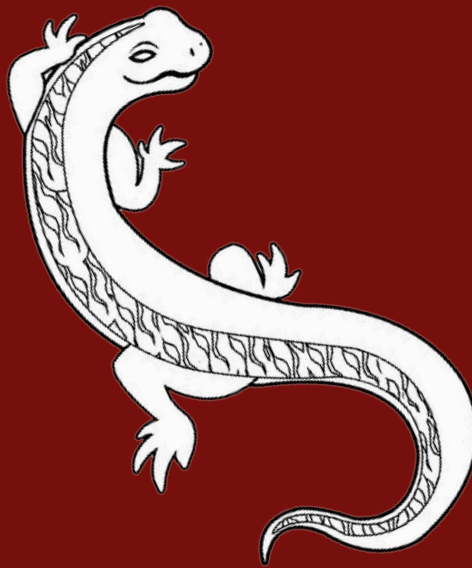


Tracking the White Salamander



**The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder
and Forged Mormon Documents**

By Jerald Tanner

***Includes Confessions of a White Salamander and
The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection***

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Third Edition

1987 [*Tracking*]

1993 [*McLellin*]

(Digital version 2017)

ALSO

***Includes Confessions of a White Salamander and
The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection***

**Utah Lighthouse Ministry
www.utlm.org**



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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

On October 28, 1986, I published the first edition of *Tracking the White Salamander*, which was the first book written concerning the Salt Lake City bombing's case. At that time we were still waiting for Mark Hofmann's trial for the murder of Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets. Subsequent trials were to deal with the question of whether Mr. Hofmann was selling forgeries to the Mormon leaders and other collectors. At the time I first published this book I felt that Mark Hofmann was guilty of both the murders and the forgeries. Nevertheless, I had not heard Mark Hofmann's side of the story (he had refused to talk to both the police and reporters), and I felt that it would not be proper to absolutely declare him guilty before a jury had a chance to decide the question. Consequently, I tried my best not to be dogmatic about Mr. Hofmann's guilt. For instance, on page 30, I wrote: ". . . the evidence against Mark Hofmann seems to be mounting. Prosecutors claim they only revealed a portion of their evidence at the preliminary hearing. It will certainly be interesting to see if Mr. Hofmann's lawyers can successfully counter the prosecution's case when the matter comes to trial."

After the second edition was published, a surprising development occurred in the case. On January 23, 1987, the *Deseret News* reported that Mark Hofmann had entered into a plea bargain arrangement and that he appeared before Judge Kenneth Rigtrup and confessed to the murders as well as selling forged and nonexistent documents—i.e., the Salamander letter and the McLellin collection. As part of the plea bargain Mr. Hofmann agreed to meet with the prosecution and give

details concerning other forged documents he sold to the Mormon Church and other collectors. The same day that Mark Hofmann made his confession to Judge Rigtrup he was sentenced to "one prison term of 5 years to life and three other prison terms of 1-to-15 years." The Judge, however, recommended that he spend the rest of his life in the Utah State Prison. For more details concerning the plea bargain see Appendix F.

From talking to a number of different people I have come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of misunderstanding concerning the Hofmann case. In this book I have attempted to tie the evidence together in such a way that the average person will be able to grasp what is actually going on. The reader will notice that this book provides the first lengthy extracts from Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing. My wife, Sandra, was able to attend all of the sessions of this hearing and compiled an excellent set of notes which have been very helpful to me. While I was only able to attend about half of the proceedings, I was able to listen to a copy of the official tapes of the hearing. The extracts that appear in this publication were taken from these tapes. Besides what I learned at the preliminary hearing and in listening to tapes of the hearing, I have been able to find out a great deal about what was going on from Mark Hofmann's associates and from others who were acquainted with them.

The reader will notice that I have used *italics* and **bold** type for emphasis throughout this book.

Jerald Tanner, March 19, 1987

1. THE SALAMANDER MURDERS

“At face value,” I wrote that evening in my journal, “it is explosive. It is a letter from Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps . . . describing the early origins of the Church in spiritualistic or cabalistic terms.” (Professor Ronald W. Walker, Brigham Young University Studies, vol. 24, no. 4, page 461)

But of course you do not believe in the Salamander, or the green snake. (The Best Tales of Hoffmann, page 57)

As I left the Salt Lake City Post Office on October 15, 1985, I noticed that the east side of Main Street was blocked off by the police. Later I was to learn that a murder had been committed at the Judge Building—less than a block from where I obtained my mail. Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop, had picked up a box in front of his office which turned out to be a “booby-trapped shrapnel bomb.” The *Deseret News*, April 15, 1986, reported:

In testimony Monday, an insurance representative [Janet McDermott] with an office directly across from Christensen’s office testified the force of the bomb blast knocked plaster off the walls of her office and sent glass flying. . . . she immediately ran behind her desk, fearing someone in the hallway had just been shot and that a gunman was in the hallway. “I crouched down,” she said, “I didn’t know what was going on.”

McDermott heard, not the sound of a gunman in the hall, but a “very high pitched crying—like a little child dying,” she said, her voice cracking with emotion.

She walked out into the hall and found Christensen lying half in, half out of his office doorway. His chest was bloody. The crying noises she had heard were coming from Christensen, but they were much deeper now.

The amount of gun powder used in the pipe bomb together with the nails which were taped around the outside of the pipe insured that Christensen would not survive the blast.

“He was obviously dead,” said Battalion Chief Lamont Epperson, Salt Lake City Fire Department. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 16, 1985)

It soon became apparent that the victim was the same man who bought the notorious “White Salamander Letter”—a letter which proved to be embarrassing to the Mormon Church.

Later that morning another package exploded killing Kathleen Sheets. This package was addressed to her husband, J. Gary Sheets who was also a bishop in the Mormon Church. Mr. Sheets “had helped fund research that authenticated the [Salamander] letter” (Ibid.). Since my wife, Sandra, and I had been the first ones to print extracts from the Salamander letter, we became somewhat concerned about our safety. The next day a bomb exploded in a car less than two miles from our house. Mark Hofmann, who sold the Salamander letter to Mr. Christensen, was critically injured in this blast. By this time we began to seriously consider the possibility that there was a systematic conspiracy to wipe out those who were bringing out information which was embarrassing to the Mormon Church. Because of our connection with the Salamander letter we were deluged with phone calls from the news media and others who were concerned about our safety or just wanted to find out what was going on in Salt Lake City. The next day (October 17) the *Deseret News* reported a surprising development: “. . . police say Hofmann is considered not just a third victim but also a prime suspect in the Tuesday killings, and others may be involved as well.”

Although Mr. Hofmann’s defense attorney later announced that Hofmann passed a lie detector test concerning the bombings, he has never allowed police to conduct such a test or even to question his client. While Mark Hofmann was in the hospital recovering from the blast, he said that he wanted to talk to the police. It was felt by police that he was going to make a confession. Detective Jim Bell testified at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing that he “received a call from my sergeant . . . that Hofmann wanted to confess.” Before detectives were able to listen to Hofmann’s statements, however, his attorney arrived and convinced him not to talk about the bombings. While police called Mark Hofmann the

“prime suspect” in the case, no murder charges were filed against him in 1985. A federal grand jury did indict Mr. Hofmann “on one count of possession of an unregistered Action Arms Ltd. Uzi machine gun” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 7), but Hofmann pleaded “not guilty.” This charge is not related to the bombings but came from evidence gathered in the investigation which followed.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1986, we reported that Mormon document dealer Mark Hofmann was not only a suspect in the October 15th Salt Lake City bombing’s case but that police were also investigating the possibility that Mr. Hofmann had been selling forged documents to the Mormon Church. On February 4, 1986, a statement was released to the news media which contained this information:

The Salt Lake City Police Department, the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Department and the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office today announced the culmination of a three-and-a-half-month investigation into the bombing deaths of Steven F. Christensen and Kathleen W. Sheets.

Mark W. Hofmann has been charged with two counts of first-degree homicide, a capital offense, and 26 other counts.

In the formal complaint, (*The State of Utah, Plaintiff, v. Mark W. Hofmann, . . .*), Mr. Hofmann was accused of stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from Mormon Church leaders and other unsuspecting individuals through the sale of forged or nonexistent documents. On April 5, 1986, the *Deseret News* reported that Mark Hofmann “was charged Friday with an additional four counts of theft by deception stemming from several transactions, some of which involved early Utah currency and a promissory note from Jim Bridger.” Before Hofmann was officially charged with the crimes (i.e., prior to February 4, 1986), some of his supporters believed that his lawyers would call for a preliminary hearing to be held within ten days and that the charges would be dismissed. This all turned out to be wishful-thinking.

In April 1986 a preliminary hearing began for Mark Hofmann which lasted into May and was called “the most complex and lengthy preliminary hearing in Utah history” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 13, 1986). On May 22, 1986, Judge Paul G. Grant decided that Mark Hofmann should be bound over for trial. In a statement issued by the Court, Judge Grant stated:

After a review of each of the 30 alleged counts in the five Informations before the court and the careful evaluation of all of the evidence admitted in these matters

IT IS THE FINDING of the Court that there is probable cause to believe that all the crimes have been committed and there is probable cause to believe that the defendant committed each of the crimes as alleged.

ULM’S INVESTIGATION

Nineteen months before local and federal investigators began working on the Salt Lake bombing’s case, Utah Lighthouse Ministry began its own investigation concerning the authenticity of the documents Mark Hofmann was selling the Mormon Church and other collectors. In this inquiry we obtained information from Washington, D.C. and ten different states. We even interviewed a convicted murderer at the Utah State Prison.

Our investigation began in March 1984 just after we were given extracts from the so-called Salamander letter. Sandra and I had been acquainted with Mark Hofmann for a number of years before he “discovered” this controversial letter. The first recollection I have of actually meeting Mr. Hofmann was in 1980. Recently I learned, however, that he may have been in our bookstore on June 16, 1978. On that day a young man came in and showed Sandra a copy of the Second Anointing—a highly secret ritual which was frequently performed in the early Mormon temples but is seldom even mentioned today. He claimed it had belonged to his grandfather and had come down through the family. Stamped at the top of the paper were the words “SALT LAKE TEMPLE,” and next to this was a handwritten notation which read: “Destroy this copy.” The man said he felt we should have a photocopy of it. He stressed that his family would be very unhappy if they thought that he was turning it over to us and he claimed that he did not dare reveal his name to us because he belonged to a very prominent Mormon family. Sandra thought that this man was somewhat thinner than Mark Hofmann is today and also that his hair was lighter. Nevertheless, she remembers that he would probably have been about the age that Hofmann was at that time.

In talking with a writer who was doing research concerning Mr. Hofmann’s activities, I learned that investigators were looking into a document concerning the Second Anointing ceremony which A. J. Simmonds had purchased from Mark Hofmann. Mr. Simmonds was kind enough to send me a photocopy of the document and I compared it to the copy that had been given to Sandra. I found that the two were identical. Simmonds revealed that he bought the document from Hofmann for \$60 in October 1979—over a year after Sandra was given the photocopy. If Mr. Simmond’s recollection

SALT LAKE TEMPLE

Dear Bro. :— having the authority of God,
I pour this holy anointing oil upon your head, & anoint you
a King & a priest unto the Most High God to rule
& reign in the House of Israel forever.

