education and experience, he entered the lists with his own geography model around the time of World War I. He held for a strictly limited territory located in Guatemala and nearby lands (see Young Pre-1920? Model). He was soon seconded by Jean Driggs (a student of Young's?), also

an engineer, who issued in 1925 the first adequate physiographic map of Middle America, upon which he projected Book of Mormon events. He was the first in the Utah Church (unless Young preceded him) explicitly to maintain that the hill of the final battle was in Central America.

Louis Edward Hills, an RLDS student of the Book of Mormon, had by 1917 developed a model that was strictly limited to Mexico and Central America. His thought was heavily influenced by the native traditions from the area as reported by H. H. Bancroft. For him the hill Cumorah was in central Mexico, and he consciously contradicted the hemispheric RLDS/Weston 1900? Model which his fellow church members espoused (see more below). Jeremiah Gunsolley, also of the RLDS Church (see Gunsolley 1922 Model) also proposed that the hill of the final battles was in central Mexico, but Lehi's landing he put in Chile, and Panama was his narrow neck.

A real contribution of the two engineers, Young and Driggs, was to deal with the external scene in real world terms. They knew and talked about the topography, climate, vegetation and travel conditions in tropical America in a more concrete way (Young had worked in Panama) than earlier, or many later, students of the geography of Book of Mormon events.

1928-1946:

Sjodahl's book was the last gasp of competitive model-making for awhile. In 1928 the Church acquired the site of the hill Cumorah in New York state and readied it as a visitor's destination in time for the coming centennial of both the Church and the printing of the Book of Mormon. In March 1928 B. H. Roberts in an article in the *Deseret News* gave what he considered sure evidence from the scriptures and Church history that the final battle of the Nephites took place around the hill (he was the Eastern States mission president and the hill was in his mission). A month later in general conference Anthony W. Ivins reiterated this view, noting in passing, "There have been some differences of opinion in regard to it." (See Appendix A.) It seems likely that the historical celebration with its re-emphasis on tradition in the Church inhibited any tendencies to speak or write about the divisive issue of geography. Then in less than two years the onset of the Great Depression turned the attention of most members and many leaders from such intellectual trivia as maps to survival matters. The Latter-day Saints of the 1930's may have broken new ground in their thinking about social matters (e.g., the decisive 1932 Utah vote to repeal national prohibition, in specific opposition to the wish of Church leaders, and popular support for the New Deal), but nothing new was said about the Book of Mormon.

The years 1938 and 1939 proved important. For the first time in eleven years the *Improvement Era* (July 1938) published a piece on the geography of Book of Mormon events. Lynn C. Layton had written about a wholly new phenomenon—an internal model. Finally, after 108 years, a Latter-day Saint had showed that it was possible and even desirable to develop such a map.

While it is difficult to imagine that coming up with this concept took so long, it is nevertheless true, as far as I can find, this sort of map had never been published before. Layton's was rudimentary yet basically sound. Since then at least eight other purely internal maps have appeared, plus others produced in preparation to particular external correlations. Clearly the Layton approach represented a productive mutation in the stream of ideas dealing with this geographical issue. We shall see, however, that while Layton published first, he may not have been the first to work seriously at making an internal model—probably the Washburns were.

Three other 1938 events were significant in a different way. In September that year Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, the Church historian and increasingly prominent as a conservative spokesman in matters of doctrine, published a lengthy piece in the Church News section of the Deseret News which reasserted the general posture of the General 1830s-Pratt-Reynolds-Ricks family of models. There was no question, for him, that tradition in this matter was based on revelation and that the New York Hill Cumorah was where the final battles took place. (He never mentioned, and may not have been aware of, his father's statement cited above which espoused the need for caution on this subject.) He was scathing in his attack on "speculation about Book of Mormon geography" and "this modernistic theory" that would assign the hill Cumorah "some place within the restricted territory of Central America, notwithstanding the teachings of the Church to the contrary for upwards of 100 years" (see Appendix A.) Since nothing had been published on this matter for some time, we can suppose that it was unpublished work in progress which triggered his statement. (The Washburns' book, discussed below, was to be published the following year, and M. Wells Jakeman had already formed some of his basic notions of a limited geography. J. Nile Washburn later said, ". . . For years my father and I were in close touch with [the Church authorities], during the writing of our geography book" [see his *Book of Mormon Guidebook*, n. p., 1968, page xi]).

