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The Dedication of the Oliver Cowdery Monument in Richmond, Missouri, 1911

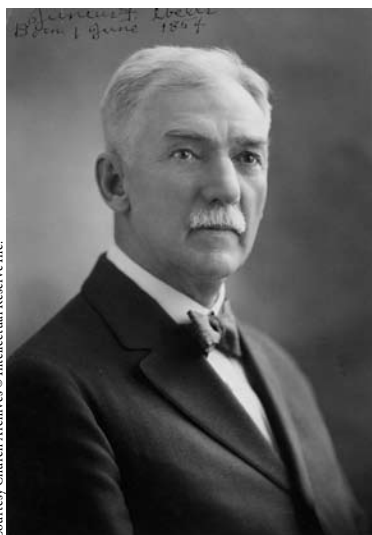
Richard Neitzel Holzappel and Robert F. Schwartz

As one of three witnesses, Oliver Cowdery testified that “an angel of God came down from heaven” to display an ancient record—a record known then and now as the Book of Mormon. Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer affirmed in written testimony that they saw “the engravings thereon,” and more surprisingly that the voice of God declared Joseph Smith’s translation of the record to be true.¹ Even though all three men eventually disassociated themselves from Joseph Smith, later members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints felt to commemorate Cowdery, Whitmer, and Harris for their role in the Church’s genesis. In 1911, Church member Junius F. Wells² erected a monument in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, toward this end (figs. 1, 2).

Wells wrote an account of his efforts to erect the monument, which he published in January 1912.³ His article focuses on interviews that he conducted in Richmond with the nearest of kin of Cowdery and descendants of Whitmer, as well as on his efforts to gain both their trust and the trust of Richmond’s citizens. The present article covers some of the same ground as Wells’s published article but adds to the story by using primary source data from Wells’s personal papers, held in trust by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This article likewise makes public, for the first time, photographs taken by George Edward Anderson that capture many events involved in creating and dedicating the monument. Happily, the story provides remarkable views of a productive, friendly, cooperative effort between Missourians and Mormons in an area where only a few decades earlier the two parties had been at war with one another.



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FIG. 2. Junius F. Wells, ca. 1924.

FIG. 1. Unveiling ceremony at the Oliver Cowdery Monument, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson.

George Edward Anderson (1860–1928), the first Latter-day Saint to professionally photograph Church historic sites, began his effort to document the Mormon past through his camera in 1907 on his way to serve a mission in the British Isles. After a year of searching out Mormon sites in the settlements in the West, Anderson arrived in England in 1908. After completing his proselytizing mission in Europe, he sailed for America in August 1911, but he did not return home immediately. He stayed in South Royalton, Vermont, continuing his quest to capture Church history through his glass plate negatives. After ending his six-year mission in 1913, he returned home to Utah.

The complete collection of Anderson photographs related to the Oliver Cowdery Monument may be seen at byustudies.byu.edu.

A Promise to Commemorate Oliver Cowdery

President John Henry Smith, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, traveled to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, in 1910, where the Church had only recently reestablished a presence after an absence that began with its expulsion in 1833. President Smith, along with Samuel O. Bennion, John L. Herrick, and Joseph A. McRae, visited nearby Mormon historical sites, and on November 30, 1910, the party visited Richmond, located thirty miles northeast of Independence.

Like Independence, Richmond has a past rich in Latter-day Saint history. Joseph Smith and other Latter-day Saint Church leaders were imprisoned in a makeshift Richmond jail following their arrest at Far West on October 31, 1838. Later, after the Mormons were driven from Missouri in 1838–39, the Richmond area became home to several former leaders of the Church who no longer accepted Joseph Smith’s leadership. This group included David Whitmer, Jacob C. Whitmer, Hiram Page, and Oliver Cowdery, each of whom played key roles in the Church’s founding events. Cowdery and his wife, Elizabeth Whitmer,⁴ moved to Richmond in 1849, shortly before he passed away. Cowdery was estranged from Joseph Smith by 1838 and was excommunicated from the Church in Far West, Missouri. Before his death in 1850, however, Cowdery rejoined the Church and planned to gather with its members in Utah.⁵ Maria Louise Cowdery (1835–92), the daughter of Oliver and Elizabeth Cowdery and the only Cowdery child to live to maturity, married Dr. Charles Johnson and died without any living descendants in South West City, Missouri, in 1892.

While in Richmond, John Henry Smith and his party visited local cemeteries, trying to locate the graves of Cowdery, Page, and David Whitmer.⁶ President Smith wrote, “We went to the old grave yard to visit the grave of Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Page but we could not locate them but were told they were in the north end of the Cemetery.”⁷ (In fact, Hiram Page was not buried in Richmond. David Whitmer was buried in a different Richmond cemetery.) President Smith and his company apparently came into contact with George W. Schweich. Schweich was the nearest living family member to Oliver Cowdery in the Richmond area as his mother, Julia Ann, was the daughter of David Whitmer, Cowdery’s brother-in-law. President Smith promised Schweich that the Church would erect a monument in Cowdery’s memory.⁸ Schweich and A. K. Raeburn—a ninety-three-year-old former sheriff who claimed to be present when Cowdery was buried in March 1850—aided President Smith in identifying the location of Cowdery’s final resting place.⁹



Courtesy Church Archives © Intellectual Reserve Inc.