I bestow upon you all of the rights, blessings, &
authorities appertaining unto the Holy Priesthood for the
building up of the Kingdom of God on earth.

By virtue of this anointing I seal you up unto
eternal life wherein nothing but the unpardonable sin
of shedding innocent blood or consenting thereto by
denying the Holy Spirit may deprive you of this
promise & blessing. Thou shalt be exalted in the
Celestial Kingdom of God & shall dwell with
the patriarchal ^{family} order of God for ever.

With this exaltation I ordain you an
equal in the order of the everlasting priesthood
with the gods, & all the holy angels your
fellows. Your kingdom & power & glory shall have
no end. Your righteous seed shall be from everlasting
to everlasting & shall continually sing praises unto
you world without end.

All of this I lawfully do, by right of the
Holy Priesthood, in the name of the Father & of
the Son & of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

is correct, Mr. Hofmann must have been the one who brought the document to Sandra. Simmonds seemed to recall that Hofmann told him at the time that he had already given a copy of the document to the Tanners.

Investigators are apparently skeptical concerning the authenticity of the document. The fact that the words "SALT LAKE TEMPLE" are stamped at the top causes me to doubt its validity because Hofmann used rubber stamps in some of his other forgeries. However this may be, Mr. Hofmann's plan seems to have been to obtain publicity for the document by getting us to publish it. If this were the case, he must have been disappointed. Since we had no pedigree for the document and didn't even know the name of the person who gave it to us, we did not feel safe to use it in any of our publications. Except for a few copies we gave to scholars who were interested, it has remained in our files since 1978. One can only speculate on what might have happened if we had taken the bait. Perhaps Mr. Hofmann would have used us as a publisher for his documents. As it turned out, however, the Mormon leaders became the ones who broke the news concerning most of his important "discoveries" at press conferences which they held. As Hofmann became more involved in dealing with the Church, he naturally would have been worried that Church leaders would find out that he had sold some of the secret temple ritual to Mr. Simmonds. This information could have had a very bad effect on his document business with the Church. I have been told that he begged Simmonds not to reveal his part in the transaction.

As I have indicated earlier, I first became acquainted with Mark Hofmann in 1980. Just after he discovered the Anthon transcript (a sheet of paper which is supposed to contain the actual characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon), Mr. Hofmann came to our store and discussed the discovery. Although he had served as a Mormon missionary in England, it soon became evident that he did not fully trust the Mormon leaders. He said, in fact, that he was suspicious that the Church might be bugging his phone. He did not claim, however, to have any real evidence about the matter. At that first meeting I had a minor disagreement with Mark Hofmann. I had photographically reproduced a xerox copy of the Anthon transcript and Mr. Hofmann felt that I should have consulted with him before publication. He believed that he had some manuscript rights in the document and that no one could reproduce it without his permission. I informed him, however, that merely possessing a document does not give a person any special manuscript rights and that anyone could reproduce it without his permission.

In spite of this disagreement, Mr. Hofmann was very polite. Sometime later he came back to the store and said that he had done research on the matter and found that my statements were correct. He referred to the lawsuit that Andrew Ehat had filed against me and Sandra for copyright violation when we reproduced portions of the William Clayton journals. He indicated that he felt Mr. Ehat had no manuscript rights and was really off base in bringing a lawsuit. (This lawsuit was finally dismissed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.)

In the years that followed our first meeting Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the latter part of November 1983 I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated October 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris' letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris was supposed to have written that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a "white salamander" in the bottom of the hole "transfigured himself" into a "spirit" and "struck me 3 times."

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some revealing extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. I was very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of compiling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, I made a discovery that shook me to the very core. I found that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in *Mormonism Unveiled*. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad "which immediately transformed itself into a spirit" and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found just two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit (see *Mormonism Unveiled*, pages 273, 275 and 276).

Some years before I had encountered similar evidence of plagiarism in Joseph Smith's *History of*

Tulungwa Oct. 27 1829

Dear Sir

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can - Joseph Smith for first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property in the case of that work I approach Joseph & work him in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together he says I have not been with out assistance but can not say more only you better find out the next day I take the stone & Smith by the stone & he says Joseph can see any thing he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees spirits here with great clarity of vision morning it was spirits who brought up such because Joseph made no attempt on their knowing of latter I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I see in every particular says he the spirits are deceived so I through back the dollar in the full of the year 1827 I have Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true I found it 4 years ago with my stone but only just got it because of the enchantment the old spirit came to me 3 times in the same place & says dig up the gold but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & touch me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole when the spirit says do not lay it down Joseph says when can I have it the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Joseph says he is dead shall I bring what remains but the spirit is gone Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it look to the stone Joseph looks but cannot see what is bring the spirit says I trusted you again look to the stone Joseph looks & sees his wife on the 27 day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible & give Joseph \$50 to remove him

A photograph of page 1 of a letter purported to have been written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps. This letter is known as the Salamander letter.

Joseph says when you visit me I will give
 you a sign he gives me some hieroglyphics I take them to
 Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr Mitchell
 gives me a introduction to Professor Barthow says he
 they are about 1000 Egyptian the same what was used
 in ancient times being me the old book & I will show
 Lyle says it is made of precious gold & is sealed from
 from view says he I can not read a sealed book
 Joseph found some giant silver spectacles with the plates he
 puts them in a old hat & in the darkness reads the words
 & in this way it is all translated & written down - about
 the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with
 Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates
 our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I
 had printed with my own money - space & time both
 prevent me from writing more at present if there is any
 thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it
 Yours Respectfully
 Martin Harris

W. W. Phelps Esq

W. W. Phelps Esq
 Canandaigua N. Y.

A photograph of page 2 of a letter purported to have been written by Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps known as the Salamander letter.

the Church. The Mormon Church leaders had always proclaimed that this *History* was actually written by Joseph Smith himself. My research, however, led me to the conclusion that the largest portion of it had been compiled after his death. I found that later Mormon historians had taken portions of newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed them to the first person so that readers would believe that they were authored by Joseph Smith himself. In agreement with my conclusions, Mormon scholars later admitted that over 60% of the *History* was compiled after Smith's death (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 127-135).

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and *Mormonism Unveiled* reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith's *History*. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a real monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the *Messenger*. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question of forgery by printing the title, "Is It Authentic?" Under this title we wrote:

At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. The serious implications of this whole matter, however, cry out for discussion. If the letter is authentic, it is one of the greatest evidences against the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. If, on the other hand, it is a forgery, it needs to be exposed as such so that millions of people will not be misled [*sic*]. We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.

In the same issue of the *Messenger*, page 4, we made these comments:

Since we have been deeply involved in research having to do with the relationship of Mormonism to magic . . . we were delighted to the report that Martin Harris had written a letter relating to the subject. . . . Some time later, we were told of another letter, written by W. W. Phelps, which seemed to prove the authenticity of the letter attributed to Harris. This letter is printed in Howe's book, pages 273-274. In the letter, Phelps tells of Martin Harris' statements concerning the Book of Mormon. There are some remarkable parallels between the two letters. Both letters refer to the Urim and Thummim as "**silver spectacles**." Both accounts tell of Martin Harris taking a copy of the Book of Mormon characters to "**Utica, Albany and New York**," and both talk of the Book of Mormon language as "**shorthand Egyptian**." Since Phelps' letter is dated January 15, 1831 (less than three months after the letter which was reported to have been written by Harris), it seemed safe to conclude that Phelps used the Harris letter in preparing his own. In all fairness, however, we made another discovery which we feel we must report. Just two pages after Phelps letter, we found a statement written by E. D. Howe which is strangely similar to the "Harris" letter.

On the next page the reader will find a complete text of the Salamander letter. The colored quotations are added from seven publications which resemble portions of the letter. The books and articles quoted are as follows:

1—*Mormonism Unveiled*, by E. D. Howe, 1834

2—*Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1976

3—*New Witness for Christ in America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1951

4—*Tiffany's Monthly, Interview with Martin Harris*, 1859

5—*A.B.C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of "Mormonism,"* by Willard Bean, 1938

6—*Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 1983

7—*Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, by B. H. Roberts, 1930

Palmyra Oct 23d 1830

Dear Sir

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can—Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property (**During the summer of 1824 there was a small leak that soon grew larger. During the fall of 1824 Joseph Smith, sr., and his son, Hyrum, were walling a basement and digging and curbing a well for Martin Harris. 5:35**) in the course of that work I approach Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together he says I have not been with out assistance (**Nor was this the only assistance...he [David Whitmer] found to his surprise that he had accomplished more in a few hours than was usual to do in two or three days. 7:vol.1, p. 126**) but can not say more only you better find out the next day I take the older Smith by the arm (**I took him by the arm 4:169**) & he says Joseph can see anything he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees spirits (**This light of the stone,...enabled him [Joseph] to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits 1:259**) here with great kettles of coin money (**kettles filled with gold and silver 1:237**) it was Spirits who brought up rock (**Joseph, Sen. told me...the large stones...we call them rocks...are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun 1:233**) because Joseph made no attempt on their money I latter dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are greived so I through back the dollar In the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true (**They told me that the report that Joseph, Jun. had found golden plates, was true 1:253**) I found it 4 years ago with my stone (**He found them by looking in the stone 4:169**) but only just got it because of the enchantment (**the enchantment 1:267**) the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold (**after a third visit from the same spirit in a dream he proceeded to the spot 3:vol. I, p. 151**) but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole (**after the plates were taken from their hiding place by Jo, he...looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit 1:275-76**) (**Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers “affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph, or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose. 6:23**) & struck me 3 times (**and struck him...the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods 1:242**) & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole (**thot he would cover the place over 2:31**) when the spirit says do not lay it down (**he had been commanded not to lay the plates down 2:31, footnote 5**) Joseph says when can I have it (**Joseph says, “when can I have it?” 2:31**) the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me (**you have not obeyed your orders...come one year from this day 1:242**) look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Alvin (**bring with you your oldest brother 1:242**) Joseph says he is dead (**he said that he was dead 1:243**) shall I bring what remains (**“Whereas reports have been industriously put in circulation, that my son, Alvin, had been removed from the place of interment 5:34**) but the spirit is gone Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it (**he went to the place and the personage appeared and told him he could not have it now 2:31**) look to the stone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring (**Lawrence...asked him to look in his stone, he looked and said there was nothing; 1:243**) the spirit says I tricked you again (**This rogue of a spirit ...intended it would seem to play our prophet a similar trick 3:vol. I, p. 290**) look to the stone (**he told him to look again 1:243**) Joseph looks & sees his wife (**he looked in his glass and found it was Emma 2:31**) on the 22d day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible—I give Joseph \$50 to move him down to Pa (**He obtained fifty Dollars in money mid hired a man to move him and his wife to pensylvania 2:34**) Joseph says when you visit me I will give you a sign he gives me some hiroglyphics I take them to Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr Mitchel gives me a introduction to Professor Anthon says he they are short hand Egyptian the same what was used in ancent times (**taken by Mr. Harris to Utica, Albany and New York; at New York, they were shown to Dr. Mitchell and he referred to professor Anthon who...declared them to be ancient shorthand Egyptian 1:273**) bring me the old book & I will translate says I it is made of precious gold & is sealed from view says he I can not read a sealed book—Joseph found some giant silver spectacles with the plates (**Joseph Smith, through a pair of silver spectacles, found with the plates 1:273**) he puts them in a old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it is all translated (**he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would apper...Thus was the hol [whole] translated 2:35**) & written down—about the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money—(**The whole expense of publishing an edition of 5,000 copies, was borne by Martin 1:13**) space and time both prevent me from writing more at present if there is any thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

Yours Respectfully
Martin Harris

W W Phelps Esq

The reader will remember that the letter said, “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole.” E. D. Howe’s statement reads as follows: “. . . looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit, . . .” Notice that both accounts use the words “the hole” as well as “spirit” and the words “transfigured himself” resemble “transformed itself”. . .