Elder Smith's hand had already become evident in another manifestation of his concern. The original publication of *The History of the Church of the Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (familiarily called "the Documentary History") was edited by B. H. Roberts and appeared in 1904. After the death of Roberts in 1933, the new Church historian, Joseph Fielding Smith, reprinted the series, with a significant change in a key statement regarding the geography of Book of Mormon events. The *History's* treatment of the Zelph incident, which took place during the march of Zion's Camp in 1834 (see Kenneth A. Godfrey, *The Zelph Story*, F.A.R.M.S. Paper GDF-89, 1989), depended on the details of the event. Some of the documents have Joseph Smith saying that Zelph was a white Lamanite warrior serving under one Onandagus who was known "from the hill Cumorah or eastern Sea, to the Rocky mountains" during "the last great struggle with the Lamanites and Nephites." Others lack the reference to "the hill Cumorah" and "the last great struggle with the

Lamanites and Nephites," leaving both Zelph's time and geography indeterminate. Godfrey's paper recounts how when Willard Richards and assistants composed the *History* in Nauvoo from a number of sources, their manuscript had the reference to "hill Cumorah" and "the last . . . struggle" in the first drafted but then explicitly crossed them out. The Roberts edition (1904) omitted those phrases in accordance with the Richards manuscript. Fletcher Hammond reported (*Geography of the Book of Mormon*, Author: Salt Lake City, 1959, pages 102-103) examining the Richards manuscript with assistant Church historian Preston Nibley, who concluded that the Roberts' edition correctly followed the Richards ms. "and that part of the 1934 edition of the same history which differs from it is erroneous." (Godfrey discusses the question at length on pages 15-19 and 22-23.) The reprinting in 1934, done under Elder Smith's direction, was when the excised statements were put back in, and they have remained to the present. In the Church News article of 1938, historian Smith said that this was "the correct" reading without commenting on the basis. It is clear enough that his motive was to protect the reputation of his great-uncle, Joseph Smith, as a prophet, and he strongly opposed any who implied that Joseph did not know the answer to the geography question or had been in error in regard to it.

A further factor was the phrasing of the *History* when Richards first wrote it in the first person to make it appear that it was specifically written by Joseph Smith. While he was the nominal author he had little or nothing to do with the actual content or wording (in conformity with 19th century editorial custom); his scribes organized the documents they had in hand in language they deemed adequate. Their draft was then read to the Prophet, in part or wholly, who commented on it, consequently it may be supposed that the changes in the wording in the Richards manuscript owed something to Joseph's comments.

Because of the phrasing in the reprinted *History*, for over half a century virtually all LDS readers of it have thought that Joseph positively said that Zelph fought in Illinois as part of the fourth century A.D. retreat of the Nephites to the New York hill Cumorah. The fact is that we cannot be sure what he said about Zelph in detail (see Godfrey 1989). (This is not an obvious matter—Elder John A. Widtsoe felt that "Zelph probably dated from a later time when the Nephites and Lamanites had been somewhat dispersed and had wandered over the country." See, *Is Book of Mormon Geography Known?*, *Improvement Era*, July 1950, page 451.) Now, Joseph Smith may indeed have said and meant "hill Cumorah." Yet it may also be that the crossing out of that key expression in the manuscript was Joseph's own decision. We lack means now to determine this. The fact remains, however, that in the late 1930's members of the Church were under strong pressure to stay with the traditional view on geography as expressed by the *History* and Elder Smith's article.

A landmark 1938 speech to Church educators by President J. Reuben Clark ("The Charted Course of Church Education") further limited options in thinking new thoughts. In it he called for retrenchment against liberal social, economic and political ideas that had crept into some seminary and institute classrooms. He insisted that all instruction must be gospel related and doctrinally based. That emphasis has continued in the schools to the present with the result that only limited reference is made to information or insights from secular sources. Church teachers who might have had a tendency to pursue geographical study of the Book of Mormon were pulled up short in 1938 and discouraged from public expression of such interests, and the policy continues still.

