

Manchester, New York Is the Place

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Tuesday, April 6, 1830 is important in Latter Day Saint history: the day the Church of Christ was founded. Historians cannot rely on one copy of a revelatory document to determine and establish that event's location. We must instead look at the totality of evidence concerning where baptisms occurred and revelations were received on April 6 to determine the location of the Church's founding.

The earliest evidence about an historical event is usually the best for accessing what really happened. In 1834, four years after the Church of Christ's founding, the name of the church and the story about where it was organized were modified. The draft manuscript history and final 1842 publication place the April 6, 1830 meeting at the house of Peter Whitmer Sr., who lived at Fayette, New York. Even though the history has the meeting at the Whitmer home, the individuals listed below were not at that place on April 6. There was no travel from one county to another for two separate events. The baptisms by immersion were performed in one location with no travel to a separate place to hold a separate church meeting.

Joseph Smith Jr., baptized in May 1829 at Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania (Manuscript History). He was brought by Joseph Knight Sr. to Manchester and ordained by Oliver Cowdery on April 6, 1830.

Oliver Cowdery, baptized in May 1829 at Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania (Manuscript History). He was living at the Smith home while the Book of Mormon was being published. He ordained Joseph Smith Jr. on April 6, 1830.

Hyrum Smith, baptized in May 1829 at Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania. He resided at the Smith home in Manchester.

Samuel Harrison Smith, baptized in May 1829 at Harmony (now Oakland), Pennsylvania (Manuscript History). He resided at the Smith home in Manchester.

Joseph Smith Sr., baptized April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York (Manuscript History). He resided at the Smith home in Manchester.

Martin Harris, baptized April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York (Manuscript History). He resided at his home in Palmyra, the next township north of Manchester.

Lucy Mack Smith, baptized April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York (Manuscript History). She resided at the Smith home in Manchester.

Sarah Witt Rockwell, baptized April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York (listed as [blank space] Rockwell in Manuscript History). She resided at her home in Manchester.

Joseph Knight Sr., present on April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York, but was not baptized until the end of June 1830 at Colesville, New York. Knight wrote his recollection prior to 1847, the year of his death; it was first published in 1976. He took Joseph Smith Jr. to Manchester.

To summarize events that occurred in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, it is known that this is the location where the Peter Whitmer Sr. family resided. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery wrote part of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon circa June 1829 in the Whitmer home. Martin Harris and Hyrum Smith made a trip there and baptisms were performed before there was a formal start of the church. In June 1829 the following individuals were baptized: Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, Peter Whitmer Jr. and probably John Whitmer (Manuscript History). The distance between Fayette and Manchester is about twenty-five miles one way. No known meeting was held on Tuesday, April 6, 1830 at the Whitmer home.

There is one manuscript copy of a revelation that has a Fayette location. That location (LDS D&C 21) is in error, corrected in preparing the Book of Commandments for publication by Oliver Cowdery. Cowdery helped with the printing of the Book of Commandments and was present at the church organization. The revelation states “which Church was Organized & established in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight Hundred & Thirty in the fo[u]rth Month on the Sixth day of the month which is called April” (Book of Commandments & Revelations, cited hereafter as BCR).

Five separate revelations in the BCR were published separately when printed in the Book of Commandments (BC) at Independence, Missouri. The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) combined the five messages for individuals as though there was one separate revelation. Compare the headings below. The headings copied in the BCR will be listed first, followed by BC and if needed the 1835 D&C.

Revelation for Oliver Cowdery

BCR: A Revelation to Oliver given at Manchester Ontario Co[unty] State of New York Soon after his calling to the Ministry

Book of Commandments, chapter 17: *A Revelation to Oliver, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

Revelation for Hyrum Smith

BCR: A Commandment to Hiram given at Manchester Ontario County State of New York

Book of Commandments, chapter 18: *A Revelation to Hyrum, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

Revelation for Samuel Harrison Smith

BCR: A Revelation to Samuel given at Manchester Ontario Co[unty] N. Y.

Book of Commandments, chapter 19: *A Revelation to Samuel, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

Revelation for Joseph Smith Sr. BCR: A Commandment to given to Joseph at Manchester Ontario County State of New York

Book of Commandments, chapter 20: *A Revelation to Joseph, the father of Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

Revelation for Joseph Knight Sr.

BCR: A Commandment to Joseph Knight given at Manchester Ontario County State of New York

Book of Commandments, chapter 21: *A Revelation to Joseph (K.,) given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

Revelation for Joseph Smith Jr. and the Church of Christ

BCR: A Revelation to Joseph the Seer by way of commandment to the Church given at Fayette Seneca County State of New York (above the line was added “Ap[r]il 6 1830”)

Book of Commandments, chapter 22: *A Revelation to Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830.*

1835 D&C (pages 177-78), section 46: *Revelation to Joseph Smith, jr. given April 6, 1830.*

“they all kneel[e]d Down and prayed”

Lucy Mack Smith does not mention her own baptism in her history. She does recall the baptism of Martin Harris and her husband, Joseph Sr.: “Joseph [Jr.] stood on the shore when his father came out of the water and as he took him by the hand he cried out Oh! my God I have lived to see my father baptized into the true church of Jesus Christ . . . this took place on the sixth of April 1830, the d[a]y on which the church was organized.” (Lucy Mack Smith History)

Joseph Knight Sr., who was present, also mentions the baptisms of Harris and the elder Smith. His account is the most detailed (original spelling retained):

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 Did not tell when. . . .

I had Be[e]n there Several Days old Mr Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod [forward] to Be Babtise[d] for the first they found a place in a Lot a Small Stream ran thro[ugh] and they ware Babtized in the Evening Because of persecution they went forward and was Babtized Being the first I Saw Babtized in the new and everlasting Covenant ...

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 Degree to See his Father and Mr Harris that he had Bin [Been] with So much he Bast [Burst] out with greaf and Joy and Seamed as tho[ugh] the world Could not hold him he went out into the Lot and appear[e]d to want to git [get] out of site of every Body and would Sob and Crie and Seamed to Be so full that he Could not Live

oliver [Oliver Cowdery] 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 he 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 Bild

[Build] up the Church and ex[h]orted them to Be faithfull in all things for this is the work of God (Joseph Knight Reminiscences)

The place of these baptisms was in Crooked Brook (now Hathaway Creek), a stream in the northwest corner of the township of Manchester. Crooked Brook ran north past the Smith residence toward Palmyra. Joseph Knight described it as a "Small Stream," which it still is. Manchester neighbors saw the same baptisms at this place.

The idea that the Church of Christ (known in its various sects as Mormonism) was established in Fayette has the problem of travel between Fayette and Manchester (a twenty-five-mile trip one way). The revelation about ordaining Joseph Smith Jr. in this scenario would have been received in Fayette. If this were the case then individuals would have had to leave Fayette and travel to Manchester for baptism. If the baptisms occurred in Manchester then the group would have had to travel back to Fayette for the organization meeting. Since the baptisms were performed and the revelations were received at Manchester, there was no need to travel to Fayette.

From the above we can understand, appreciate, and confirm that the location where the Church of Christ was organized on April 6, 1830 was at Manchester, Ontario County, New York (USA).