In the Press: Early Newspaper Reports on the Initial Publication of the Book of Mormon

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Cannon’s examination of news articles and stories concerning the publication of the Book of Mormon helps provide a greater understanding of its initial reception. Most news coverage first appeared in Palmyra and the surrounding areas, but articles on the Book of Mormon appeared as far west as Missouri and Arkansas and from Maine to Georgia. Even with this seemingly wide range of coverage, the overall quantity of news articles on the topic reveals how few people knew about the book and the early LDS Church as a whole. Although the majority of the news articles concerning the Book of Mormon were negative, some assumed a neutral stance and a relatively small number were positive about the book and its publication.
In the Press:

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Donald Q. Cannon
As a long-time teacher and student of the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I have been fascinated by the question of how people reacted to the first publication of the Book of Mormon. I have wondered how they regarded this unusual book. One way to answer this question is to examine the news stories concerning its publication. As we consider this matter, several questions come to mind. How many news articles were there? How widespread was the press coverage? Were the stories positive or negative?

This interest in the reaction to the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon has motivated me to collect news articles and to analyze them. Initially, this quest took me personally to libraries and historical societies in the eastern United States. As time passed, Internet sources made a broader search more feasible and much more efficient. An example of the types of material now available online is “Uncle Dale’s Old Mormon News Articles,” prepared by Dale R. Broadhurst.

Since the 1980s I have collected news stories about the Book of Mormon from newspapers in states located primarily east of the Mississippi River. Most of the articles were published between 1830 and 1832, soon after the Book of Mormon first appeared in print. There are a few which came out earlier and later.

As one would suppose, most news coverage originated in Palmyra or other neighboring cities. Although local newspapers paid a great deal of attention to the Book of Mormon, papers in other locations contained far fewer articles.

In order to understand what these news articles discussed, let us first examine the New York newspapers. The earliest article about the Book of Mormon...
Mormon appeared on June 26, 1829, in the *Wayne Sentinel* of Palmyra, New York. The editor of the *Wayne Sentinel* was Egbert B. Grandin, who would later publish the Book of Mormon. This article covered the story of local gossip concerning the so-called “Golden Bible” and even included a sample title page from the forthcoming Book of Mormon. Quoting from the article, “Just about in this particular region, for some time past, much speculation has existed, concerning a pretended discovery, through superhuman means, of an ancient record, of a religious and divine nature and origin, written in ancient characters, impossible to be interpreted [sic] by any to whom the special gift has not been imparted by inspiration. It is generally known and spoken of as the ‘Golden Bible.’”

Later that summer another Palmyra newspaper, the *Palmyra Freeman*, ran an article which included a brief history of the plates and described the forthcoming publication as “the greatest piece of superstition that has ever come within our knowledge.” The author of this article has been identified as J. A. Hadley, publisher of the *Palmyra Freeman*.

In 1829, *The Reflector*, another Palmyra paper, had published some items concerning the Book of Mormon. Early in 1830, *The Reflector* began publishing excerpts from the yet unpublished book. The first installment came from “The First Book of Nephi,” beginning with the phrase, “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents.” The editor of *The Reflector*, Abner Cole, used the name Obadiah Dogberry for his newspaper articles. On weekends, Cole was able to use the press where the Book of Mormon was being published. This gave him the opportunity to obtain excerpts from the forthcoming book, which he printed without permission.

The E. B. Grandin building housed the press where early newspaper reports on the Book of Mormon—and the book itself—were printed. The first newspaper article about the Book of Mormon appeared in the *Wayne Sentinel* on June 26, 1829. All newspaper images in this article courtesy Matthew P. Roper.
first excerpt included a statement from Cole which encouraged readers to withhold judgment concerning the book’s authenticity until the book itself came off the press and they had the opportunity to read it for themselves. As Cole continued to publish excerpts from the forthcoming book, Joseph Smith became alarmed and threatened Cole with a lawsuit for copyright violation. This action caused Cole to refrain from publishing more excerpts, but from this point on he ran essentially negative articles about the Book of Mormon.

The first New York City paper to carry an article on the Book of Mormon was the New York Telescope. On February 20, 1830, it printed a letter from C. C. Blatchly under the title “Caution Against the Golden Bible.” Blatchly, who had secured a few pages of the book from the publisher, criticized the work, warning people not to buy it.

