

**Church of Christ Organizational Meeting of April 6, 1830
Held in Manchester, Ontario County, New York**

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The draft history and manuscript history of Joseph Smith (Book A-1) was composed in 1839 by Church scribe James Mulholland. This history mentions that believers met together on Tuesday, April 6, 1830, at the house of Mr. Whitmer (Peter Whitmer Sr.). The Whitmers lived in township of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, about twenty-five miles from Manchester. What occurred on April 6 was that Joseph Smith ordained Oliver Cowdery an elder of the Church and Cowdery ordained Smith an elder. Baptisms were performed for Joseph Smith Sr., Lucy Mack Smith, Martin Harris, and a [blank space] Rockwell, which would have been Sarah Rockwell. The location of Fayette, the Whitmer home, is considered to be in error since the baptisms took place in Crooked Brook near the Smith home in the township of Manchester.

It should be no surprise that there may be mistakes made when compiling the history. For example, the dates of the first two Church conferences are incorrect. The Manuscript History has “On the first day of June” (A-1:41). This should be June 9. For the second conference the history says “As a conference meeting had been appointed for the first day of September” (A-1:54). The conference commenced on September 26, a twenty-five day difference.

Revelations were either listed or copied into the history citing the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (D&C). This book consolidated five revelations into one with the day of the month omitted. The revelation received regarding performing the two ordinations contained no location in the 1835 D&C (section 46), which is now LDS section 21. The Manuscript History when the revelation was copied included the addition of Fayette, Seneca County. Another revelation which previously was listed as given in Fayette was said to be received in Manchester. Though this portion of the history does not indicate the role of Joseph Smith in its production it does follow the first printed location of Fayette that was mentioned in a May 1834 meeting.¹

Book A-1 was published starting in March 1842 as the “History of Joseph Smith” in the *Times and Seasons*, a newspaper printed in Nauvoo, Illinois. Over time the Fayette branch of the Church at the Peter Whitmer home took on a more important part. The first three conferences were held at the Whitmer home. The history is the source of the listing of baptisms performed on April 11 and 18 at the township of Fayette. No source is given on who provided the names of those baptized on these two dates. The Whitmer family and friends had about thirteen baptisms performed in April. On April 11 Oliver Cowdery delivered the first discourse of the newly founded Church as it’s “first preacher” (LDS D&C 21:12).

Joseph Knight Sr. who arrived with Joseph Smith at his father’s home in Manchester, was present at the meeting where the organization took place and wrote his account prior to his death in 1847. Knight cites two revelations given in Manchester, page 174 and page 177 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants what is now sections 19 and 21. He was present at the baptism of Joseph Smith Sr. and Martin Harris. The following is an excerpt of Knight’s account:

Now in the Spring of 1830 I went with my Team and took Joseph out to Manchester to his Fathers when we was on our way he told me that there must be a Church formed But

¹ “Communicated,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834):160, Kirtland, Ohio.

Did not tell when. . . . we went home to his Fathers and Martin with us Martin Stayed at his Fathers and Slept in a bed on the flore [floor] with me . . . in the after part of the Day Joseph and oliver Received a Commandment which is in Book of Covenants Page. 174 I stay[e]d a few Days wa[i]ting for Some Books to Be Bound. Joseph Said there must Be a Church Biltup [Built up] I had Be[e]n there Several Days old Mr Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod [forward] to Be Babtise [Baptized] for the first they found a place in a Lot a Small Stream ran thro and they ware Babtized in the Evening . . . there was one thing I will mention that evening that old Brother Smith and Martin Harris was Babtised Joseph was fild [filled] with the Spirrit to a grate [great] Degree to See his Father and Mr Harris that he had Bin [Been] with So much he Bu[r]st out with greaf [grief] and Joy and Seamed [Seemed] as tho the world Could not hold him he went out into the Lot and appear[e]d to want to git [get] out of Site [Sight] of every Body and would Sob and Crie [Cry] and Seamed [Seemed] to Be So full that he Could not Live oliver and I went after him and Came to him and after a while he Came in But he was the most wrot [wrought] upon that I ever Saw any man But his Joy Seemed to Be full I think he Saw the grate [great] work he had Begun and was Desirus [Desirous] to Carry it out. on the Sixth Day of April 1830 Begun the Church with Six members and received the following Revelation Book of Covenants Page 177 they all kneel[e]d down and prayed and Joseph gave them instructions how to B[u]ild up the Church and ex[h]orted them to Be faithfull in all things for this is the work of God²

