



7-31-2004

Cumorah's Cave

Cameron J. Packer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Packer, Cameron J. (2004) "Cumorah's Cave," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 13 : No. 1 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol13/iss1/6>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Book of Mormon Studies by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Cumorah's Cave

Author(s) Cameron J. Packer

Reference *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 13/1-2 (2004): 50-57, 170-71.

ISSN 1065-9366 (print), 2168-3158 (online)

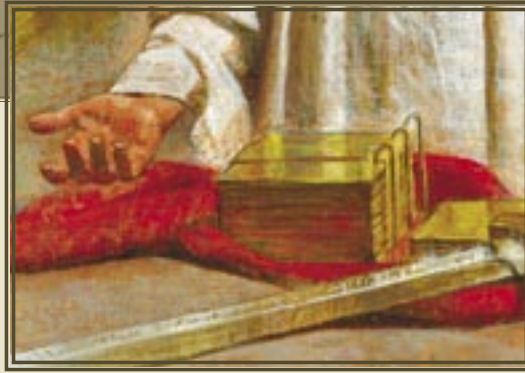
Abstract The significance of the Hill Cumorah in the restoration of the gospel goes beyond its identification as the ancient repository of the metal plates known as the Book of Mormon. In the second half of the 19th century, a teaching about a cave in the hill began surfacing in the writings of several leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In their view, the hill was not only the place where Joseph Smith received the plates but also their final repository, along with other sacred treasures, after the translation was finished. This article cites ten different accounts, all secondhand, that refer to this cave and what was found there. The author includes a comparison of the accounts that discusses additional records in the cave, God's dominion over Earth's treasure, miraculous dealings of God, and the significance of the presence of the sword of Laban.



A painting of a cave filled with stacks of books, viewed from a dark opening. The scene is illuminated by a warm, golden light from the left, highlighting the numerous stacks of books of various sizes and colors. The cave walls are dark and textured, and the floor is covered in a layer of dust or sand. The overall atmosphere is one of a hidden library or a treasure trove of knowledge.

Qumran's Dave

CAMERON J. PACKER



THE HILL CUMORAH'S SIGNIFICANCE in the restoration of the gospel goes beyond its being the ancient repository of the metal plates known as the Book of Mormon. In the second half of the 19th century, a certain teaching about a cave in the hill began surfacing in the writings and teachings of several leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In their view, the hill was not only the place where Joseph Smith received the plates but also their final repository, along with other sacred treasures, after the translation was finished. According to some of those leaders, Joseph Smith and others returned the plates to a cave in the Hill Cumorah after he finished translating them. At least 10 different accounts,¹ all secondhand, refer to this cave and what was found there.

With these reports of a cave in the Hill Cumorah comes the question, Was this a real cave that Joseph and others actually walked into, or was it a visionary, or “virtual,” experience? The wording of the accounts leaves the issue open. While this question cannot be answered unless we find firsthand information regarding the cave, what can be learned from these accounts captures our interest. A closer look at them shows that at times they have been used to teach certain gospel principles in a memorable way. Following is a chronological synopsis of the cave accounts (with original spelling and punctuation preserved) and an examination of four associated gospel principles.

**1. William Horne Dame Diary,
14 January 1855**

Attended meeting a discourse from W. W. Phelps. He related a story told him by Hyrum Smith which was as follows: Joseph, Hyrum, Cowdery & Whitmere went to the hill Cormorah. As they were walking up the hill, a door opened and they walked into a room about 16 ft square. In that room was an angel and a trunk. On that trunk lay a book of Mormon & gold plates, Laban's sword, Aaron's brestplate.

**2. Heber C. Kimball, *Journal of Discourses*,
28 September 1856**

In response to a Brother Mills's statement about the handcart pioneers, Heber C. Kimball said:

How does it compare with the vision that Joseph and others had, when they went into a cave in the hill Cumorah, and saw more records than ten men could carry? There were books piled up on tables, book upon book. Those records this people will yet have, if they accept of the Book of Mormon and observe its precepts, and keep the commandments.



