

## Doctrine and Covenants 3-5



*A representation of the gold plates Joseph Smith received at the Hill Cumorah.*

### **Joseph Knight Sr. wrote his memories of how the Lord gave Joseph Smith power to translate the Book of Mormon**

Several years after the organization of the Church, Father Knight wrote his memories of some of the key events he had witnessed. He gave his ten handwritten pages the title "Recollections in Early Church History." What follows is a transcription of the pages he wrote concerning translation of the Book of Mormon. Original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization is retained. Paragraph breaks have been added to make reading easier.<sup>1</sup>

"He [Joseph Smith] now Began to be anxious to git them Translated he ther fore with his wife Drew of[f] the Caricters [characters] exactly like the ancient and sent Martin Harris to see if he Could git them Translated he [Martin Harris] went to Albany and Philadelpha and to new york and he found men that Could Translate Some of the Caricters in all those places.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Knight, Sr., "Recollections of Early Church History," pp 3-5. Archives manuscript 3470, Church History Library. A copy can be found on the website, [www.josephknighfamily.org](http://www.josephknighfamily.org).

Mitchell [Samuel I.] and Anthony [Charles Anthon] of New York were the most Larded [learned] But there were some Characters they could not well understand therefore Anthony told him [Harris] that he thought if he had the original he [Anthon] could translate it and he wrote a very good piece to Joseph and said if he would send the original he would translate it But at last Martin Harris told him that he could not have the original for it was Commanded not to be shown.

And he [Anthon] was mad and said what Does this mean and he tore the paper that he wrote all to pieces and stamped it under his feet and says bring me the original or I will not translate it Mr Harris seeing he was in a passion he said well I will go home and see. and if they can be had I will write to you immediately So he came home and told how it was and they went to him no more then was fulfilled the 29<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Isaiah.

Now he [Joseph Smith] being [being] an unlearned man did not know what to do Then the Lord gave him power to Translate him self then were the Larned men Confounded for he by the means he found with the plates he could translate those Characters better than the Larned

Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would appear in Brite Roman Letters then he would tell the writer [scribe] and he would write it then that would go away the next sentence would come and so on But if it was not Spelt right it would not go away till it was right So we see it was marvelous thus was the hol [whole] translated.

Now when he began to translate he was poor and was put to it for provisions and had no one to write for him But his wife and his wife's Brother would sometimes write a little for him through the winter.

The Next Spring Oliver Cowdery, a young man from Palmyra came to see old Mr Smith Joseph's father about this work and he sent him down to Pennsylvania to see Joseph and satisfy him self So he [Oliver] came Down and was soon Convinced of the truth of the work

the next<sup>2</sup> Spring came Martin Harris down to Pennsylvania to write for him and he wrote 116. pages of the first part of the Book of Mormon. And about this time Martin wanted to go home about some Business and he wanted to take the writings with him But Joseph put him off [f] But he [Martin] urged him [Joseph] By fair promises that he would be Careful and he would Return it again But he [Martin] Being free with it some person got hold of it and kept [kept] it so that he never could obtain it again. There fore Joseph

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<sup>2</sup> He perhaps means previous. From other sources we know Martin Harris was a scribe in 1828 and Oliver Cowdery arrived later in the spring of 1829 after Joseph was again allowed to translate after the lost plates episode.

Lost his privilege for a while. But after Repenting he again received the privilege of translating again, as in Book of Covenants page 168<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Knight's "Recollections" were handwritten on both sides of five sheets of paper. A copy of the entire handwritten version can be found on the website, [www.josephknight.org](http://www.josephknight.org) on the Joseph and Polly's posterity page under Joseph Knight Sr. documents and articles.

There is no known date when Joseph Knight, Sr. wrote down his memories of early Church events, but it must have been after 1835 when the earlier *Book of Commandments* was republished as an expanded book, the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Joseph Smith's seven *Lectures on Faith* were included as the first section of the new *Doctrine and Covenants*, hence the addition of the word doctrine to the title. The revelations in the earlier *Book of Commandments*, and the revelations received after it was first printed in 1833, completed the new 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* book. The cite to page 168 in Father Knight's Recollections would have to correspond to the 1835 printing with the *Lectures on Faith* in the front half of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

A transcript of the full "*Recollections of Early Church History*" written by Joseph Knight, Sr., can be found in Appendix A of William G. Hartley, *They Are My Friends, a History of the Joseph Knight Family 1825-1850*, Grandin Book Company, 1986. It can also be found in Dean C. Jesse's *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976) article.

Diane Mangum, December 2024

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<sup>3</sup>Joseph seemed to have combined the titles Book of Commandments and Doctrine and Covenants. He seems to be referring to D. & C. 10:3.