It was in this atmosphere that J. Alvin (father) and J. Nile (son), both teachers in the seminary system, published their important book *An Approach to the Study of the Book of Mormon* (New Era: Provo, 1939). It represented by far the most detailed and careful study of geography to that time. But it is 99% concerned with the internal map. (As to external correlates, J. A. in his 1940 thesis at BYU concluded, without elaboration, "Central America appears best suited to the requirements of the text." Their few other statements were little more enlightening on the matter.) The conclusions reached about distances and size of the Nephite lands had been anticipated in brief but lucid terms by Driggs (which J. N. acknowledged in *Book of Mormon Guidebook*, 1968, page 32). The difference was that Driggs had then proceeded directly to his external model, in Central America. Anybody who chose to reject that correlation would read his little publication without having learned much about the scriptural text or internal geography as such. The Washburns, in contrast, refused to be drawn into an argument about externals, so their detailed internal treatment stood on its own. Spots in their writings show us that they supposed the only correlation that would make sense had to be in "Central America," but they held back from explicating that position, either because they did not feel qualified to deal with externals or because they were cautious about spoiling the reception of their valuable internal schema. They did demonstrate convincingly that the scale of a map of Book of Mormon events was restricted by the text itself to a few hundred miles in extent. (While Layton had got the internal basic relationships down the year before, he paid no attention to scale.) The Washburns were the first to put all the major pieces together on a fairly consistent internal map, then they added a reasonable scale of miles.

Caught in the midst of a reaction against new thought and renewed emphasis on traditional ideas in the Church, the timing of the Washburn and Washburn book could hardly have been worse. Their effort was further bracketed by the Depression ("back to basics") and World War II ("unity"), both of which were times that discouraged new intellectual directions among Latter-day Saints. As a consequence, less came of their model's issuance than

its quality called for. Little attention has ever been paid to their work except among a handful of devotees of the geography subject.

From the 1960's to 1984 J. Nile Washburn wrote and lectured a number of times more on this subject. He made certain minor modifications in the internal placement of lands, but he seems to have become even more reluctant about an external correlation, refusing even to hint at an answer to the question.

In the period about 1937-1939 the development of a new focus of interest in geography was underway. M. Wells Jakeman and Thomas Stuart Ferguson were fellow students and friends at the University of California at Berkeley who shared an intense interest in the Book of Mormon (Milton R. Hunter was also on the same campus, but he seems not to have been directly concerned with the subject at the time). Working on a Ph.D. in ancient history (his dissertation would be on the geography and history of the peoples of Yucatan just before the Spaniards arrived), Jakeman saw in the "chronicles" (native traditions recorded after the conquest) many parallels to the Book of Mormon. These he introduced to Ferguson. When Jakeman received his degree in 1939 and returned to his home in Los Angeles, he, Ferguson and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., were instrumental in organizing "The Itzan Society," dedicated to doing research and publishing on those matters. Through the war years only a few of their plans came to pass and when Jakeman came to the BYU faculty in 1946, the rudimentary organization evaporated.

Jakeman has never publicly discussed the background of his thought, but it seems that some inspiration probably came from the writings of Louis Edward Hills, mentioned earlier. Hills identified the "Quinames" of Mexican tradition with the Jaredites, the "Nahuas" with the Nephites (landing in El Salvador), the "Mayas" with the Lamanites, and the "Olmecs" with the Mulekites. A number of historical and geographical points in his scheme are so patently like those in Jakeman's 1940s Model that it would be very surprising if there had been no connection (e.g., the Mulekites landed at Xicalanco on the Laguna de Terminos, Nephi was at or near Copan, and the hill Cumorah was in the Valley of Mexico).

1947-1974:

The collaboration between Jakeman and Ferguson foundered over their differing enthusiasms. Jakeman was the meticulous scholar who wished to have every detail worked out before publishing. (His 1945 professional book, *The Origin and History of the Maya*, had been reviewed negatively by the formidable archaeologist J. Eric Thompson and Jakeman did not care to repeat that experience.) Ferguson (a lawyer) was primarily an apologist or even propagandist, not a scholar. He wanted to get "the word" out about the Mexican chronicles as "evidence" for the Book of Mormon, and the sooner the better. In 1947 he published *Cumorah, Where?*, a short book specifically confronting the New York view by mustering arguments from the scriptural

text that require a limited geographical scene; he made a few statements that said the scene had to be entirely in Middle America. This was the first publication proposing such a small scale model since Sjordahl 20 years before. In the face of Apostle Smith's support for a hemispheric scale, Ferguson's piece was generally greeted with suspicion or hostility.