President Heber C. Kimball, first counselor to President Brigham Young. Courtesy of the Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

3. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 5 May 1867

President [Heber C.] Kimball talked familiarly to the brethren about Father Smith, [Oliver] Cowdery, and others walking into the hill Cumorah and seeing records upon records piled upon table[s,] they walked from cell to cell and saw the records that were piled up. . . .

4. *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 11 December 1869

In his journal, Wilford Woodruff recounted what he had heard Brigham Young say about the cave:

President Young said in relation to Joseph Smith returning the Plates of the Book of Mormon that He did not return them to the box from wh[ence?] He had Received [them]. But He went [into] a Cave in the Hill Comoro with Oliver Cowdery & deposited those plates upon a table or shelf. In that room were deposited a large amount of gold plates Containing sacred records & when they first visited that Room the sword of Laban was Hanging upon the wall &

when they last visited it the sword was drawn from the scabbard and [laid?] upon a table and a Messenger who was the keeper of the room informed them that that sword would never be returned to its scabbard untill the Kingdom of God was Esstablished upon the Earth & untill it reigned triumphant over Evry Enemy. Joseph Smith said that Cave Contained tons of Choice Treasures & records.

5. *Elizabeth Kane Journal*, 15 January 1873

Although not a member of the church, Elizabeth Kane lived in St. George, Utah, and entertained the company of Brigham Young. She recorded the following discussion:

I asked where the plates were now, and saw in a moment from the expression of the countenances around that I had blundered. But I was answered that they were in a cave; that Oliver Cowdery though now an apostate would not deny that he had seen them. He had been to the cave. . . . Brigham Young's tone was so solemn that I listened bewildered like a child to the evening witch stories of its nurse. . . .



President Wilford Woodruff. Courtesy of Church Archives.

Brigham Young said that when Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith were in the cave this third time, they could see its contents more distinctly than before. . . . It was about fifteen feet high and round its sides were ranged boxes of treasure. In the centre was a large stone table empty before, but now piled with similar gold plates, some of which lay scattered on the floor beneath. Formerly the sword of Laban hung on the walls sheathed, but it was now unsheathed and lying across the plates on the table; and One that was with them said it was never to be sheathed until the reign of Righteousness upon the earth.

6. Jesse Nathaniel Smith Journal, February 1874

A southern Utah Saint, Jesse Nathaniel Smith, heard Brigham Young speak in Cedar City, Utah, and recorded:

I heard him [Brigham Young] at an evening meeting in Cedar City describe an apartment in the Hill Cumorah that some of the brethren had been permitted to enter. He said there was great wealth in the room in sacred implements, vestments, arms, precious metals and precious stones, more than a six-mule team could draw.

7. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 17 June 1877

Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in this room more plates than prob-



President Brigham Young. Courtesy of Church Archives.

ably many wagon loads; they were piled up in the corners and along the walls. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ." I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well as we understand coming to this meeting. . . . [Don] Carlos Smith was a young man of as much veracity as any young man we had, and he was a witness to these things. Samuel Smith saw some things, Hyrum saw a good many things, but Joseph was the leader.²

8. Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet*, 1877

In his book *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon*, Edward Stevenson relates an interview with David Whitmer in 1877:

It was likewise stated to me by David Whitmer in the year 1877 that Oliver Cowdery told him that the Prophet Joseph and himself had seen this room and that it was filled with treasure, and on a table therein were the breastplate and the sword of Laban, as well as the portion of gold plates not yet translated, and that these plates were bound by three small gold rings, and would also be translated, as was the first portion in the days of Joseph. When they are translated much useful information will be brought to light. But till that day arrives, no Rochester adventurers shall ever see them or the treasures, although science and mineral rods testify that they are there.

9. David Whitmer, *Deseret Evening News*, 16 August 1878

In an interview with P. Wilhelm Poulson, David Whitmer gave another account of the cave:

[Poulson]: Where are the plates now?