In the meantime, the Wayne Sentinel began advertising the sale of the Book of Mormon. The first ad appeared on March 19, 1830, and others followed through most of April to May 7, 1830. The copies of the Book of Mormon were first made available to the public at the Egbert B. Grandin Bookstore, on March 26, 1830. He had initially refused to publish the book because he thought it to be a religious imposture and an attempt to defraud Martin Harris. Grandin’s associates convinced him that it was purely a business proposition and that he was not responsible for any action of the author. His concern for the financial feasibility of the volume was resolved when Martin Harris signed a mortgage agreement with Grandin to pay the agreed $3,000 through the sale of the necessary acres of farm land within an eighteen-month period if he should fail to pay the regulated amount through other means. On March 26, 1830, bound copies of the Book of Mormon had been readied for the readership.

Soon after the first copies came off the press, on April 2, 1830, the first full-scale newspaper article about the Book of Mormon appeared in the
The “Book of Mormon” has been placed in our hands. A viler imposition was never practised. It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy and credulity, shocking to the Christian and moralist. The “author and proprietor” is one “Joseph Smith, jr.” — a fellow who, by some hocus pocus, acquired such an influence over a wealthy farmer of Wayne county, that the latter mortgaged his farm for $3000, which he paid for printing and binding 5000 copies of the blasphemous work. The volume consists of about 600 pages, and is divided into the books of Nephi, of Jacob, of Mosiah, of Alma, of Mormon, of Ether, and of Helaman. — “Copyright secured!” The style of the work may be conjectured from the “preface” and “testimonials” which we subjoin.

The article also included the preface, the testimony of the Three Witnesses, and the testimony of the Eight Witnesses.

In early America it was common practice for newspapers to reprint articles from other papers. The same articles might appear in a dozen newspapers. In this manner many of the original pieces about the Book of Mormon found their way into several papers around the country. For example, the article referred to above was reprinted in the following New York newspapers: Yates Republican, Fredonia Censor, Geneva Gazette, Mercantile Advertiser, and the Rochester Republican. It also was reprinted in three Ohio newspapers: Cincinnati Advertiser, Ohio Phoenix, and the Lorain Gazette. This process of reprinting articles, of course, led to wider dissemination of information, well beyond the confines of New York. We shall defer detailed consideration of such items until after we have fully examined what took place in New York.

An article in the Gem of Literature and Science, published in Rochester, said of the Book of Mormon: “It partakes largely of Salem Witchcraft-ism, and Jemima Wilkinson-ism, and is in point of blasphemy and imposition, the very summit.”

In the fall of 1830 the stories continued in the New York press. The Countryman, published by J. A. Hadley in Lyons, New York, called the Book of Mormon “catch-penny.” At the end of the year, the Rochester Republican, which had run an ad for the book in March and had reprinted the April 2, 1830, article from the Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph, now adopted a more hostile stance, calling it “pretended revelation.” It should be noted that while many newspapers of this era reprinted articles from other sources, those articles did not necessarily reflect the views of the paper in which they were reprinted.

Another news article concerning the Book of Mormon adopted a more balanced stance, reflecting the connection of the editor with the new church. William W. Phelps, editor of the Ontario Phoenix did not join the church until June 1831, but he had been investigating the new faith at the time an
In this case he carefully avoided making any judgments about the Book of Mormon.15

The Reflector (Palmyra) published a series of articles concerning the Book of Mormon, beginning with the issue for January 6, 1831. This initial article printed a letter from someone styling themselves “Plain Truth” stating his or her intention of bringing to light the real facts of “this most clumsy of all impositions, known among us as Joe Smith’s ‘Gold Bible.’”16

During February, the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate published an article which claimed that the Book of Mormon was full of “blasphemous nonsense, silly stories, pretended prophecies, history, etc.”17 The fact that this article was published in Utica, New York, some considerable distance from Palmyra, demonstrates that the story of the Book of Mormon was spreading.

As a matter of fact, people in other states began paying attention to the new Mormon scripture. The Painesville Telegraph, published by Eber D. Howe in Ohio, reprinted articles from the New York newspapers, but its first full-scale, independent examination of the Book of Mormon came in February 1831. Inasmuch as this is a full-scale article, it seems appropriate to quote more fully from its contents. It begins:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed and done among the Mormonites, it seems good to me also (having had knowledge of many things from the beginning) to testify to my brethren of mankind, that they may know something certainly concerning these wonderful people.