The correct location of Church organization was the meeting held in the Joseph Smith Sr./Hyrum Smith home (not owned by the family) in Manchester. Individuals who resided in Manchester, and who did not associate with the Church, and who witnessed the baptisms performed would not have traveled to Fayette a fifty mile round trip to attend a baptismal rite. The reason is that the four baptisms were performed near the Smith home in what was locally known as Crooked Brook or Hathaway Creek.

A history of Ontario County describes the stream in terms congruent with the accounts of those who claimed to be present: "Crooked brook, of Mormon fame, runs through the northwest part of the town[ship of Manchester], and it was in the waters of this stream that the Mormons baptized their early saints. Dr. [John] Stafford, an old resident of the village of Manchester, was present at the first baptism."³ John Stafford, oldest son of William, "knew the Smith family well, and was present at the first baptism, when old Granny Smith and Sally Rockwell" were baptized.⁴ The Stafford and Rockwell families were residents of the township of Manchester and lived within a mile of the Smith home.⁵

² Joseph Knight Reminiscences, circa 1835-47, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City; first published in Dean C. Jessee, ed., "Joseph Knight's Recollection of Early Mormon History," *Brigham Young University Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976):36-37.

³ John H. Pratt, in Charles F. Milliken's *A History of Ontario County, New York, and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 1:418.

⁴ *Shortsville Enterprise*, March 18, 1904.

⁵ 1830 U.S. Census, Manchester, Ontario County, New York, 169-70.



Crooked Brook on Smith Farm, Manchester, New York. (Photograph by George E. Anderson, August 1907. Published in *Birth of Mormonism in Picture* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School, ca. 1909].)

In the early years of the Church only the date of organization was given in licenses for those holding offices. At the conference held in Fayette on June 9, 1830 licenses were written out by Oliver Cowdery. Each of the three extant licenses contains no location for the April 6 meeting but they do include Fayette and June 9 date for each individual so ordained.

During preparation for publishing Joseph Smith's revelations locations were given where each document was received and systematically included. We find in the first Church periodical *The Evening and the Morning Star* the earliest brief history dealing with the month of April.

Soon after the book of Mormon came forth, containing the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church was organized on the sixth of April, in Manchester; soon after, a branch was established in Fayette, and the June following, another in Colesville, New York.⁶

The following is a small sample of publications that mention Manchester as the location for revelations on April 6, 1830 and/or the Church's organizational site. Each of the below individuals attended the meeting. The revelations were published in A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of Christ (in press 1833).

Book of Commandments, chapter 17 (1833), A Revelation to Oliver, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Oliver Cowdery]

Book of Commandments, chapter 18 (1833), A Revelation to Hyrum, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Hyrum Smith]

Book of Commandments, chapter 19 (1833), A Revelation to Samuel, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Samuel H. Smith]

Book of Commandments, chapter 20 (1833), A Revelation to Joseph, the father of Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Joseph Smith Sr.]

Book of Commandments, chapter 21 (1833), A Revelation to Joseph (K.) given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Joseph Knight Sr.]

Book of Commandments, chapter 22 (1833), A Revelation to Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830." [Joseph Smith Jr.] The book of Commandments and Revelations manuscript, the source of chapter 22, recorded Fayette when it was copied by John Whitmer. This was corrected in the 1833 Book of Commandments.

Oliver Cowdery assisted William W. Phelps in preparing the Book of Commandments for publication in Independence, Missouri (LDS D&C 55:4 and 57:13). The Church location was clearly reported at this time. When the *Evening and the Morning Star* was reissued in Kirtland, Ohio, the location of the Church's organization was retained:

"Prospects of the Church," *Evening and Morning Star* 1(March 1833):151, Kirtland reprint, May 1836.

"Rise of Progress of the Church of Christ," *Ibid.*, 1 (April 1833):167, Kirtland reprint, June 1836.

⁶ "Rise and Progress of the Church of Christ," *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (April 1833):[84], Independence, Missouri. In the article "Prospects of the Church," *Ibid.*, 1(March 1833):[76], it was stated "It will be three years the sixth of April next, since the church of Christ was organized in Manchester, New York, with six members."