[Whitmer]: In a cave, where the angel has hidden them up till the time arrives when the plates, which are sealed, shall be translated. God will yet raise up a mighty one, who shall do his work till it is finished and Jesus comes again.

[Poulson]: Where is that cave?

[Whitmer]: In the State of New York.

[Poulson]: In the Hill of Comorah?

[Whitmer]: No, but not far away from that place.³

10. Orson Pratt, *The Contributor*, September 1882

But the grand repository of all the numerous records of the ancient nations of the western continent, was located in another department of the hill, and its contents put under the charge of holy angels, until the day should come for them to be transferred to the sacred temple of Zion.

Gospel Principles and the Cave Accounts

Future Records Yet to Come Forth

While there are variations in each of the cave accounts, one of the most obvious consistencies concerns the additional records present in the cave. All of the accounts except 1 and 6 refer to additional records, whether the sealed “portion of the gold plates not yet translated” or additional “piles” of plates that were around the sides of the cave or under the table. While the number and perhaps identity of the additional records may vary in the different accounts, the message is the same: there are records we do not yet have.⁴ This is in harmony with the Latter-day Saint doctrine that God “will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

One apostle in particular expounded on the future coming forth of these records and what he thought they would contain. In a discourse delivered at the tabernacle in Ogden on 18 May 1873, Orson Pratt said: “Will these things be brought to light? Yes. The records, now slumbering in the hill Cumorah, will be brought forth by the power of God, to fulfill the words of our text, that ‘the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the great deep.’”⁵ Regarding what these records might contain, Elder Pratt taught, “When these plates, now hidden in the hill Cumorah, are brought to light we shall have the history of the Old Testament much more fully, with the addition of a great many prophecies that are not now contained in the record.” These additional prophecies are, according to Elder Pratt, “the prophecies of Joseph in Egypt . . . [and of] Neum, a great Prophet who prophesied concerning Christ; also those of Zenos and Zenock, and others of which only bare reference is given.”⁶ Thus we are to understand that such records will yet serve an important role in the future of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

God’s Dominion over Earthly Treasures

Another obvious theme in many of the cave accounts is that of wealth or treasure. Accounts 4, 5, 6, and 8 all mention treasures or wealth being inside the cave. It appears that this is an aspect of the cave experience that Brigham Young employed to teach the principle that God has dominion over earthly

treasures and that the Saints should therefore avoid prospecting for silver and gold. For example, in his 17 June 1877 discourse, President Young told the congregation, “You will find just enough [gold and silver] to allure you and to destroy you.”⁷

Just before sharing the cave story, Brigham Young recounted how Porter Rockwell and others had searched for treasure. According to Rockwell, they found treasure but were unable to withdraw it because it kept sliding back into the earth.⁸ After sharing the cave experience, President Young said: “Now, you may think I am unwise in publicly telling these things, thinking perhaps I should preserve them in my own breast; but such is not my mind. I would like the people called Latter-day Saints to understand some little things with regard

encouraged the impoverished Saints in the Great Basin to know that God controls great wealth and can bless the Saints with it if it is in their best interest. As Brigham stated in the same sermon, “Are not the earth and the treasures the property of the Lord who created them?”¹¹

Jesse Nathaniel Smith’s account also shows Brigham Young highlighting the cave experience to illustrate God’s dominion over earthly treasures. It appears his motive was to help convert church members to the idea of the united order. In Smith’s account, Brigham Young was traveling in southern Utah to organize the united order, or the “Order of Enoch.” Smith wrote:

In February, 1874, Pres. Young sent letters to the authorities at Parowan announcing the inauguration of a new order of life designed to bring about greater harmony among the Saints and to do away with selfish feelings, to be called the Order of Enoch. He soon after started from Salt Lake City organizing the people at the different settlements along the road. With others I met this company at Kanarra and at[t]ended the meetings until he reached our place. He spoke with great power upon the all-absorbing theme. *I heard him at an evening meeting in Cedar City describe an apartment in the Hill Cumorah that some of the brethren had been permitted to enter. He said there was great wealth in the room in sacred implements, vestments, arms, precious metals and precious stones, more than a six-mule team could draw.* Upon arriving at our place he organized all into an order with the local authorities in charge. All my property was valued by the appraising committee and taken charge of by the authorities of the order.¹²

