

## CHAPTER 2



# “REST ASSURED, MARTIN HARRIS WILL BE HERE IN TIME”

*Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter*

I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. (Ezekiel 34:12)

**T**he name of Martin Harris is well known to the worldwide membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. What is not well known is that Martin Harris was the only one among the Three Witnesses or the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon to journey to the Salt Lake Valley, though he was not willing to come until 1870, in the eighty-eighth year of his life.

### “The Old Spirit of Mormonism Here”

Elder David B. Dille<sup>1</sup> of Ogden, Utah, was called on a mission to England at the April general conference of the Church of

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1. David Buel Dille (5 April 1812–1 January 1887)—farmer, stonemason, wheelwright, assessor, politician—was born at Euclid, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the son of David Dille and Mary Sailor. He married Harriet Lucretia Welch on 16 March 1837 in Euclid, Ohio. He was baptized by Elder Bushrod W. Wilson and gathered with the Saints at Nauvoo in 1842. He was endowed in the Nauvoo Temple on 1 January 1846. He traveled in the James Pace Wagon Company (David Bennett’s Division) to Salt Lake City, arriving 15 September 1850. Dille located at Farr’s Fort, Weber County, Utah. On

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1852. He accepted the call but found it necessary to delay his departure until the spring of 1853 when he and two other elders literally “got up a team together” to cross the plains. Elder Willard G. McMullin furnished the carriage, Charles R. Dana provided one mule, while David B. Dille supplied another mule and all the harnesses. Elder Dille left the Rockies with just forty-five cents in his pocket.<sup>2</sup>

En route to the East, forty-one-year-old Dille visited his brothers and sisters in Euclid, Ohio, a Cuyahoga County township, about thirteen miles west of Kirtland. Knowing that Martin Harris lived nearby, and “having business” with him, Elder Dille went to Kirtland to see the seventy-year-old Book of Mormon witness. While yet a non-Mormon, Dille had worked on the Kirtland Temple with his brother Samuel Dille, both of whom had been hired by the Mormons as stonecutters. David and his wife, Harriet Lucretia Welch, were eventually converted to the Mormon faith by Elders Bushrod W. Wilson and Linsay A. Brady. Elder Wilson baptized the couple. Elder Dille affirmed, “My first gathering with the saints was at Nauvoo, Illinois in the summer of 1842.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, as a Mormon elder from Utah, Dille waited upon Martin Harris at his residence two miles east of the village. Dille found Martin at home with his wife, Caroline, and their little daughter

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26 January 1851, when Lorin Farr became the stake president of the Weber Stake of Zion, covering Weber County, Utah, he selected David B. Dille as his second counselor. Dille served a mission to Great Britain, 1853-57. He was buried in the Neeley Idaho Cemetery. See David B. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” MS 1107, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter Church History Library); John Parley Clay and Martha Ann Clay, *The Life of David Buel Dille, 5 April 1812-1 January 1887* (Logan, UT: Clay’s Printing, 2002), chaps. 2-3; Amy Oaks Long, David J. Farr, and Susan Easton Black, *Lorin Farr: Mormon Statesman* (Salt Lake City: Winslow Farr Sr. Family Organization, 2007), 60; Milton R. Hunter, *Beneath Ben Lomond’s Peak: A History of Weber County 1824-1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945), 432.

2. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” 3; Clay and Clay, *Life of David Buel Dille*, 15.

3. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” 1, 3; Clay and Clay, *Life of David Buel Dille*, 12; Jay D. Andrews, *Early Descendants of David Dille, Sr.*, vol. 2 (Yorktown, VA: by the author, 1997), 34.

Sarah. Although Martin was in bed at the time and had resolved not to “admit anyone into his room for three days,” he allowed his old acquaintance to enter. “His good wife introduced me to him, he received me very coldly but told me to take a seat,” recalled Dille. “I obeyed.” After a few moments, Martin inquired, “How are they getting along at Salt Lake?” Dille answered, “Fine, delightfull.” Dille’s response was not satisfactory to Martin. He came to the point: “How are they getting along with polygamy?” Dille said, “Them that was in it was very comfortable.” Martin pressed him for a better answer: “How do you reconcile polygamy with the doctrine taught by one of the old prophets?” Dille replied, “Mr. Harris, if necessary take what you call polygamy to fulfill that prophecy. . . . There is more females born into the world than there is males and besides the many thousands of young men slain in battle, leaving the ladies without a mate.” After reflecting upon his answer, Martin said, “It is so but I never thought of it in that light before.” He then interrupted their conversation to ask Caroline to bring him breakfast before again turning to Elder Dille. “I have not eaten anything for three days but the old spirit of Mormonism has cured me,” he claimed. Martin then entreated the missionary, “You must stay with me all day.” Having made other plans, Dille told Martin that he would be visiting “Bro. Whiting that afternoon.” And then Martin invited him to “stay till noon and we will get you a good dinner and I will go with you.” Dille replied, “You can’t go, you are sick.”<sup>4</sup>

At this, Martin sprang out of bed and began to put on his clothes while saying, “sick, no, you have brought the old spirit of Mormonism here and it has cured me.” After dinner, both men called upon Brother Whiting. It was in the Whiting home that Martin spoke at length of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon:

Do I not know that the Book of Mormon is true? Did I not hear the voice of God out of heaven declaring that it was

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4. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” 3-4.

truth and correctly translated? Yes[,] I did[,] and you know I did for I see you have the spirit of it. . . .<sup>5</sup> I know that the plates have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice declared it unto us. . . . And as many of the plates as Joseph Smith translated I handled with my hands, plate after plate.<sup>6</sup>

Martin then estimated the dimensions of the plates: “I should think they were so long [demonstrating with his hands], or about eight inches, and about so thick, or about four inches; and each of the plates was thicker than the thickest tin.” Dille asked him if he “ever lost 3,000 dollars by the publishing of the Book of Mormon.” Martin replied, “I never lost one cent. Mr. Smith . . . paid me all that I advanced, and more too.”<sup>7</sup>

That evening Elder Dille preached in a house built by Hyrum Smith in Kirtland. After listening to his address, Martin said, “Just let me go with you to England, I see you can preach. You do the preaching and I will bear testimony to the Book of Mormon and we will convert all England.” Elder Dille replied, “You can not go, you are too crooked.” Martin queried, “Will I ever be any straighter?” Dille told him, “Go to Salt Lake and get straightened up and then [you] could go.” Convinced that a better life awaited him in the

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5. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” 4.

6. Elder Dille gave this “Additional Testimony” of his conversation with Martin Harris in a manuscript dated 15 September 1853, which was later found and published in the *Millennial Star*; see “Testimonies of Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 21 (20 August 1859): 545-46. The manuscript was apparently prepared not long after his interview with Harris as he didn’t leave the port at Philadelphia on the steamboat *City of Glasgow* until 18 October 1853.

7. As if to suggest that Martin “received a portion of the profits accruing from the sale of the book”—his response lacks sufficient detail to fully assess the exact status of his return on the \$3,000 advance “and more too.” The complex nature of the distribution and sales of copies of the Book of Mormon, and the decided dearth of accurate records make it very difficult to compute income ascribed to the respective parties associated with the volumes. As reported, however, Martin sounded a positive note of satisfaction with the end results. David B. Dille, “Additional Testimony of Martin Harris (One of the Three Witnesses) to the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon,” *Millennial Star* 21 (20 August 1859): 545.

West, Martin said, “I have got a good farm, I will advertise it for sale immediately and when you get back you will find me there.”<sup>8</sup> In spite of his promise, Martin remained in Kirtland.

The next missionaries to arrive in Kirtland were Elders Thomas Colburn and W. W. Rust. In October 1854 at a conference held in St. Louis, these elders were called to find the “lost sheep” in the north-eastern states. In an attempt to fulfill that assignment, Colburn and Rust journeyed to Kirtland, where they “found a few that called themselves Saints, but very weak, many apostates,” among whom was Martin Harris. Elder Colburn, like Elder Dille before him, had known Martin years before. Colburn had been baptized in 1833 and had marched with Martin in Zion’s Camp in 1834. It seemed natural for him to search out an old friend. Colburn had a “lengthy interview” with Martin. He sent news of their discussion to Elder Erastus Snow, editor of the *St. Louis Luminary*. Excerpts of his interview were printed in the *Luminary*:

At first [Martin Harris] was down on polygamy, but before we left he informed me that he never should say a word against it. He confessed that he had lost confidence in Joseph Smith, consequently, his mind became darkened, and he was left to himself; he tried the Shakers, but that would not do, then tried Gladden Bishop, but no satisfaction; [he] had concluded he would wait until the Saints returned to Jackson Co., and then he would repair there. He gave us a history of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; his going to New York and presenting the characters to Professor Anthon, etc.; concluded before we left that “Brigham was Governor,” and that the authorities were there, and that he should go there as soon as he could get away.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Dille, “Reminiscences, 1886,” 4; Dille observed that Martin was then on “a valuable farm of 90 acres.” “Additional Testimony,” 546.

9. Letter of Elder Thomas Colburn to Erastus Snow, 2 May 1855, *St. Louis Luminary* 1/24 (5 May 1855): 2. See “Francis Gladden Bishop,” Leonard J. Arrington Papers,

Yet once again, Martin did not make good on his promise. He refused to leave his beloved Kirtland.

### **“An Official Divorce Decree Was Not Found”**

His promise to migrate to the Salt Lake Valley and his failure to keep that promise not only frustrated visiting missionaries, it led to disappointment and irreconcilable marital strife. For years, his wife, Caroline, had urged him to take their family to the Rocky Mountains, and for just as many years Martin had refused her entreaties. But in 1854, he promised Caroline that he would make good on his promise and take the family to the Salt Lake Valley. Yet as time passed, Martin did not tell friends that he was moving west nor did he try to sell his house or farm holdings in Kirtland. Nothing in his actions suggested that his family would soon be settled in the Rockies. In fact, he spoke with those outside his family circle of becoming a self-appointed guide in the Kirtland Temple.