The idea of the Fayette April 6 meeting presented in 1834 was continued when the Manuscript History was being worked on in 1839. The draft history written by James Mulholland with its crossed outs and inserts shows how it was not an easy process to write a history that would express not only what happened in the past but also the current position of the Church. While the April 1830 portion of the “History of Joseph Smith,” printed in the *Times and Seasons* in October 1842, has the Fayette location, it did not alleviate publications before and after that date from presenting where in fact Joseph Smith organized the Church and held its first meeting. The membership of the United Firm was still concealed when Willard Richards copied the other revelations in 1843.

1840

Orson Pratt wrote:

“And on the sixth of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty, the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints’ was organized, in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, State of New York, North America.”

(*A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions...* [Edinburgh: Printed at Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840], 23-24; changed to Fayette in an 1848 printing)

1842

Joseph Smith authorized the printing of “Church History”:

“On the 6th of April, 1830, the ‘Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,’ was first organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario co., state of New York.”

(*Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1, 1842):708; known as the Wentworth letter)

1844

Jedediah M. Grant wrote the following:

“... the rise of said church, which was organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario county, State of New York, on the 6th day of April, A.D. 1830 ...”

(*A Collection of Facts, relative to the course taken by Elder Sidney Rigdon ...* [Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, Printers, 1844], 5)

1846

Article printed in Honolulu, now Hawaii:

“*Church of Latter Day Saints* -- This is the name of the society founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. It was organized April 6, 1830, at Manchester, N. Y. Six members originally composed the body, viz. Joseph Smith, senior, Hiram Smith, Samuel Smith, (father and brothers of the leader,) Joseph Smith, Jr., Joseph Knight and Oliver Cowd[e]ry.”

(*The Friend* 4 [July 1, 1846], Honolulu, Oahu, Sandwich Islands; Joseph Knight Sr. not baptized until late June 1830.

In Utah Territory the location was still being discussed.

1855

Church Historian George A. Smith wrote “Church History” which was printed in the *Deseret News*:

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized in Manchester, New York, on the 6th of April 1830...”

(*Deseret News* 5 [September 5, 1855]:203)

1861

“Remarks By President Heber C. Kimball, Bowery, Sunday morning, July 7, 1861,” included: “When the Church was first organized in Manchester, in the State of New York, the people rose up against us...”

(*Deseret News* 11 [March 19, 1862]:2; also printed in the *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. [London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1854-86], 9:181)

1884

Benjamin Saunders, fifteen years old in 1830, said that the “<Smiths> held meetings at their house. I was there when they first baptized. Oliver Cowdery did the baptizing. Old brother <Smith> was baptized at that time and I think old Mrs. Rockwell.”

(Interview of Benjamin Saunders by William H. Kelley, circa September 1884, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri)

“1830. April 6. First Mormon Church regularly organized at Manchester, New York.”

(Robert W. Sloan, edited and com., *Utah Gazetteer and Directory of Logan, Ogden, Provo and Salt Lake Cities for 1884* [Salt Lake City: Herald Printing and Publishing Co., 1884], 207)

Summary

Nothing happened regarding the forming of a Church at Fayette, Seneca County on April 6, 1830. The first two elders, Joseph Smith Jr. and Oliver Cowdery were not at that location on that day. Also no members of the Whitmers family were in attendance at Manchester on April 6 as there were no revelations for them on that day. Responding to the idea that the Church was really organized on April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York, this location has produced nothing about a meeting on that day. Is there any evidence of a meeting establishing the Church of Christ at Fayette on April 6, 1830? Answer: No.

The Kirtland United Firm met on May 3, 1834, and made changes to protect the Church from creditors and being sued for debts not paid. They stated that the April 6, 1830 meeting occurred in Fayette, New York. This was done for the same reason that pseudonyms were used instead of using real names in revelations published in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. The Manuscript History continued protecting the names of members of the United Firm.

The changing of the Church’s name and the location where it was organized and altering of real names was done for a purpose. We have the correct names of individuals mentioned in certain revelations, the original name of the Church, and can appreciate having individuals think that the Church being organized at a different location.