FIG. 3. Joseph Smith Jr. birthplace, Sharon, Vermont, 1907, photographed by George Edward Anderson. Junius F. Wells managed the creation and installation of the monument to Joseph Smith in 1905.

When President Smith returned to Salt Lake City, he approached Junius F. Wells about the possibility of erecting a monument in Richmond. Wells had already successfully purchased, on behalf of the Church, Joseph Smith's birthplace in Sharon, Vermont and had erected there a large granite monument in Smith's honor in 1905 (fig. 3).¹⁰ In fact, Wells had already given thought to erecting a monument in Cowdery's honor when Smith approached him. He afterwards wrote, "I had a very clear notion of the kind of monument and suitable inscriptions thereon."¹¹ He also planned to erect additional monuments at the grave sites of David Whitmer and Martin Harris.¹² The decision to build a monument to Joseph Smith in 1905 and to Cowdery in 1911 reflect broader national trends in monument building that took hold after the Civil War. During this period, a multitude of monuments sprung up at Civil War sites, town squares, and cemeteries throughout the country.¹³

After personal reflection and planning, Wells decided on a text that would honor not only Oliver Cowdery but Joseph Smith and all three

witnesses, even though he hoped to erect separate monuments to Harris and Whitmer later. He submitted his proposal for the monument—including inscriptions and cost estimations—to the First Presidency, which at the time included President Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and John Henry Smith. Wells reported, “This was approved by the First Presidency and Twelve, and I was commissioned to carry it out.”¹⁴ The text appears in the sidebar below.

The Text of the Oliver Cowdery Monument

Front of monument:

Sacred to the memory of Oliver Cowdery, witness to the Book of Mormon and to the translation thereof by the gift and power of God.

Born 3rd October, 1806, Wells, Rutland Co., Vermont.
Died 3rd March, 1850, Richmond, Ray Co., Missouri.

He was the scribe of the translation as it fell from the lips of Joseph Smith, the Prophet. He copied the original manuscript for the printer’s use and was proof-reader of the first edition. He was the first person baptized in the Latter-day Dispensation of the Gospel; and was one of the six members of the Church of Jesus Christ at its organization, on the sixth day of April, A.D., 1830, at Fayette, Seneca Co., New York. Though separated from it for a time, he returned to the Church. He died firm in the faith.

This Monument has been raised in his honor by his fellow-believers; and also to commemorate the Testimony of Three Witnesses, the truth of which they maintained to the end of their lives. Over a million converts throughout the world have accepted their testimony and rejoice in their fidelity. Dedicated 1911.

Reverse of monument:

The Book of Mormon. An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Translated and published by Joseph Smith Junior, Palmyra, 1830.

On the other two sides appears the text of The Testimony of the Three Witnesses, printed in the Book of Mormon.

Preparing a Monument

Wells immediately set about working to build Oliver Cowdery's monument. He contacted R. C. Bowers, president of R. C. Bowers Granite Company in Montpelier, Vermont, sometime before the middle of February. Bowers was the general contractor who organized the logistical efforts involved in constructing the 1905 Vermont monument. In contracting Bowers, Wells was freed from worrying about the details involved in monument construction such as quarrying, polishing, inscribing, and transporting.¹⁵

On February 13, 1911, Bowers responded to Wells's inquiry: "Referring to your favor of recent date in regard to design of the monuments, the monument[s] alone would be worth \$900.00 each F. O. B. cars here, and would weigh about 36000 lbs. each. The V sunk inscription letters would be worth 18 cents each. If the continuous inscription of 1264 letters is smaller letters, they would be worth from 12 to 15 cents each."¹⁶ Wells agreed, sent a check for \$30, and asked for a perspective drawing of the design. It was weeks before he received this note from Bowers: "Just got word from the man that makes our designs that he has been sick but he will get right at your design and lose no time in finishing it. Sorry to have delayed you and hope to send it to you shortly."¹⁷ On April 19, Bowers sent by "express this morning" the examples of the design.¹⁸

On May 19, 1911, Wells, still in Salt Lake City, formalized his obligations regarding the monument's erection when he signed an agreement with President Joseph F. Smith, promising "to procure the requisite consent of the parties lawfully interested and secure the site in the cemetery at or near the burial place of Oliver Cowdery, to erect thereon a monument of dark barre granite accord to the design and inscription submitted."¹⁹ Presidents John Henry Smith and Anthon H. Lund also signed the document as witnesses.²⁰

Soon thereafter, Wells traveled to Richmond for the first time.²¹ Wells indicated that he hoped to accomplish several important objectives during this visit: first, visit the cemetery; second, identify Cowdery's grave; third, obtain the consent of the local officials to erect a monument; fourth, obtain approval from the nearest of kin living there; fifth, select a site for the monument; and finally, secure the goodwill of the people of Richmond.