Frustrated and unable to see any solution to the growing schism between Martin and herself, Caroline determined to make plans of her own. She insisted that Martin take her and the children to Pottawattamie County, Iowa, where her sister Louisa Young Littlefield and her family lived. At some juncture in the time period Martin agreed to her plea. It may well be that Martin and Caroline’s sale of some ninety acres of land in Kirtland Township Lot 45 to Isaac Moneysmith on 9 October 1855, and another one-half acre of ground in that same township to William W. Hadden and Nelson I. Hadden on 29 April 1856 are directly connected to expense monies for Caroline and the family’s western journey and keep in 1856.<sup>10</sup> Martin obviously felt an obligation to shepherd his expectant wife

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Mormon History Topics, box 84, fd. 24, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah (hereafter USU Special Collections).

10. Deed Record Book M, Lake County Recorder’s Office, pp. 481-82, 9 October 1855, Painesville, Ohio; Deed Record Book N, Lake County Recorder’s Office, pp. 48-49, 29 April 1856, Painesville, Ohio.

and the children from Kirtland to Iowa where her family members could give her the necessary assistance.

At age seventy-three, Martin transported Caroline and the children to Crescent City, Rocky Ford (Rockford) Township, Pottawattamie County. There Martin is identified as head of the household by the 1856 Iowa State census taker.<sup>11</sup> For a brief period, he stayed in Crescent City with Caroline and their children, residing right next door to his sister-in-law and her husband, Lyman O. Littlefield, a printer who became publisher of the *Crescent City Oracle*. Interestingly, on the other side of Caroline’s dwelling place lived Russell King Homer, longtime friend and the man to whom Martin had sent a copy of the Book of Mormon via a “stranger” when Homer lived in Pennsylvania. In that small Iowa community, Martin’s last child, Ida May, was born on 27 May 1856. After these familial events, concern over land holdings, monies, and other obligations in Kirtland

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11. See Iowa State Census, 1856, Iowa State Collection, 1836-1925, Rocky Ford (Rockford) Township, Pottawattamie County, Iowa State Archives, Des Moines, Iowa. This census for Rockford Township was concluded by 29 August 1856. It lists Martaine [Martin] Harris (73) as the head of the household, his wife Caroline Harris (40), and the children, Martan [Martin] Harris [Jr.] (18), J[ulia] L[acothia] Harris (13), J[ohn] W[heeler] Harris (10), S[olomon Wheeler] Harris (2), and J[I]. C[?] Harris (0) [meaning less than a year old]. This last child is actually the infant Ida May Harris, a female, born to Caroline and Martin in Iowa on 27 May 1856. Another daughter, Sarah Harris, born in 1849, and age 1 year in the 1850 Census of Kirtland, Ohio, had died sometime in childhood and is not listed in this 1856 census. The time and place of her death is unknown. Noel R. Barton, genealogical specialist, the Joseph Smith Papers Project, informed us that “ordinarily the fact that Martin is listed by the census taker in Rockford Township as the head of the household would indicate that he was physically present with the family in Iowa. Otherwise, Caroline would have been listed as the family head.” Personal interview of author with Noel R. Barton, 18 February 2010, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. David H. Pratt, emeritus professor of history at BYU and also a genealogist, informed us that after examining the Iowa 1856 census listing with Martin designated as head of the household, and looking at the attendant circumstances, he is convinced that Martin was personally present for the enumeration. “Martin Harris was definitely in Iowa in 1856. He had sired his last child with Caroline [Ida May]. They had moved west to Iowa where Caroline had family and friends for her departure.” Personal interview with David H. Pratt, 30 November 2010 and 3 December 2010. See also Rachel Maretta Homer Crockett, *Homer Family History* (Salt Lake City, UT: by the author, 1942), 15; *History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa* (Chicago: Baskin, Historical Publishers, 1883), 290-91.

caused Martin to leave Iowa and return home. He was again residing in Kirtland by 24 April 1857, as recorded in the *Painesville Telegraph* on 30 April: “Martin Harris, of the Latter Day Saints, on Friday last [the 24th], baptized a happy convert in the river, near the Geauga Mills.”<sup>12</sup> Although his reasons for returning had much to do with temporal affairs, it led to a marital separation, the duration of which neither Martin nor Caroline had perhaps fully anticipated. After about twenty years of marriage, Martin Harris and Caroline Young ended their marriage vows by separation in 1856. Biographer William H. Homer Jr. claimed that differences between the marriage partners was the cause of their separation.<sup>13</sup> Martin pointed to Brigham Young and Mormonism as the cause. Whatever the reason or reasons, Caroline and her four children, ages approximately one to eighteen, chose to remain in Pottawattamie County while Martin Harris returned to Kirtland, some eight hundred miles distant.

On 16 July 1857, A. Milton Musser, a returning missionary from England, informed William Appleby, assistant editor of the *Mormon* in New York City: “It may be pleasing for you to learn that the family of Martin Harris (one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) is in Pottawattamie, and purpose migrating to Zion next spring.”<sup>14</sup> Although his announcement was met with excitement by Appleby and others, it proved premature, for Caroline and her children had put down roots in Crescent City, a Mormon settlement. In the interim period to 1859, the family biographer of Martin Harris Jr., Naomi Harris Morris, explained: “Many times the mother and her son, Martin Jr., prevailed upon the father to join one of the

12. *Painesville Telegraph* 35 (30 April 1857): 3.

13. William H. Homer Jr., “. . . Publish It upon the Mountains’: The Story of Martin Harris,” *Improvement Era*, May 1955, 345-46.

14. Letter of Amos M. Musser to William I. Appleby, president of the Eastern States Mission and assistant editor of the *Mormon*, 16 July 1857, in “Correspondence of Elder A. M. Musser,” *Mormon* [New York City], 15 August 1857, 3.



companies coming west. But their pleadings were to no avail; . . . he returned to the old home in Kirtland.”<sup>15</sup>

It was not until the early summer of 1859, three years after arriving in Iowa, that Caroline and her family began the final leg of their journey to the Salt Lake Valley. She joined with her sister, Louisa Young Littlefield, and family for the trek out of Crescent City. This afforded her not only their society but the added security provided by the presence of Louisa’s capable husband, Lyman O. Littlefield. They were attached to the ox team company of the Captain Horton D. Haight/Frederick Kesler freight train. The company broke camp at Florence, Nebraska, on 6 June 1859. On their journey westward, the company entry of 28 June 1859 notes, “Caroline Harris got very ill and was almost on the point of death in consequence of an unexpected haemorrhage.” On 30 June the company moved forward, leaving Caroline and her children in the care of the Littlefields. Caroline survived the hemorrhage ordeal and on 18 July, assisted by the Littlefields, caught up with the main body of the camp.<sup>16</sup> The Haight ox team company reached the Salt Lake Valley on 1 September 1859. President Brigham Young’s history recorded, “About 5 P.M. the church train went into the President’s yard.” That evening, “Martin Harris Jr was introduced to G[eorge] A. S[mith] by Prest. Young, he is the oldest son of Martin Harris by his second wife, daughter of John Young.” The Frederick Kesler freight train came into Salt Lake the following day, September 2.<sup>17</sup>

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15. Norma H. Morris, “The Life of Martin Harris Jr., Son of Martin Harris, A Witness of the Book of Mormon,” typescript, p. 1, BX 8670 .Ala no. 327, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (hereafter Perry Collections).

16. Frederick Kesler Papers 1837-1899, MS 7651, microfilm reel 1, vol. 2, Church History Library; Letter of Frederick Kesler, Ft. Laramie, to Brigham Young, Salt Lake City, 22 July 1859, Brigham Young Office Files 1832-1878, CR 12341, Microfilm reel 37, box 27, fd. 2, Church History Library; Horace S. Eldredge, “Crossing the Plains Narrative,” Horace S. Eldredge Journal, 1 June 1859-1 September 1859, Church History Library.

17. Historian’s Office Journal, Thursday, 1 September 1859, Church History Library; Journal History of the Church, 1 September 1859, p. 1; Frederick Kesler Papers

In the valley, Caroline and her family were welcomed into the home of her father, John Young. Although Caroline had planned to stay with her father for some time, the attentions of forty-five-year-old widower John Catley Davis cut her stay short.<sup>18</sup> In 1854 Davis, a convert from Birmingham, England—accompanied by his wife, Phoebe Oxenbold Davis, and their seven children—immigrated to America. En route to the valley, Phoebe and two of the children, John Edward and Phoebe, died of cholera in July 1854 and were buried at St. Louis, Missouri. Another child, Frederick William, died of consumption in July 1858 as the family was making preparations to cross the plains. John and the remaining four children later continued their journey to the Salt Lake Valley from the Mormon outfitting post at Florence (Nebraska) with the Edward Stevenson Company, 26 June 1859. John arrived in Salt Lake City on 19 September 1859, three days behind the main company because their wagon had broken down. The family settled in the Salt Lake 17th Ward, where Davis worked as a lock- and gunsmith and was known as a man of good repute.<sup>19</sup>

Following a brief courtship, Caroline Young Harris and John Catley Davis were married at the home of the bride's parents, John and Theodocia Young, on 16 January 1860. Lyman O. Littlefield, Caroline's brother-in-law, performed the ceremony. John and Caroline received their endowments and two months later were sealed in celestial marriage by the bride's uncle, President Brigham Young, at the Salt Lake Endowment House on 1 March 1860.<sup>20</sup> Their right

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1837-1899, MS 7651, microfilm reel 1, vol. 2, Diaries 1857-1899, 2 September 1859.

18. John Catley Davis (21 April 1814-18 February 1879) is a native of Handsworth, Staffordshire, England. He married Phoebe Oxenbold (Oxenbould) on 24 August 1840 in Handsworth. He died in Brigham City, Box Elder County, Utah, 18 February 1879, and was interred in the Brigham City Cemetery. See John Catley Davis Family Group Record, FamilySearch Ancestral File.