Smith sandwiched the cave account (in italics) between President Young’s teaching on the united order and Smith’s record that he turned all his property over to local authorities. It is possible, of course, that Smith suddenly remembered the cave account and included it in his journal where he did, with the result that it misleadingly implies that Young used the story to illustrate a point he was making about consecration. However, if Smith’s sequencing of events is correct, the question arises that if the purpose of Young’s trip to Cedar City was to convert people to the united order and set it in motion, why did he talk about the cave? What makes this account of the cave



Sketch of the Palmyra area showing the Hill Cumorah and Miner’s Hill, which because of a cave located there, was at times confused with the Hill Cumorah. Courtesy of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 21 March 1998.

to the workings and dealings of the Lord with his people here upon the earth.”⁹ Therefore, in reporting the cave story, Brigham Young seems to have been teaching that, as part of the “workings and dealings of the Lord,”¹⁰ the earth’s treasures belong to God, who can either bless or curse them (see Helaman 13:31, 33, 36; Mormon 1:18). It must have

stand out in a journal entry dedicated to consecration is that it pointedly focuses on wealth more than the other accounts do (“great wealth,” “precious metals and precious stones”). Perhaps Brigham Young was using the cave experience to illustrate that God is in charge of his treasures and that he will measure them to the righteous and the unselfish who live the united order.

Grander Principles of the Restored Gospel

Heber C. Kimball appears to have shared the cave account in one instance to teach the early Saints about the miraculous dealings of God in establishing his church. Kimball was speaking to a group of people in the bowery in Salt Lake City when a man by the name of Mills expressed the opinion that “crossing the Plains with hand-carts was one of the greatest events that ever transpired in this Church.”¹³ In response, Kimball admitted that the handcart treks were an important event but were not on the same plane as events such as “the visitation of the angel of God to the Prophet Joseph, and with the reception of the sacred records from the hand of Moroni at the hill Cumorah.”¹⁴ He then cited the cave story as another example of the “greatest events that ever transpired in this Church.”¹⁵ While Kimball did not want to demean the handcart pioneers, he did call attention to what he viewed as the grander dimensions of the restored gospel—visions, revelation, ministering of angels, and additional scripture.

The Word of God

Several accounts preserve the distinctive element of the sword of Laban being visible in the cave (see accounts 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8). At first reading, the sword seems even more mystical than the cave itself. But it too can reveal an important doctrinal teaching that may have been significant to early Saints. In scripture a sword is often a symbol of the word of God (see, for example, Ephesians 6:17).¹⁶ In the five cave accounts cited above, the sword’s final resting place was either on the table with the plates or lying across them unsheathed, almost in an obvious attempt to equate the sword with the plates. A possible interpretation is that the word of God that had just been translated from the gold plates is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12), an image that would have a powerful effect on the minds of people in this last dispensation (see Alma 31:5).

Accounts 4, 5, and 7 include the detail of a message being associated with the sword. The accounts differ as to whether this message was written on the sword (as in Brigham Young’s account) or was related by an angelic messenger (the Wilford Woodruff and Elizabeth Kane accounts).¹⁷ Regardless of the form of communication, the message was essentially the same: it was a message of conflict. Elder Woodruff’s account states that “a Messenger who was the keeper of the room informed them that that sword would never be returned to its scabbard until the Kingdom of God was Established upon the Earth & until it reigned triumphant over Evry Enemy.”¹⁸

