

Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whittaker, Mark-Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832-1844*. Volume one of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, general eds. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012. 686 pp. Hardback: \$54.95. ISBN: 978-1-60641-196-4.

Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Histories, 1831-1847*. Volume two of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, general eds. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2012. 453 pp. Hardback: \$54.95. ISBN: 978-1-60908-945-0.

Reviewed by H. Michael Marquardt

There are six histories assigned to Joseph Smith in *Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832-1844*. Of these only two had some involvement of Smith. The two accounts are his 1832 History, that includes his own handwriting, and the Manuscript History (called Draft 1, 2 and 3). All of the histories, except the Howard Coray copy, were previously published in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 1: Autobiographical and Historical Writings* in 1989.

The first history, the 1832 History (2-22), was written while there were problems with church leadership in Missouri, especially with bishop Edward Partridge. Though there is no date on the six pages this volume suggests “circa summer 1832” (4). The history appears to have been written in November 1832. There are several reasons that lead to this dating as will be explained below. The 1832 History was recorded before a November 27, 1832 letter from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, was copied, prior to being sent to Phelps, into what became the first of two letterbooks.

The 1832 History commences with an introduction written by Frederick G. Williams and alternates with Smith's handwriting including his account of a heavenly vision of Jesus and of an angel revealing the Book of Mormon. Williams added, above the line, to the time of the first vision, “in the 16th year of my age,” when Smith was fifteen years old.

On July 20, 1832 Frederick G. Williams “commenced writing for Joseph Smith”¹ since Sidney Rigdon was out of fellowship with the church. Williams assisted Joseph Smith in recording changes in Smith's “translation” of the New Testament. After completing this task the pair returned to work on the Old Testament picking up where Smith left the project in 1831 with the book of Genesis.

Additions to Exodus 34:1-2, in the handwriting of Williams, include, “for I will take away the priest-hood out of there midst therefore my holy order <and the ordinances thereof> shall not go before them for my presence shall not go up in there midst . . . I will give unto them the law as at the fi[r]st, but it shall be after the law of carnal commandment.”² This concept received clarification in LDS D&C 84:25 (September 22, 1832) in the words, “therefore he took Moses out of there [their] midst and the holy Priesthood also” and verse 27 that mention “the law

¹ Statement of Frederick G. Williams, circa 1838, LDS Church History Library.

² Old Testament MS 2, 70, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri.

of carnal commandments.” In the same manner wording in LDS D&C 84:26 “minist[e]ring of Angels and the preparatory [preparatory] gospel” is reflected in the opening portion of the 1832 history, “ministering of Angels” and “the letter of the <Gospel>.”

It is evident from the November 27, 1832 letter to Phelps (LDS D&C 85:12), which refers to Ezra 2:61-62, that the revision of the Old Testament was past the book of Ezra as all the chapters were marked “Correct” as they read through the text. Old Testament manuscript 2, in the Community of Christ Library-Archives, helps us understand the texts that Smith and Williams were working on even though no dates are recorded until the completion of the book of Malachi in July 1833.³ Smith’s handwriting appears on Old Testament 2, pages 81-83, 86.

Another record book was started where revelatory documents and notes were recorded. This manuscript book was labeled “Kirtland Revelations.” The first item recorded (pages 1-10) by Frederick G. Williams is the Vision of February 16, 1832, where on page 1 Joseph Smith copied a few lines. Sidney Rigdon who was with Smith would have written the Vision at the time which indicates this is a copy, possibility from the original. Williams copied on page 11 a revelation with the date of December 1, 1832 rather than the year 1831 (LDS D&C 71). On page 12 Williams also has an incorrect location of Hiram, Ohio, rather than Kirtland (LDS D&C 47, March 8, 1831). Smith’s handwriting again appears on pages 13-15 where he copied parts of three 1831 revelations. Pages 18, 23 and 29 also contain Smith’s writing. Williams recorded the December 6, 1832 revelation, written by Sidney Rigdon, (LDS D&C 86), on pages 31-32 of the revelations book.