19. Susan Woodland Howard, "John Catley Davis and Phoebe Oxenbold Davis," [http://penwood.famroots.org/john\\_and\\_phoebe\\_davis.htm](http://penwood.famroots.org/john_and_phoebe_davis.htm), pp. 1-10; Frank Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Pioneers Book, 1913), 489, 839.

20. "Married," *Deseret News*, 1 February 1860, 384; Endowment House Marriage Record, 1 March 1860, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. John Catley Davis's

to marry has been questioned since an official divorce decree from Martin Harris has not been found.<sup>21</sup> Caroline’s lengthy separation from Martin in both time and distance appeared very final—all marital ties had long been severed. For her it was improbable that she would ever see him again. With both Caroline and John in need of mutual support for their respective families, John’s advances were welcome.<sup>22</sup> At the time of their marriage, no questions were asked concerning a writ of divorcement; such formalities were often overlooked in pioneer Utah. One child was born to their union—Joseph Harris Davis on 19 November 1860 in Payson, Utah. He lived only two days, dying on 21 November. After the death of their infant son, Caroline and John returned to Salt Lake City and once again resided in the Salt Lake 17th Ward.<sup>23</sup>

In 1867, after only seven years of marriage, Caroline and John Davis separated. Among the circumstances leading to their separation was a dispute involving Brigham Young. William H. Homer Jr. explains:

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deceased wife, Phoebe Oxenbold, was sealed to her husband at the same time. On that same date, 1 March 1860, Elijah Walter Davis, the nineteen-year-old son of John Catley Davis, was sealed to Julia Harris, the eighteen-year-old daughter of Martin and Caroline Harris.

21. Family biographers suggest that “one could correctly assume that the laws of the frontier at this time gave Caroline proper license for her remarriage. According to recorded statements, when a three-year period of time had elapsed during which a woman had received no support from her husband, she was legally free to contract another marriage.” See Madge Harris Tuckett and Belle Harris Wilson, *The Martin Harris Story: With Biographies of Emer Harris and Dennison Lott Harris* (Provo, UT: Vintage Books, 1983), 69.

22. Dennis A. Wright, “Caroline Young Harris: The Kirtland Wife of Martin Harris,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio and Upper Canada*, ed. Guy L. Dorius, Craig K. Manscill, and Craig James Ostler (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2006), 117; see chapter on William H. Homer Jr. in Wayne Cutler Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955), 125.

23. Nell Sumsion, “Notes on Genealogy of Martin Harris, One of the Witnesses of the Book of Mormon,” Genealogical Society of Utah, 21 March 1933, in Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness,” 122; 1860 US Federal Census, Payson, Utah, 25 August 1860; 1870 US Federal Census, 17th Ward Salt Lake City, Utah, 2 July 1870.

An altercation arose between Mr. Davis and Brigham Young regarding title to land. Caroline supported the views of Brigham Young. Mr. Davis became so enraged that he threatened to leave the Church. John Young, Caroline's father and Brigham's brother, intervened as mediator and the dispute was settled. Thus, seeds of dissention were early sown in the Davis household. Disagreements multiplied and finally resulted in the couple's separation.<sup>24</sup>

Instead of moving back in with her father, Caroline moved north to Smithfield, Cache County, to be near her eldest son, Martin Harris Jr.<sup>25</sup> In Smithfield, she was known as Caroline Harris, not Caroline Davis.<sup>26</sup>

### **“Wherever He Turned, Life Had Changed”**

During these years of difficulty and disappointment that had beset Caroline in the West, Martin too experienced troubles of his own in Kirtland. Many things were in a state of flux, and conditions were constantly changing. The absence of his family was a hard and lonely test. His diminishing financial resources and limitations of advancing age all took their toll. He continued his association

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24. Letter of William H. Homer Jr., Cody, Wyoming, to Preston Nibley, Salt Lake City, Utah, 31 December 1959, in “William H. Homer research papers, 1867–1965,” MSS 825, box 1, fd. 2, p. 3, Perry Collections; John Davis moved to Pleasant Grove, where he lived with his daughter Elizabeth Davis Stewart. According to his granddaughter, a Mrs. Atwood, in February 1878 John left Pleasant Grove, hoping to visit his children in Idaho. When he reached Brigham City, Utah, he became very ill and died. His obituary notice appeared in the *Deseret News*: “Died: At Brigham City, February 16th, 1878, after a prolonged illness, John C. Davis. He joined the Church in Birmingham, England, at an early day, lived the life of a Latter-day Saint, was ordained a High Priest, and died firm in the faith of the gospel.” *Deseret News*, 29 May 1878, 271.

25. Her sons John and Solomon Harris resided in the Snake River Valley in Idaho. See “The Forgotten Woman: Letter of Leander S. Harris [to Nell Sumsion],” 19 January 1952. Sumsion, in writing on behalf of the Genealogical Society of Utah, attached Leander Harris's letter to her “Notes on Genealogy of Martin Harris,” cited in Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness,” 126.

26. According to her granddaughter, Sariah Steel of Goshen, Utah, Caroline “was never known by the name of Davis, either in the family circle or among neighbors or friends.” Tuckett and Wilson, *Martin Harris Story*, 71.

with the local congregation of the Church of Christ, which circle of friends gave him some conversation and also provided an outlet for preaching. But it was his testimony of the Book of Mormon that kept Martin from becoming a solitary recluse and drifting into comparative obscurity. His powerful testimony, born of his calling as one of the Three Witnesses, kept him in the forefront. As in times past, many came to Kirtland to measure his experience. Believers, the undecided, or skeptics came to laud, inquire, or deride his testimony of an angel, gold plates, and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Too, Martin had an insatiable desire to exhibit the Kirtland Temple, the House of the Lord, and the inspired message that it represented to the world. For this task he felt a personal proprietorship and dedicated himself to that work.

Kirtland continued to be a touchstone for individuals and organizations hoping to generate or regenerate their particular religious creed. In October of 1855 William Smith had come to Kirtland and joined with Martin Harris and others in an attempt to reconstitute a church based on the principles of the original organization founded by Joseph Smith. At that time they went to great lengths to itemize those principles. Martin was elected president of their conference, which was held in the Kirtland Temple. However, Stephen Post, secretary of the conference, stipulated that “it was not found expedient to organize” at that time. Instead, the founders resolved to convene “in general conference and Solemn Assembly at the House of the Lord in Kirtland Ohio on the 6th day of Apr. 1856. Then and there to set in order all things not in order in the Church of Jesus Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

The anticipated 1856 conference failed to materialize. Stephen Post was there for the conference, but it didn’t transpire according to the 1856 appointment. He returned to his home in Erie, Pennsylvania, with the dejected observation, “I find Kirtland apparently a

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27. Stephen Post Papers 1835-1921, MS 1304, box 6, fd. 3, 3-8 October 1855, Church History Library.

land barren of faith as people without a shepherd.”<sup>28</sup> However, William attempted to regenerate his plan once again in 1857. According to Post, “In Sept [1857] Wm Smith got up a revelation appointing me [Stephen Post] a printer to the church &c he is trying to organize as president in Kirtland Ohio.”<sup>29</sup>

But it was apparently not until 1858 that a makeshift organization took place at Kirtland involving Martin Harris and William Smith. On 18 May 1858, Dr. Jeter Clinton, who was just returning from a mission in the east, reported to Pres. Brigham Young “that Martin Harris and Wm Smith were at Kirtland, [and] had organized a Church of their own.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, we learn from a 22 June 1858 journal entry of Wilford Woodruff that Enoch Beese and other missionaries coming from England to Utah took occasion to stop in Kirtland. Elder Beese reported to Pres. Young’s office that “Martin Harris had reorganized the Church in this place with 6 members. Appointed Wm. Smith their Leader Prophet Seer & Revelator. In [a] few days Harris drove Wm. Smith out of the place & damned him to Hell.”<sup>31</sup> William’s aspirations for presidency were short-lived at the hands of a disgruntled Martin Harris.

Martin Harris was naturally the subject of numerous interviews locally during the succession of Kirtland years in the 1850s and 1860s. Some of these interviews were recorded and published, providing invaluable insights into the man and the period. In late January 1859, one of the more informative interviews was granted to Joel Tiffany (editor of *Tiffany’s Monthly* published in New York City), who visited Martin in Kirtland. Mr. Tiffany affirmed, “The following narration we took down from the lips of Martin Harris, and read the same to him after it was written, that we might be

28. Stephen Post Papers 1835-1921, 5-11 April 1856.

29. Stephen Post Papers 1835-1921, 25 October 1857.

30. Brigham Young, “Historian’s Office Journal,” Tuesday, 18 May 1858, Church History Library.

31. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, ed. Scott G. Kenny (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1984), 5:198-99.

certain of giving his statement to the world.” Tiffany listened as Martin spoke of Joseph Smith Jr., an angel, and gold plates, without offering his own personal commentary.<sup>32</sup>

Most interviews and verbal exchanges concerning the faith, however, were never printed. Nevertheless, so many opportunities to express his views were proffered him by 1860 that Martin felt very confident in posting his daily occupation as that of “Mormon Preacher.”<sup>33</sup> A striking example of the profound effect Martin had on certain visitors to Kirtland when bearing testimony of the validity of the Book of Mormon is readily apparent in the experience of David H. Cannon in 1861. Elder Cannon, a returning missionary from the British Isles, called to see Martin at the home of his son George B. Harris, where Martin was then residing.<sup>34</sup> Harris took him to the temple where David affirmed:

He testified to me in all solemnity . . . that the angel did appear with the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and testified that they contained a history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent, and that they had been translated by the gift and power of God. There was a feeling [that] accompanied his testimony, when he bore it, that I have never experienced either before or since in any man that I ever heard bear testimony.<sup>35</sup>

As Martin Harris exercised his calling as a witness the Spirit attended him and gave confirmation to the hearer.