It is apparent that several of the early brethren viewed Joseph’s receiving the plates at the hill as the beginning of a war between good and evil.¹⁹ The unsheathed sword may therefore have been a sign that the struggle that began at Cumorah was still going on and that with the completed translation of the plates, the side of righteousness had just gained a powerful weapon in the war against evil—the Book of Mormon. It seems very fitting that the Lord, also known as the “man of war” (Exodus 15:3), would want Joseph Smith and others to know that this mortal experience is indeed a war and that He will conquer the enemies of righteousness. This may have reassured the Saints that divine help was on their side. Within the context of then-current events, namely, severe persecution of the fledgling church, the sword served as an effective teaching tool to emphasize that the Lord’s side would be victorious despite the apparent overwhelming odds against it.²⁰

While the cave accounts may stir questions about the Hill Cumorah, perhaps the more important issue is what the firsthand witnesses may have learned from their encounters with the cave and, in turn, how their experiences were used to teach others. It is apparent from the existing records that many of the early church leaders viewed the cave experience as a legitimate event, whether an actual physical experience or a visionary one. By looking at the accounts and the context in which they were shared, one can see that regardless of the metaphysical nature of Cumorah’s cave, it has served to teach important gospel principles—principles such as God’s miraculous dealings with man, his dominion over all things, consecration, and continuing revelation. ■

- longer quotations, and more comprehensive citations to the many reprints of the early documents could have been included, but space constraints did not allow it. I chose many of the accounts not only because they will interest readers of this journal but also because they have become meaningful and memorable to me, since I visited the Hill Cumorah many times during the decade that my family and I lived in upstate New York.
3. James Gordon Bennett, "Mormonism—Religious Fanaticism—Church and State Party," *New York Morning Courier and Enquirer*, 31 August and 1 September 1831. His original article was reprinted, summarized, paraphrased, or embellished by many newspapers. A partial list includes the following: *Vermont Gazette*, 13 September 1831 (adapted and paraphrased); *Cleveland (OH) Herald*, 15 September 1831 (reprinted); *Boston Christian Register*, 24 September 1831 (reprinted); *St. Johnsbury (OH) Farmer's Herald*, 23 October 1831 (paraphrased, with additional material from other sources) and 18 January 1832 (reprinted, with corrections); and *New York Churchman*, 4 February 1832 (paraphrased, with corrections). It also appeared in the *Salem (MA) Gazette* in late 1831 or early 1832 and the *Philadelphia U.S. Gazette* in January 1832. I have not been able to track down all the precise dates.

A modern reprint can be found in Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on 'The Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies* 10/3 (Spring 1970): 353–64. Arrington also provides additional glimpses from entries in Bennett's diary. For 7 August 1831, Bennett noted "the Golden Bible Hill where there is a hole 30 or forty feet deep into the side—6 feet diameter—dug among and the chest fled his approach." He also added to his description that the hill had "several fine orchards on the east—and fine farms on the west."
 4. Arrington, "Bennett's 1831 Report," 359.
 5. Arrington, "Bennett's 1831 Report," 360; see 360–63.
 6. Letter VII appeared in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1/10 (July 1835): 155–59 and *Times and Seasons* 2/12 (15 April 1841): 377–80. Letter VIII appeared in *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2/11 (October 1835): 195–202 and *Times and Seasons* 2/13 (1 May 1841): 391–97. These letters, or lengthy portions of them, were reprinted in several other publications as well, including the early church magazine *The Gospel Reflector* and even some non-LDS newspapers. Extracts appeared in a pamphlet by Orson Pratt titled *An Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: 1840), beginning on page 8.