The 1832 History and the revision of the Old Testament are in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, who writes first after which Joseph Smith continues from where Williams left off. The Kirtland Revelations Book and the letter to W. W. Phelps also are started by Williams but in this case are copies of a vision, and other revelations. As explained in the source note, “Beginning on the recto of the fourth leaf in the front of the book (immediately following the history) are ninety-three pages” of copied letters (3). The editors indicate that the 1832 History could be a copy or an original inscription (7), it is the later. The handwriting in these early records alternates between Williams (FGW) and Smith (JS) as follows:

Kirtland Revelations Book [pages 13-15 copied circa Dec. 1, 1832 per JS Journal]

page 1 FGW, JS, FGW

pages 2-12 FGW

page 13 FGW, JS, FGW

page 14 FGW, JS

page 15 JS, FGW

pages 16-17 FGW

page 18 FGW, JS, FGW

pages 19-22 FGW

page 23 FGW, JS, FGW

³ The Old Testament reading was stopped for a time as Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith returned to review what was previously worked on in the New Testament. Additional corrections were made on notes that were pinned to manuscript pages. Rigdon and Smith were working on the review by December 6, 1832 (see LDS D&C 86) at Matthew chapter 13.

pages 24-28 FGW
page 29 FGW, JS, FGW
pages 30-32 FGW

1832 History (three leaves, six pages; known as Letterbook 1)

page 1 FGW, JS
page 2 JS
page 3 JS, FGW seven words above the line
page 4 FGW
page 5 FGW, JS, FGW
page [6] FGW (ending with Oliver Cowdery)

Letterbook 1 [pages 5-8 copied Dec. 5, 1832 per JS Journal]

page 1A FGW (copy of Nov. 27, 1832 letter to W. W. Phelps)
page 2 FGW, JS, FGW (copy of Nov. 27, 1832 letter to W. W. Phelps)
page 3 FGW, JS (copy of Nov. 27, 1832 letter to W. W. Phelps)
page 4 JS, FGW, JS (copy of Nov. 27, 1832 letter to W. W. Phelps and Dec 29, 1829 letter)
pages 5-8 JS (copies of three 1829 letters of Oliver Cowdery, Dec 28; June 14 and Nov. 6)
page 9 FGW (copy of JS letter to Oliver Cowdery, Oct. 22, 1829)

Old Testament 2 [pages 80-86 by Nov. 27; before Dec. 6, 1832 with review of New Testament]

page 80 FGW (Ezra 1-Nehemiah 7:22)
page 81 FGW, JS (Nehemiah 7:23-13:31; Esther 1-10; Job 1:1-1:6)
page 82 JS (Job 1:6-35:16)
page 83 JS, FGW (Job 36-42; Psalm 1:1-11:1)
pages 84-85 FGW (Psalm 11:2-13:1; 13:1-14:7)
page 86 FGW, JS (Psalm 14:7-17:6)

Joseph Smith's journal was "Baught" on November 27, 1832, and helps in determining the most likely time frame when Williams and Smith worked together in the Kirtland Revelations Book, Joseph Smith Letterbook, and Old Testament Bible revision. It appears that three record books were started in November 1832: (1) six page history of early events in the life of Joseph Smith Jr., in Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, (2) Kirtland Revelations Book and (3) Joseph Smith's journal. Shortly afterwards, circa December 3, 1832, Frederick G. Williams started an additional record, copying minutes in the Kirtland Council Minute Book. For Joseph Smith to have written portions of both the 1832 History and help copy the November 27, 1832 letter to Phelps, indicates that Williams was either already occupied or was not available at the time. There are three entries in Smith's journal that assist in assigning dates to his handwriting.

December 1, 1832: "wrote and corrected revelations &c" This includes copying revelations in the Kirtland Revelations Book, at least pages 13-15.

December 5, 1832: "this day ~~wrote letters~~ copying letters and translating" Copying letters, after the one to Phelps, in the Letterbook 1, pages 5-8 and reviewing with Sidney Rigdon the gospel of Matthew.

December 6, 1832: “translating and received a Revelation explaining the Parable the wheat and the tears [tares]” Reviewing Matthew 13 and revelation of LDS D&C 86, written by Sidney Rigdon.