That Howe’s statement (*Mormonism Unveiled*, page 276) is so much like the one in the “Harris” letter is a little disturbing. Even more disconcerting, however, is the fact that it appears just two pages from a letter by W. W. Phelps which also bears remarkable parallels. . . . As we understand it, the Church’s handwriting expert, Dean Jessee, feels that the signature was penned by Martin Harris, but so far no tests on the paper have been completed. We feel that the letter should be made available to other handwriting experts, and that the public should be informed where the letter was originally obtained. We have heard that there is a red postal mark on the original letter and that the amount of postage is correct for a letter from Palmyra to Canandaigua. Although the average person would have a difficult time forging these things, there are probably a number of people who could do the job. . . .

While we would really like to believe that the letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth.

As soon as I noticed that there were problems with the Salamander letter, I began to realize the serious implications this would have for the study of Mormon history. Prior to Mark Hofmann’s appearance on the scene, the documents we had used in building our case against Mormonism seemed to have a good pedigree. For instance, the Joseph Smith Papyri were rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1967. Although officials at the museum did not acquire the papyri until 1947, they had been aware of them since 1918. The papyri could, in fact, be traced back to the Smith family. The documents which proved that Joseph Smith was tried as a “Glass Looker” in 1826 could be traced back to the jail in Norwich, N.Y. Two men, in fact, signed affidavits that they were discovered in the basement of the jail. Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision, as well as his diaries, could be traced directly to the Church Historical Department where they had been preserved.

When Mark Hofmann came on the scene everything seemed to change. Hofmann was vague about where his finds were coming from, and no one seemed to think of questioning his veracity. The *Deseret News* for October 27, 1985, said that Hofmann’s “reputation regarding documents was impeccable, and his friends

in the historical circle defended it.” It was only after I began to have doubts about the Salamander letter, that I began to realize that Hofmann was not providing pedigrees for his discoveries. While Mormon scholars felt that the Bible in which Hofmann found the Anthon transcript (it was supposed to have been pasted between two pages) came from the Smith family, Hofmann refused to disclose where he had bought the book. Since book collectors sometimes have a policy of checking out every page of a rare book, I would like to have talked to the collector to see if he remembered anything glued between the pages. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann only said that it came from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. When we pressed Hofmann to reveal which descendant (there must be hundreds), he refused to be of any help. Lucy Mack Smith’s 1829 letter, Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter and Martin Harris’ 1873 letter all seem to have no pedigree. In the case of the Salamander letter, I did learn that Hofmann claimed that it came from a man by the name of Lyn Jacobs. I also learned that Hofmann and Jacobs were working together in the document business. Since the documents were all coming from these two men, it was necessary to focus in upon their backgrounds.

Although the money involved in the sale of Mormon documents would provide a sufficient motive for forgery, I began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history by this method. In an article published in the *New York Times*, February 16, 1986, Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

SALT LAKE CITY, February 13 — Court documents indicate that prosecutors will try to prove that a murder suspect here set out to extort hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by forging embarrassing historical documents and then offering to sell them secretly to church leaders. . . .

Prosecutors say that Mr. Hofmann, perhaps with the help of an unknown accomplice to help make the forgeries, set out in the early 1980’s to defraud the church by selling it forged documents that cast doubt on the validity of the Book of Mormon and other aspects of church teachings. . . . Prosecutors speculate that the church officials may have placed most of the documents in their vault without authenticating them because they were regarded as potentially embarrassing to the church.

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors in the Salt Lake County Attorney’s office believe Mr. Hofmann’s goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world’s perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them . . . supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism.

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church's highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings.

Mr. Tanner said it appeared that Mr. Hofmann's growing credibility as a source of documents was putting him in a position where the documents he presented were considered unassailable. If that continued, Mr. Tanner said, Mr. Hofmann "could control the direction of Mormon history."

By August 1984 I was convinced that the evidence against the Salamander letter cast a real shadow of doubt on all the important discoveries Mark Hofmann had made since 1980. On August 22, 1984, I printed the first part of the pamphlet, *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 9 of that publication, I wrote: ". . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980's. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents." In the same publication I wrote the following concerning the Salamander letter: "The more we examine this letter attributed to Harris, the more questions we have about its authenticity" (page 6). I went on to show important parallels between other documents and the Salamander letter. I noted that the parallels to the Joseph Knight account (first published in 1976) seem to be extremely important. On page 7, I told of an interview with Martin Harris which was published in 1859: "The interview in *Tiffany's Monthly* also raises a very serious question about the lack of religious material in the Salamander letter. In the interview, Harris quoted at least five portions of the Bible. He used the words *revelation*, *Moses*, *Scripture* and *Christ* at least once. He used the word *prayed* twice, and mentioned the *devil* four times. The word *angel* or *angels* appears five times. *God* is mentioned

seven times, and the word *Lord* appears ten times. In the Salamander letter all of these words are absent. In fact, there is nothing we can find concerning religion. *Spirits* are mentioned many times in the letter, but they are never linked to God in any way. Instead they are linked to money-digging. They are the guardians of the treasures.

This total lack of religious material seems to be out of character for Martin Harris. A person might try to maintain that Harris was more interested in religion in 1859, but the evidence shows that he was always that way. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 7)

On the following page, I charged that Mr. Hofmann had originally tried to sell the Salamander letter "to the Mormon Church for a large amount of money." Hofmann later told me that it was actually Lyn Jacobs who took the letter to the church. Hofmann seemed willing, however, to admit that he was involved in the decision to sell the letter to the church. In any case, I went on to state:

In the past Mr. Hofmann acted under the theory that the Church will buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. This is very clear from his own account of how he handled the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. In a paper given at the Mormon History Association, Mark Hofmann stated that he did not want "to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church," but he acknowledged that if the Church had wanted him to, he would have promised to never tell anyone about its discovery: ". . . Hofmann later commented: "It surprised me a bit that the Church didn't buy it up quick and stash it away somewhere, . . ." (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 19). . .

However this may be, it is reported that the Mormon Church felt that Hofmann's price was too high on the Salamander letter and refused his offer. The document was later sold to Steven Christensen.

We feel that one of the most important tests of the letter's authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 8)

The day following the publication of *The Money-Digging Letters* (August 23, 1984), Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that

A photograph of Mark Hofmann. Mr. Hofmann was bound over at the preliminary hearing and now faces charges ranging from murder to the sale of forgeries and nonexistent documents.



A photograph of Hofmann's close friend Lyn Jacobs at the preliminary hearing. Jacobs admitted that he had told a false story with regard to the discovery of the Salamander letter. Photo by Al Hartmann of the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

opposition might come from those in the church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of him. Mr. Hofmann tried to explain that he could not reveal the source of the Salamander letter because he had sold it to Christensen. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young's finances that would be embarrassing to the church.

Sandra felt that Mark Hofmann was almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. He did not make any threats, however, nor did he show any sign of being violent. At any rate, Hofmann's explanations certainly did not satisfy me.

On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*:

. . . unusual caution about the [Salamander] letter's genuineness has been expressed by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, longtime evangelical critics of the Mormon Church. . . . The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.

The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the *Deseret News*.

Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful. . . .

Another disturbing aspect, Tanner said, was the letter seemed out of character for Harris. "In the entire text of the letter, there is no mention of religion . . . if it's a forgery, then it's important because there's a document forger out there."

By the time we printed the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, we had received word that the evidence derived from physical testing seemed to indicate that the Salamander letter was genuine. At that time I wrote the following:

Since I have spent years proving that early Mormonism is linked to magic and money-digging, this news should have brought me a great deal of satisfaction. Instead, however, I find myself facing a real dilemma. While the tests and the opinions of noted Mormon scholars seem to indicate that I should relax and enjoy the victory, I still have serious reservations about the document's authenticity. In fact, I find it very hard to believe that the Martin Harris I have learned about from numerous historical

sources could have written the letter. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1985, page 4)

I pointed out in that issue of the *Messenger* that I had recently examined a number of historical sources relating to Martin Harris, and wrote:

These references, from early newspapers up until the time of his death, point to the unmistakable conclusion that Harris could hardly open his mouth without talking about religion. That he could write a letter of over 600 words without mentioning the subject seems highly unlikely. This is especially true since the Salamander letter deals with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and gives ample opportunities to bring up the subject. While it is true that Martin Harris believed in money-digging and the superstitions connected with it, it seems very hard to believe that he would write a prospective convert like Phelps and leave out all the divine elements of the Book of Mormon.

On page 9 of the same issue, I showed that an Episcopalian minister by the name of John A. Clark claimed in 1842 that Martin Harris told him the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in 1827 and that Clark did not remember Harris saying anything about the white salamander that was transformed into a spirit. Instead, Clark related that Harris told him about a dream Joseph Smith had about an "angel of God" who visited him "while he lay upon his bed." It seemed inconsistent to me that Harris would tell this story before the Book of Mormon came forth and then refer to an "old spirit" when he wrote the Salamander letter. In this same issue I expressed the hope that scholars would not "side-step" the issue of the pedigree of the Salamander letter and stated that "Too many of the documents which have recently come forth appear to be like Melchisedec, 'Without father, without mother, without descent, . . .' (Hebrews 7:3)"

On April 28, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the noted document examiner Kenneth Rendell proclaimed that the Salamander letter was authentic. Even the Church Section of the Mormon-owned *Deseret News* (April 28) published an article entitled: "**1830 Harris letter authenticated.**" At the Mormon History Association, Church scholars Dean Jessee and Ronald Walker told of their research which confirmed the authenticity of the letter. The most noted Mormon scholars seemed to completely accept the letter's authenticity.