In an interesting political gambit, he drew into collaboration Milton R. Hunter, one of First Quorum of Seventy, with a Ph.D. in history and a background as a Church educator. Their *Ancient America and the Book of Mormon* (1950) laid out lengthy excerpts from Ixtlilxochitl, one of the native writers who recorded traditions in Mexico after the Spanish conquest, showing striking parallels to the Book of Mormon text. This book was much heftier and had more influence than Ferguson's own, in part perhaps because it handled the question of geography more subtly (see Ferguson and Hunter 1950 Model). Meanwhile Jakeman was incensed that material to which he thought he had discovery rights had been brought out (and not with his sort of scholarly care at that) by someone else. The rift between the two men was never fully healed.

Jakeman had come to BYU in 1946, to begin teaching and research in archaeology, with a modest assist from Ferguson in making the connection and with the blessing of Elder John A. Widtsoe. To Jakeman "Book of Mormon archaeology" was a branch of conventional archaeology waiting to be born and nurtured and he saw himself as the obstetrician and pediatrician. Apostle Widtsoe, former university president and acknowledged intellectual, played the role of godfather. He encouraged studies of the Book of Mormon by a variety of persons and approaches, hoping that "out of diligent prayerful study, we may be led to a better understanding of times and places in the history of the people who move across the pages of the divinely given Book of Mormon" (see Appendix A). He played a key role in providing a measure of legitimacy for scholarly studies of the Nephite record at a time when many in the Church did not welcome them.

Jakeman's most significant contribution was through his students. Over a period of three decades he furnished stimulation to many hundreds of young people who passed through his courses at BYU. As they spread throughout the Church, they carried with them assurance that Mesoamerica was the scene of Book of Mormon events and that traditions from that area strikingly confirmed scripture. He never arrived at a point where he felt confident enough with his own model of geography, or at least with his phrasing of it, that he was willing to make it fully public (see Jakeman 1940s Model). On the one hand this denied clarity to those who came to learn from him, but on the other it left them room to construct their own readings of the geography, history and archaeology to which he introduced them.

Through the "University Archaeological Society," later the "Society for Early Historical Archaeology," Jakeman and Ross Christensen harnessed the energies of a number of students and hobbyists in studies related to the

“archaeology of the scriptures.” Yet Jakeman has never been comfortable with anybody but him dealing with the geography, although he has never, in fact, finished that task.

What he perceived as rivalries hindered cooperation in the crucial 1950-1970 period. Ferguson and Hunter did their own thing in book form, then Ferguson organized the “New World Archaeological Foundation” to move ahead with a program of field archaeology where again he felt Jakeman was stalling. At BYU, meanwhile, Jakeman’s relations with Sidney Sperry and Hugh Nibley ran from guarded cooperation downward. Later, many of his students (Sorenson, Lowe, Warren, Norman, and others) went their own ways in Book of Mormon matters in varying degrees of distance from their mentor even while acknowledging important intellectual debts to him.

Jakeman’s primary contributions were two: (1) the settling, for many people, of the basic “where?” of the geography of Book of Mormon events; those who studied systematically with him ended up with no question but that the entire story took place in Mesoamerica and related significantly to what can be learned from the native Mesoamerican traditions; and, (2) the idea that the ultimate “test” for correlating the Book of Mormon in space and time with one particular set of Mesoamerican sites and localities would involve comprehensive study of the ancient world, not just geography; ultimately traditions, archaeology, physical anthropology and linguistics had to combine. He was the first student of the geography of Book of Mormon events to gain professional standing as an “archaeologist” (though he did virtually no digging personally) and to see that geography must connect with cultural contexts through meticulous scholarship.