All the letters were reprinted in Liverpool in 1844 in a pamphlet titled *Letters by Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps on the Origin of the Book of Mormon and the Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Cowdery's description of the Hill Cumorah begins on page 34. The pamphlet is available in digital form via the catalog of Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library in Provo, as are most of the other printings.
 7. Cowdery, "Rise of the Church," Letter VII, 158.
 8. Cowdery, "Rise of the Church," Letter VII, 159.
 9. Cowdery, "Rise of the Church," Letter VIII, 195–96.
 10. Cowdery, "Rise of the Church," Letter VIII, 197.
 11. Orson Pratt, "The Hill Cumorah; or the Sacred Depository of Wisdom and Understanding," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 28/27 (7 July 1866): 417–19.
 12. Pratt, "Hill Cumorah," 417.
 13. Pratt, "Hill Cumorah," 418.
 14. Pratt, "Hill Cumorah," 419.
 15. Andrew Jenson and Edward Stevenson, *Infancy of the Church: An Elaborate and Detailed Description of Persons, Places and Incidents connected with the Early Rise and Progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1889).
 16. Jenson and Stevenson, *Infancy of the Church*, 36–37.
 17. Jenson and Stevenson, *Infancy of the Church*, 39.
 18. George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888). A second edition was published by the *Deseret News* in 1907, with reprintings in 1958, 1964, 1972, and 1986 by *Deseret Book Company*.
 19. George Q. Cannon, *The Latter-Day Prophet: History of Joseph Smith Written for Young People* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1900). This book was reprinted as *A History of the Prophet Joseph Smith for Young People* (Salt Lake City: *Deseret Book*, 1957), with different pagination. The quoted passages are from chapter 4, pages 20–23 in the 1900 edition and pages 21–24 in the 1957 edition.
 20. Susa Gates Young, "A Visit to the Hill Cumorah," *Young Woman's Journal* 12 (January 1901): 18–26. The article includes a C. R. Savage photograph of the hill showing it almost totally cleared of trees.
 21. Young, "Visit to the Hill Cumorah," 20.
 22. Young, "Visit to the Hill Cumorah," 21–22.
 23. Young, "Visit to the Hill Cumorah," 22–23.
 24. Young, "Visit to the Hill Cumorah," 26.
 25. About 40 photographs, including one of the Hill Cumorah, appeared in *Birth of Mormonism in Picture: Scenes and Incidents in Early Church History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), with narrative and notes by John Henry Evans. The caption for the photograph of the hill on page 36 reads, "This is the Hill Cumorah, called 'Mormon Hill' by those who live in the neighborhood. The photograph shown in the cut is without doubt the best ever taken of this historic spot. It shows the road which Joseph must have traveled many times on his visits to the hill. The plates of the Book of Mormon [sic], deposited in a stone box under a stone of considerable size, were found on the west side not far from the top."
 26. Richard Neitzel Holzappel, T. Jeffrey Cottle, and Ted D. Stoddard, *Church History in Black and White: George Edward Anderson's Photographic Mission to Latter-day Saint Historical Sites, 1907 Diary, 1907–8 Photographs* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995).
 27. Quoted in Holzappel, Cottle, and Stoddard, *Church History in Black and White*, 167. Three views of the hill from the north, showing it almost devoid of trees, plus one taken from its summit, are reproduced in the book.
 28. President Ivins's address was reprinted in *Improvement Era*, June 1928, 674–81. The quotation is on page 675. This publication includes a photograph of the Hill Cumorah taken in 1920.
 29. Ivins, "Hill Cumorah," 680–81.
 30. Carl Carmer, *Listen for a Lonesome Drum: A York State Chronicle* (New York: Farrar & Reinhard, 1936), xv, xvii. This book was reprinted, with illustrations by a different artist and with different pagination, by William Sloane Associates in 1950.
 31. Carmer, *Lonesome Drum*, 176.
 32. Carmer, *Lonesome Drum*, 186–87.
 33. E. Cecil McGavin, *Cumorah's "Gold Bible"* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940), iii.
 34. McGavin offers a brief bibliography that does not include any works by the "prominent students of the subject" from which his "facts" apparently derive. It is impossible to know if his extracts are accurately quoted or even if they derive from authentic sources.
 35. McGavin, *Cumorah's "Gold Bible,"* 48–49.
 36. I am certain that other noteworthy items could be added to this bibliography and welcome suggestions from readers. I can be reached via the FARMS office.