In the June 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, I wrote the following:

. . . At the outset I will state that I originally approached the Salamander letter with a strong bias

towards its authenticity. . . . No one could have possibly have had a greater desire to prove the Salamander letter authentic, and I doubt that many people have invested the time and effort that I have in sifting the evidence. This letter has been constantly on my mind for well over a year. My desire has been to come up with a definite answer concerning its reliability. At the present time, however, I still find myself with some serious doubts. . . .

When I originally took a stand against the Salamander letter, some people thought that I was just trying to force the Mormon researchers to come out with their research. They felt that as soon as the letter was published I would jump on the band wagon. The truth of the matter, however, is that my statements were made out of a strong conviction, and the release of the letter has done nothing to calm the apprehension I have about the letter's authenticity. At the present time I feel almost alone. Even the Mormon historians accept the letter, and I am under a great deal of pressure to get into step with the scholars. . . .

Before making any final decision with regard to the letter's authenticity, I would like to do further research with regard to a number of items. For instance, I would like to find out if there is any evidence that someone owned the letter before Lyn Jacobs. . . .

In conclusion I should say that although I have serious doubts about the Salamander letter, I still stand behind the thesis we presented in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. I feel that there is very good evidence linking Joseph Smith to magic.

In the same issue (page 13), we stated that if "the letter is a forgery, one is almost forced to the conclusion that it would have to be a recent forgery." We also stated that the forger would probably turn out to be a Mormon. The following comments appeared on pages 9 and 10:

One problem with allowing the suppression of important information concerning the source of discoveries is that it could encourage forgers to enter the Mormon document business. Since there is already a great deal of money involved in these transactions. . . . here would be a temptation to create such documents and palm them off on unsuspecting collectors by merely saying: "I obtained these from a collector in _____." If we allow this type of thing to go on, it will certainly encourage the forgery of Mormon documents. Since these documents have an important affect on the religious beliefs of many people, it is crucial that their pedigree be revealed to historians. . . . This whole business of secret dealings with the Church is very disturbing. While dealers have a right to operate in this way, from a historian's

point of view it is deplorable. We can not see any real reason for all the secrecy that surrounds these transactions.

A CONFRONTATION

The Mormon History Association met in May 1985 in Kansas City. I learned that Lyn Jacobs and Mark Hofmann were at the first session, but they left as soon as the meeting was over and I was not able to question them. I did receive a tip, however, that Lyn Jacobs was going to be staying at Rick Grunder's house in Indiana. After I returned to Salt Lake City, I was able to reach Jacobs on the telephone and asked him where he obtained the Salamander letter. He replied that he could not tell me. I responded, "What are you trying to hide?" While Mr. Jacobs was polite, he refused to give me any information. I told him that I would print the fact that he had refused to reveal where he obtained the letter. He still refused to be of any help and the telephone conversation ended. Consequently, I printed the following in the August 1985 issue of the *Messenger*: ". . . Lyn Jacobs has stubbornly refused to tell where he obtained it."

On August 24, 1985, Sandra and I had the very rare opportunity to speak with both Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs at the same time. After Marvin Hill had given his presentation at the Sunstone Theological Symposium, we found Hofmann and Jacobs at the back of the room. Both men treated us politely and answered some of our questions. I asked Hofmann and Jacobs if it were true that the letter was obtained for only about \$20 from a postmark collector. They indicated that this was true. Since Marvin Hill had indicated that Jacobs may have purchased the letter from a collector by the name of Elwin Doubleday, I asked Mr. Jacobs if this were true. He replied that it was not true. He said he had bought it from another collector and that collector could not remember where he got the document from. I asked him for the name of the collector from whom he obtained it. His reply was that he could not tell me because the collector had told him not to reveal his identity. This, of course, did not ring true. Why would a collector who saw no value in the letter except that it had an early postmark worth \$20 ask that his name not be revealed? Common sense told me that a collector would be happy to have other people know that he had such letters for sale. At any rate, Mr. Hofmann then stated that he had been the one who directed Jacobs to the collector. Hofmann, however, did not reveal the name of the collector. I was

certainly not the only one who was told the false story that the Salamander letter was originally obtained by Lyn Jacobs. Writing in *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 54, Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reported:

It was from a New England postmark collector that Jacobs said he obtained . . . the Salamander letter. . . . Without disclosing his interest in the content of the letter, Jacobs said he purchased it for about \$25, the value of the postmark.

At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Donald Schmidt, former LDS Church Archivist, testified as follows:

A—He [Lyn Jacobs] told me he had obtained it.

Q—Mr. Lyn Jacobs had obtained it?

A—Yes.

Q—He didn't tell you that Mark Hofmann had obtained it?

A—. . . He had obtained it from . . . a source that Mark Hofmann had supplied him.

Q—Did he tell you where that source was?

A—My understanding it was from a stamp or postmark collector in the east.

The noted document dealer Kenneth Rendell testified that he received the same story concerning the origin of the Salamander letter from Mark Hofmann:

A—. . . My understanding was that the letter had been found in the stampless cover collection or stampless cover dealers . . . that Mark Hofmann was not the person who found it but Lyn Jacobs was.

Q—Who related this story to you?

A—Mark Hofmann.

After investigators began raising the question of forgery with regard to the Salamander letter, Lyn Jacobs decided to put some distance between himself and the document. He now claims that it was actually Mark Hofmann who originally purchased the letter. In an interview published in *Sunstone* magazine, Jacobs stated:

JACOBS: Unfortunately, my involvement in the discovery of the Martin Harris letter has been somewhat exaggerated . . . **it was Mark who actually acquired it.** . . . I found out that a dentist in Cortland, New York, had a little group of Palmyra letters dating from the 1830s that might be of historical interest. So I called Mark and gave him that tip. Soon afterwards **Mark purchased the Martin Harris letter** . . .

It was about the middle of December 1983 and I was about to come home for Christmas vacation,

so we waited until I got to Utah to discuss what to do with it. He turned the letter over to me and told me he did not wish to become involved with the publicity he felt the letter would probably generate. (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 15)

When Jacobs was asked if it were true that he “did not see it [the Salamander letter] until Mark showed it to you,” he replied, “Yes.” (Ibid., page 19)

The “dentist in Cortland, New York” has been identified as William Thoman. Dr. Thoman, however, undercuts the entire story by claiming that he never had any dealings with Mark Hofmann after 1982 when Hofmann ran up a bill for \$60 which he never paid. Mr. Hofmann, therefore, could not have obtained the letter from him in late 1983 as Jacobs maintained. At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Lyn Jacobs acknowledged under oath that he had “fabricated” the story that he had obtained the Salamander letter in New England because Mr. Hofmann did not want any publicity:

Q—. . . did you have occasion to tell people that it was—that you were the one who located the item and purchased the item and that Mr. Hofmann was brought in to help you market the item?

A—Unfortunately, that is correct.

Q—And you're doing this under Mr. Hofmann's instruction?

A—Not instructions, under his request. Not his request that I fabricate a story, but that his request that I take full responsibility for the document. That was my decision, to fabricate a story several months later.

In his testimony, Lyn Jacobs told of a strange arrangement Mark Hofmann made with him concerning the Salamander letter:

A—. . . We had another [telephone] conversation after that towards the beginning of December.

Q—What was that conversation concerning?

A—Well, Mark was trying to decide what to do with the letter and we had discussed—first of all, he had mentioned that I had a share in the finding of the letter since I had helped him to apparently, at least, from what I understood from him, that I had helped him to find it in giving him the name and at that time we discussed . . . actually dealing with the letter jointly, since he figured, at that time, that we had both owned it. . . .

Q—Let me ask you this then. Prior to the telephone conversation, the first conversation in November, had you ever heard anything of a so-called Martin Harris letter?

A—Never before.

Q—And had you ever seen anything such as that that he read over the phone to you?

A—I had not.

Q—It's my understanding, at that time, that you were not the person who located the letter in the sense of going to a place and picking it up or purchasing it. Is that correct?

A—That is correct.

Q—In fact, at that time, you didn't even know such a letter existed or where it existed. Is that correct?

A—Not specifically. A Martin Harris [letter] no.

Q—Now, over the phone, on the second phone conversation, the discussion as to the effect that you will have an interest in the document—

A—Um hum.

Q—So at this point, all you knew was Mr. Hofmann had the document. It's one he had obtained. Is that correct?

A—That is correct.

Q—Now, why was it that you obtained an ownership of the document?

A—Well, Mark himself had suggested to me that because I . . . was instrumental in suggesting who it was that he could contact to obtain the letter, that I would be partial owner of it. Since I gave him the clue or the . . . tip, shall we say.

Q—Did he explain to you what he paid for it?

A—I think he mentioned that it was 15 or 20 dollars, something like that. He also mentioned that he had acquired a couple of other covers from this same individual.

Q—Did you have an occasion to see the document?

A—I did, when I got home.

Q—When would that be?

A—Oh, around the 16th of December. I came home for Christmas break.

Q—83?

A—Um hum.

At one point in Lyn Jacobs' testimony, this exchange occurred:

Q—At this time you were still maintaining that it was your document?

A—Well, it was. He had given it to me.

Kenneth Rendell, the expert who had originally authenticated the Salamander letter, learned that Jacobs had changed his story in February 1986. At that time he indicated that there was a "high likelihood" that it was a forgery. In an interview on KUTV, February 6, 1986, Mr. Rendell commented:

. . . given the circumstances now that the history of the letter apparently is changing this week and that the person [Lyn Jacobs] is saying that it originally

came from Hofmann, not from him, and given the circumstances of all these other forgeries, I think whether there is ever any physical evidence to prove it is a forgery, there is a high likelihood that it could be a forgery.

When Mr. Rendell was asked if he was "more suspicious now about the origin of the Salamander letter than you were when you first examined it," he replied: "Certainly I am. There's considerably more information now and considerably more evidence now."

It is now evident that both Lyn Jacobs and Mark Hofmann conspired to hide the truth concerning the origin of the Salamander letter. If Jacobs had knowledge that the letter was forged, he would be as guilty as Hofmann of "THEFT BY DECEPTION." Investigators have apparently not found any hard evidence to that effect. Otherwise, they would have filed charges against him. In any case, Mr. Jacobs claims that he was involved in the sale of the document to Steven Christensen: "I met Steve for the first time at Coordinated Financial Services. By that time, the sale contract had already been written and Mark and I signed it along with a few witnesses. It obligated Steve to pay \$40,000 . . ." (*Sunstone*, page 15). At the preliminary hearing Lyn Jacobs confirmed that the letter was sold for "\$40,000." He went on to say: ". . . we solidified that I was going to get about \$5,000 and some trade . . . items for it." Jacobs was not asked what the value of the trade items amounted to. Therefore, we have no way of knowing how much of the profit Hofmann shared with him.

Since Jacobs was deeply involved with Hofmann and was a party to an erroneous story concerning the origin of the Salamander letter, some have suggested that he may be a co-conspirator with Mark Hofmann in forgery. We find the following in the interview with Jacobs in *Sunstone* (page 19):

SUNSTONE: So as far as you know, no one living can claim to have read it [the Salamander letter] before it came from Mark Hofmann's hands. You don't have any first hand knowledge of its actual origins.