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32. Report of Joel Tiffany’s January 1859 interview with Martin Harris in “Mormonism—No. II,” *Tiffany’s Monthly* (New York) 5/4 (August 1859): 163-70. Tiffany had expressed his personal views of the nature of Mormonism in a previous issue of his magazine and also alluded to the fact that Martin had “conversed with us many times upon the subject.” See “Mormonism,” *Tiffany’s Monthly* (New York) 5/1 (May 1859): 46-51.

33. U.S. Federal Census, Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio 1860.

34. U.S. Federal Census, Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio, 1860, lists Martin Harris, age 77, “Mormon Preacher,” as a resident in the household of his son, George B. Harris.

35. Beatrice Cannon Evans and Janath Russell Cannon, *Cannon Family Historical Treasury* (Salt Lake City: George Cannon Family Association, 1967), 250.

Martin continued to deal in realty on a very limited scale as long as he was able. It is interesting that during this period he acquired two one-half acre lots immediately adjoining the Kirtland Temple to the west along Whitney Street (now Maple Street). Lot No. 3 was purchased from Martha Frost on 17 October 1857; Lot No. 2 was procured from Hiram and Electa Stratton, 20 October 1857.<sup>36</sup> Personal circumstances, however, soon necessitated their sale. Martin deeded Lot No. 2 to his son George B. Harris on 10 December 1859 for the consideration of \$200.00, and Lot No. 3 to Hiram Dixon on 11 November 1863 for the consideration of \$125.00.<sup>37</sup>

Martin had become an object of charity. His financial base was virtually gone by 1860. He lived in the home of his forty-seven-year-old son, George, and his wife, Mary Jane Thompson Harris. James McKnight, in a 27 February 1862 letter to the editor of the *Millennial Star*, reported, “Of [Martin’s] property there is little or none left. He has now no home; his son, a worthless scapegrace, with whom he lived, being in prison, and the house deserted.”<sup>38</sup> McKnight may not have been acquainted with all of the extenuating circumstances affecting his description. Just six days before his letter was written, 21 February 1862, George B. Harris and his wife were in a divorce hearing at Painesville. The court found George “guilty of Extreme Cruelty” and granted the petitioned-for divorce decree to Mary Jane. Whether or not there was any “prison” time associated with the “Extreme Cruelty” aspect of the divorce proceedings or a separate situation entirely, we are unaware.<sup>39</sup> Whatever the condi-

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36. Martha Frost to Martin Harris, Lot 3, Deed Record Book S, p. 277, Lake County Recorder’s Office, Painesville, Ohio; and Hiram and Electa Stratton, Lot 2, Deed Record Book N, pp. 589-90, Lake County Recorder’s Office, Painesville, Ohio.

37. Martin Harris to George B. Harris, Lot No. 2, Deed Record Book T, pp. 524-25, Lake County Recorder’s Office, Painesville, Ohio; Martin Harris to Hiram Dixon, Lot No. 3, Deed Record Book X, pp. 462-63.

38. James McKnight, letter to George Q. Cannon, 27 February 1862, published in “Correspondence: America,” *Millennial Star* 24 (19 April 1862): 251.

39. Journal No. F, pp. 349-50, Lake County Clerk of Courts, West Annex, Painesville, Ohio.



tion, that same year George B. Harris enlisted at Painesville in the U.S. Army on 12 August 1862 as a private in Company I of the 52nd Regiment of Ohio Volunteer Infantry. At the time of his enlistment, George stood 5' 7", had a light complexion, brown eyes, and dark hair. His stated occupation was a “Seaman.” George enrolled in the military to fight for the northern cause in the Civil War. However, bronchitis and general debility landed him in General Hospital for two months, and for a time at the Convalescent Barracks in Nashville, Tennessee. There George was released from active duty on 2 February 1863 with a “Certificate of Disability for Discharge” and returned to Kirtland. Although doctors had hoped for his complete recovery, George died at Kirtland in 1864.<sup>40</sup>

Martin had not been left entirely homeless through the process of the 1862 divorce between his son George and daughter-in-law Mary Jane. At the divorce proceedings Martin was identified in court as still having some ownership rights in the property that he had previously sold to his son. Relative to the disposition of property regarding Mary Jane Thompson Harris and Martin Harris, the Court “ordered and decreed” that:

The said plaintiff [Mary Jane] have and enjoy with the right to sell and dispose of all the personal property now in her possession and that she have and enjoy as for alimony one undivided half of the premises described in said petition Consisting of the house and lot in Kirtland in Common with Martin Harris he having appeared and Consented thereto, during their joint lives and in the Case of the death of Either the survivor is to have and Enjoy said premises during his or her natural life and at death of the survivor

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40. George B. Harris, “Army of the United States, Certificate of Disability for Discharge,” National Archives, Record Group 15 (Department of Veterans Affairs), invalid pension, app # 29,712; *Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1866*, vol. 4 (Akron, OH: Published by Authority of the General Assembly, 1887), 669. The grave site of George B. Harris is presently unknown.

the said House and lot to Rest in fee simple in said Alma Harris the Child of said Mary J and George B. [consideration was also given to “any other Child that may hereafter be born as the issue of said marriage”].<sup>41</sup>

Mary Jane gave birth to a second child, Henry Harris, shortly thereafter. Thus for an extended period of time Martin was living in a household consisting of his daughter-in-law Mary Jane Thompson Harris and her two children, Alma M. Harris and Henry Harris.<sup>42</sup>

In an effort to support himself without undue assistance Martin leased ninety acres of farmland in Kirtland commencing in 1865.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately he was too old and too tired to work the land as he desired and his financial situation was such that it was difficult to hire a helping hand. Near the same time, Pomeroy Tucker, a Palmyra, New York, journalist, wrote an 1867 exposé on Mormonism in which he painted Martin as he remembered him in the early days of the Restoration, a “prosperous, independent farmer, strictly upright in his business dealings, and, although evidencing good qualifications in the affairs of his industrial calling, yet he was the slave of the peculiar religious fanaticism controlling his mental organization”—all in the past tense.<sup>44</sup> Tucker failed to write anything of Martin’s present condition.

Christopher Crary, a Kirtland and township trustee during this difficult time for Martin, describes just how desperate the situation had become regarding his personal plight:

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41. Journal No. F. pp. 349-50, Lake County Clerk of Courts Office, West Annex, Painesville, Ohio.

42. William H. Homer Research Papers, MSS 825, box 1, fd. 1 and fd. 2, Perry Collections. Interestingly, this source reveals that Alma M. Harris later went west to Lewistown, Idaho, in 1885 and there married Ida May Harris, the daughter of Martin Harris and Caroline Young Harris, in 1886.

43. Rhett Stephens James, “Martin Harris,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:576.

44. Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: Appleton, 1867), 50.

In 1867 or 1868, while acting as township trustee, complaint was made to me that Martin Harris was destitute of a home, poorly clothed, feeble, burdensome to friends, and that he ought to be taken to the poor-house. I went down to the flats to investigate, and found him at a house near the Temple, with a family lately moved in, strangers to me. He seemed to dread the poorhouse very much. The lady of the house said she would take care of him while their means lasted, and I was quite willing to postpone the unpleasant task of taking him to the poor-house. Everybody felt sympathy for him. He was willing to work and make himself useful as far as his age and debility would admit of.<sup>45</sup>

Adding to the everyday burdens created by having suffered for so long the afflictions of extreme poverty, which had affected him both body and soul, Martin was informed of the death of his brother Preserved Harris, who passed away in Mentor, Ohio, on 18 April 1867. In what would later prove to be another pivotal year, Martin was informed that his brother Emer had succumbed in Logan, Utah, on 28 November 1869. Time was exacting a significant toll on those who had been so close to him across the years.<sup>46</sup> His

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45. Christopher G. Crary, *Pioneer and Personal Reminiscences* (Marshalltown, IA: Marshall Printing, 1893), 44-45. George Levi Booth of Mentor, Ohio, interview by M. Wilford Poulson, 20 August 1932. “Poulson, ‘Question: Was Martin Harris ever a public charge in his old age here in Kirtland?’ Booth, ‘Answer: No. he was not. There were people who would not have allowed that to take place.’” See M. Wilford Poulson Collection, Poulson interview, MSS 823, 20 August 1932, box 9, fd. 32, Perry Collections.

46. Preserved died at his home in Mentor, Ohio. He was buried in the Mentor Municipal Cemetery. Emer died at the home of his son Alma Harris in Logan, Utah. He was buried in the Logan City Cemetery. The plaque on his monument reads: “Emer Harris, born at Cambridge, New York, May 29, 1781. A direct descendent of Thomas Harris who came to America with Roger Williams in 1631 for religious freedom. Through influence of his brother Martin, the witness to the Book of Mormon, Emer received [the] first bound copy. He was baptized into the Church in 1831 by Hyrum Smith, called on mission by revelation in 1832 (D.&C. sec. 75:32 [30]), worked on Nauvoo and Kirtland Temples, suffered persecution and mobbings in Missouri and Nauvoo, came to Utah in 1852. Pioneered Ogden, Provo and Southern Utah. Ordained

life, however, was about to be transformed yet again in a very unexpected fashion.

### “A Poorly Clad, Emaciated Little Man”

In mid-December 1869 Elder William H. Homer,<sup>47</sup> a returning British missionary en route to his home and family in Utah, stopped in Kirtland overnight. He was accompanied as far as Kirtland by his cousin, James A. Crockett of Summit Township, Crawford County, Pennsylvania, not a member of the Church. The weary travelers asked “[their] landlord who was custodian of the Mormon Temple.” Homer recalled that the landlord “informed us that Martin Harris was custodian, and pointed out to us where we would find the old gentleman.” On 14 December 1869<sup>48</sup> the two visitors knocked on the door of the cottage where the witness resided and found the eighty-six-year-old Martin to be “a poorly clad, emaciated little man, on whom the winter of life was weighing heavily.” Homer affirmed, “In his face might be read the story of his life. There were the marks of spiritual upliftment. There were the marks of keen dissatisfaction. There was the hunger strain for the peace, the contentment, the divine calm that it seemed could come no more into his life.” To Homer, Martin was “a pathetic figure, and yet it was a figure of strength. For with it all there was something about the little man which revealed the fact that he

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patriarch 1853. The father of 15 children. Died in Logan November 28, 1869 in his 89th year.”