Obtaining the goodwill of the people was not necessarily as easy as it might appear to the modern reader. Controversy surrounding polygamy generated ill will toward the Church's members through the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Although the Mormon practice of polygamy had officially ended in 1890, controversy and misunderstanding

continued. The situation came to a head in the early years of the twentieth century when Apostle Reed Smoot was elected to the US Senate. Public senatorial hearings regarding his suitability for office ensued, and newspapers nationwide criticized Utah.²² The years 1910 and 1911 witnessed a significant recurrence of anti-Mormon feeling throughout the country resulting from the negative fallout generated by Smoot's reelection. It might, indeed, be assumed that the monuments of 1905 and 1911 were constructed partly in the hope of engendering goodwill for the Church.

Wells, contrary to what he might have expected in the political climate, was pleasantly surprised by the welcome he received from the hospitable people of Richmond. He received solid support from George W. Schweich, who emphasized his willingness to help and expressed his feelings about erecting another monument in Richmond to honor his grandfather, David Whitmer.²³

Wells went to the Old City Cemetery, known today as the Pioneer Cemetery (fig. 4²⁴). He described his visit:



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FIG. 4. Old City Cemetery, Richmond, Missouri, November 21, 1911, photographed by George Edward Anderson. More than just a photograph of tombstones, this view reveals the history of the Whitmer family and their relatives in Richmond's Old City Cemetery, known today as the Pioneer Cemetery. Note the tombstone of Jacob Whitmer (1800–56) with the opened book, Book of Mormon (second row, right).

Among the earliest graves within this sacred acre are those of Father Peter Whitmer's family and kindred, whose burying lots appear to have occupied about sixteen by sixty feet, along the east side of a central drive, entering at the north end of the cemetery. Within this boundary, and in the southern part, are buried the bodies of Peter Whitmer, and his wife, Mary Musselman Whitmer—father and mother of the Witnesses,—Jacob Whitmer, one of the Eight, and two more of his daughters, and other members of his family. I counted thirteen graves, most of them unmarked, except by crude stones without inscriptions.²⁵

Wells looked specifically for Cowdery's grave. With the help of several individuals, including A. K. Raeburn, he found the site.

After making initial contacts in Richmond, Wells made his way to Vermont to select the stone for the monument. In June 1911, President John Henry Smith, traveling in the East, met up with "J. F. Wells, Ben E. Rich and a Mr. Milne and Mayor Boutwell of Montpelier, Vermont who took us in his Auto to the Joseph Smith Monument where Bro. Brown gave lunch. We planted 6 trees. We called at the Barre Marble Quarries."²⁶ Apparently, they "selected the stone, and the order was given for the manufacture of the [Cowdery] monument" on this occasion.²⁷

During the first week of August 1911, Bowers contacted Wells, who was staying in South Royalton, Vermont. He wrote, "We have your monument all ready to letter and have the lettering drawn up for it, and would be pleased to have you come up at once and look the lettering over as we wish to start lettering it Monday."²⁸ Due to a misunderstanding, Wells failed to contact Bowers to approve the lettering, causing additional delay.

Days later while on another visit to Richmond, Wells met with several of Cowdery's family members, including Philander A. Page, Julia Ann Schweich, and George W. Schweich, in an effort to obtain their legal consent to erect the monument.²⁹ Each said they would not oppose Wells's efforts. Page said he "preferred not to sign his approval, as he was not in favor of so much display."³⁰ The Schweich family, on the other hand, were not only supportive but also helped in every way to assist Wells. Regarding Julia Ann Schweich, daughter of David Whitmer, Wells stated, "She was seventy-six years old in September, and is a very smart, clear-minded lady of remarkable memory, firm convictions, honest, outspoken, and independent. I became much attached to her, and enjoyed repeated interviews with her, in which she told me many things concerning her father, his family and the family connections."³¹

On August 8, Wells obtained the legal consent of Cowdery's relatives to proceed with the project. The document states that Cowdery's relatives "approve of this undertaking and freely consent to it and thereby authorize Junius F. Wells acting for himself, ourselves and fellow believers

in the above testimony [testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon], to take every necessary step to locate the site of said grave and erect said monument thereon only hold the undersigned free from expense connected therewith.”³²

Still concerned that Oliver Cowdery’s grave site had not been correctly identified, Wells visited the graveyard on August 9, 1911, with A. K. Raeburn. Wells did this again on August 18 and on November 23 to gain complete assurance that Raeburn provided the same description.

After repeatedly hearing Raeburn’s description, Wells went to the cemetery to carefully review what he had been told. He wrote:

I found by measuring the distance between the graves, and between the headstones and footstones, that there were two graves, shorter than the grave of a full grown man, north of the depression which was supposed to be the grave of Oliver Cowdery. By some digging, we found the rotting stones that had supported the headstone, which was gone, and six and half feet eastward, a large, though crumbling, footstone. This supplied whatever assurance was lacking as to the identify of the grave we sought—especially as the next grave, seven feet southward, was that of a child.³³

With written permission of Cowdery’s surviving family now in his possession, Wells met with the mayor of Richmond and some of the city councilmen and “arranged with the city engineer to establish the grade of the street—Crispin avenue—on the north line of the cemetery—and to stake out and set the levels of the foundation of the site selected for the monument.”³⁴ The city engineer billed Wells \$3.00 for survey work and setting the corners.³⁵ The city’s final approval was granted on August 15, 1911.³⁶