By the sixties the increasing number of people working with the geography question had settled on Mesoamerica as the only plausible candidate area in the New World. There were rare exceptions with anomalous models located in Peru, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, “Central America,” and so on, but certain basic issues appeared to be settled for those who had paid close attention: (1) the area in which the story took place was far smaller than a continent, (2) the hill in New York could not be the scene of the final battle because of statements in the text itself, and (3) only some place within the high civilization area called Mesoamerica could qualify. Even Sidney B. Sperry, prominent writer on Old World aspects of the Book of Mormon, and long a voice among BYU religion faculty in favor of the traditional (Smith) view of geography, by 1960 had changed his mind, having found the scriptural text undeniably contrary to the full-hemisphere, New York-hill correlation (see Ross T. Christensen, *Geography in Book of Mormon Archaeology, Newsletter and Proceedings of the SEHA*, No. 147, December 1981, page 3). RLDS students had arrived at the same conclusions. Meanwhile the Church membership in general still held a vague idea of a hemispheric model, although they thought little about it under a virtual ban on discussion of the topic in Church manuals and in the education system. Yet thousands

of readers and people who had studied under Jakeman or his students scattered throughout the Church actually held the Mesoamerican view.

Progress toward clarification or consensus about geography was slow. No mechanisms existed to facilitate intercommunication about it. Instead there were minor rivalries among protagonists (often over nothing more than personality differences) and jockeying for position about detailed differences in models.

By the seventies, Church authorities still held a cautious position on geography. At BYU Jakeman always felt held down under what he inferred to be a lid on explicit discussion. Once the Church had taken over financing the New World Archaeological Foundation from Ferguson in the fifties, NWAf professional staff were specifically instructed not to discuss the geography, or any other Book of Mormon matter, but to be wholly professional in their approach to archaeology. Only the fact that extensive, long-term financial support was given to that agency—with work restricted largely to the Book of Mormon period and exclusively to southern Mesoamerica—could be taken as indicating that the authorities had any geographical preference about the Book of Mormon scene whether they did in fact or not.

1975-1990:

Historical perspective is, of course, more difficult the nearer one gets to the present, particularly for someone who is a participant in the events considered. Later interpretations will no doubt be better, but for what it is worth, here are some viewpoints on the virtual present.

In late 1974 I was approached by David A. Palmer, an active student of Book of Mormon geography and of archaeology in relation to it. He had once studied under Jakeman and was (and is) a chemical engineer with a major petroleum firm in Naperville, Illinois. (I was then nominally professor of anthropology at BYU but at the time was serving as chair of the University Studies Department) Aware of the general features of my model for the geography of Book of Mormon events, he urged upon me the importance of working toward a consensus on the disputed topic. He proposed a conference to which all serious students of geography would be invited and where competing viewpoints would be presented and discussed. Knowing the degree of emotion the matter involved for some of the prospective participants, I was reluctant to engage in what I thought likely to be a painful and probably unfruitful activity. But Palmer's persistence drew from me a commitment to aid him in putting together a mail "non-conference." Garth Norman and I both consented to circulate position papers. Mine consisted of the latest revision of a brief item I was calling "Where in the World," which I had first written and sent to friends and former students in 1955; it outlined the Sorenson 1955 Model, together with a lengthy appendix in which secular materials on Mesoamerican geography and cultures were mustered to show

that the model fit the literature. (I had worked out the basic model in the central depression of Chiapas in April 1953 while Tom Ferguson and I—then a recently graduated student in archaeology at BYU—were doing archaeological reconnaissance which in that area, until then, was unstudied by archaeologists. We were acting on the recommendation of field director Dr. Pedro Armillas, at the end of what Ferguson considered a disappointing field season in Tabasco (where, he had concluded by 1952, Zarahemla would be found), the first for his privately funded New World Archaeological Foundation. Our survey (see my *An Archaeological Reconnaissance of West-Central Chiapas*, New World Archaeological Foundation Publication no. 1, 1956, pages 7-19) turned out to set the agenda from which the NWAFF began in 1955 to excavate in Chiapas, an effort that has continued to the present.