JACOBS: If you're suggesting Mark forged it, it is not possible. Mark Hofmann is not a forger. . . .

SUNSTONE: Some have suggested that you might be a forger.

JACOBS: That's ridiculous. . . . To my knowledge, such a thing has never been perpetrated either by Mark or myself. . . .

Detectives have seriously considered the possibility that there is at least one co-conspirator in the forgeries. Rick Grunder, an associate of both Lyn Jacobs and

Mark Hofmann, revealed the following:

“They [the investigators] asked me who was Mark’s forger. They knew he wasn’t capable of it, so they accused Lynn Jacobs of it. Lynn is very upset. He spent the weekend here in Ithaca with me and I just saw him off to the airport. He feels his life is in tatters.

“The police accused me of making a mysterious round-trip flight into Salt Lake on July 12th, 1985. I’m supposed to have delivered a mystery document to Mark then. . . .

“It’s a crude fake and absurd . . . I’m surprised the police thought it had any validity. I certainly didn’t make any round-trip into Salt Lake in July of ’85. I didn’t forge any documents.” (*Maine Antique Digest*, April 1986, pages 11-12)

In the interview in *Sunstone*, page 19, Lyn Jacobs made some strange statements regarding those who questioned Mark Hofmann’s documents:

SUNSTONE: How do you suppose these questions of forgery arose?

JACOBS: The reasons for that are difficult for me to ascertain except that people just simply don’t like certain documents. . . . It seems to me it’s only when a document becomes particularly offensive to people or in any way controversial that people decide it’s a forgery. What’s the matter with everyone? . . .

SUNSTONE: One of the most outspoken proponents of the forgery theory has been the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. One would think that with their anti-Mormon mission, they would not question the Martin Harris letter’s authenticity without good reason, especially since it supposedly supports their case against the Church. What do they have to gain?

JACOBS: I’ve always wondered that. . . . So often such documents get stashed away; nobody talks about them anymore, and they just sort of fizzle out of public attention. That’s really what started happening to the Martin Harris [letter]. . . . Well the anti-Mormons may have wanted to keep the thing going by claiming it to be a forgery.

The other possibility is that because certain individuals were crying forgery from the beginning, the anti-Mormons may have become apprehensive about using a document in their ministry which might not be authentic. If it were a forgery, it would make them look like fools.

Lyn Jacobs seems to imply that because “certain individuals were crying forgery,” we were extremely cautious about endorsing the Harris letter. Actually,

the truth of the matter is that we were the first to raise the question. Furthermore, Mr. Jacob’s assertion that we wanted to keep the “thing going by claiming it to be a forgery” is almost ludicrous.

In any case, while Sandra and I were talking with Hofmann and Jacobs at the Sunstone Symposium, I asked Mr. Hofmann some very pointed questions that related to the Salamander letter. The answers he gave did not satisfy me, and I felt that Mr. Hofmann knew that I did not believe what he was saying. At one point he looked at me with a sad expression on his face. He seemed to be deeply troubled. It was almost as if he were trying to say, “Please believe what I am telling you.” Unfortunately, I could not believe his answers. They did not square with the facts that I already knew. Although this confrontation was very unpleasant for all of us, I must say that neither Hofmann nor Jacobs showed any sign of vindictiveness.

One question I asked Mr. Hofmann which seemed to really cause a problem was concerning a story he had given to a scholar on December 11, 1983. Hofmann had told him that he was flying back to Massachusetts with a cashier’s check for \$18,000 to buy the Salamander letter. Two days later he claimed there had been a leak concerning the existence of the document and that he would not be able to buy it from the collector or dealer who had it. He, therefore, would have to get someone else to purchase it for him. Since the scholar to whom he told the story was standing right by me, Hofmann apparently felt that it would cause a problem to deny it. Lyn Jacobs was occupied with something else at the time, but Hofmann got his attention and told him that there was something he had never told him before—i.e., he had decided to go back to Massachusetts to buy the document from him. This explanation did not satisfy me. I felt that it was strange that Hofmann would already have the cashier’s check made out for \$18,000 if he had never even discussed the matter with Jacobs. The story just did not ring true.

Now that Jacobs has given his testimony, we have two completely opposite accounts of what was going on. Hofmann claimed that Jacobs had the document back in Massachusetts and that he was planning to fly back and buy it from him. Jacobs, on the other hand, now maintains that Hofmann had the document in Utah and that he saw it for the very first time when he returned from Massachusetts. Now that investigators have declared the Salamander letter a forgery, it is easy to understand why there are conflicting stories concerning its origin.

CHRISTENSEN COULDN'T TESTIFY

As strange as it may seem, the “white salamander” question even found its way into our court trial—the lawsuit that Andrew Ehat brought against us over the William Clayton journals. In the “Pre-Trial Order,” Gordon A. Madsen [Ehat’s lawyer] indicated that he was thinking of calling “Steven Christensen,” the man who bought the Salamander letter and was later killed by a bomb, as a witness against us. In the “Trial Brief” Mr. Madsen wrote:

The deliberateness of defendants is further emphasized by the testimony of Christensen and the defendants that the printing of stolen and unpermissive material has been, and is, a habit with these defendants and is highlighted by the most recent issue of defendants’ publication, *The Salt Lake Messenger*, in which they both advertise the continued sale of the Clayton publication and print excerpts from Mr. Christensen’s [Salamander] letter without permission, knowing full well who owned the document, that the same has not been previously published, and completely disregarding the rights of Mr. Christensen.

At the trial the following exchange occurred between Gordon A. Madsen and myself:

Q—Indeed the forepart of that same *Messenger* has some quotes in it from a letter that hasn’t yet been printed that you acknowledge is owned by Mr. Steven Christensen, doesn’t it?

A—It has quotations from a letter, but that has not been stolen.

Q—But your quotations from it were without any permission from Mr. Christensen, were they?

A—I did not need permission from Mr. Christensen because the owner[ship] of the document is in the family, and it’s the family rights would be the descendant[s] of Martin Harris.

Q—You say in your own article that Christensen is the owner of that document, do you not?

A—Yes, but if you would read the copyright law there is a difference between ownership of the document and ownership of the manuscript rights.

Q—What effort did you make to determine who owned the copyrights in that Christensen letter?

A—I’m sure that it’s been so long that no one would. (*Trial Transcript*, pages 391-92)

Steven Christensen was present at our trial, but because the Judge felt that Mr. Ehat’s lawyer was

wasting so much time on irrelevant material, he was unable to call him as a witness. It was lucky for Mr. Madsen that Christensen could not testify. Madsen had tried to play down the idea of a “Mormon underground” which was secretly circulating sensitive church documents. In our attempt to find material that would nullify Steven Christensen’s testimony, we learned that he was deeply involved in this underground. He had even been dealing with some of the church’s worst enemies—i.e. the Mormon fundamentalists, who teach polygamy and the Adam-God doctrine. We had a list of over 2,000 books and manuscripts which Christensen had in his possession at that time and were prepared to question him concerning how he obtained copies of some of the restricted Mormon documents.

We do not believe that Steven Christensen had any manuscript rights to the Salamander letter, but even if he had, we quoted only a few sentences from it in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. This would fall well within the limits of “fair use,” and therefore would not be considered a copyright violation. Furthermore, if Ehat’s lawyer had pressed the matter further, he would have learned that the extracts we published were obtained even before Steven Christensen purchased the letter. They certainly were not stolen. Mr. Hofmann himself had allowed a scholar to make some extracts from the Salamander letter and these extracts were turned over to us. If Christensen had been called to the stand to give testimony, it would have had a disastrous affect on Mr. Madsen’s attempt to minimize the role of the “Mormon underground.” The whole thing, in fact, would have been very embarrassing for Mr. Christensen.

Steven Christensen seems to have been thoroughly converted to the Salamander letter. Instead of listening to the message of caution which we printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, he wanted to fight us in court. He continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he seems to have eventually come to the conclusion that Hofmann was involved in illegal activities, by this time it was too late. If investigators are correct in their theory, it was Christensen’s continued involvement with Hofmann which led to his untimely death.

In Chapter 6 and also Appendix A the reader will find more information on the Salamander letter.

2. THE CASE AGAINST HOFMANN

Although I do have fun, it's really not as romantic as it sounds. It seems like you always have people who hate you or are mad at you. (Mark Hofmann, Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 17)

"Mock and jeer me, you cursed witch!" said Anselmus, "you are to blame for it all; but the Salamander will catch you, you vile beet!" (The Best Tales of Hofmann, page 58)

As I have indicated earlier, Mark Hofmann has refused to talk to investigators. He has also "refused to discuss the charges with reporters . . ." (*New York Times*, February 16, 1986). At his preliminary hearing he was given an opportunity to say something in his own behalf, but he chose to remain silent. While I do not have Mr. Hofmann's side of the story, it does seem that the prosecution is building a strong case against him. I will, of course, have to wait until the trial before I come to a final conclusion.

When I first began my investigation into the documents and activities of Mark Hofmann, I realized I was taking a very unpopular course. Mormon scholars felt that I was unjustly persecuting Mr. Hofmann. The only one who gave much encouragement was A. J. Simmonds, manuscripts librarian at Utah State University. Ironically, Mr. Simmonds, like Sandra and myself, is also a non-Mormon.

Although I had no reason to fear that Mr. Hofmann was dangerous, I knew that any time a person tries to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation. If the police are correct in their theory that Mr. Hofmann is guilty of murder, Sandra and I may have been in real danger. Although I do not want to pass judgment until I have heard all the facts, if Hofmann is the type of man who would engage in bombings, then the thing that probably saved us from his wrath was that hardly anyone believed my findings. While I have uncovered some important circumstantial evidence indicating fraud, I could not find the hard evidence necessary to convince either historians or the police. In the pamphlet *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, I told of my frustration:

In my investigation I have been seriously handicapped by secrecy. . . . If I had investigative power like the FBI or could subpoena documents, . . . I could force Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann to reveal where the Salamander letter was obtained, . . .

By the summer of 1985 I felt I had almost exhausted all my human resources. Although I had prayed about the matter from the beginning, I began to fervently seek God's help. Then a remarkable thing happened. A young man felt the burden of prayer and began to pray with me. He became extremely interested in my problem with the documents and prayed earnestly that God would just open up the way so that the truth about the matter would be revealed.

In my wildest imagination I would never have thought that an investigation that would lead to the truth concerning Mark Hofmann's documents would be set into motion by the explosion of three bombs. Although I do not believe that God planned the bombings (they undoubtedly came from the wicked heart of man), the result seemed to me to be a real answer to prayer. While I had previously complained because I did not have "investigative power like the FBI," it soon became apparent that Mark Hofmann was the subject of an intensive investigation. Mike Carter wrote: "The investigation is one unparalleled in Utah law-enforcement history. The number of agencies involved and the manpower assigned to work the case is unprecedented" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 18, 1985). The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Salt Lake City Police Department, the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office, the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office and the FBI. A U.S. grand jury also heard testimony concerning the case, and the laboratories of both the FBI and the Secret Service were used to perform tests on the documents. Mr. Hofmann's car, home and safety deposit boxes were thoroughly searched and many documents were confiscated by the police.