Once approved by the city council, preparations at the site itself continued as J. W. Hagans graded the spot for the monument and prepared a six-foot-square concrete foundation at a cost of \$67.50.³⁷ On October 26, 1911, Wells and Schweich placed a metal box in the foundation—a time capsule that contained a number of books, periodicals, pictures, and miscellaneous items.³⁸

While efforts in Richmond to erect the monument proceeded, work on the monument itself ceased for a few weeks when unusually hot weather in Vermont “shut down work in the stonemason’s sheds.”³⁹ Since Wells had failed to authorize the lettering of the monument, Bowers wrote: “I am in receipt of your favor of the 18th inst. and regret to say we were delayed two weeks on your monument on account of the lettering not being approved, as I did not feel safe in starting it until I heard from you. The lettering is all that will hold us up now and I assure you that we will do the very best we can in rushing the work out.”⁴⁰



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FIG. 5. Construction of the Oliver Cowdery Monument, October 10, 1911, at R. C. Bowers Granite Company, Barre, Vermont, photographed by George Edward Anderson. Often misidentified as the base of the Joseph Smith monument in Sharon, Vermont, this piece belongs to the Oliver Cowdery Monument.

Originally, Wells and President John Henry Smith desired to dedicate the monument on October 3, 1911, the anniversary of Oliver Cowdery's birth.⁴¹ However, due to these delays, they set back the date for the dedication.

A few weeks later, Utah portrait and landscape photographer George Edward Anderson visited the workshops at Barre, Washington County, Vermont. In his first photograph related to the erection of the Oliver Cowdery monument, Anderson captured in black and white a craftsman engaged in his work on the monument (fig. 5).⁴²

A Change of Plans

President John Henry Smith had been busy during the first half of 1911 fulfilling Church, business, and governmental responsibilities. Few knew that his health was failing rapidly. President Smith passed away on October 13, 1911. Wells revealed, "The lamentable death of Elder Smith occurring on the thirteenth [October], caused a complete change in the plans respecting the dedication."⁴³ Wells decided to work for a date later

in the year to coincide with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's six-thousand-mile national tour, which began on October 23, 1911. Wells hoped to arrange for the choir to stop briefly at Richmond on its return trip to Salt Lake City, following a scheduled concert in Kansas City on November 21 and before another scheduled concert in Topeka on November 22. While the choir's tour was generally considered a success, especially in light of the anti-Mormon mood that prevailed nationwide, the choir encountered stiff opposition in various places. In some cases, they could not secure places to perform, and, in the end, incurred a deficit of some \$20,000. In the face of the budgetary concerns that surfaced during the tour, Wells needed to demonstrate that a side trip to a small Missouri town would not push the choir further into the red and that they would be received warmly by the local people.

Getting Everything in Place

Assuring that work on the monument was moving forward also consumed Wells's efforts. On October 10, Bowers wrote Wells: "Monument will



FIG. 6. Transporting the Oliver Cowdery Monument to cemetery from the railway, ca. November 1, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson.

leave here tomorrow.”⁴⁴ Once Wells received the notification, he contracted with Thomas B. Blount, a house-moving company in Richmond, to transport the monument from the railway station to the old city cemetery. Wells wrote to Blount, “Accept your offer. Please be ready to receive monument shipped from Montpelier eleventh. I shall be there by twentieth. Make sure that every rope, chain, pulley, and anchor are sound and strong. I may bring men to assist in erection but do not depend on that. Be prepared.”⁴⁵ The men “had quite a time hauling it on the house-moving trucks and setting it, but finally got it up without accident”⁴⁶ (fig. 6). The monument was in place in the Old City Cemetery by November 1, 1911 (fig. 7). The total expense for transporting and setting the monument was \$100.00.⁴⁷

Wells still had not yet secured the commitment for the two-hundred-member Mormon Tabernacle Choir to participate in the services. They were already in New York when Wells appealed to George D. Pyper, the choir’s tour manager, trying to persuade him to make the necessary arrangements for the proposed stop:

Upon arriving here, I found that they have a very nice little opera house practically new and clean and well furnished, there are actually six hundred orchestra chairs, and other seats for at least four hundred with the boxes and standing up twelve hundred people can be admitted. The people here are sufficiently interested in having you come that they have assured me if I find that you can do so, they will tender us the free use of the opera house, warmed and lighted.⁴⁸

After providing several more issues for Pyper’s consideration—including further description of available facilities and necessary costs—Wells concluded: “I sincerely hope that nothing will occur to prevent carrying



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FIG. 7. Oliver Cowdery monument, November 21, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson.

out this program. It will be very delightful for everybody and will do a lot of good.”⁴⁹