Palmer sent the papers by Norman (see Norman 1966 Model) and me to a couple of dozen people, inviting them to comment. Fewer than ten did so. Palmer interpreted the responses as a strong endorsement of the Sorenson model as against Norman's. On that basis in 1975 he made contacts in the Church office building in Salt Lake City which resulted in a series of weekly presentations which I made over the fall months to a varying group of people from several departments, the magazines, curriculum, education, etc. As a result, Jay Todd, managing editor of *The Ensign*, invited me to prepare a series of articles; they were completed early in 1976.

For the next nine years we worked together trying to find a style and range of content acceptable for publication in *The Ensign*. Not surprisingly, reluctance was manifested on the part of various constituencies that would be affected by such a discussion appearing in the Church periodical. Meanwhile requests for access to my manuscript were persistent and as a result a total of about 1200 photocopies were distributed at cost of copying. I was surprised and gratified by the widespread interest. Strong interest was expressed by many well-informed Latter-day Saints, including a number of general authorities, who thought that such a detailed statement of an LDS position phrased in terms of current scholarship was needed.

One factor in this interest was that anti-Mormon writers and lecturers were attacking the Book of Mormon on grounds which the Church was unprepared to defend against by reason of its past reluctance to allow, let alone encourage, discussions of geography and archaeology. Poorly informed opponents were having a field day attacking 19th century models and notions still widespread among Church members and missionaries and which were represented as the definitive LDS position.

The significance of this series of events for the present discussion is that most of those who had opinions on or models for "Book of Mormon geography" since the mid-seventies became very aware of the Sorenson model. Many were supportive. Others were stimulated to prepare alternative statements. The Palmer 1981 Model was one result. He considered that there was urgency in telling the public about the material I

had pointed out, so he did that, supplemented with his own data, in his 1981 book. Further, a growing Latter-day Saint tourist clientele anxious to visit “Book of Mormon lands” helped raise to consciousness the question of where those lands might be located specifically.

By 1984 continuing discussions involving editor Todd, those supervising him, and me produced a request that I prepare two articles for *The Ensign* giving some of the same sort of information as in the unpublished series. The first of these, “Digging into the Book of Mormon: Our Changing Understanding of Ancient America and Its Scripture”, *The Ensign* 14, September 1984, pages 26-37, contained a brief section on “The Nephite and Jaredite Lands,” which gave the basic arguments favoring a limited-scale model and recapped a little of the history of LDS study of geography (see endnotes 6 and 8). This represented the first printing of any information about external models in a Church magazine for many decades. As one consequence, the major publisher to the LDS trade decided that they had received a green light from 47 East South Temple to publish on the geography of Book of Mormon events where before they would not touch the topic.

It would be easy to read too much and too little into this event. By no means did the Brethren approve a particular model or even the notion of a limited geography model as such; the *Ensign* articles did not even put forward details of my model but dealt only in general with Mesoamerica. What was signalled by this request and publication of the pieces was that it was now permissible, and perhaps even desirable, to discuss the topic openly. Such a position was easier to adopt because of the progressive passing from the scene of older Church authorities who had been strongly committed to the prevailing hemispheric model with which they had grown up.

Thus the eighties have seen an unprecedented crop of writings on the geography of Book of Mormon events—more than ever. Much of this consists of slightly revised versions of previous models. The table on the next page illustrates this fact. It shows in sequence when certain major features or attributes of most of the external models were communicated. (A full history-of-ideas treatment would require many more and more elaborate displays of this sort with appropriate analyses.)

Key Points in the History

For the first 85 years few anomalies can be seen. The full hemispheric model prevailed, yet with one notable blip on the screen of history—the 1842 Times and Seasons Model. This was discussed above, but placed in the format of this chart, its uniqueness stands out starkly.

