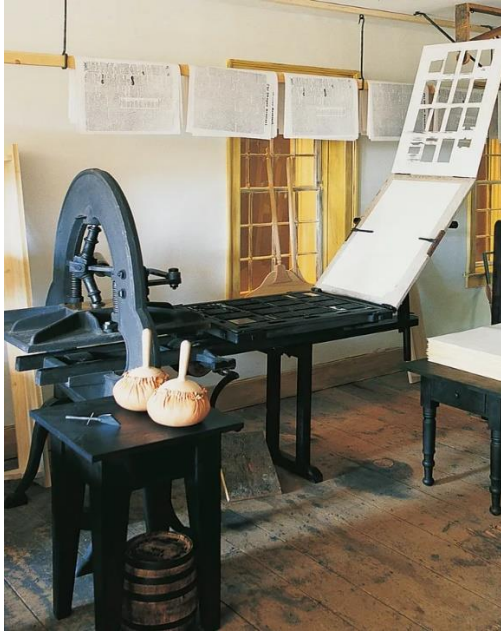


## Doctrine and Covenants 19



The restored print shop of Egbert B. Grandin in Palmyra, New York, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was published in 1830. Martin Harris mortgaged his farm and sold part of it to pay the cost of printing 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon. Typesetting began in August 1829, and finished copies were available March 26, 1830.

Photo and above text from “Church History Photographs” at [churchofjesuschrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org).  
<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/history-photos/photo-4?lang=eng>

## Martin Harris, the publishing of the Book of Mormon, and what Joseph Knight, Sr., observed

Some years after the fact, Joseph Knight, Sr., wrote about his experience taking Joseph Smith, Jr., in the Knight wagon to Palmyra to get some copies of the Book of Mormon that were due to be fresh off the press.

**Below is a transcription of Joseph Knight, Sr.’s, “Recollections of Early Church History,” his personal writings about the translation process from ancient text to English. Joseph Knight’s original spelling, capitalization and punctuation is retained. Paragraph breaks have been added.<sup>1</sup>**

Page 6, line 21

Now in the Spring of 1830 I went with my Team and took Joseph out to Manchester to his father. When we was on our way he told me there must be a Church formed But did not tell when.

Now when we got near to his fathers we saw a man some Eighty Rods<sup>2</sup> Before us run across the street with a Bundle in his hand. There Says Joseph there is Martin going a cros the road with some thing in his hand

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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).

<sup>2</sup> 440 yards

Says I how Could you know him so far Says he I believe it is him And when we Came up it was Martin with a Bunch of morman Books He came to us and after Compliments he says The Books will not sell for no Body wants them

Joseph says I think they will sell well Says he [Martin] I want a commandment Why says Joseph fulfill what you have got But says he I must have a commandment Joseph put him off But he insisted three or four times he must have a commandment

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We went home to his father's and Martin with us Martin stayed at his Fathers and slept in a bed on the floor with me

Martin awoke in the nite and asked me if I felt any thing on the Bed. I told him no Says I Did you Yes I felt some thing as Big as a grat Dog Sprang upon my Brest Says I Was you not mistekened No says he It was real I sprang up and felt But I could see nor feel nothing

In the morning he [Martin] got up and said he must have a commandment to Joseph and went home And along in the after part of the day Joseph and Oliver Received a Commandment which is in the Book of Covenants page 174<sup>3</sup>

I stayed a few Days waiting for some Books to be Bound. Joseph said there must Be a Church built up

I had Ben there for several Days Old Mr Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod, [forward] to be Babtise for the first They found a place in a lot a small Stream ran thro and they ware Babtized in the Evening because of persecution they went forward and was Baptized Being the first I saw Baptized in the new and everlasting covenant I had some thots to go forrod But I had not red the Book of Mormon and I wanted to oxeman [examine] it a little more I being a Restorationar and hand not oxamined so much as I want to But I should a felt better if I had a gone forward But I went home and was Babtised in June with my wife and family.