My friend had specifically prayed that some experts on documents would take an interest in the Salamander letter. In the months that followed the bombings some of the top experts in the country were called upon to

examine Mark Hofmann's documents and the ink that was used in their production. Microscopes have been carefully focused on the most important documents, and the result is that charges have been filed against Mr. Hofmann. The complaint against him states that eleven documents which he sold the Mormon Church and other collectors are forgeries:

All of the above documents were given to George Throckmorton, an experienced questioned documents examiner formerly employed with the Utah State Crime Laboratory, presently employed by the Utah Attorney General Office.

Mr. Throckmorton has done extensive scientific analysis on all of the documents described above and has concluded that none are authentic. (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 6)

The Salamander letter is among the documents listed as forgeries.

WHEELING & DEALING

To understand Mark Hofmann's problems it is necessary to know something about his profession as a document dealer. Mr. Hofmann seems to have begun his career by collecting coins. As strange as it may seem, the whole thing started just after an explosion and, as I have already shown, ended in the same way. The following information appeared in the magazine section of the *London Times*, March 30, 1986:

According to Bill Hofmann, his son Mark was seriously injured when, at the age of 12, he was playing with a chemistry set. Mark and his cousin were mixing a potion over a small burner when the test tube exploded. Mark was cut about the head by flying glass—his neck still bears the scars—and spent two weeks in bed recovering. During his convalescence he took up coin collecting.

In an interview published in *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16, Mark Hofmann gave this information concerning himself:

HOFMANN: When I was a kid I collected coins. I made the transition from coins to Mormon memorabilia when I was about 12. That's when I bought my first Mormon item: a \$5 Kirtland Safety Society note (you know, the bank that folded). It was signed by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.

REVIEW: How much did you have to pay for it?

HOFMANN: At that time it was going for \$250.

REVIEW: You had \$250 to spend when you were 12?

HOFMANN: Well, even then I did a lot of wheeling and dealing. I can't say I paid straight cash for it. I probably traded half my coin collection for it. But that was the transition from coins to Mormon items. I collected Mormon money for awhile. For example, I picked up a \$50 Kirtland note at an antique shop here when I was about 15 or 16. That was a pretty good find. I paid nothing near what it was worth. Then gradually I moved into Mormon documents, signed items. While on my mission to Bristol, England, I bought several early copies of the Book of Mormon in old bookstores. After my mission I went to Utah State University. I was in the pre-med program, planning to be a doctor. Well, the week before the medical admissions test—the MCAP—I found the Anthon transcript. That somewhat disrupted my studies for the week so I put off taking the test. In fact, I didn't end up taking the test at all. So I'm doing this as a full time profession now.

In the same interview (page 17), Mark Hofmann said that "any Joseph Smith document, signed by Joseph himself, is a thousand dollar item." Mr. Hofmann went on to say that he was not concerned with pleasing historians and that "I'm in this for the money." Hofmann probably bought and sold many genuine documents before he announced the discovery of the Anthon transcript—a document investigators believe is a forgery. Lyn Jacobs commented: "Another reason for Mark's success is the sheer volume of material he handles. He had found several documents and books before his first major find, the Anthon transcript. These items were rather insignificant things and only rarely added to our knowledge of history" (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 11). Mr. Jacobs went on to say:

You meet a lot of contacts in bookstores, libraries, etc. That's how I met Mark . . . He's been doing it for the past twelve years, so it's not surprising he has a network that is just incredible. Mark has friends all across the country and keeps in constant contact with most of them. That's why he had two home phones and a phone in each of his cars.

Mark Hofmann not only dealt with Mormon documents, but he had moved into many other fields as well. The *Deseret News* for October 18, 1985, reported:

A man who asked not to be identified said Hofmann bought the one-page document, called "Oath of a Freeman," in New York sometime within the past year and has been trying to sell it for approximately \$1 million.

"Oath of a Freeman" is recognized by historians as the first document printed on a printing press by American colonists. However, until Hofmann's discovery, no one was sure if an original copy existed.

Another source said in addition to the "Oath of a Freeman," Hofmann has collected letters from some important early American figures that he planned to sell, including documents written by Edgar Allan Poe and Abraham Lincoln.

Hofmann dealt heavily in early American books and documents. "The Mormon stuff is probably only 20 percent of his business activities," the source said.

It was later reported that Mr. Hofmann said the Oath of a Freeman was actually worth 1.5 million dollars! Investigators now believe that it is a forgery. On November 8, 1985, the *Los Angeles Times* gave this information:

"There were many, many deals," said Alvin Rust, a Salt Lake coin collector who often financed Hofmann's purchases. "It started with early Mormon documents, but that wasn't all. There were Abraham Lincoln deals, there were Charles Dickens deals, there were Van Gogh deals."

The truth is, Hofmann's activities were something of a phenomenon in this city. The prospect of big profits attracted some of Salt Lake's most prosperous business leaders and excitement of his document discoveries stirred the intellectual community. . . .

It was, for Salt Lake, a subterranean economy that bustled with continuous deals but remained largely out of public view. The man who created the economy was himself elusive, appearing at his associates' doorsteps at odd hours and then disappearing for days. . . . Hofmann managed to establish great trust between himself and his many business partners. "I trusted him implicitly," Rust said. . . .

"It was a market that Mark created, and then he manipulated it, playing buyers off each other," said Allen Roberts, one of the founders of the Sunstone Foundation, a liberal Mormon group. "First the deals were in the hundreds of dollars, then the thousands, then the hundreds of thousands. People were getting greedy." . . .

In recent years, the Mormon emphasis on history has led to several agonizing episodes; . . . some researchers who believe it is proper to reveal quirks of the founders have complained of church officials attempting, as one put it, "to intimidate legitimate

scholarship." . . . this conflict has brought Mormon leaders into close contact with Hofmann, the man who seemed to own the franchise on the document business. Hofmann traded or sold so many documents to the church that he regularly bypassed the archives department and dealt directly with the highest of the General Authorities, the inner circle of men who watch over the church and its 5.8 million members.

From all appearances Mark Hofmann had a very successful document business. Not too long before the murders, he "put down \$5,000 in earnest money on a \$550,000 Cottonwood home" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 47). While Hofmann had made tens of thousands of dollars on some of his early document deals, in 1985 he began dealing in transactions involving hundreds of thousands of dollars. In fact, as I have already mentioned, he claimed that a copy of the "Oath of a Freeman" was worth \$1,500,000. As the amount of money involved in the deals increased, so did the concern of the investors. Before the bombings, some of the investors found that Hofmann was misrepresenting how he was using their money. Pages 23-24 of *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, contain some very revealing information concerning Hofmann's document dealings:

On May 9, 1985, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement with Thomas Wilding wherein Thomas Wilding agreed to put up \$160,000.00 in order to have Mark Hofmann purchase a Charles Dickens "Haunted Man" manuscript. . . . Later, Mark Hofmann assured Mr. Wilding that the manuscript described above had been purchased by Mr. Hofmann and re-sold to an investor in Japan. Your affiant has learned from Justin Schiller, that Mr. Schiller has possession of the above described manuscript due to the fact that Mr. Schiller invested \$170,000.00 of his own funds to purchase the manuscript. Mark Hofmann never gave the monies given to him by Mr. Wilding to Mr. Schiller for the acquisition of the manuscript. . . . Thomas Wilding . . . gave the following information: On September 12, 1985, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement to purchase the "Oath of a Freeman" from Lynn Jacobs in New York State. This is the first time Mr. Wilding had heard the name, Lynn Jacobs. Mr. Wilding gave Mark Hofmann \$170,000.00 in order to purchase the "Oath of a Freeman" from Lynn Jacobs. The next day, Thomas Wilding tried to verify if Mark Hofmann had traveled to New York and found that he had not. It has been determined by your affiant that the monies received by Mark Hofmann in this above described transaction did not go to Lynn Jacobs . . .

On the evening of September 13, 1985, . . . Syd Jensen, Tom Wilding and Mark Hofmann met in Tom Wilding's office. Mark Hofmann admitted to Mr. Wilding and Jensen that the "Oath of a Freeman", had not been purchased . . . Mr. Hofmann further confessed that the money purported to be obtained by Mr. Hofmann to purchase the Charles Dickens' manuscript as described above had not gone for the purpose intended.

On November 7, 1985, the *Deseret News* reported:

At least four different individuals or groups apparently gave unknown hundreds of thousands of dollars to Mark Hofmann to purchase a Charles Dickens manuscript, "The Haunted Man."

An individual involved with one group told the *Deseret News* he is aware of two other groups or individuals who invested last spring. . . .

A minority investor who, in July, gave Mark Hofmann an undisclosed amount as "the brick he needed to complete his house" in purchasing "The Haunted Man" said he concluded from media reports about another group of investors that he may be a victim of double dealing.

Arizona business man Wilford Cardon was conned into investing \$110,000 into "The Haunted Man" manuscript (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1986).

One major deal that Mark Hofmann was supposed to have been working on at the time of the bombings had to do with a collection which was supposed to have been owned by an early Mormon Apostle by the name of William E. McLellin. Investigators now believe that Mr. Hofmann never had such a collection. In any case, Hofmann persuaded Alvin Rust to invest "\$150,000 to purchase the documents" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 23, 1985). Hofmann, however, used this money for other purposes. Later he told Steven Christensen—the man who was killed in the first bombing—about the McLellin collection and "Christensen, solicited the help of Elder Hugh Pinnock of the LDS First Quorum of the Seventy in securing a \$185,000 loan from First Interstate Bank for the purpose, Hofmann told Pinnock and Christensen, of purchasing the McLellin collection" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 47). We will have a great deal more to say about the McLellin collection later in this book.

As Hofmann found himself further in debt, he must have been very concerned that his fraudulent business deals would become known. Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin observed:

For Mark Hofmann, thirty, the screws were being turned in several potential business deals that applied intense financial and psychological pressure. . . .

By September, after having already paid \$18,000 toward his debt to Rust, Hofmann wrote a check for \$132,000 to Rust. The check bounced. Rust says that Hofmann asked for more time to complete the transaction and added, "I'm losing everything. They're coming to take my home and my car."

"He was nearly in tears," says Rust, who agreed to give Hofmann until November 1 to pay off his debt but warned Hofmann that he would retain an attorney to begin debt collection if payment was not made by that time. (Ibid., pages 42 and 47)

Alvin Rust testified as follows at the preliminary hearing:

A—This occurred at the Salt Palace. . . . Mark came running in to my table and indicated that it was urgent . . . that he would talk to me.

Q—Now, had you seen him or had a conversation with him in between the time that you had tried to collect on the check and this date?

A—I don't know if I called him on the check bouncing or not. . . . I don't recall.

Q—Did you say he came running in to see you?

A—Yes.

Q—What was his demeanor or condition?