The handwriting changes between Williams and Smith was probably written in November 1832 previous to copying the November 27, 1832 letter in the same ledger book. An examination of the above listed records leads me to assign the writing of the 1832 History to November 1832.

The next section (23-185) in volume 1 is History, 1834-1836, which includes Oliver Cowdery’s letters that became the first published church history, though the letters mainly expound on scriptural passages and not much on Joseph Smith’s experiences. The manuscript book included genealogy of the families of Joseph Smith Jr., Joseph Smith Sr. and Oliver Cowdery. It also includes minutes of December 5-6, 1834. After a few blank pages the eight Oliver Cowdery letters, which were printed in the *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, between October 1834 and October 1835, were copied into the record book. The letters contain some information from Joseph Smith but were not dictated by Smith. Cowdery’s letters are not really a history of the church but a limited explanation relating to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon prior to April 6, 1830.

The letters include mention of Cowdery meeting Joseph Smith for the first time in April 1829. Cowdery wrote, “from his hand I received baptism, by the direction of the angel of God the first received into this church in this day” (41) and received under Smith’s hand “the holy priesthood” (43). The other letters explain gospel topics, prophecies, mention of Mr. Lane and the religious excitement that led to Lucy Mack Smith and three of her children joining the Presbyterians. Cowdery included an account of the visit of an angel in 1823 that revealed the Book of Mormon plates, a description of the hill Cumorah, and Smith’s working a few months for Josiah Stowell. Next in this record comes a copy, in the third person, from Joseph Smith’s 1835-36 journal. The dates covered are from September 22, 1835 to January 18, 1836. The largest section is titled “History Drafts, 1838-circa 1841” (186-463). After church historian John Whitmer refused to turn over his church history, Joseph Smith started to work on his own account of his early life in late April-early May 1838. The initial draft, probably written by George W. Robinson, secretary of the First Presidency, is no longer extant. The 1839 copy in Manuscript History Book A-1 (Draft 2) is the earliest copy made by James Mulholland. The history covers at least the first ten pages (extract in Joseph Smith History 1:1-65, LDS Pearl of Great Price). Though not extant the 1838 portion of the history commences with the birth of Joseph Smith on December 23, 1805 to circa July 1828, the time when the original manuscript pages of the Book of Lehi were lost. The 1839 history includes the words “untill this day, being the Second day of May, One thousand Eight hundred and thirty eight,” indicating it is a copy. The copy does contain errors such as having Alvin Smith’s death year a year later, in 1824, rather than the correct year 1823.

After writing this history it is not known the exact involvement of Joseph Smith in 1839 with Mulholland. What words Smith dictated and what is Mulholland’s composition from verbal or written notes coming from Smith is not known. The early pages written by George W. Robinson, are missing. The available pages of Draft 1, in the handwriting of James Mulholland, start at the baptisms of Cowdery and Smith on May 15, 1829. This draft is sketchy and contains notes where revelations should be entered in the history. It includes crossed through parts and

there are incorrect dates which indicate there may be little of Joseph Smith's personal involvement. See cross outs in images of the Mulholland draft on pages 186, 375, 407.

Mulholland used the draft and revelations contained in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants as a base to write more fully the history of Joseph Smith of Draft 2. As the introduction to this history indicates:

Many of JS's early revelations underwent significant updating and expansion in order to suit rapidly changing circumstances after the organization of the Church of Christ in 1830, so the inclusion of the 1835 version of revelations into a narrative covering events before 1835 introduced numerous anachronisms. (197)

Manuscript History, Draft 2 continues what was written by James Mulholland covering the period May 15, 1829 to September 1830. The volume includes a small part written by Robert B. Thompson, a church clerk. This history could be considered an assigned history since the scribe was given the responsibility of writing in Smith's name as though he was the author.