“Wonderful people,” in this case is a sarcastic comment; the author, who has been identified as William W. Phelps began writing about the Book of Mormon in his newspaper before he joined the church.

The quotation above is from the November 16, 1830, issue of the Painesville Telegraph, which was published by Eber D. Howe. The article was reprinted in the Painsville Telegraph, published in Ohio, in February 1831. This article provides a full-scale examination of the Book of Mormon, and it seems appropriate to quote more fully from its contents. It begins:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed and done among the Mormonites, it seems good to me also (having had knowledge of many things from the beginning) to testify to my brethren of mankind, that they may know something certainly concerning these wonderful people.

“Wonderful people,” in this case is a sarcastic comment; the author, who has been identified as William W. Phelps, began writing about the Book of Mormon in his newspaper before he joined the church.
Matthew S. Clapp, is not praising the Mormonites (Mormons). Clapp knew Sidney Rigdon, and this article reports a discussion the two men had concerning Rigdon’s belief in the Book of Mormon. Sidney Rigdon told Clapp about the supernatural gifts the Mormon prophet possessed. Joseph Smith’s ability to receive revelation and to translate scriptures from ancient languages gave Rigdon a reason to believe.\textsuperscript{18}

In the same paper only a month later, Alexander Campbell\textsuperscript{19} wrote a very lengthy critique of the Book of Mormon and accused Joseph Smith of being a fraud. In the report, Campbell calls attention to errors in the book, especially in reference to the Bible. In this same article Campbell accused Joseph Smith of being present-minded and seeking to answer all the theological questions of the day. As he put it:

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his Book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call of the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government; and the rights of man. All these topics are repeatedly alluded to.\textsuperscript{20}

In a way, this criticism of Joseph Smith by Campbell was really a kind of backhanded compliment. The fact that this unschooled farm boy could answer all these questions is indeed worth noting.

Other Ohio newspapers besides the \textit{Painesville Telegraph} also featured items on the Book of Mormon. Among these papers were the \textit{Geauga Gazette}, the \textit{Cleveland Herald}, the \textit{Cleveland Advertiser}, and the \textit{Huron Reflector}. Most of these articles in Ohio newspapers featured reprints of articles from other newspapers, especially from New York. On April 11, 1831, an article in the \textit{Huron Reflector}, published in Norwalk, Ohio, called the Book of Mormon “a work fabricated by some jugglers and impostors,” and went on to describe church activity in that area.\textsuperscript{21}

One Cleveland newspaper article accused the Mor-
mons of trying to make money by creating and selling their “Golden Bible.” A news article published in Wooster, Ohio, called the Book of Mormon “a miserable production.”

As one would expect, most of the news articles concerning the Book of Mormon appeared in New York and Ohio, places where the most church members then resided. Nevertheless, newspapers in other places did carry some items on the Book of Mormon.

In New England, for example, the new book of scripture received a fair amount of attention. The Boston Free Press ran a series of advertisements for the Book of Mormon during the summer of 1830. These ads were prepared by Thomas B. Marsh. Generally the ads included the title page of the book and the address of a Boston bookstore where the book could be purchased. An article in the Christian Register (Boston) in March 1831 appears to have been the first newspaper article to pay serious attention to the Book of Mormon. In September 1831 the New-Hampshire Sentinel reported: “We had hoped, that ere this the believers in the Book of Mormon would have been entirely extinct.”

Not able to determine whether the Book of Mormon had been produced by “stupidity or wickedness,” the Christian Register reprinted an article from the Morning Courier which purported to give a complete and accurate history.

The Eastern Argus (Portland, Maine) printed an account of Mormon converts and their feelings. They told of one woman from Boston who “had satisfied herself that the Mormon bible was a revelation from God.” This report, unlike most news articles of this period, had a somewhat positive tone.

The Nashua Gazette and Hillsborough Advertiser (New Hampshire) reported the preaching of William E. McLellin, who cited Ezekiel 37 to substantiate the validity of the Book of Mormon. The article reported: “We thought this part of his subject too ludicrous to be refuted by any man in his right mind.”

Newspapers in Joseph Smith’s birthplace, Vermont, published several stories about the Book of Mormon. As early as May 1830, the Horn of the Green Mountains (Manchester, Vermont) ran an article which called the book “one of the vilest impositions.”

Most of the Vermont news stories appeared in 1831. On March 14, 1831 the American Whig
reprinted an article from the *Geauga Gazette* (Ohio) which called the Book of Mormon a “miserable production.”