47. William Harrison Homer Sr. (13 July 1845–28 January 1934) was born near Quiver, Mason County, Illinois, son of Russell King Homer and Eliza Williamson. He married Susanna Rebecca Raymond on 8 February 1870 in Salt Lake City. William died in Orem, Utah, and is buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery; see “William Harrison Homer,” in Rachel Maretta Homer Crockett, *Homer Family History* (Salt Lake City, UT: by the author, 1942), 56–61; William Harrison Homer, Family Pedigree Chart, FamilySearch Ancestral File.

48. The date that Homer and Crockett visited the Kirtland Temple with Martin Harris is verified as 14 December 1869. Both men took occasion to sign the Kirtland Temple Visitor’s Register. Crockett signed first, and dated his signature: “December 14th 1869 J.A. Crockett of Summit [township] Crawford Co Pennsylvania.” Homer’s inscription reads “W. H. Homer Salt Lake City Utah, Territory.” Ron Romig, ed., *Martin Harris’s Kirtland* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2007), 92.

had lived richly, that into his life had entered such noble experiences as come to the lives of but few.”<sup>49</sup>

Elder Homer introduced himself to Martin “as a brother-in-law of Martin Harris, Jr.,—as he [Martin Jr.] had married my eldest sister—and as an Elder of the Church who was returning from a foreign mission.”<sup>50</sup> Martin snapped, “One of those Brighamite ‘Mormons,’ are you?” He then “railed impatiently against Utah and the founder of the ‘Mormon’ commonwealth.” To Homer, “Martin Harris seemed to be obsessed. He would not understand that there stood before him a man who knew his wife [Caroline] and children, who had followed the Church to Utah.”<sup>51</sup> After a time, Martin asked, “You want to see the Temple, do you?” Elder Homer nodded. “I’ll get the key,” said Martin. According to Homer, Martin now “radiated with interest.” He led Homer and his cousin into the Kirtland Temple and “through the rooms of the Temple and explained how they were used. He pointed out the place of the School of the Prophets. He showed us where the Temple curtain had at one time hung. He related thrilling experiences in connection with the history of the sacred building.”<sup>52</sup> While speaking of the neglected state of the temple, Martin again railed “against the Utah ‘Mormons’” and said that a “gross injustice had been done to him. He should have been chosen President of the Church.”<sup>53</sup> It was then that Martin seemed “somewhat exhausted.”<sup>54</sup>

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49. William H. Homer [Sr.], “The Passing of Martin Harris,” *Improvement Era*, March 1926, 468-69; William H. Homer, “The Last Testimony of Martin Harris,” pp. 1-6, notarized typescript sworn by William H. Homer, 9 April 1827, MSS 236, Perry Collections. The story by Homer of visiting Martin Harris was largely reprinted by his son, William H. Homer Jr., in “. . . Publish It upon the Mountains’: The Story of Martin Harris,” *Improvement Era*, July 1955, 505-6.

50. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469; Homer Jr., “‘Publish It upon the Mountains,’” 505.

51. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469.

52. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469; Homer Jr., “‘Publish It upon the Mountains,’” 505.

53. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469.

54. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469; Homer Jr., “‘Publish It upon the Mountains,’” 505.

While they were resting, Homer asked, “Is it not true that you were once very prominent in the Church, that you gave liberally of your means, and that you were active in the performance of your duties?” Martin replied, “That is very true.” He mused, “Things were alright then. I was honored while the people were here, but now that I am old and poor it is all different.” Homer reported that when questioned about his belief in the Book of Mormon, “the shabby, emaciated little man before us was transformed as he stood with hand outstretched toward the sun of heaven.”

“Young man,” answered Martin Harris with impressiveness, “Do I believe it! Do you see the sun shining! Just as surely as the sun is shining on us and gives us light, and the [moon] and stars give us light by night, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, chosen of God to open the last dispensation of the fulness of times; so surely do I know that the Book of Mormon was divinely translated. I saw the plates; I saw the Angel; I heard the voice of God. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I might as well doubt my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon or the divine calling of Joseph Smith.”<sup>55</sup>

To Homer, “it was a sublime moment. It was a wonderful testimony.” Indeed, “it was the real Martin Harris whose burning testimony no power on earth could quench.” Homer claimed that hearing him testify was “the most thrilling moment” of his life.<sup>56</sup> It was then that Martin turned to Elder Homer and asked, “Who are you?” Homer explained for the second time his relationship. “So

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55. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 469-70; Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 505.

56. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470.

my son Martin married your sister,” repeated the old man, shaking his hand.

“You know my family then?” “Yes,” he replied, “Wouldn’t you like to see your family again?” Martin admitted that he would “like to see Caroline and the children” but lamented that his impoverished circumstances prevented such a visit. “That need not stand in the way,” Homer said. “President Young would be only too glad to furnish means to convey you to Utah.”<sup>57</sup> The mere mention of Brigham Young angered Martin. “Don’t talk Brigham Young,” he warned. Martin then declared, “He would not do anything that was right.” Homer suggested that Martin “send him a message by me.” Martin refused. Yet he did admit, “I should like to see my family.”<sup>58</sup> Homer entreated him again to convey a message to President Young. Martin replied,

You call on Brigham Young. Tell him about our visit. Tell him that Martin Harris is an old, old man, living on charity with his relatives. Tell him I should like to visit Utah, my family, my children—I would be glad to accept help from the Church, but I want no personal favors. Wait! Tell him that if he sends money, he must send enough for the round trip. I should not want to remain in Utah.<sup>59</sup>

When Elder Homer reached his home in Utah, he told his father, Russell King Homer, of his visit with Martin Harris. Enthused by the account, his father suggested that they set out together to tell President Young of the visit. Homer recalled, “The president received us very graciously [in his office]. He listened attentively to

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57. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470; Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506.

58. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470.

59. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470; Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506. Homer concluded, “For 25 [32] years he had nursed the old grudge against the leaders of the Church, probably because nobody had had the patience with him that I had shown.” Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 470-71; Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506.

my recital of my visit with Martin Harris.” During the recitation, “President Young asked questions now and again, to make clear on certain points,” before saying, “I want to say this: I was never more gratified over any message in my life. Send for him! Yes, even if it were to take the last dollar of my own. Martin Harris spent his time and money freely when one dollar was worth more than one thousand dollars are worth now. Send for him! Yes indeed I shall send! Rest assured, Martin Harris will be here in time.”<sup>60</sup>

### “A Great Desire to See Utah, and His Children”

In February 1870, fifty-year-old Elder Edward Stevenson,<sup>61</sup> returning from the east to Salt Lake City, journeyed to Kirtland in hopes of finding Martin Harris. Stevenson, like David Dille and Thomas Colburn before him, had earlier become acquainted with the Book of Mormon witness. “While I was living in Michigan, then a Territory, in 1833, near the town of Pontiac, Oakland Co.,” Stevenson penned, “Martin Harris came there and in a meeting where I was present bore testimony of the appearance of an angel exhibiting the golden plates and commanding him to bear a testimony of these things to all people whenever opportunity was afforded him to do so.”<sup>62</sup> Thirty-six years later, after fulfilling a mission to

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60. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 471; Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506. See Preston Nibley, *The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1946), 115-23.

61. Edward Stevenson (1 May 1820-27 January 1897) first heard the gospel preached by Elders Jared Carter and Joseph Wood. He was baptized on 20 December 1833 in Silver Lake, Michigan, by Japheth Fosdick. Stevenson endured the trials associated with the Mormon era in Missouri and Illinois. In 1847 he was a pioneer to the Salt Lake Valley. He was appointed an alternate member of the First Council of Seventy in June 1879, nine years after bringing Martin Harris to the Salt Lake Valley. He was called as one of the seven presidents of the Seventy on 7 October 1894. See Edward Stevenson Collection, MS 4806, Church History Library; and “Edward Stevenson,” Leonard J. Arrington Papers, box 94, fd. 8, USU Special Collections.

62. Letter of Edward Stevenson to the editor of the *Deseret News*, 30 November 1881, in “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 762; A year later in October 1834, Edward Stevenson had the opportunity of meeting Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer at Pontiac, Michigan, and hearing the testimony of those witnesses. See *History of the Church*, 2:168-69; Edward



the Eastern States, Stevenson met Martin once again on 11 February 1870. Stevenson saw Martin coming out of the Kirtland Temple and observed, “He took from under his arm a copy of the Book of Mormon, the first edition, I believe, and bore a faithful testimony.” He heard Martin say “it was his duty to continue to lift up his voice as he had been commanded to do in defence of the Book that he held in his hand, and offered to prove from the Bible that just such a book was to come forth out of the ground.” Martin confessed to Stevenson that “he was daily bearing testimony to many who visited the Temple.”<sup>63</sup>

Although Stevenson recognized the power of Martin’s testimony, the circumstances in Martin’s life left Stevenson with a sense of pity for the once prosperous farmer. Edward bore witness to Martin of the truthfulness of the Latter-day work—a witness he had gained “through obedience to the Gospel.”<sup>64</sup> Stevenson further stated, “I felt to admonish him to the renewal of his duties and more advanced privileges of gathering to Zion and receiving his endowments and blessings.” Martin was impressed by the power that attended his testimony and boldly declared that “whatever befell him he knew that Joseph was a Prophet, for he had not only proved it from the Bible but that he had stood with him in the presence of an angel, and he also knew that the Twelve Apostles were chosen of God.”<sup>65</sup> His last statement was not repetitive of his testimony of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It was an expressed conviction of the calling of the Twelve. This testimony spoke volumes to Stevenson. By implication, it meant that Martin knew the

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Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: by the author, 1893), 4-5; Bertha S. Stevenson, “The Third Witness,” *Improvement Era*, August 1934, 458.

63. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 762-63. On that day, 11 February, Elder Stevenson signed the Kirtland Temple Register, see M. Wilford Poulson Collection, MSS, box 5, fd. 4, Perry Collections.

64. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 763.

65. Edward Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” *Millennial Star* 48 (7 June 1886): 366.

keys for leading the Lord’s kingdom in the latter days rested with the Twelve. It meant that Martin knew the truth of God lay in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

For Martin, exchanging testimonies with Stevenson may not have been noteworthy. It may have been like so many encounters before—forgotten. But this was not so for Elder Edward Stevenson. Long after he returned to Salt Lake City, thoughts of Martin Harris surfaced. Rather than ignore what he believed were impressions, he wrote a letter to Martin recalling their meeting in Kirtland. Martin responded with a letter of his own, stating: “When I read your letter I had a witness for the first time that I must gather with the Saints to Utah.”<sup>66</sup> A series of letters passed between the two men. The thread that bound their correspondence was Martin’s repeated desire to migrate west.<sup>67</sup> Stevenson shared one of Martin’s letters with Brigham Young. After reading the letter, President Young, through his counselor George A. Smith, suggested that Stevenson set up a subscription fund to financially assist Martin Harris on his journey to the Salt Lake Valley. Stevenson liked the suggestion and went to work, soliciting the necessary funds. President Young was among the immediate contributors and gave twenty-five dollars. Others contributed more or less and soon a subscription of nearly two hundred dollars was raised.<sup>68</sup>

With funds in hand, on 19 July 1870 Stevenson boarded a railroad car in Salt Lake City bound for the east. He first elected to make a hurried trip through Ohio to western New York where he visited the Hill Cumorah at Manchester before calling “for [his] charge at Kirtland.”<sup>69</sup> By 7 August, Stevenson reached the agrarian community and there found Martin “anxiously waiting” for him.<sup>70</sup>

66. Journal History of the Church, 27 May 1884, 7.

67. Andrew Jenson, “The Three Witnesses,” *The Historical Record* (Salt Lake City: by the author, 1886-1890), 6:215.

68. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 763.

69. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 366.

70. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 366. The day after his arrival, Stevenson learned that the Kirtland Temple was available for

Martin, age eighty-eight, having no real wealth to speak of, was then living on the goodwill and charity found in the household of Joseph C. Hollister, age eighty-four, and his wife, Electa Stratton Hollister, age sixty-six.<sup>71</sup>

Martin was “elated with his prospective journey” and expressed confidence that neither age nor health could deter its success. To prove the matter, he boasted of having recently worked “in the garden, and dug potatoes by the day for some of his neighbors.”<sup>72</sup> He later confided to Edward Stevenson that in preparation for his forthcoming departure for the west he experienced a most taxing incident. In the process of going from house to house to bid longtime friends farewell, he became “bewildered, dizzy, faint and staggering through the blackberry vines that [were] so abundant in that vicinity, his clothes torn, bloody and faint, he lay down under a tree to die. After a time he revived, called on the Lord, and finally at twelve midnight, found his friend, and in his fearful condition was cared for and soon regained his strength.” Martin believed that the incident was a “snare of the adversary to hinder him from going to Salt Lake City.”<sup>73</sup>

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religious meetings. He secured the temple and preached on that Sunday morn. At the conclusion of his sermon, those in attendance voted to return for a second meeting that afternoon. According to Stevenson, the second one was “well attended.” See Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506, who says, “Both meetings were well attended.” Stevenson signed the Kirtland Temple Register on 7 August 1870. M. Wilford Poulson Collection, MSS 823, box 9, fd. 32, Perry Collections.

71. See United States Federal Census, 1870, Kirtland Township, Lake County, Ohio.

72. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 763.

73. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 763. A slightly different account appears in Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 366. In the latter account, Martin Harris related that “he went to bid adieu to some old friends previous to his departure. His way led him through a woodland field, in which he lost his way. Wandering about, he became bewildered, and came in contact with briars and blackberry vines, his clothes were torn into tatters, and his skin lacerated and bleeding. He laid down under a tree in despair, with little hope of recovery. It was about midnight, when he was aroused, and called upon the Lord and received strength; and about one o’clock, a. m., he found his friends.

Martin recited another incident to Edward Stevenson. From the recorded description it is difficult to distinguish whether this event was in any way associated with his departure or if it happened “on one occasion.” It may have been an earlier snare designed to entrap him. During their journey west he confided in Edward Stevenson that:

On one occasion several of his old acquaintances made an effort to get him tipsy by treating him to some wine. When they thought he was in a good mood for talk, they put the question very carefully to him: “Well, now, Martin, we want you to be frank and candid with us in regard to this story of your seeing an angel and the golden plates of the Book of Mormon that are so much talked about. We have always taken you to be an honest, good farmer and neighbor of ours, but could not believe that you ever did see an angel. Now Martin, do you really believe that you did see an angel when you were awake?” No, said Martin, I do not believe it. The anticipation of the delighted crowd at this exclamation may be imagined. But soon a different feeling prevailed when Martin Harris, true to his trust, said, “Gentlemen, what I have said is true, from the fact that my belief is swallowed up in knowledge; for I want to say to you that as the Lord lives I do know that I stood with the Prophet Joseph Smith in the presence of the angel, and it was in the brightness of day.”<sup>74</sup>

With that same determination, he claimed that nothing could prevent him from going west—neither bewilderment nor designing friends. No matter the difficulty, he would board a train bound for Zion in the Rockies. Believing his stubborn tenacity, Stevenson

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When he related this circumstance he said the devil desired to prevent him from going to Zion.”

74. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 367. Martin then went on to explain that “although he drank wine with them as friends, he always believed in temperance and sobriety.”

sent a letter to the *Deseret News* informing the editor of their travel plans:

Martin Harris, who still lives here [Kirtland], is tolerably well, and has a great desire to see Utah, and his children that live there; and although the old gentleman is in the 88th year of his age, he still bears a faithful testimony to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, being one of the three original witnesses. He says he saw the plates, handled them and saw the angel that visited Joseph Smith, more than 40 years ago. I have made arrangements to emigrate him to Utah, according to his desire, and will start in about two weeks.<sup>75</sup>

### **Miles of Railroad Track to Cross**

Nine days after Elder Stevenson arrived in Kirtland and on the very day the *Deseret News* printed his letter, he and Martin Harris boarded a train bound for Chicago. With miles of railroad track to cross, there were many occasions for conversation. None was more significant to Stevenson than Martin’s memories of Joseph Smith. He recalled that Martin said, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet, was very poor, and had to work by the day for his support, and he (Harris) often gave him work on his farm, and that they had hoed corn together many a day.” Martin said that “[Joseph] was good to work and jovial and they often wrestled together in sport, but the Prophet was devoted and attentive to his prayers.”<sup>76</sup>

When the train arrived at the Chicago Depot on 21 August 1870, the passengers bound for Salt Lake City disembarked to await a train heading west. Upon learning of a delay, Stevenson and Martin checked into the popular American Hotel in downtown Chicago. Before retiring for the evening, Martin was “delighted to find

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75. Letter of Edward Stevenson, 10 August 1870; see “Kirtland, Ohio,” *Deseret News*, 24 August 1870, 341.

76. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. III.,” *Millennial Star* 48 (21 June 1886): 389.

crowds that would listen to him. All seemed astonished to hear him relate the story of his part in the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>77</sup> After being comfortably situated in their room, Stevenson wrote to Elder George A. Smith: “I am well, as also Martin Harris, who is with me, although he is now in the 88th year of his age and rather feeble. But he walks along remarkably well. . . . He stands his journey, thus far, quite well, and feels filled with new life at the idea of going to the valleys of Utah, to see his children and friends.” Stevenson confided, “[Martin] is coming to the conclusion, after trying everything else—although he has always borne a faithful testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon—that the work of the Lord is progressing in the tops of the mountains and that the people are gathering in fulfilment of prophecy.”<sup>78</sup>

The next day, the two men boarded a westbound train. One of the principal train stops on their route was Des Moines, Iowa. When Martin and Stevenson disembarked at the train depot, instead of seeking lodging as before, Stevenson escorted Martin to the *Daily Iowa State Register* office. There an editor of the *Register* listened and then questioned Martin about his testimony of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The editor was so intrigued by his words that on 26 August 1870, he printed in the *Register*, “Martin Harris, one of the *three witnesses* of the Mormon Bible, called at our sanctum yesterday. Mr. Harris is now in his 88th year, hale and hearty, with many interesting things to relate in reference to the finding of the tablets of the testament. We shall have occasion to mention some of these in another issue.”<sup>79</sup> As promised, in the Sunday morning edition, 28 August 1870, an extensive account of his conversation with Martin was printed. It included, “The old gentleman evidently loves to relate the incidents with which he was personally connected and he does it with wonderful enthusiasm.” Martin spoke of the Book

77. Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 506-7.