Eventually, choir leaders agreed that the choir would perform at the dedication, and Wells began the Herculean task of arranging for the visit of so large a party to Richmond. Additionally, some fifty people, most of them family of the choir members, accompanied the choir on their tour. Their presence brought the total number of Latter-day Saints present on this occasion to about two hundred and fifty. Wells wrote the owner of the local hotel in Richmond: “Dedication service Wednesday morning, twenty-second, ten o’clock sharp. Choir must have breakfast and be seated in Topeka House by nine forty-five. Dinner must be all ready twelve thirty, and over by two. Train leaves two thirty for Topeka.”⁵⁰

Wells received an official invitation for the use of the Opera House from Richmond’s “principal bankers, merchants, one of the ministers, the Mayor of the City, hotel proprietors, and the owner of the Opera House.”⁵¹ Wells was “deeply grateful for this courtesy”⁵² and reported to President Joseph F. Smith that there was “a feeling of great interest and enthusiasm, already manifest by the people at the prospect of so large a company being present.”⁵³ Wells awaited President Smith’s approval and information concerning who would be present on the occasion. Mindful of the weather, he noted: “If we can only have a pleasant day, it promises to be a very fine affair.”⁵⁴

President Joseph F. Smith wrote back that the gathering would be more limited than Wells may have anticipated. He assigned Heber J. Grant of the Council of the Twelve to conduct the affairs of the Church at the services.⁵⁵ Wells noted in later reflections why other general church officers were not sent to attend the occasion: “Conditions at home were so forbidding that the Presiding Authorities were not able to go to the service.”⁵⁶ The conditions referred to were the November municipal elections in Utah. Since 1905, the anti-Mormon third party, known as the American Party, controlled several local governments in the northern part of the state, including Salt Lake City. The two national parties made every effort to defeat the American Party. Mormon Church leaders joined in forces with non-Mormons in both parties to help accomplish the defeat. The campaign successfully brought about the demise of the American Party and allowed political affiliation in the state to be based on political preference instead of Church membership.⁵⁷

President Smith indicated in his letter that he did not feel it necessary to invite representatives from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). This decision is significant because of the Reorganized Church’s ties to the American

Party. Joseph Smith III (cousin of President Joseph F. Smith) and his son, Fredrick M. Smith, had worked with Frank Cannon and ex-Senator Kearns to form the American Party in Salt Lake City.⁵⁸ Moreover, in July 1905, when the American Party first began to take root, Frederick Smith wrote a full-page protest of the Joseph Smith monument that the Latter-day Saint Church had recently erected in Vermont under Wells's supervision.⁵⁹

After receiving President Smith's reply, Wells ordered 750 formal invitations, printed at a cost of \$15. The invitations were sent not only to local citizens but to all Church mission, temple, stake, and Church college presidents to notify them of the event.

On November 16, Wells wrote Bowers regarding final payment for the monument and added his impressions regarding the final product: "I think the material and workmanship of the monument are very good, and that it will be much admired."⁶⁰ Work began on preparing the ground around the monument for the unveiling ceremony. Wells contracted with Charles E. Prispin to grade the area and Powell Brothers to fence the west and north side of the cemetery.⁶¹

The citizens of Richmond not only offered the use of the Opera House for the dedication service, but they also graded streets, paved sidewalks, and laid plank crossings at several corners. Several individuals, especially George W. Schweich, offered more assistance than Wells ever expected. So it was with great hope and a sense of satisfaction that Wells greeted the long-awaited day of the dedication service and unveiling ceremony on November 22, 1911.

The Dedication Services and Unveiling Ceremony

A train of Pullman Palace sleeping cars pulled into Richmond from Kansas City during the early morning hours of November 22, 1911 (fig. 8). While the train sat on a side track, members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir continued to sleep until sunrise. Wells provided a description of the choir's arrival: "The train bringing the choir from Kansas City arrived during the night, or early in the morning of the 22nd. It was not easy to rouse the weary sleepers, and get them out, under lowering skies, at half-past seven for early breakfast, at the hotel. It was, however, loiteringly accomplished, but not until the prince and power of the air, or whoever has charge of the storm clouds, had taken vicious control and started a down-pour of chilling rain that continued for the greater part of the day."⁶²

Following breakfast at the hotel, the choir made its way to the Farris Opera House. Wells paid \$12.00 for Manley & Wading to transport the "choir from the Hotel to the Opera House" in the rain.⁶³