The **Vermont Chronicle** (Woodstock) reported that the book came from golden plates which vanished as soon as Joseph Smith translated them.

The **Vermont Gazette** (Bennington) ran an article which described the “strange narratives” of the Book of Mormon.

The **Vermont Patriot and State Gazette** (Montpelier) said the Book of Mormon was “destitute of the beauties of sublimity.”

Later, the *Farmer’s Herald* (St. Johnsbury) claimed that the book “is a singular proof of the proneness of the human heart to idolatry.”

The Pennsylvania press contained one of the earliest articles on the Book of Mormon after its publication. This article declared that the testimonies of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon “smacks pretty strongly of what once would have been called blasphemy.”

Later that year the *Philadelphia Album* gave a balanced historical summary of the Book of Mormon, but suggested that it contained doctrines that are “revolting.”

Early in 1831 the *National Gazette and Literary Register* recommended that the Mormons “melt up the yellow plates . . . and sell them the first opportunity.” In August 1831, the *Republican Compiler* referred to the Book of Mormon as the “Golden Bible” and a supposed “revelation from Heaven.”

The author of an article in the *Sun* (Philadelphia) claimed to be personally acquainted with the history of the church and then referred to the Book of Mormon as a superstition.

One paper in Maryland wrote about “certain knaves, pretending to have found some holy writings.” This characterization of the writers and the product was fairly common when one considers the articles concerning the publication of the Book of Mormon.

In the nation’s capital, the *Daily National Intelligencer* ran an article about the “Golden Bible Imposition” and said the Mormon movement had no parallel in stupidity.

A Georgia newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate, ran several articles during the 1830s describing Mormonism. One article reported on the growth of the Mormon faith in the Canandaigua area of New York, stating: “I have had a good opportunity of witnessing much of the proceedings of those who believe in the book of Mormon. The book causes great excitement in these parts . . . and some believe and become meek and lowly in this region.” This article was a reprint from the *Boston Courier* and had a little more favorable tone than most articles in the press.

An article that appeared in a Bethany, Virginia, newspaper labeled the Book of Mormon a “romance.” A later article in the same publication spoke of “the delusions of Smith’s book of Mormon.”

Even out on the frontier in Arkansas, news articles about the Book of Mormon appeared in print. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* published in Little Rock called the Book of Mormon a “pretended revelation.”

In Missouri, which the Latter-day Saints called Zion, more news articles on the Book of Mormon appeared. The *Missouri Intelligencer*, published in Columbia, carried an article which contained a fascinating statement: “We hope the people hereafter will be satisfied with the bible God has given us, and the religion it reveals, without the addition of the ‘Book of Mormon.’” This statement is fascinating because it directly relates to a scriptural passage in the Book of Mormon itself. I refer, of course, to 2 Nephi 29:3, which reads, in part, “A Bible! A Bible!
We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.”

In a later issue, the same paper published an article which called the Book of Mormon “an absurd collection of dull, stupid and foolishly improbable stories, which no person, unless under the influence of powerfully excited feelings can mistake for truth and inspiration.” The article then goes on to prophesy about the future of the Book of Mormon. “With its authors, the Book of Mormon cannot survive this generation.” Subsequent events have certainly rendered their prophecy false.

In Michigan news articles concerning the Book of Mormon also appeared in print. One of them got into the theory about the origin of the Book of Mormon, which has come to be known as the Spaulding thesis. The article, which is a reprint from the *Wayne Sentinel* (Palmyra, New York), gives credit to Philastus Hurlbut for discovering the truth about the origin of the new book of scripture. Hurlbut, an apostate Mormon, was bent on exposing Mormonism. The materials he collected were popularized in the press in Ohio by Eber D. Howe and in his book *Mormonism Unvailed*. This theory, the Spaulding thesis or Spaulding Manuscript, has received a lot of attention over the years.

One of the most positive articles concerning the Book of Mormon appeared in Burlington, Iowa. This article appeared in 1841 and is consequently much later than most of the articles examined in this study. Since it is both one of the most affirmative pieces and also reflects the important influence of the Mormons across the Mississippi, I have chosen to include substantial excerpts here:

One of the greatest literary curiosities of the day is the much abused “Book of Mormon.” That a work of this kind should be planned, executed and given to the scrutiny of the world by an illiterate young man of twenty — that it should gain numerous and devoted partizans, here and in Europe and that it should agitate a whole State to such a degree that law, justice and humanity were set aside to make a war of extermination on the new sect, seems scarcely credible in the nineteenth century, and under this liberal Government; yet such is the fact.