There is one thing that I will mention that evening that old Bro Smith and Martin Harris was baptized Joseph was filled with the spirit to a grate degree to see his father and Mr Harris that he had bin with so much he bast out with greaf [possibly great]and joy and seemed as tho the world Could not hold him he went out into the lot and appeared to want to get out of site of every Body and would sob and Crie and seemed to be So full that he could not live

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<sup>3</sup> Because he cites a page number, Joseph Knight clearly wrote these *Recollections* sometime after the Book of Commandments had been published in 1833, but more likely after the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was published, because that version had Joseph Smith's seven "Lectures on Faith" printed in the first part of the book, and the page number he gives is Page 174 for what is now Section 19.

Oliver and I went after him and Came to him and after a while he Came in But he was the most wrot upon that I ever Saw any man But his joy seemed to be full I think he saw the grate work he had Begun and was Desirus to Carry it out.

on the sixth day of April 1830 he [Joseph] begun the church with six members and received the following revelation Book of Commandments page 177 [D&C 21]. They all kneeled down and prayed and Joseph gave them instructions how to Bild up the Church and exhorted them to be faithful in all things for this is the work of God.

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Now after he had set things in order and got a number of Mormon books we returned home.

### **Additional background information**

Beginning with the 1833 edition through the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the section heading for D. & C. 19 has specified the date of March 1830 when this revelation was given to Martin Harris. If that is an accurate date, then Joseph Knight, Sr. was an eyewitness to the circumstances surrounding the revelation that counsels Martin Harris to not covet his own property and to pay the printer.

As research on the Joseph Smith Papers was concluded in 2013, and a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was printed, the section heading for Section 19 was changed to give a date of summer 1829. Although the source note associated with this chapter in the Joseph Smith papers acknowledges the date could “possibly” be March 1830.<sup>4</sup>

Both of those dates were a natural time when Martin Harris might want or need a revelation and divine support.

In the summer of 1829 the translation work had been completed and there was a need to secure a printer. There was a plan that the sale of the books could offset the cost of the printing, but the printer, Egbert Grandin wanted financial security before printing. Martin Harris mortgaged his farm for \$3,000 to guarantee payment on the printing of 5,000 copies in case the book didn't sell well. Martin's wife Lucy was furious about the arrangement and the couple separated because of it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Smith Papers Source Note for Section 19: *Revelation, Manchester Township, Ontario Co., NY, to Martin Harris, [ca. summer 1829, though possibly Mar. 1830]. Featured version, titled “Chapter XVI,” typeset [ca. early 1833] for Book of Commandments, 39–42. John Whitmer copied this revelation [ca. Mar. 1831] into Revelation Book 1, but the pages on which the first part of the revelation was copied were removed at some point from that volume and are no longer extant.<sup>1</sup> The version found in the Book of Commandments and featured below [ in the Joseph Smith Papers] is the earliest complete, extant version. For more information, see the source note for the Book of Commandments on the [Joseph Smith Papers website](#).*

<sup>5</sup> Richard Lyman Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, Alfred Knopf, 2005, p.80-82,

Once printing was underway, a local Palmyra newspaper editor pirated sections of the copyrighted Book of Mormon text and ran selections in his paper. Local citizens responded by organizing a boycott promising they would never buy the book once it was printed. Naturally this contributed to the panic Martin Harris felt in late March of 1830 when the printed books were available and ready to sell. If the books didn't sell he wouldn't be able to pay off his mortgage.<sup>6</sup>

When Joseph Knight, Sr. and Joseph Smith, Jr. arrived in Palmyra and met Martin Harris on the street in late March 1830, Martin expressed those fears, and asked for a revelation of Joseph Smith several times.

The books didn't sell well. Proceeds from book sales were not enough to save his farm. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon came from a hard sacrifice on Martin's part.

Regardless the date of the revelation, whether Spring 1829 or March 1830, the conversation between Father Knight, Joseph Smith, Jr. and Martin Harris gives us insight on the personal challenges faced by many in bringing forth the Book of Mormon and establishing the Church.

Diane L. Mangum, November 2024

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.