Cumorah's Cave Cameron J. Packer

1. The 10 cave accounts presented in this paper are found in William Horne Dame, *Journal of the Southern Exploring Company, 1854–1858, Iron County, UT*, 14 January 1855, Della Edwards Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah; Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:105; Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 5 May 1867, Family and Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter Church Archives); Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, 11 December 1869, 6:508–9; Elizabeth Kane, *A Gentle Account of Life in Utah's Dixie, 1872–73: Elizabeth Kane's St. George Journal* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Tanner Trust Fund, 1995), 75–76; Jesse Nathaniel Smith, *The Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith: Six Decades in the Early West; Diaries and Papers of a Mormon Pioneer, 1834–1906*, ed. Oliver R. Smith (Provo, UT: Jesse N. Smith Family Association, 1970), 217, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University (hereafter BYU Special Collections); Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:37–39; Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Edward Stevenson, 1893), 14–15, BYU Special Collections; David Whitmer, found in P. Wilhelm Poulson, "Interview with David Whitmer," *Deseret Evening News*, 16 August 1878, 2; Orson Pratt, "Cumorah," *The Contributor* 3/12 (September 1882): 357. Orson Pratt often referred to the cave in Cumorah but not with specific reference to Joseph Smith and others entering to return the plates. One of Pratt's accounts is cited in this article. Several of the other references to the cave that are not included in this article are found in *Journal of*

