

## Note on the Joseph Knight Jr., Statement, August 11, 1862

© 2012, 2019 by H. Michael Marquardt. All rights reserved.

On August 11, 1862 at the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City, Joseph Knight Jr. (son of Joseph Knight Sr.) listed the "Names of the six members of the church as they were organized April 6, 1830: Fayette, Seneca Co. New York. Oliver Cowdery[,] Joseph Smith Jun.[,] Hyrum Smith[,] Peter Whitmer Jun.[,] Samuel H. Smith[, and] David Whitmer."(Joseph Knight Jr., Names of the [first] six members of the church ..., 1862 Aug. 11, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City; a copy was attached to Manuscript History Book A-1, page 36) The words "Fayette, Seneca Co. New York" were added to the 1862 document.

If there were six male members on April 6, this could mean something special, like six members on *sixth* of April. Those baptized in 1829 and at Manchester on April 6 were: Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, Samuel H. Smith and Hyrum Smith. If there were six male members on April 6 it would have included Joseph Smith, Sr. and Martin Harris, after they had been baptized on that day. The inclusion of Peter Whitmer Jr. and David Whitmer in the list is considered incorrect as they would have been in Fayette as the commencement of the Fayette Branch of the Church a few days later.

Non-LDS writers in the 1840s who made a list of six did it the simple way. They listed those persons for whom revelations were given and came up with six persons who were there. Doing this they made one error in that Joseph Knight, Sr. was listed as being present but he was not a baptized member.

By just listing those baptized in 1829 there would be six as it would include David Whitmer and Peter Whitmer, Jr. But if John Whitmer was baptized it would be seven. If John Whitmer is excluded, since we do not know when he was baptized, there would be six baptized persons. There could be six baptized men but they would not be together on April 6 at the Smith home in Manchester. It would be hard to prove that the compiler(s) of Joseph Smith's history thought about the number baptized in 1829 rather than upon the early tradition that there were six members on April 6.

David Whitmer wrote:

"Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the 'Church of Christ,' in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N.Y.; one at Manchester, N.Y., and one at Colesville, Pa. [New York] It is all a mistake about the church being *organized* on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully *organized*—spiritually—before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land. . . . Now brethren, how can it be that the church was any more organized--spiritually--on April 6th, than it was before that time? There were six elders and about seventy members before April 6th, and the same number of elders and members after that day.

(David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* [Richmond, MO: Author, 1887], 33, emphasis in original)

Whitmer's statement contains errors. He claims there were seventy members in the three branches of the church by April 6, 1830. However, the "Far West Record" has the number at the time of the first conference two months later, June 9, 1830, as only twenty-seven.

Besides listing Joseph Smith, Jr. and Oliver Cowdery (first and 2nd elders) the below chart is from four reports of David Whitmer. A key to the initials:

DW = David Whitmer	ES = Edward Stevenson Journal, December 22, 1877; January 2, 1887
HS = Hyrum Smith	KCJ = <i>Kansas City Journal</i> , June 1, 1881
JW = John Whitmer	Address = <i>An Address to All Believers in Christ</i> , 32
CW = Christian Whitmer	[list as elders; "There were six elders and about
PW = Peter Whitmer Jr.	seventy members before April 6th" (p. 33).
MH = Martin Harris	
SHS = Samuel H. Smith	

DATE	DW	HS	JW	CW	PW	MH	SHS
1877 ES	X	X	X	X			
1881 KCJ	X	X	X		X	X	
1887 ES	X	X	X		X		
1887 <i>Address</i>	X	X			X		X

In David Whitmer's lists he names himself and Hyrum Smith. It is interesting that in other separate listings he has Samuel H. Smith and Martin Harris. There is no evidence that David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Christian Whitmer, Peter Whitmer were at the meeting of April 6, 1830. According to the Manuscript History Christian Whitmer was baptized on April 11, 1830.

Where the compilers of the Manuscript History got the number six:

1. There are six persons mentioned in the Manuscript History as being baptized in May-June 1829.
2. There was an earlier published reference in a church publication, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (March 1833):[76], that states "... since the church of Christ was organized, in Manchester, New York, with six members." This reference implies that the church was organized with six members.

If there were six "baptized" members at the meeting at Manchester on April 6, there would be only four baptized persons present when the meeting started:

1. Joseph Smith, Jr. baptized May 15, 1829
2. Oliver Cowdery baptized May 15, 1829
3. Samuel H. Smith baptized May 1829
4. Hyrum Smith baptized May 1829

To have six male members, those would have to include Joseph Smith Sr. and Martin Harris, both baptized on April 6 at Manchester:

1. Joseph Smith, Jr.
2. Oliver Cowdery
3. Samuel H. Smith
4. Hyrum Smith
5. Joseph Smith, Sr. baptized April 6, 1830
6. Martin Harris baptized April 6, 1830

As for the number said to be at the organization of the Church, according to David Whitmer, it appears that the number grew through the years. Whitmer was probably giving numbers for the first Church conference of June 9, 1830. When he mentioned Colesville, the next conference where members could attend would be at the end of September 1830. The large numbers would not have been on Sunday April 11 or 18, 1830 where individuals in the Fayette area were baptized. The names of those baptized at Fayette are included in the Manuscript History.

1877 "thare [sic] was present about 40 or 50 Persons Mostly Members of the Church"  
Edward Stevenson, Journal, December 22, 1877, LDS Church History Library

1885 "some fifty or sixty"  
Zenas H. Gurley Jr., Interview, January 14, 1885, LDS Church History Library

1887 "2 Rooms were filled with members about 20 from Colesville, 15 from Manchester Church and about 20 from aro[u]nd about Father Whitmers about 50 members & the 6 Elders present"  
Edward Stevenson, Journal, January 2, 1887, LDS Church History Library

1887 "about seventy members before April 6th"  
*Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 33