78. Edward Stevenson, letter to George A. Smith, 21 August 1870, *Deseret Evening News*, 27 August 1870, p. 3.

79. *Daily Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), 26 August 1870, 4.

of Mormon and gave a valuable observation concerning the record itself. As reported, “Mr. Harris describes the plates as being of thin leaves of gold, measuring seven by eight inches and weighing altogether, from forty to sixty pounds.”<sup>80</sup>

With more than a day remaining in Des Moines, Martin took advantage of other opportunities to bear his testimony. James M. Ballinger, president of the Des Moines Iowa Branch, invited him to speak to his congregation. He responded by bearing “testimony as to viewing the plates, the angel’s visit, and visiting professor Anthony [Anthon].” His brief mention of Professor Charles Anthon captured the fancy of branch members, especially his recounting of “a certificate, etc., as to the correctness of the characters, [Anthon] asked him to fetch the plates for him to see. Martin said that they were sealed, and that an angel had forbidden them to be exhibited. Mr. Anthony [Anthon] then called for the certificate, tore it up and consigned it to the waste basket, saying, angels did not visit in our days, etc.”<sup>81</sup>

The next day Stevenson baptized Sally Ann Ballinger Fifield, the forty-nine-year-old sister of President Ballinger, in the Des Moines River. Seeing an opportunity for discussing the doctrine of baptism, Stevenson tried to teach Martin of “the necessity of being rebaptized.” Troubled by the inference, Martin said that “he had not been cut off from the Church”; therefore, there was no need of being rebaptized.<sup>82</sup> Stevenson begged to differ. Martin replied that “if it was right, the Lord would manifest it to him by His spirit.”<sup>83</sup> Since a manifestation did not occur, he refused to enter baptismal

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80. *Daily Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), 28 August 1870, 4.

81. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” *Deseret News*, 28 December 1881, 763.

82. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses—Incidents in the Life of Martin Harris,” *Millennial Star* 44 (6 February 1882): 87. Martin’s statement that he “had not been cut off from the Church” was true in the sense that he had not been excommunicated since his rebaptism in Kirtland in 1842. See Thomas G. Truitt, “Was Martin Harris Ever Excommunicated from the Church?,” *Ensign*, June 1979, 34-35.

83. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 367; cf. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 87.

waters that day.<sup>84</sup> Members of the Des Moines branch contributed “a new suit of clothes” to him. Of their generosity, Stevenson penned, “[This] very much helped the feelings and appearance of the old gentleman.”<sup>85</sup> To Martin, this was more than a singular gift. He was overcome by their generosity and “felt to bless them” before departing with Stevenson and two members of the Des Moines branch for the depot.<sup>86</sup>

At the depot, they boarded their Pullman passenger car bound for Utah. There were other stops along the way and more people to meet, but it was not until 29 August, when the train stopped at Ogden, Weber County, that another reporter took interest in Martin, and wrote a note, albeit brief. The *Ogden Junction* reported, “Martin Harris arrived, (with Elder Edward Stevenson) whose name is known almost throughout the world as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They left Kirtland on the 19th of August.”<sup>87</sup> On 30 August the *Deseret Evening News* printed: “By a telegram, per Deseret Telegraph Line, received at half-past three o’clock this afternoon, we learn that Martin Harris, accompanied by Elder E. Stevenson, of this city, arrived at Ogden, by the 3 o’clock train, he comes to this city to-morrow morning.”<sup>88</sup>

### “Arrival in This City, of Martin Harris, One of the Three Witnesses”

The train actually pulled into the Salt Lake Depot at 7:30 p.m. that same evening, Wednesday, 30 August 1870. The Stevenson and Harris party had not delayed their coming until the following day but had continued through to Salt Lake from Ogden. Newspaper

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84. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 87. See Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 367.

85. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 366; Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 86.

86. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 86.

87. *Ogden Junction*, 29 August 1870, as quoted in Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 86.

88. *Deseret Evening News*, 30 August 1870, 3. This announced delay in the time of their arrival in Salt Lake proved to be incorrect.



reporters were understandably anxious to announce the arrival of the only witness of the Book of Mormon to enter the Salt Lake Valley. The *Salt Lake Herald* responded the morning of the 31st: “Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the book of Mormon, arrived in Salt Lake City last night, accompanied by Elder Edward Stevenson.”<sup>89</sup> George Q. Cannon, editor of the *Deseret Evening News*, devoted a lengthy column of newsprint to his arrival. He related, “Considerable interest has been felt by our people in the arrival in this city, of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He arrived here at 7,30, p. m. yesterday, in the company of Elder Edward Stevenson.” Over the process of time “he has never failed to bear testimony to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He says it is not a matter of belief on his part, but of knowledge.”<sup>90</sup> Whether reading the telegrapher’s message or the newsprint of the day, residents in the Salt Lake area were abuzz with news of Martin’s arrival. But to assure that his arrival was officially reported, Stevenson led him to the Church Historian’s office where an authoritative record was made.<sup>91</sup>

Edward Stevenson and Martin Harris were invited to address the congregation gathered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Sunday morning, 4 September 1870. Stevenson spoke first, followed by Martin Harris, and Pres. George A. Smith concluded the meeting.<sup>92</sup> Martin’s remarks and personal testimony were carefully recorded

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89. From an interview that took place at the *Salt Lake Daily Herald* office on 2 September 1870. An article highlighting the interview appeared the following day and also included, “Mr. Harris is now 88 years of age, and is remarkably lively and energetic for his years. He holds firmly to the testimony he has borne for over forty years, that an angel appeared before him and the other witnesses, and showed them the plates upon which the characters of the Book of Mormon were inscribed. After being many years separated from the body of the Church, he has come to spend the evening of life among the believers in that Book to which he is so prominent a witness.” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, 3 September 1870, 3.

90. See *Deseret Evening News*, 31 August 1870, 2; cf. *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, 3 September 1870, 3.

91. *Journal History of the Church*, 31 August 1870, 1.

92. “Sabbath Meetings,” *Deseret Evening News*, 5 September 1870, 2.

by Edward Stevenson as he wrote, “Salt Lake City Sept 4, [1870] Sunday morning Testimony of Martin Harris Written By my hand from the Mouth of Martin Harris.” Martin declared:

in the year 1818=52 years ago I was Inspired of the Lord & Taught of the Spirit that I Should not Join any Church although I was anxiously Sought for By many of the Sectar-ians I Was Taught I could not Walk together unless agreed What can you not be agreed in[?] in the Trinity because I can not find it in any Bible find it for me & I am ready to Receive it 3 persons in one god—one personage I can not concede to for this is Anti christ for Where is the Father & Son I have more Proof to Prove 9 Persons in the Trinity than you have 3 How Do you Do so[?]-John Tells us of the 7 Spirits sent into all the World—if you have A Right to make A Personage of one Spirit I have of the 7—& the father and Son are 2 more Making 9—other Sects the Episcopalians also tried me they say 3 Persons in one god Without Body Parts or Passions I Told them Such A god I Would not be afraid of I could not Please or offend him [I] would not be afraid to fight A Duel with sutch A god—the Methodists teach two [illegible word] them exceed form one I told them to [retract] it or I Would sue them for Riley their Minister made them give it up to me saying god would hold me accountable for the use I made of it—all of the sects caled me “Bro” [Brother] because the Lord had enlightened me the Spirit told me to Join None of the Churches for none had Authority from the Lord for there Will not be A True Church on the Earth until the Words of Isaiah shall be fulfilled=When Interrogated & I told them if any church [be] the Church of Christ the Christians then claime me But join and lectuien [?] as much as any other The time has not come for you to take that name. at Antioch they were called Christians in Derision—No thanks for your name—So remained for there was No authority for the Spirit

told me that I might just as well Plunge myself into the Water as to have any one of the sects Baptise me So I Remained until the Church Was organized By Joseph Smith the Prophet Then I was baptised by the Hands of Oliver Cowdery By Joseph Smith’s command Being the first after Joseph & Oliver Cowdery & then the Spirit Bore Testimony that this was all right & I Rejoiced in the Established Church Previous to my being Baptised I became A Witness of the Plates of the Book of mormon in 1829 in March the People Rose up & united against the Work gathering testimony against the Plates & Said they had testimony enough & if I did not Put Joseph in Jail & his father For Deception, they Would me So I went from Waterloo 25 miles South East of Palmyra to Rogerses Suscotua [Seneca?] Co. N. Y. & to Harmony, Pensylvania 125 miles & found Joseph[.]<sup>93</sup> Rogers unknown to me had agreed to give my Wife 100 Dollars if it was not A Deception & had Whet his Nife [knife] to eat the [illegible word] of the Plates as the Lord had forbid Joseph exhibiting them openly.

Martin’s Wife had hefted them & felt them [the gold plates] under cover as had Martin & [this disconnected sentence on the fifth page abruptly ends his transcript of Martin’s words and any remaining pages of text are missing].<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

Following his tabernacle address, there were many opportunities for Martin to speak—types of opportunities that were never enjoyed by other witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Martin was

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93. We believe that Martin is essentially saying that he went 25 miles from Palmyra southeast to Waterloo, Seneca County, which is the correct distance and direction, and then from Waterloo to Harmony, Pennsylvania, which is close to 100 miles more or a total of 125 miles traveled overall.

94. Edward Stevenson Papers Collection, MS 4806, reel 9, box 9, fd. 7, 5pp, Church History Library. Martin was again in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Sunday, 9 October 1870, bearing testimony of the “divine authenticity” of the Book of Mormon following the remarks of Elder John Taylor. *Deseret News*, 12 October 1870, 419.

beset with numerous invitations to express his experiences from the earliest days of the Restoration. He accepted quite a number, but certainly not all since the long journey from Ohio and the fanfare surrounding his arrival had begun to take a heavy toll on his health. Stevenson perhaps said it best: “Considering his great age, much charity was necessary to be exercised in his behalf.”<sup>95</sup> It was his grandniece, Irinda Crandall McEwan,<sup>96</sup> who offered to help until his family from Smithfield came to take him to their home. She and her husband of three years, Joseph T. McEwan, a pressman for the *Salt Lake Herald*, had moved to Salt Lake City in 1870. The McEwans provided shelter, food, and kindness to Martin.

“While he was there, hundreds of people came to see him, including President Brigham Young, to talk over with him the details regarding his contact with the Book of Mormon story and of the appearance of the Angel to him.” Irinda McEwan recalled, “Anyone who heard Martin Harris describe the scenes and bear his testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon could not help but be deeply impressed with his sincerity and his absolute conviction of the truth of what he was saying.”<sup>97</sup>

Of those who called at the McEwan home, none was of greater significance to Martin than his estranged wife, Caroline, who

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95. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. III.,” 390.