The Manuscript History includes parts that are ghostwritten as though composed by Joseph Smith. Howard Searle explains, "There is often a discernible difference in style between a Joseph Smith holograph, his dictated compositions, and the writing of the scribes; but, as in the case of most ghostwriting, it is very difficult to determine in a definitive or comprehensive way just what was contributed by Joseph Smith and what was the input of his scribes."⁴ The Manuscript History is not in Smith's handwriting, but shows evidence that it followed his directions and was composed for him.

The editors state, "The duplicate copy of the history was used as the source text in Utah when the *Deseret News* picked up serial publication of the history where the *Times and Seasons* left off" in the issue of November 15, 1851 (xxxii). The history was a work in progress with additions made in December 1842 and periodic corrections through the years.

The Howard Coray draft copy "Draft 3" was a rewrite taken from Book A-1, pages 1-61, with the fair copy reproduced on the Joseph Smith Papers website. Coray copy ends at the beginning of November 1830 with Sidney Rigdon's conversion. About 1841 church clerk Howard Coray revised Manuscript History A-1 into a draft account. He then made a fair copy but neither copy was used for the "History of Joseph Smith" in the *Times and Seasons*.

The three remaining items in the book are first, an "Extract, from the Private Journal of Joseph Smith Jr." which may not have been composed by Smith (464-88). It was printed in the *Times and Seasons*. The second work was title "Church History" as a short summary of the history and beliefs of the Latter Day Saints (489-501). Known as the Wentworth letter it was also published in the *Times and Seasons* with Joseph Smith's name attached. Orson Pratt's *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions* (1840) was used as the base text of Smith letter to John Wentworth.

⁴ Howard C. Searle, "Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay," *BYU Studies* 32 (Winter 1981):122.

The last of these histories is an article submitted, with the assistance of W. W. Phelps, to Daniel Rupp (502-16) and appeared in his 1844 *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States*. The Appendix contains the full text of Pratt's pamphlet with highlighted areas of wording similar to the two previous histories (517-46).

Histories, Volume 2, Assigned Histories, 1831-1847 does not contain Joseph Smith histories. It is a compilation of four items of interest that are termed "Assigned histories, 1831-1847." The first and most important history is that written by John Whitmer (2-110). It has been published in part and whole a number of times since 1908. While Whitmer probably kept notes since his appointment in March 1831, it appears that he finally wrote in the record book after the printing of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

Whitmer's history starts with the call of the Lamanite missionaries in September and October 1830 and includes copied revelations from the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants with various documents and letters until his excommunication in March 1838. The last three chapters of the manuscript were probably written in 1846-47. Chapter 21 has the date of "Feb 1847."

A brief account, "Rise and Progress of the Church of Christ," from the *Evening and the Morning Star*, issue of April 1833, William W. Phelps, editor of the *Star* is reproduced (111-19). Oliver Cowdery probably assisted Phelps with the events before Phelps' baptism in June 1831.

John Corrill, published in 1839 *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints*. Corrill was a former church member who presents his recollections and reasons why he left the church (120-201). His manuscript is posted on the Joseph Smith Papers Web site.

"A History of the Persecutions" (202-86) was issued in the *Times and Seasons* in an eleven part series of articles. The "first three installments" were based upon a manuscript written by Edward Partridge. The remaining eight articles incorporated information from the writings of Parley P. Pratt and Sidney Rigdon.

For the Joseph Smith publications that contain Reference Material (at the end of most books) the reader should note the following concerning the latest updates of the Joseph Smith Papers website:

A number of updates and changes have been made to the reference material. The updates correct factual errors, add additional information, and remove biographical information that, while possibly accurate, could not be documented in primary sources or the most reliable secondary sources. Because the reference material supports all published volumes and all documents published on the website, the Smith Papers staff will not keep a record of the specific changes made to each entry published in [Histories, Volumes 1-2]. Readers should refer to the Reference section of the Joseph Smith Papers website to find the corrected and updated information.

It is always good to have additional documents to work with such as the Howard Coray draft (with the fair copy on josephsmithpapers.org), even though it was not used for the printing of Joseph Smith's history. The 1832 History is the superior account of Joseph Smith's early religious experiences. Those collecting the Joseph Smith Papers series will want to include these two volumes in their collection.