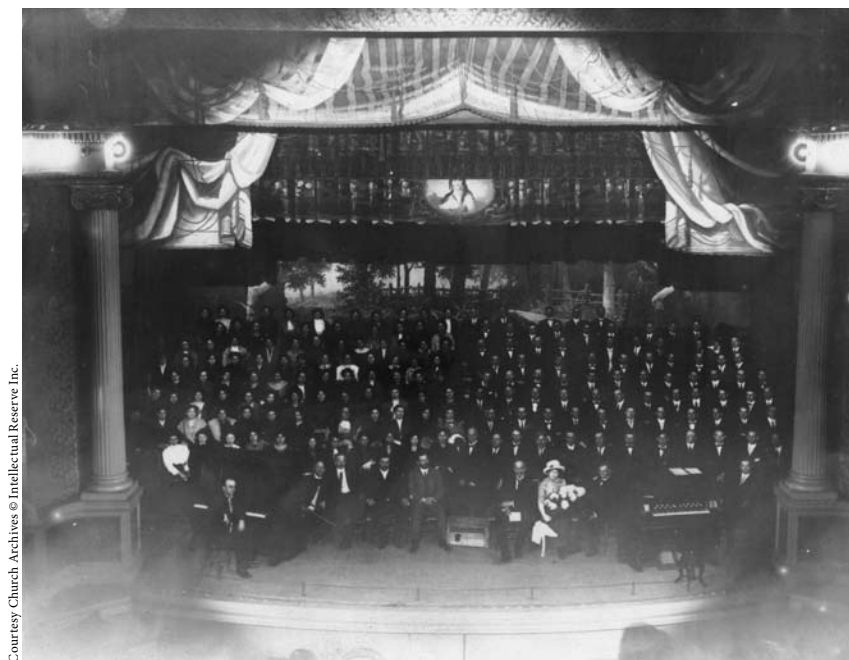


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FIG. 8. Mormon Tabernacle Choir Train, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson. A chartered train brought the choir from Kansas City, where they performed the night before, and took them on to Topeka after the dedication of the monument. Here several members, including Evan Stephens (arms outstretched), pose for the photographer.

Wells had prepared 1,500 programs for the dedication service and unveiling ceremony,⁶⁴ and the Opera House “was well filled, there being hardly a vacant seat in the building.”⁶⁵ Elder Heber J. Grant greeted the crowd, followed by the Tabernacle Choir performing the first hymn: “An Angel from On High”⁶⁶ (fig. 9). President Samuel O. Bennion offered the invocation and the Tabernacle Choir sang the anthem “Hosannah!” Then Junius F. Wells “spoke in brief as to why we were assembled, reviewing the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the life of Oliver Cowdery, the history of the monument itself.”⁶⁷ In the end, he spoke to the local residents suggesting “that the cemetery be improved and that the citizens of Richmond would regard that monument as a credit to the place.”⁶⁸

The Tabernacle Choir sang one of its favorite hymns, “Oh! My Father!” followed by comments from Mayor James L. Farris in behalf of the city: “Take possession of the City of Richmond, today we are your servants.”⁶⁹ The assembled group then heard brief remarks from George W. Schweich, who represented Oliver Cowdery’s family, welcoming everyone present to the occasion.



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FIG. 9. Dedication service in the Farris Opera House, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson. Front row, from left: John J. McClellan (organist), Willard A. Weihe (violinist), George W. Schweich (grandson of David Whitmer), Samuel O. Bennion (Central States Mission President), Bishop David A. Smith (Presiding Bishop's Office), Evans Stephens (Tabernacle Choir director, behind the wooden platform), Elder Heber J. Grant (Council of the Twelve), Katherine Schweich (great-granddaughter of David Whitmer), and Junius F. Wells.

Heber J. Grant then spoke and noted how pleased President Joseph F. Smith was that a monument had been erected to honor Oliver Cowdery. He went on to relate that he had always admired Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, who played such crucial roles in establishing the Church. As he drew near to the close of his remarks, Grant “bore his testimony of the gospel to the assemblage, gave words of praise to the Choir for their conduct and singing. Also expressed his pleasure in accepting hospitality of Richmond people. Also stated that on account of the storm they would be unable to go to the cemetery to dedicate the grave.”⁷⁰

After Grant's remarks, Wells introduced Katherine Schweich, grand-niece of Oliver Cowdery, to the assembled group. He noted that she

would unveil the monument when weather permitted. She “very modestly acknowledged the honor before the audience.”⁷¹

Elder Heber J. Grant then dedicated Oliver Cowdery’s grave from the Farris Opera House, thanking God “for the feeling of goodwill and fellowship that has been manifest by the inhabitants of this City during the erection of this monument and we pray Thee that it may continue and that the bond of love and sympathy between the believers of the Book of Mormon and the people of Richmond and those who read the message may grow and increase in strength every year.”⁷²

Time was allotted for George Edward Anderson to take a photograph of the event (see fig. 8).⁷³ George Schweich made the program’s closing remarks, saying that he was as proud to be a descendant of David Whitmer as of “any monarch that ever lived.”⁷⁴ He asked the Tabernacle Choir to perform a few concluding numbers before the program ended, including



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FIG. 10. Unveiling ceremony at the Oliver Cowdery Monument, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson. Katherine Schweich holds the bouquet of flowers following the unveiling of the monument, and Junius F. Wells stands at her right, in the front row.



FIG. 11. Junius F. Wells (standing by the fence) offers a prayer following the unveiling of the monument, November 22, 1911, Richmond, Missouri, photographed by George Edward Anderson.

“Lucia Sextet.” The choir performed and Bishop David A. Smith then offered the benediction to close the service. Wells reported that “the visitors [Tabernacle Choir and Church representatives] hurried through the rain to the hotel for dinner, and about half-past one, their train pulled out for Topeka, Kansas. . . . Elders Grant and Bennion accompanied them.”⁷⁵

Later in the afternoon, when the weather permitted, Wells and a small party proceeded to the cemetery. George Edward Anderson accompanied them and provided some beautiful black-and-white images of the occasion (figs. 10 and 11).