- Discourses*, 14:330–31; 15:182–83; 16:57; 17:30–31; 17:281; 19:218. Another source for Pratt's accounts is supposedly the *Quorum of the Twelve Minutes*, 6 May 1849, but I have not been able to confirm this. Brigham Young's record of that date, however, is interesting to note: "I met with President Willard Richards and the Twelve on the 6th. We spent the time in interesting conversation upon old times, Joseph, the plates, Mount Cumorah, treasures and records known to be hid in the earth, the gift of seeing, and how Joseph obtained his first seer stone" (*Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 6 May 1849, Church Archives). See also *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 May 1849.
- Most of the cave accounts mention Oliver Cowdery as a participant. Although Cowdery is not formally on record as having shared this experience in speaking or writing, there is one obscure line from Cowdery that might refer to the cave experience. In describing his feelings about the Hill Cumorah, Cowdery wrote, "In my estimation, certain places are dearer to me for what they now contain than for what they have contained" (*Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, October 1835, 2:196; emphasis in original).
 - It is interesting that his account differs from the others regarding the exact location of the cave, and yet it should be remembered that Whitmer's statement "not far away from that place" may have been referring to the exact place where the plates were found, and therefore the cave, which was nearby, could have still been in the hill proper. Another possibility is that, for some reason, Whitmer was thinking of Miner's Hill, which is just north of the Hill Cumorah and was said to feature a cave dug by Mormons; see Cameron Packer, "A Study of the Hill Cumorah: A Significant Latter-day Saint Landmark in Western New York" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2002), 59–62.
 - For a review of these missing records, see Monte S. Nyman, "Other Ancient American Records Yet to Come Forth," *JBMS* 10/1 (2001): 52–61.
 - Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:57.
 - Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:218.
 - Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:39.
 - Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:37.
 - Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:38.
 - Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:38.
 - Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:39.
 - Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith*, 217.
 - Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:105.
 - Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:105.
 - Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:105.
 - See also Jeffrey R. Holland, "Therefore, What?" (address given at the 2000 CES Conference, Brigham Young University, 8 August 2000), 2; and Leslie A. Taylor, "The Word of God," *JBMS* 12/1 (2003): 52–63.
 - Account 10, by Orson Pratt, also mentions an angelic guardian.
 - Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 11 December 1869, 6:508–9.
 - Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball: An Apostle, the Father and Founder of the British Mission*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945), 15–17. See also Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:5; George A. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:104; 16:193; and *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 7:622.
 - It is also interesting to note that when Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith on 21 September 1823 and revealed the existence of the Nephite record, "he informed [Joseph] of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence" (Joseph Smith—History 1:45). Perhaps the sword in the cave symbolized that these judgments were at hand.
- The Hill Cumorah Pageant: A Historical Perspective**
Gerald S. Argetsinger
- The Passion Play of Oberammergau* is the world's most enduring and famous play depicting the Passion of Jesus Christ. It has been presented regularly since AD 1634 in Bavaria.
 - Charles W. Whitman, "A History of the Hill Cumorah Pageant (1937–1964) and an Explanation of the Dramatic Development of the Text of America's Witness for Christ" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1967); Randy V. Hansen, "Development of the Cumorah Pageant" (honors thesis, Brigham Young University, 1978); Walter E. Boyden, "The Road to Hill Cumorah" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982); Gerald S. Argetsinger, "Cumorah Pageant," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:347.
- Designing Costumes for the Hill Cumorah Pageant**
Rory R. Scanlon
- See Margot Blum Schevill, *Costume as Communication: Ethnographic Costumes and Textiles from Middle America and the Central Andes of South America in the Collections of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology*, Brown University, Bristol, Rhode Island (Bristol, RI: Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1986), 9.
 - See Ralph Whitlock, *Everyday Life of the Maya* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 44–46.
 - "There is a tendency by some Christians to assume too much from archaeology. Sometimes the words *confirm*, *prove*, *authenticate*, and *substantiate* can be employed. It can be proved that historical conditions were such that Solomon could have been as powerful a king as the Bible says he was; but it does not prove that God gave Solomon wisdom. It can be fairly well substantiated that there was a census when Jesus was born; but this confirmation hardly proves his divinity. No archaeological evidence will ever prove the atonement. It must be recognized that there is a clear separation between historical and theological proof." Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 20.
 - John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992).
 - Joseph L. Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon* (Orem, UT: S. A. Publishers, 1989).
 - See John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon Mapped," in his *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985).
 - See Patricia Rieff Anawalt, *Indian Clothing before Cortés: Mesoamerican Costumes from the Codices* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 9–14.
 - See Ralph Whitlock, *Everyday Life of the Maya* (New York: Dorset Press, 1976), 43.
 - See Henry F. Lutz, *Textiles and Costumes among the Peoples of the Ancient Near East* (New York: G. E. Stechert and Co., 1923), 70. For more contemporary information, see Florence Eloise Petzel, *Textiles of Ancient Mesopotamia, Persia, and Egypt* (Corvallis, OR: Cascade Printing, 1984), 21–28.
 - See Anawalt, *Indian Clothing before Cortés*, 209–14. Also see Margot Blum Schevill, *Costume as Communication* (Bristol, RI: Mark-Burton, Inc., 1986), 13.
 - See Federico Kauffmann-Doig, *Ancestors of the Incas: The Lost Civilization of Peru*, trans. Eulogio Guzman (Memphis, TN: Wonders, 1998), 108–17. See also Raoul D'Harcourt, *Textiles of Ancient Peru and Their Techniques*, trans. Sadie Brown (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1974), 3.
 - See Patricia Rieff Anawalt, "Textile Research from the Mesoamerican Perspective," *Beyond Cloth and Cordage: Archaeological Textile Research in the Americas*, ed. P. B. Drooker and L. D. Webster (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 2000), 214.
 - See Michael D. Coe and Justin Kerr, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), 97.
 - See Mormon 1:8–9; Jacob 1:14.
- A New Beginning for the Pageant: 1948 to 1951**
Harold I. Hansen
- J. Karl Wood was called to direct the Hill Cumorah Pageant in 1939.
 - Thorpe B. Isaacson, in Conference Report, October 1949, 156.
 - Thorpe B. Isaacson, in Conference Report, October 1949, 156–57.
- "Hail, Cumorah! Silent Wonder": Music Inspired by the Hill Cumorah**
Roger L. Miller
- "An Angel from on High," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 13; hereafter *Hymns*.
 - Latter-day Saint children might also think of one of their favorite songs: "The Golden Plates Lay Hidden," *Children's Songbook of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 86.
 - On summer evenings in July and August, thousands gather on the slopes of the Hill Cumorah to