Hills, an RLDS student of the Book of Mormon, seems to deserve credit for many innovations: (1) the first regionally limited model, (2) that the lands where Book of Mormon events took place comprised exclusively Mesoamerica, (3) that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the narrow neck, (4) that the Usumacinta was the Sidon, and (5) the first comprehensive attempt to

Land
Land
Nephi's
Narrow Neck
Northward
Southward
Cumorah
River Sidon
Landing

	Panama	Honduras Bay	Belize-Yuc. base	Tehuantepec	Other	Panama-N. York	Tehuant.-N. York	Yucatan Pen.	So.-Cent. Mexico	Guatemala	Ecuador-Colom.	South America	Honduras-El Sal.	So. Guatemala	S. Meso., inc. Yuc.	Tehuant.-El Salv.	Peru and south	Other	New York	Central Mexico	So. Veracruz	Guatemala	In So. America	In Peru	Magdalena	Ulua	Usumacinta	Grijalva	Other	Chile	Colombia	Central America							
General 1830s	x					x							x						x					?						x									
T. and S. 1842	-					?						?					x	x													x								
Pratt 1866	x					x						x							x						x					x									
Com./Maes. 1880	x					x						x							x						x					x									
Reynolds 1880	x					x						x							x						x					x									
Plain Facts 1887	x					?			x			x							?						x					?									
Roberts 1888	x					x						x							x						x					x									
RLDS/Wes 1900?	x					x						x							x						x					x									
Ricks 1904	x					x						x													x					x									
Hills 1917				x				x						x						x						x					x								
Young pre-1920?					x				x				x								x				x						x								
Gunsolley 1922	x					x						x								x					x					?									
Driggs 1925		x				x							x								x				x							x							
Bagley 1927			x					x											x																				
Sjodahl 1927				x				x											x												x								
Jakeman 1940s				x				x						x						x						x						x							
Laytons 1940?				x				x						x						x					x														
Wilde 1947	x					x						?							x											?									
Birrell 1948					x					x							x						x	x							x								
Simmons 1948				x				x						x							x						x						x						
Ferg./Hunter 1950				x				x						x							x						?						x						
Stout 1950					x												x												x				x						
Hanson 1951					x			x						x							?												?						
Pierce 1954					x			x														x				x							x						
Sorenson 1955					x			x								x					x							x					x						
Dixon 1958	x					x						x								x											x								
Hammond 1959				?											?						?					x							x						
Vincent 1960?				x				x						x							x					?	?						?						
Lowe 1960a		x							x									x				x												x					
Lowe 1960b					x													x				?					x							x					
Warren 1960				?					x						x						x						x							x					
Warren 1961									x						x						x						x								x				
Norman 1966					?				x						?												x								x				
Christensen 1969				x				x															?			x									x				
Lowe 1970s						x							x								?						x	x							?				
Priddis 1975						x															x														x				
Steede 1975					x				x						x							?						?								x			
Loving 1976					x				x						x							x						x											
Robison 1977					x				x						x							x						x											
DeLong 1977					x				x						x							x						x											
Ellsworth 1980						x																														x			
Lesh 1980						x									x							x					x									x			
Palmer 1981						x									x							x														x			
Holley 1983																																					x		
Porritt 1985						x									x							x															x		
Kocherhans 1986						x																				x	x										x		
Sahlin 1987																																							
Warren 1987						x																																x	
Curtis 1988																																							
Hauck 1988																																							
Hobby/Smith 1988															x																						x		
Quilter 1988	x																																					x	
Allen 1989																																						x	

utilize secular scholarly literature (on the native chronicles or traditions) to settle Book of Mormon questions. The first point involves both the landing of Lehi's party in Central America and the presence of the hill Cumorah of the final Nephite battles in Mexico; actually, then, the concept of "two Cumorahs" goes back *at least* 75 years.

I pointed out above that there is reason to think that some LDS students may have preceded and inspired Hills' geographic correlation. For instance, the Plain Facts 1887 Model, though brief, maintained that "Most of the descendants of the genuine race of Lamanites, possibly live in Yucatan or Central America." Had more details been added to that short piece, we might have learned that something less than a full hemispheric model was intended, as hinted by the inclusion of only a partial map. Also we need to learn more about the Anthony Ivins' 1900 view that the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was the narrow neck. And there may have been others.