The believers in the Book of Mormon now numbering well nigh 50,000 souls in America, to say nothing of numerous congregations in Great Britain. They style themselves Latter Day Saints, as it is a prominent point in their faith that the world is soon to experience a great and final change. They believe and insist upon believing, literally the Old and New Testament, but they also hold that there are various other inspired writings, which in due season will be

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Mr. Editor,—I have gotten some additional information respecting the Book of Mormon, which I send you for insertion in your paper, if you see fit. It is contained in an extract, which I have just taken from a letter, written from a town in the State of New York, where, as I had been previously told, this Jos. Smith has resided some years, and from which he set out, with an attendant, in pursuit of the gold plates, which he found, as they say, about one hundred and fifty miles from the place of starting. The letter is dated Oct. 18th, 1836, and the extract is as follows:

“You have probably heard of the Gold Bible taken from the earth by Joseph Smith, the money-digger. This he has translated from the Egyptian reformed language to English, by a pair of stone tablets, provided by an angel, and a dark hat before his eyes. The books have been printed, and J. S. and Mr. N—s are engaged in peddling the same. The society are increasing. Eighteen have been baptized in a day. H. P. and wife have been baptized, & are very strong in the faith. The girls are under conviction. The leaders pretend to cast out devils and work miracles, heal the sick, &c. We have seen none of their miracles here, except N. N. I heard say in meeting, that he had had the devil cast out.”

I just add, that I have been in contact with these peddlers in different parts of this county, having my information from them only through most credible second hand informers, who state that they said, they knew the book, and the manner in which it is said to have been found, was true; or that they did not believe it, but knew it. They are said to be respectable men. The wife of one of them, though immersed formerly by an Elder in this county, has been immersed or baptized again into this new system. I only state facts, and leave the judicious and pious to their own reflections.

CLERICUS.

P. S. There was a little error in the former piece. You mistook my L for an S in the word Lamanites.
brought to light — Some of these, (the Book of
Mormon for example) are even now appear-
ing, after having been lost for ages. They think
that in the present generation will be witnessed
the final gathering together of the true fol-
lowers of Christ into one fold of peace and
purity — in other words, that the Millennium
is near. Setting aside the near approach of the
Millennium and the Book of Mormon, they
resemble in faith and discipline the Methodists,
and their meetings are marked by the fer-
vvid simplicity that characterizes that body of
christians. It is believing the Book of Mormon
inspired that the chief difference consists; but
it must be admitted that this is an important
distinction. . . .

The Book of Mormon purports to be a his-
tory of a portion of the children of Israel, who
found their way to this continent after the first
destruction of Jerusalem. It is continued from
generation [to generation] by a succession of
prophets, and give in different books an account
of the wars and alliances of the Lost Nation.
The Golden Book is an abridgment by Mormon,
the last of the prophets, of all the works of his
predecessors.
The style is a close imitation of the scriptural,
and is remarkably free from any allusions that
might betray a knowledge of the present practi-
cal or social state of the world. The writer lives
in the whole strength of his imagination in the
age he portrays. It is difficult to imagine a more
difficult literary task than to write what may
be termed a continuation of the Scriptures, that
should not only [avoid] all collision with the au-
thentic and sacred work, but even fill up many
chasms that now seem to exist, and thus receive
and lend confirmation in almost every body. . . .

A copy of the characters on some of the
golden leaves, was transmitted to learned gen-
tlemen of this city, who of course [were] unable
to decypher them, but thought they bore resem-
bance to the ancient Egyptian characters.
If on comparison it appears that these char-
acters are similar to those recently discovered
on those ruins in Central America, which have
attracted so much attention lately, and which
are decidedly of Egyptian architecture, it will
make a very strong point for Smith. It will tend
to prove that the plates are genuine, even if it
does not establish the truth of his inspiration, or
the fidelity of his transaction. . . .