Wells preserved the details regarding the monument’s unveiling: “The following named Elders, Geo. W. Schweich & his daughter Kathryn met with Geo. Ed Anderson & me at about 3 p.m. at the monument and I spoke to them & offered prayer & Kathryn held the flag that veiled the monument while we all had our pictures taken.”⁷⁶

Assessment

The local paper in Richmond provided its assessment of the service: “The musical numbers rendered by the choir were excellent and showed their fine training and splendid voices. . . . The remarks by the speakers were to the point and interesting. Apostle Heber Grant of Salt Lake City, made the longest talk and was very interesting. . . . The arrangements and plans were carried out and everything worked smoothly. Mr. Wells had been here for several days and with Geo. W. Schweich, a grand son of David Whitmer, had everything in readiness for the event.”⁷⁷

Everyone seems to have been pleased with the events of the day and happy to have participated in celebrating the life of Oliver Cowdery. Wells may have captured, at least on one level, the significance of the day when he talked about the members of the community, including clergymen, bankers, merchants, county and city officials, and the leading citizens who gathered in the Opera House and “wept for joy, as they participated in this song service. They were also admonished in words of stirring testimony and convincing reason of the truth, the life, the immortality and saving grace of the doctrines and government of the Church, as they fell from the lips of descendants of the very men who had been well nigh hounded to death in the public square near by.”⁷⁸ This day, however, provided a different setting for the interaction between the Latter-day Saints and the people of Missouri as they celebrated together to honor one of their own.

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1. Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and David Whitmer, “The Testimony of the Three Witnesses,” in Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:57.

2. Junius F. Wells (1854–1930), son of Daniel H. and Hannah C. Free Wells, was asked to organize the Church’s Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) in 1875 and became its first president.

3. Junius F. Wells, “The Oliver Cowdery Monument at Richmond, Missouri,” *Improvement Era* 15 (January 1912): 251.

4. Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery (1815–92) was the daughter of Peter and Mary Musselman Whitmer.

5. Richard L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981).

6. David Whitmer is buried in the Richmond City Cemetery, located on Highway 10 just west of Richmond City Center. Oliver Cowdery, along with many other Whitmer relatives, including Peter Whitmer Sr. and Mary Musselman Whitmer, are buried in the Pioneer Cemetery located on Highway 13 just north of the center of town. See Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, *Old Mormon Kirtland and Missouri: Historic Photographs and Guide* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Fieldbrook, 1991), 215–16.

7. John Henry Smith, Diary, November 30, 1910, John Henry Smith Papers, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives). All quotations from Smith's diary are from Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).

8. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

9. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

10. See Keith A. Erekson, "American Prophet, New England Town: The Memory of Joseph Smith in Vermont" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2002).

11. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

12. Junius F. Wells to Heber J. Grant, August 26, 1924, Church Archives. All primary source material is found in the Junius F. Wells Papers, 1867–1930, at the Church Archives unless otherwise noted. In the letter, Wells maintains that John Henry Smith promised him that additional monuments would be erected. He writes:

In 1918 the matter came up again for completing the plan and after a long consideration and favorable report being made by a committee of the Apostles a contract with me was authorized for the immediate erection at the grave of Martin Harris for the sum of \$5800, with the further recommendation that I should also have the contract to erect the one promised at David Whitmer's grave later on—(The promise to do this was originally made by President John Henry Smith & virtually repeated at the dedication of Oliver Cowdery's in 1911.) As I was called to go upon a mission to Europe before the contract for the Harris monument was actually executed, it was decided to postpone the matter until my return. (Wells to Grant, August 26, 1924)

Neither a monument to Harris nor to Whitmer came to fruition under Wells's direction.

13. See Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991); G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1995); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

14. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

15. Erekson, "Memory of Joseph Smith in Vermont," 59–101.

16. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, February 13, 1911. Bowers's reference to multiple monuments presumably has to do with Wells's ostensible desire to erect a monument for each witness.

17. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, April 7, 1911.

18. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, April 19, 1911.

19. "Agreement," May 19, 1911.

20. Anthon H. Lund (1844–1921) had served as first counselor since April 7, 1910.

21. Wells's published timeline, written nearly six months after the event, does not match the primary source record. Because he made several visits to Richmond within the space of three months, he probably could not recall the exact details of what happened during each visit. See Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

22. Milton R. Merrill, *Reed Smoot: Apostle in Politics* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 33.

23. George Schweich to Junius F. Wells, May 27, 1911.

24. George Edward Anderson's notation on the glass plate edge of this photograph proves that this image was taken in 1911 and not, as previously thought, in 1907.

25. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 253.

26. Smith, Diary, June 12, 1911, in White, *Church, State, and Politics*, 673.

27. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 251.

28. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, August 4, 1911.

29. Philander Alma Page (1832–1919) was the son of Hiram Page, Cowdery's wife's brother-in-law. Julia Ann Whitmer Schweich (1835–1914) was David Whitmer's daughter and Cowdery's niece. George W. Schweich (1853–1926) was son of Julia Ann Whitmer Schweich, grandnephew of Cowdery.

30. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 255–56.

31. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 257.

32. "Certificate of Authority," August 8, 1911.

33. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 254–55.

34. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 259–60.

35. Junius F. Wells to W. A. Mullins, August 18, 1911.

36. "Petition," August 15, 1911; I. R. E. Brown to Honorable Mayor and City Council of Richmond, Mo., August 16, 1911.

37. Junius F. Wells to J. W. Hagans, August 18, 1911.

38. "Certificate," October 26, 1911. The books included the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and volume one of *History of the Church*. The periodicals included issues of publications then printed by various church organizations as well as a few that were no longer in publication. Wells chose a volume from the discontinued *Contributor* because it contained the history of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon by George Reynolds and a beautiful steel engraving of the Three Witnesses: Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. The photographs deposited included views of Salt Lake City and portraits of U.S. President William H. Taft, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lucy Smith, Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, John Henry Smith, David Whitmer, George W. Schweich, and Julia Whitmer Schweich. The miscellaneous items included statistical information about Utah and the Church (sixty-two

stakes, twenty missions, and 690 wards), a current Church directory of officers, programs from an “Old Folks Reception to William H. Taft, President of the U.S.” and the “Proceedings of the Dedication of the Joseph Smith Monument, at his birth place Sharon, Vermont, 1905.”

39. See Susan Easton Black, “Pioneer Cemetery: Richmond, Ray County, Missouri,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 2 (fall 2001): 183.

40. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, August 21, 1911.

41. Wells, “Oliver Cowdery Monument,” 263.

42. This photograph has been mistaken to be “the base of the obelisk erected in 1905 at Joseph Smith’s birthplace in the township of Sharon, Vermont.” Richard H. Jackson, “Historical Sites,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow and others, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:592; see also Douglas F. Tobler and Nelson B. Wadsworth, *The History of the Mormons in Photographs and Text: 1830 to the Present* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1989), 63.

43. Wells, “Oliver Cowdery Monument,” 263.

44. R. C. Bowers to Junius F. Wells, October 10, 1911.

45. Junius F. Wells to Thomas Blount, October 14, 1911.

46. Junius F. Wells to R. C. Bowers, November 16, 1911.

47. Junius F. Wells to Thomas B. Blount, November 4, 1911.

48. Junius F. Wells to George D. Pyper, October 29, 1911.

49. Wells to Pyper, October 29, 1911.

50. Junius F. Wells to H. B. McIntyre, November 9, 1911.

51. Junius F. Wells to Joseph F. Smith, November 11, 1911.

52. Junius F. Wells to J. M. Ferguson and others, November 11, 1911.

53. Wells to Smith, November 11, 1911.

54. Wells to Smith, November 11, 1911.

55. Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) was ordained a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles in 1882. Later he served as president of the Church from November 1918 to May 1945.

56. Wells, “Oliver Cowdery Monument,” 265.

57. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 16, 29–30, 32–33, 38–39, 201.

58. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 16, 29–30, 32–33, 38–39, 201.

59. Frederick M. Smith, “Open Letter to All People,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 1, 1901, 3. Smith’s article was actually less of a protest against the monument and more of a polemic against the Latter-day Saint Church’s practice of polygamy, including the controversy surrounding Apostle Reed Smoot’s senatorial candidacy. His mention of the monument was a foil used to initiate arguments against the church that, given the contemporary political climate and his involvement in the American Party’s organization, might have been posed as political concerns that would become the tenets of the American Party.

60. Wells to Bowers, November 16, 1911.

61. Junius F. Wells to Charles E. Prispin, November 23, 1911; “Powell Brothers Receipt,” November 23, 1911.

62. Wells, “Oliver Cowdery Monument,” 267.

63. “Manley & Wading Receipt,” November 23, 1911.

64. Junius F. Wells to L. H. Biglow, November 15, 1911.

65. "Tabernacle Choir Here," *Richmond Conservator*, November 23, 1911.

66. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument," November 22, 1911. Apparently, the report was prepared by Louise Dansie of the Central States Mission Office; see Louise Dansie to Junius F. Wells, November 27, 1911.

67. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

68. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

69. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

70. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

71. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

72. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument." President Grant's comment regarding David Whitmer being buried in the same cemetery as Oliver Cowdery is inaccurate. Whitmer was in fact buried in the New City Cemetery west of Richmond.

73. George Edward Anderson was apparently not the only photographer present for the occasion. On November 23, Wells paid John Encoe \$8.40 "for pictures." John Encoe Receipt, November 23, 1911. Anderson and Encoe were well acquainted, having met in 1907 when Anderson was taking his first photographs of Church historical sites in Missouri. Richard Neitzel Holzappel, T. Jeffery Cottle, and Ted D. Stoddard, *Church History in Black and White: George Edward Anderson's Photographic Mission to Latter-day Saint Historical Sites* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1995), 75-76.

74. "Minutes of the Dedicatory Service and Unveiling of the Oliver Cowdery Monument."

75. Wells, "Oliver Cowdery Monument," 272.

76. Junius F. Wells, Notes, November 22, 1911.

77. "Tabernacle Choir Here."

78. "Six Thousand Miles with the 'Mormon' Tabernacle Choir," 448.