Interestingly, as noted above, Hills' model is similar at all major points of geography with that of Jakeman, a generation later. This raises the question, persistent as we scan the models in sequence, of how much influence previous students of the topic had on later ones. Only very rarely does one find a writer giving explicit credit to a predecessor. It would seem that particular attributes of many models reappear by separate rediscovery. That may, in fact, be so. After all, there are only a limited number of possible isthmuses and once one of those has been chosen, certain other features, such as a candidate river for the Sidon, virtually suggest themselves. Yet, while this is possible in some cases, a more parsimonious explanation is that those who phrased a later model had somehow been alerted, whether by reading or oral reporting, to ideas of their predecessors. In an extreme instance, it is difficult to imagine that Birrell, Priddis and Kocherhans produced their very similar Andean-emergence models in complete independence. Yet we are not told, in their printed works at least, who influenced whom.

The particular joint (?) contributions of Young and Driggs were (1) recognition of the key nature of distances in relating Book of Mormon features on the map, and (2) their attention to detailed external facts about the tropical landscapes of the scene(s) they chose.

Jakeman made a major contribution by his insistence on, as he repeatedly put it, "the archaeological test." He meant that ultimately archaeologists would have to find sites of the correct nature and date at particular points in order to qualify a geographical model as pointing to actual Book of Mormon lands. In his day unfortunately, the quantity and quality of archaeological information was woefully short of permitting valid application of the "test," yet his concept remains unassailable. Until his time, virtually all those Book of Mormon believers who dealt with the topic acted as if geography were chiefly a matter of drawing abstract lines on abstract maps of the hemisphere (tempered somewhat in the case of Young and Driggs) and that any sort of ancient site would do, or none at all.

Ferguson made no contribution to geography *per se*, but he did grasp the point that Latter-day Saints could not afford simply to sit and wait for secular scholars to come up with the external data that would be needed in order to correlate the scriptural account with its scene. This viewpoint was not appreciated very much in Church leadership circles until much later. Furthermore, both he and Jakeman invested effort in seeing that serious students as well as the public were educated and focused on this topic. Ferguson particularly provided opportunities for others to learn in the field much that would later contribute to studies of the geography of Book of Mormon events. (Those who learned explicitly from Jakeman include at least Ferguson, Hunter, Lowe, Sorenson, Warren, Vincent, Norman, K. Christensen, Palmer, Hauck, Allen, Clark, M. Smith, and T. Tucker. Ferguson's efforts directly affected at least Lowe, Sorenson, Warren, Norman, Clark, and Treat.)

The effect of Sorenson's working through the Church leadership to provide some cachet of acceptance for work on the geography topic has been noted. Other contributions by him include bringing into the geographical study current data and concepts from expert studies on Mesoamerican cultures and societies, the importance of the nature of the scripture as a cultural record, and the issues of distances and directions.

The Washburns laid important groundwork with their major internal reconstruction of geography. Even though it was not definitive, it educated many in the need to pay attention to this aspect. Until their time, nobody had preceded the attempt at correlating scriptural events and the external map by seriously analyzing the text's internal picture. Instead, for over a century, all studies began with certain assumptions about the external scene—the hill of the final battle must be in New York, Lehi surely landed in Chile, Palenque was Bountiful, Panama was the narrow neck, or whatever. Until this father-son team showed that there was a great deal to be done with the internal facts *first*, nobody dealt with that aspect. After they wrote, most students of geography have paid some attention to this initial step in determining the where of Book of Mormon events, although all seem till to have been led to a degree by recognized or unrecognized assumptions. Only in 1989 did Clark finally produce the first consistently rationalized internal model which had not been preceded, and to an extent betrayed, by picking an external correlation in advance.

What we see in our survey of these models which stretch over more than a century and a half is that superficial study has been the norm, while confusion has been rampant for at least the latter half of the period by reason of the multiplicity of discordant maps. It is true that for the last seventy-five years the old hemispheric model has tended to fall into disfavor, Tehuantepec as the narrow neck has become the common view, and the notion of sweeping geological changes at the time of the crucifixion of the Savior is now less often mentioned. Yet all sorts of variants continue to crop up or reappear. Large

land masses are still thought to heave out of the sea, the Magdalena River in Colombia is still argued as the Sidon, and several types of "necks" are yet proposed. There is no indication that by simply waiting for more books or papers to appear somehow consensus will emerge. Without major changes in approach, nothing like that promises to come about. There have been lessons out of the history of thought on this matter, but we need to identify them pointedly and insist that they not be forgotten if we are to avoid continued folly.