—Josephine

In Illinois, where the Church built the flourish-
ing city of Nauvoo, the press also contained an arti-
cle on the Book of Mormon. The Pioneer, published
in Rock Spring, carried an article entitled "Mor-
monism." Some of its statements regarding the Book
of Mormon are of particular interest. At one point
in this article the author states the basic issue that
each reader of the Book of Mormon focus "on the
truth or falsity of Smith’s pretended inspiration, and
of the character of this 'Book of Mormon,' rests the
whole scheme. If the Book in general is a fable —
with the extravagant stories, then Joe Smith Junior,
is a base imposer — a worthless fellow, and his fol-
lowers are most wretchedly deceived and deluded."52

Having examined so many news articles con-
cerning the Book of Mormon published in the
1830s, the obvious question is what does it all
mean? What conclusions can or should one draw
from these articles?

First and foremost, it is obvious that the Book
of Mormon came forth in obscurity. By that I mean
that very few people knew about the book or the
early LDS Church. A vast majority of these news
articles were published in the vicinity of Palmyra,
New York, where the book was first published
on March 26, 1830. Some of these articles were
reprinted in other newspapers in other locations,
but the chance of learning about the Book of Mor-
mon in the 1830s through the press was extremely
unlikely.

To further emphasize this point, consider
the fact that most of America’s newspapers in the
1830s made no mention at all of the new book of
scripture. As evidence of this fact allow me to pre-
sent in a footnote, the findings of my own personal
research in libraries in the eastern United States.53

Further evidence of the obscurity of the initial
publication of the Book of Mormon is the reported
difficulty in selling copies of the book. Terryl Giv-
en's in his masterful book By the Hand of Mormon
describes the frustration of Joseph Knight when he
reported “the books will not sell for no Body wants
them."54

The vast majority of the news articles concern-
ing the Book of Mormon were negative, i.e., critical
of Joseph Smith’s account of the translation and
publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. Most news articles displayed a heavy load of skepticism about this new book of scripture. Most of these criticisms charged Joseph Smith with fraud, specifically outright fabrication of the text, or plagiarism of a similar work such as the Spaulding Manuscript.

More sophisticated criticism which called attention to Joseph Smith’s literary genius and natural religious insight would have to wait for a future generation.55

Some of the news articles about the Book of Mormon adopted a more neutral stance. Only a very few came close to being positive or affirmative. In my estimation the most affirming piece was the article signed by Josephine, which appeared in the New Yorker and which was reprinted by several other newspapers.56

Those newspaper readers who did learn something about the Book of Mormon faced a choice: either accept or reject the explanation presented by Joseph Smith. As Louis Midgley has convincingly argued, the Book of Mormon is the great divider. It becomes either a stumbling block or a source of faith.57

Finally, let me offer one other conclusion concerning those faithful followers of Joseph Smith who did have a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Considering that the book was hardly noticed, and that those who did pay attention to it generally condemned it as a hoax, one is compelled to a sense of admiration for the steadfast efforts of the early missionaries to proclaim the true message of the Book of Mormon. Theirs was most certainly an uphill battle—a struggle against nearly overwhelming odds. But struggle they did, and the Book of Mormon has now been accepted by over twelve million people all around the world.58

Joseph Knight, one of Joseph Smith’s earliest supporters, reported that he had great difficulty selling copies of the Book of Mormon. © IRI.
ENDNOTES

In the Press: Early Newspaper Reports on the Initial Publication of the Book of Mormon

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2. Wayne Sentinel, June 26, 1829. The printed copy of the page of the Book of Mormon which followed was, with minor punctuation changes, the same as the copy entered by R. R. Lansing, clerk of the Northern District Court of New York as part of the copyright application on June 11, 1829. In order to help the reader, I will use a code to indicate if the article came from library research (L) or the internet (I). This article is identifiable as (L).

3. Palmyra Freeman, August 11, 1829 (L). It should be noted that I have relied heavily upon the excellent work done by Walter A. Norton in his dissertation entitled “Comparative Images: Mormonism and Contemporary Religions as Seen by Village Newspapermen in Western New York and Northeastern Ohio, 1820–1833” (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1991).


5. The Reflector, January 2, 1830 (L).


7. New York Telescope, February 20, 1830 (I). The Telescope printed more negative articles after the publication of the Book of Mormon (see April 17, 1830; December 11, 1830; February 19, 1831). Other New York City papers took longer to react to the Book of Mormon. On March 31, 1830, the Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer had printed a short notice announcing the publication of the Book of Mormon, but the notice remained neutral and informative. Perhaps not until August 31, 1831, did another New York City paper take a definitive stance on the merits of the book when the Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer claimed that the book was authored by Sidney Rigdon.