96. Irinda Naomi McEwan (18 August 1851-12 January 1935), daughter of Spicer Wells Crandall and Sophia Kellogg. Her grandmother, Naomi Harris, was the sister of Martin Harris. See Theria McEwan Selman, “History of Irinda McEwan, 1928,” in authors’ possession.

97. Franklin S. Harris, “Minutes of Harris Family Reunion,” 3 August 1928, Geneva Resort, Utah County, Utah, USU Special Collections. Franklin S. Harris, president of Brigham Young University, records her words in his summary of a speech by Irinda McEwan at a Harris family reunion. See Selman, “History of Irinda McEwan.” On that same occasion, Mrs. Sariah Steele of Goshen, Utah, told of her experiences with her grandfather Martin “whom she knew when she was a little girl. She had sat on his lap many times and heard him bear fervent testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon record and of the part he played in connection with the testimony of the three witnesses. She said that anyone who had ever come in contact with him and had heard him bear his testimony was thoroughly impressed with his sincerity and with the truthfulness of the story which he told.” See also Franklin S. Harris Papers, MSS 340, box 2, fd. 4, Perry Collections.

came to see him.<sup>98</sup> It had been over eleven years since she had seen the father of her children. There was much to share and forgive. Unfortunately, a record of their conversation was not preserved. The same is true of other conversations that took place in the McEwan home.

We are grateful for the careful record of Martin’s days in Salt Lake City as found in the writings of Edward Stevenson. Stevenson often visited Martin in the McEwan home and frequently brought him to his own residence. There, much like on their journey to Salt Lake City, the two men spoke of the gospel. In one conversation, Martin said that “the Spirit of the Lord had made it manifest to him, not only for himself personally, but also that he should be baptized for his dead, for he had seen his father [Nathan Harris] seeking his aid. He saw his father at the foot of a ladder, striving to get up to him, and he went down to him taking him by the hand and helped him up.”<sup>99</sup> He reminded Stevenson of having been taught “a principle that was new to him—baptism for the dead, as taught and practiced by the ancient Saints, and especially taught by Paul the Apostle in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians: ‘Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?’”<sup>100</sup> He then expressed a desire to be baptized for the remission of sins and baptized by proxy for his father.

A joyous Stevenson hurried to inform Latter-day Saint leaders of Martin’s intention. Each responded with enthusiasm. On the day of his baptism, Saturday, 17 September 1870, Elders George A. Smith (president of the quorum), John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, and Joseph F. Smith of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and also John T. D. McAllister gathered near the baptismal font at the Endowment House to witness the event. Naomi Harris Bent, a sister of Martin, was also in attendance. Edward Stevenson

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98. See Sumsion, “Notes of the Genealogy of Martin Harris,” as cited in Gunnell, “Martin Harris—Witness,” 122.

99. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 367.

100. Stevenson, “One of the Three Witnesses,” 87.

baptized Martin Harris. John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, and Orson Pratt confirmed him a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Orson Pratt being voice.<sup>101</sup> Edward Stevenson later observed, “The occasion was one which interested all present, and reminded us of Christ’s parable of the lost sheep.”<sup>102</sup> Martin then entered the font and was baptized for his deceased father, Nathan Harris, and his uncle, Solomon Harris.<sup>103</sup> His sister, Naomi Harris Duel Kellogg Bent,<sup>104</sup> was baptized by proxy for two of her own sisters, Sophia and Lydia Harris, and also for Harriet Fox Kellogg, who was the first wife of Naomi’s deceased husband Ezekiel Kellogg.<sup>105</sup> She and Martin were then confirmed by the same brethren, with Joseph F. Smith being voice.<sup>106</sup> Martin was again in the Endowment House on 21 October 1870 for the purpose of obtaining his own endowment.<sup>107</sup>

101. Journal History of the Church, 17 September 1870, 1.

102. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 368.

103. Salt Lake Temple and Endowment Records, Baptisms, Records for the Dead, 12 September 1870, p. 184, microfilm #1149519, Special Collections, Family History Library, Salt Lake City; Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 368.

104. *Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude* (Salt Lake City, UT: International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1998), 1:237.

105. Salt Lake Temple and Endowment House Records, Baptisms, Records of the Dead, 12 September 1870, p. 184; Journal History of the Church, 17 September 1870, microfilm #1149519, Special Collections, Family History Library, Salt Lake City; Elder Stevenson wrote of Martin’s initial failure to understand the doctrine of vicarious work for the dead: “I wish to add that Brother Harris having been away from the Church so many years did not understand more than the first principles taught in the infantile days of the Church, which accounts for his not being posted in the doctrine of the Gospel being preached to the spirits who are departed, which was afterwards taught by Joseph Smith the Prophet.” Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. II.,” 367.

106. Members of the Harris family were imbued with a desire to see to the ordinance work for their kindred dead. On 12 October 1870, Martin Harris Jr., son of Martin Sr. and Caroline, was baptized for his half-brother George B. Harris, the son of Martin Sr. and Lucy Harris, and also his great-grandfather Samuel Kimball (1757-1780), grandfather of his mother Caroline; see Salt Lake Temple and Endowment House Records, Baptisms, Records for the Dead, 12 October 1870, p. 234, microfilm #1149519.

107. Salt Lake Temple and Endowment House Record, Endowment Records Living, 31 October 1868-11 November 1872, Book G, 21 October 1870, p. 208.

This was a time of rejoicing for many to see a witness of the Book of Mormon participate in sacred covenants. Martin’s response to such proceedings was, “Just see how the Book of Mormon is spreading.”<sup>108</sup> A few days later, he made a similar statement in the company of Edward Stevenson, George A. Smith, and John Henry Smith on the way to the warm springs just north of Salt Lake City. As the carriage in which they were riding reached a summit, curtains were raised so that the passengers could have a panoramic view of the city below. To Martin, who could see the Tabernacle and the Salt Lake Temple under construction, as well as the expansive city, the scene was “wonderful.” He exclaimed, “Who would have thought that the Book of Mormon would have done all this?”<sup>109</sup> Martin was now back. Brigham Young’s prophecy, “Rest assured, he will be here in time,”<sup>110</sup> had been fulfilled. Martin had become the only one of the Three Witnesses to personally observe the growth of the Church in the West. For him, this was a day of great rejoicing.

After spending over a month and a half in Salt Lake City, Martin accepted the invitation of his son Martin Jr. to live with him in Smithfield, Cache County. From 1870 to 1874 Martin lived with his son’s family in Smithfield. In October 1874 Martin moved with them to Clarkston, Cache County. Just ten months after moving to Clarkston, in early July 1875, Martin was stricken with paralysis.<sup>111</sup> William Harrison Homer Sr. and William’s mother, Eliza Williamson Homer, were the only persons present with Martin at the moment of his passing. Martin Jr. and wife Nancy had gone to milk the cows and do the evening chores. William affirmed:

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108. It is not certain whether this statement was made by Martin at his own baptism or at another baptismal service. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. III.,” 390.

109. Stevenson, “The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. No. III.,” 390; see *Journal History of the Church*, 1 June 1877, 1-2.

110. W. H. Homer, “Passing of Martin Harris,” 471.

111. See Homer Jr., “Publish It upon the Mountains,” 525; for details of his paralysis and final illness, see Letter of Martin Harris Jr. to George A. Smith, 10 July 1875, Clarkston, Utah, George A. Smith Papers, MS 1322, Church History Library.

I stood by the bedside holding the patient's right hand and my mother at the foot of the bed. Martin Harris had been unconscious for a number of days. When we first entered the room the old gentleman appeared to be sleeping. He soon woke up and asked for a drink of water. I put my arm under the old gentleman, raised him, and my mother held the glass to his lips. He drank freely, then he looked up at me and recognized me. He had been unconscious several days. He said, "I know you. You are my friend." He said, "Yes, I did see the plates on which the Book of Mormon was written; I did see the angel; I did hear the voice of God; and I do know that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, holding the keys of the Holy Priesthood." This was the end. Martin Harris, divinely-chosen witness of the work of God, relaxed, gave up my hand. He lay back on his pillow and just as the sun went down behind the Clarkston mountains, the soul of Martin Harris passed on.<sup>112</sup>

At about a quarter to eight in the evening of 10 July 1875, Martin died in his ninety-third year.<sup>113</sup>

His funeral was held on 12 July 1875 at the Clarkston meeting-house. "We had a good attendance and a large turn out for a small town like Clarkston," wrote Martin Jr. "Every respect that could be paid to him was manifested by the people."<sup>114</sup> There was only one problem—"they were going to put a Book of Mormon in [Martin's] hand, and they forgot the book." While the mourners waited, Martin Jr. went to fetch the book. Upon returning, he placed the Book of Mormon in Martin's right hand and a copy of the Doctrine and Covenants in his left. Martin was buried in the Clarkston Cemetery

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112. William Harrison Homer [Sr.], "The Passing of Martin Harris," *Improvement Era*, May 1926, 472. Compare also William Harrison Homer Sr., "The Last Testimony of Martin Harris," a notarized statement of this account (with slight variations), signed by William Harrison Homer Sr., 9 April 1927, MSS 236, p. 5, Perry Collections.

113. Letter of Martin Harris Jr. to George A. Smith, 10 July 1875.

114. Martin Harris Jr., "Funeral," *Deseret Evening News*, 17 July 1875, p. 3, col. 4.



north of town. A simple wooden marker inscribed with the words “One of the Three Witnesses of the book of Mormon” was placed above his grave.<sup>115</sup>

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115. “Presiding Bishopric,” Clarkston Cemetery Project File, 1940–1950, CR 4117; Letter of Martin Harris Jr. to George A. Smith, 13 July 1875, Clarkston, Utah, George A. Smith Papers, MS 1322, Church History Library.