8. Wayne Sentinel, March 19, 1830; March 26, 1830; April 2, 1830; April 9, 1830; April 16, 1830; May 7, 1830 (L).


10. Rochester Daily Advertiser and Telegraph, April 2, 1830 (L).


12. The Gem of Literature and Science, May 15, 1830 (I). Rochester, of course, was only about 16 miles from Palmyra.

13. Countryman, September 7, 1830 (I).


15. Ontario Phoenix, December 29, 1830 (I). Phelps had obtained a copy of the Book of Mormon soon after the Church was organized. He felt it was still too risky for him to make a statement affirming the truth of the Book of Mormon. For more on Phelps, see Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, A Book of Mormons (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 204–9.

16. The Reflector, January 6, 1831 (I).


20. Painesville Telegraph, March 15, 1831 (I). Campbell’s report was so long that it had to be printed in two issues of the Telegraph. The first half was printed a week earlier in the March 8 issue.


22. Cleveland Herald, November 25, 1830 (I). Other Ohio papers which reprinted this article included the Ashitabula Journal (December 4, 1830) and the Republican Advocate (December 4, 1830).

23. Republican Advocate, February 5, 1831 (I).

24. See, for example, Boston Free Press, July 16, 1830 (I).

25. Christian Register, March 26, 1831 (I).


27. Christian Register, September 24, 1831 (I).


29. Nashua Gazette and Hillsborough Advertiser, October 21, 1831 (I).


32. Vermont Chronicle, June 24, 1831 (I).

33. Vermont Gazette, September 13, 1831 (I).

34. Vermont Patriot and State Gazette, September 19, 1831 (I).

35. Farmer’s Herald, October 26, 1831 (I).


37. Philadelphia Alman, December 18, 1830 (I).

38. National Gazette and Literary Register, April 27, 1831 (I).

39. Republican Compiler, August 2, 1831 (I).

40. Sun, August 18, 1831 (I).

41. Nile’s Weekly Register (Baltimore, MD), July 16, 1831 (I).

42. Daily National Intelligencer, July 6, 1831 (I).

43. Cherokee Phoenix and Indians’ Advocate, January 21, 1832 (I).

44. The Millennial Harbinger, February 7, 1831 (I).

45. The Millennial Harbinger, November 7, 1831 (I).

46. The Arkansas Gazette, October 24, 1832 (I).

47. Missouri Intelligencer and Boon’s Lick Advertiser, June 2, 1832.

48. Missouri Intelligencer and Boon’s Lick Advertiser, April 13, 1833.

49. Michigan Sentinel (Monroe, MI), January 25, 1834 (I).


51. Iowa Territorial Gazette, February 3, 1841 (I). This is a reprint from the original article in The New Yorker under the date December 12, 1840. This paper was edited by Horace Greeley. Josephine, the author of the article, has been identified as the daughter of Gen. Charles W. Sanford (1796–1878). Charles Sanford was a New York lawyer, commander of the First Division of the Third New York Militia Regiment, and served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War.

52. The Pioneer, March 1835 (I).

53. The libraries I visited and newspapers consulted include: (I) The Library of Congress. Twelve newspapers in that area were consulted. None of the papers which I examined contained any reference to the Book of Mormon. I consulted mainly those in the Washington DC region 1830–1831 during my research. The papers I examined include:
Colombian Gazette; The American Argus; American Spectator; The Busy Body; Washington Expositor; The Globe; Daily National Journal; National Journal; Washington News; United Telegraph. None of these papers had anything on the Book of Mormon. (2) The Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia. The two newspapers for that area were: The Philadelphia Price Current; Mechanics Free Press. None had any information on the Book of Mormon. (3) The University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill. These papers were consulted: New Orleans Bee; The Texas Gazette; The Charleston Courier; The Raleigh Register; Hillsborough Recorder; Carolina Observer. None had anything on the Book of Mormon. (4) New York Public Library included: New York American: For the Country; New York Post; Morning Courier and Enquirer. None of these had information concerning the Book of Mormon. Finally (5), in my research at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, I found some reference to the Book of Mormon. However, the only thing I discovered was a series of advertisements for the Book of Mormon placed in the Boston Free Press by Thomas B. Marsh. He ran six advertisements during the summer of 1830 in that paper. The purpose of describing my library research over a period of several years is to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon came forth in obscurity—with very little notice.


55. For a discussion of these and other critiques of the Book of Mormon, see Givens, By the Hand of Mormon, 155–84.

56. See the information in footnote 51. A citation from the article is on pages 11 and 12.