A—Well, he was very distraught. He was very upset. I had never seen Mark in, under the trauma of, of his behavior . . . like that. He was desperate. . . .

Q—. . . did he have a conversation with you?

A—Well. . . . I followed him out. He said, "I need to see ya. It's very important." . . . I followed him out, and we went over to a table . . . and he threw his hands up and he said, "I'm losing everything. I'm losing my home. I'm losing my car. They're coming to lock my house down." He says, "I, I'm losing everything." And . . . I said, "Well wait a minute, Mark. Calm down. What's going on?" And he says, "I have a bank foreclosing on me for \$185,000 and I . . . gotta . . . raise some money . . . to stop them from taking over my home and everything that I have."

An investor in "The Haunted Man" was very upset with Mark Hofmann, and on the day before the bombings (October 14), demanded that Hofmann meet with him and "bring to the meeting money toward

repayment of the investment, title to his car and a legal description of his home so a lien could be placed on them as security for his investment.

At 3 p.m. Hofmann met with the investor and his attorney, but failed to bring the money, title, or property description. After a brief meeting, Hofmann agreed to bring the paperwork by the attorney's home that evening. Without calling to cancel, Hofmann failed to take the papers to the attorney that night. (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 49)

Mark Hofmann had always been concerned that someone was spying on him. As I indicated earlier, in my first conversation with him he suggested that the Mormon Church might be bugging his phone. Over three years later (December 15, 1983), Mr. Hofmann told me that when he was attempting to place a telephone call late one night, he heard a strange voice on the line which said something like, "Why is he calling out so late?" He indicated that he feared that someone was spying on his document business. He commented also that agents of the IRS might be tapping his phone because of a problem he was having with them. They were apparently disturbed that he was involved in secret deals which could not be traced with any records. Hofmann said he told them that this was the way that some people he dealt with operated and that the IRS would have to take his word as to the amount of money that exchanged hands in these transactions. Mr. Hofmann did not acknowledge any crime on his part nor did he tell me that the untraceable deals involved the Mormon Church. One of Mr. Hofmann's friends told me that he used the phone in his van because he believed his home phone was tapped. Dawn Tracy reported that "Friends said Mr. Hofmann changed telephone numbers frequently, contacted those who called him rather than answering the phone, and abruptly left town to pursue shadowy leads that sometimes led to spectacular discoveries" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 17, 1985). On November 8, 1985, the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

In the last year, Hofmann seemed to become more withdrawn, secretive. . . .

Shannon Flynn, a 28-year-old associate of Hofmann, said the dealer was security-conscious. He had once changed his telephone number, suspecting the line was tapped.

"What we were subjected to," Flynn said, "was nothing different than corporate spying."

Brent Metcalfe, who went to work as a researcher for Hofmann in mid-August, said the dealer claimed to have received a death threat about a week before the bombings. . . .

A business associate who asked not to be identified told of happening upon Hofmann in a church parking lot. Hofmann was hunched down in his car.

"He was there all alone. He was clearly surprised . . . and his face was white as a ghost. I was worried. I said, 'If there's anything we can do, let us know . . . if this [the paycheck] is too much for you, I could get another job.'

"His reaction was, 'Coming up with the money to pay you is nothing compared to my problems.'

"I looked down at his lap. He was working on his will in the car." . . .

Not all Mormons, including many of Christensen's closest friends, suspect he was killed by Mark Hofmann. Some who knew the principals believe it more likely the bombings were the work of a fanatic who thought a sale of the McLellan Collection would drag the church into devastating controversy.

Others subscribe to the so-called "apostate theory." They suspect that the bombs were planted by people radically opposed to the teachings of the Mormon Church, that the explosions were in fact a modern echo of violence directed against the church in its earliest days. . . .

"There is nothing as dangerous and as hostile as a Mormon who used to be," said Tom Moore, a friend and former business associate of Christensen. "I have seen so many times, throughout the history of the Mormon people, groups which have done their best to try and destroy the Mormon Church. They would want to make sure that if there were damaging documents to be purchased and given to the church, that they be exposed."

Since Mr. Hofmann normally received calls on his answering machine and no threat was recorded there, it seems somewhat unlikely that he received such a call. On the other hand, we know that there were some people who were very upset with the contents of some of Hofmann's documents, and it is impossible to entirely rule out the possibility of a threatening call. While the report of Hofmann making out his will may be used in support of the idea that he believed his life was in danger, it is also possible to believe that he might have been contemplating suicide to save himself from the embarrassment of exposure and criminal charges. In the list of charges against Mark Hofmann we find this information:

Affiant has been informed by Curt Bench that he has known Mark W. Hofmann for several years on a professional basis. That in the months preceding the bombing Curt Bench knew that Mark W. Hofmann's personal debts exceeded the hundreds of thousands of

dollars owed to several groups of people as a result of document dealings. Around the middle of September, 1985, Mr. Bench saw Mr. Hofmann and observed that Mr. Hofmann was highly agitated and [in a] distraught condition. When Mr. Bench inquired of Mr. Hofmann the reason for this condition, Mark W. Hofmann told Curt Bench that he owed a great deal of money and could be facing serious consequences, including criminal charges, if he could not get his financial problems solved. (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 16)

Just prior to the bombings, strong pressure was being exerted on Hofmann from at least three different directions:

In the months immediately before the bombings, Stott said, several investors were demanding repayment.

—The Thomas R. Wilding group was seeking \$450,000 and had threatened to take Hofmann's home and car. . . .

—Coin dealer Alvin Rust wanted back the \$132,000 he paid Hofmann for the purchase of the McLellan Collection.

—Christensen was pressuring Hofmann to repay the \$185,000 bank loan. (*Deseret News*, May 21, 1986)

David Hewett observed that "Mark Hofmann was juggling a huge number of balls in the air over his head during the hot summer months of August and September, 1985. Some of them were due to start falling" (*Maine Antique Digest*, July 1986, Section C, pages 5-6). The investors, who had originally treated Mr. Hofmann with a great deal of respect, were becoming increasingly impatient with him. Mr. Rust was threatening legal action, and the Wilding investors were pressing him very hard:

In an interview with *The Tribune*, Salt Lake City investor Thomas R. Wilding said that he represented a group of anonymous investors . . . Those promissory notes came due Oct. 14 — the day before the homicides.

Mr. Wilding said that Mr. Hofmann was to be penalized a total of \$4,000 per day, plus interest, after that due date. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 1985)

Testimony given at the preliminary hearing shows that the Wilding investors were beginning to watch Mark Hofmann's actions very closely and finally one of them became so angry that he "slugged" him:

However, on Sept. 12, things began to unravel. Wilding gave Hofmann \$173,870 to be used to purchase a second copy of the "Oath of a Freeman"—purported to be the oldest printed document in America. Hofmann took the money and said he was going to New York that night to purchase the document, which he claimed was worth 1.5 million.

Later that day, Wilding and his partner, Sid Jensen . . . went to the airport but found Hofmann had not taken any flight to New York.

Wilding camped out in front of Hofmann's house at 5:30 a.m., finally confronting him about 7:30. "What's the big deal?" he quoted Hofmann as asking.

"The big deal is there are a lot of things that don't jibe," said Wilding demanding that his money be returned. Wilding accompanied Hofmann to Hofmann's bank where Hofmann withdrew \$18,000 but was very ambiguous about where the remaining \$155,000 was. . . .

After Hofmann, accompanied by Wilding, spent the entire day trying to raise the additional funds, the pair met at Summit Financial with Jensen. (*Deseret News*, May 6, 1986)

Thomas Wilding testified that Mark Hofmann sat with "detached arrogance" during the meeting, and this eventually led Mr. Jensen to hit him:

Q—Was there any frustration on your part or Mr. Jensen's part concerning the inability of Mr. Hofmann to return your money during that day?

A—There's a large amount of money at risk there. A lot of people involved, so there was a great deal of frustration.

Q—What was Mr. Hofmann[']s. . . attitude during the first hour of that meeting?

A—I would say almost a detached arrogance.

Q—And what, if anything, did that cause in yourself and Mr. Jensen?

A—It caused . . . me a great concern and it caused Mr. Jensen anger.

Q—Did Mr. Jensen do anything at that meeting because of that anger?

A—Yes, he did.

Q—What?

A—He slugged Mr. Hofmann.

Q—Well, what was Mr. Hofmann's response to that?

A—His statement was, "No one's ever struck me before."

Mr. Hofmann may have begun to view the investors, who had previously treated him with deference, as his enemies. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1986, I wrote the following:

It is possible also that there could have been some tension between Christensen and Hofmann over the \$185,000 loan from First Interstate Bank that Hofmann had not paid back. It is claimed, in fact, that “Shortly before the murders Christensen waited in his car several nights in front of Hofmann’s home trying to catch up with him” (*People* magazine, November 4, 1985, page 123). The *Deseret News* for December 8, 1985, reported that “Under pressure from Pinnock, Christensen had gone with Hofmann to collect a \$20,000 check which was turned over to the bank.” According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 28, 1985, Shannon Flynn claimed that “at one point, Mark Hofmann and bombing victim Steven Christensen came to him [his?] home at 12:30 a.m. to pick up that \$20,000 check.” Furthermore, Christensen asked David E. West, the attorney representing the anonymous person who was supposed to buy the McLellin collection, to “add his name to the \$185,000 check for Hofmann, . . .” (*Deseret News*, December 8, 1985). Christensen apparently wanted to be absolutely certain that Hofmann would use the check to pay his debt rather than use it for his own purposes. While Steven Christensen was undoubtedly justified in his actions, Mr. Hofmann probably felt that he was overbearing and may have resented his parental-like intrusion into his affairs. Under these circumstances it is easy to believe that there could have been friction between the two men. At this point, however, I have no evidence to show that this would have provided a sufficient motive for such a brutal murder.

While one could possibly theorize that Mark Hofmann would kill Steven Christensen so that he would be able to cash the \$185,000 check without having to get his signature, we cannot prove that Hofmann knew that Christensen had asked for his name to be added to the check. Moreover, it is improbable that Hofmann could have obtained the check anyway unless he had some actual documents or forgeries that Donald Schmidt could have examined. . . .

While it seems very hard for me to believe that a quiet and mannerly man like Mark Hofmann could be involved in such violent crimes, I have often heard of people who lived very peaceful lives suddenly going berserk over small matters and killing innocent people. Sometimes people keep things within them until they suddenly explode. . . .

Mark Hofmann was not only having a difficult time financially, but his dishonesty with regard to the McLellin collection was about to catch up with him. His entire reputation as a Mormon document dealer

was at stake. Mr. Hofmann had already shown signs of irrational behavior when he broke up the Rendell papyrus for the purpose of deception. Under the mounting pressure, he could have decided to take more desperate action in an attempt to save himself from ruin.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, pages 16-17, we find that weeks before the bombings Steven Christensen warned Mark Hofmann that he may be facing criminal charges:

Curt Bench was also an acquaintance of Steven Christensen and had been informed by Steven Christensen that he needed Mr. Bench’s assistance in contacting Mark W. Hofmann over a very serious matter which could result in “legal action,” possibly “criminal charges,” and Hofmann would lose his membership in the L.D.S. Church as well as lose his ability to do business with anyone in the L.D.S. Church forever. Steve Christensen told Curt Bench that he wanted Mr. Bench to relay this information to Mark Hofmann even though Steven Christensen had already told Mark Hofmann this as well.

Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Mr. Robert Pitts, a business associate of Steven Christensen, who met with Steven Christensen at the Judge Building in the morning hours of October 10, 1985. At that meeting, Mark Hofmann came into the office of Steven Christensen and asked to speak to Steven “privately.” Mr. Pitts relates that both Steven Christensen and Mark Hofmann went to the outer office and left Mr. Pitts, alone, in the office of Steven Christensen. As Mr. Pitts sat waiting he overheard Steven Christensen say to Mark Hofmann in a loud and agitated voice “You can’t hide that!” This is the only part of the conversation that was overheard due to its loud nature. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Pitts saw Mark Hofmann leave the office in a “solemn mood.”

In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Curt Bench said that Steven Christensen even used the word “crook” when he referred to Hofmann:

Q—Let me direct your attention to the 24th day of September of 1985. On that day or evening, did you have occasion to receive a phone call from Mr. Steven Christensen?

A—Yes, I did.

Q—Can you tell us what he said on, what he said . . . ?

A—He said that a certain general authority who

was a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and an apostle, whom he did not ever name to me, were upset because Mark had defaulted on a loan to a bank and had written a check and the check had bounced and . . . was supposed to be in touch with the bank regarding the loan and had not made contact. They were quite upset over this and said some very serious things could happen as a result of that not being taken care of. They were interested in Steve getting a hold of Mark and letting him know the seriousness of the situation so he could take care of it.

Q—Did he mention what some of these serious things were that could occur?

A—Steve told me that various things could occur if Mark didn't make good and some of them were he would certainly lose his credibility and credit with the Church and with President Hinckley, that **criminal action could be taken, that he could conceivably go to jail**, he could also be sued by the bank or even by the Church if the Church was sued. He could **lose his membership in the Church**. It was very serious. And Steve wanted me to convey that to Mark because I had been able to get a hold of him and I saw him more frequently than Steve did.

Q—Do you remember anything else he told you?

A— . . . On that occasion, he indicated that these general authorities were going to tell President Hinckley the next morning, that they had apparently concluded that Mark was not going to make good. . . . **Steve used the term *crook***. They could only assume the worst because they hadn't heard from Mark. . . .

Q—After receiving this phone call, what did you do if anything?

A—I went to Mark's house.

Q—Did you mention all those possible consequences that Steve Christensen had told you over the phone?

A—Yes, I did. I was very specific with Mark.

Q—You told him each and every one?

A—Yes.

When Curt Bench was examined by Mr. Hofmann's lawyer, he testified that Steven Christensen showed "concern and bewilderment" over Hofmann's actions. Although Christensen was not using a "malicious approach, he was very frustrated" and I'd say angry. . . .

Mike Carter reported the following in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 21, 1986:

Deputy Salt Lake County Attorney Robert L. Stott, in summarizing the state's case against Mr. Hofmann, said the documents dealer was under incredible pressure to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars he owed and feared he would be exposed unless he could relieve that pressure. He did so by murdering Mr. Christensen . . .

"He had to get rid of Steve Christensen. He was the center of the pressure," Mr. Stott told 5th Circuit Judge Paul G. Grant. "Maybe it wouldn't solve all the problems, but at best it would buy him some time. And we all know the only thing a con artist needs is time . . . maybe just one more day." . . .

In all five cases filed against Mr. Hofmann . . . he obtained \$944,420 "through fraudulent means," the prosecutor said. He attempted [to] obtain almost twice that amount, Mr. Stott told the judge.

The fact that Mr. Christensen would be murdered the very day that Hofmann was supposed to produce the McLellin Collection certainly makes one suspicious that the transfer of the collection had something to do with the bombings. This is especially true since the evidence seems to show that Hofmann had no collection to produce. The murder of Christensen might also release pressure from the Thomas Wilding group and Alvin Rust. Hofmann may have reasoned that these people would understand that there would be another delay in their receiving money because of the murder of a key figure in this major financial transaction.

At the preliminary hearing, Detective Jim Bell said that the only motive for the Sheets' killing "would be diversion." He said that "Mr. Hofmann contacted Brent Metcalfe over the phone and indicated that, hey, everybody can rest easy now because the bombings aren't related to the Mormon document end of it, they're related to the CFS end of it—end of the deal."

MACHINE GUN AND BOMBS

Before the bombs exploded in October 1985, I had never heard that Mark Hofmann had any interest in either bombs or guns. In fact, I was rather surprised to read that he was charged with the possession of an unregistered machine gun. On October 20, the *Salt Lake Tribune* announced that one of Mark Hofmann's business associates, Shannon Flynn, was arrested for possession of an "Uzi machine pistol." On November 1, the *Tribune* reported that Hofmann himself was

charged with the possession of the same unregistered “Uzi machine pistol taken from the home of Shannon Flynn.” Hofmann, however, “pleaded innocent to a charge alleging he possessed a unregistered machine-gun. He was indicted for the crime Wednesday by a federal grand jury in U.S. District Court for Utah. . . .

Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Flynn are charged with illegally possessing the same Uzi machine-pistol. According to police sources, Mr. Flynn . . . purchased the legal, semi-automatic weapon from a Kaysville gun distributor with money given him by Mr. Hofmann. The men, police said, then converted the weapon to a machine-gun at Mr. Hofmann’s home.

It is alleged that “Detectives confiscated parts from the weapon from Mr. Hofmann’s home during a search” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 1, 1986). Mr. Hofmann’s friend, Shannon Flynn, pleaded guilty to the charge but has not been sentenced. Hofmann’s trial relating to the machine gun has apparently been delayed so that he can prepare to face the murder and fraud charges.

On December 1, 1985, the *Tribune* reported: “ATF agents have been questioning friends of Shannon Patrick Flynn, an associate of Mr. Hofmann’s, regarding allegations that he picked up two blasting caps from a man in Richfield last winter. Those blasting caps, however, apparently were fuse detonated and in no way have been connected to the bombs that went off last month, sources said.” The same day blasting caps were mentioned in the *Tribune*, the *Deseret News* printed the following information:

Hofmann’s attorney, Bradley Rich, said last week that it was his understanding that Hofmann and Shannon Patrick Flynn, 27, a friend and associate, had discussed building a bomb. . . .

Flynn’s attorney, James Barber, also said his client obtained two blasting caps earlier this year, but the lawyer declined to say what Flynn did with them. Attorneys for both men said the blasting caps have nothing to do with the bombings.

Police have said they found no evidence in Hofmann’s home that he constructed the bombs. . . .

Police are now optimistic they have located that site in a workshop of an Emigration Canyon home that Hofmann had been trying to buy. Searchers found evidence that someone had broken into the workshop adjacent to the vacant home.

A drill had been left on the counter and a light had been left on. Metal shavings were recovered from a work bench, and “other items of interest” were confiscated.

Police say they have a room about 20 feet by 14 feet filled with evidence in the case, . . . (*Deseret News*, December 1, 1985)

After Mark Hofmann was injured in the bomb blast of October 16, 1985, he told Detective Jim Bell that that morning he had “gone to a restaurant for breakfast at 8 a.m., then ‘just drove around’ in Emigration Canyon ‘just thinking about things’” (Ibid., May 14, 1986).

The idea that Mark Hofmann may have discussed making bombs with Shannon Flynn is supported by the fact that a book which told how to make bombs was found when police searched Flynn’s home. Detectives learned that Hofmann was with Flynn when he bought this book:

The investigation of Hofmann led officers to Shannon Flynn . . . About eight months ago, Flynn accompanied Hofmann to purchase a machine gun, which both converted to a fully automatic weapon. Several days before the bombings, the pair purchased “Anarchists’ Cookbook,” a book on how to make bombs, from the Cosmic Aeroplane. (*Deseret News*, October 23, 1985)

It is true, of course, that everyone who buys the *Anarchists’ Cookbook* does not actually make bombs. Brent Metcalfe, in fact, reports that he saw a copy of this book in the possession of Mormon Church security when he worked there. The Church has received many bomb threats and may have used the book to inform its personnel concerning the different types of bombs they might encounter. At any rate, it does seem strange that this book would be purchased just days before the bombings.

Police claim that the bombs used were pipe bombs placed in shoe-box sized containers with brown wrapping paper around them. The names of the victims were written on the packages with a felt marking pen. The *Deseret News*, December 1, 1985, reported: “Police have maintained that Hofmann was injured by a bomb of his own making, and they claim their evidence is substantial. Following the Oct. 16 blast, investigators searched Hofmann’s car and recovered a number of items, including pieces of pipe, brown butcher paper, a felt marking pen and surgical gloves.” Whether the pipe, wrapping paper and marking pen involved in the bombings are identical with the items found in Hofmann’s car remains to be seen.

In the charges filed against Mark Hofmann we find the following:

... a bomb exploded inside a vehicle belonging to Hofmann, injuring the defendant. The defendant stated to detective J. F. G. Bell that when he opened his vehicle door, a package fell on to the vehicle floor and he went to grab for it, then there was an explosion. . . .

Investigation by agent Jerry Taylor, an explosives technology expert and reconstruction expert for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, reviewed all the physical evidence and laboratory reports and concluded that the position of the bomb at the time of detonation in defendant's car was on the driver's seat, against the console in contrast to defendant's statement that it was on the floor.

On search of defendant's car by law enforcement officials a galvanized steel pipe elbow was found with a 2 inch threaded opening. (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 14)

HOFMANN'S ALIASES

At the preliminary hearing some very startling information came out that seemed to link Mark Hofmann to the construction of the bombs. The evidence showed that Hofmann used the alias "Mike Hansen" when ordering material for his forgery operation and that the same name was used by the person who bought important electronic components which were probably used in the bombs. The name "Mike Hansen" was originally discovered on a manila envelope found in Mark Hofmann's basement. The name of a company, Utah Engravings, appeared on the opposite side of the envelope. Jorgen Olsen of Utah Engravings "identified the writing on the envelope as his own. He explained that the company uses previously used envelopes to put customer orders in, putting the customer's name on the reverse side" (*Deseret News*, April 17, 1986). Olsen said that the name he wrote on the envelope was the name given to him by a customer who ordered an engraved plate for printing. When investigators searched through boxes at Utah Engravings, they found a negative used to make a plate to print the "so-called Jim Bridger notes allegedly sold by Mr. Hofmann to several investors for as much as \$5,000." Hofmann sold the Jim Bridger notes as authentic documents actually signed with the American frontiersman's "X." Microscopic examination of the negative, however, proved beyond all doubt that Hofmann's Jim Bridger notes were nothing but modern forgeries. Negatives for other forged documents were found at other engraving companies:

A Salt Lake engraver testified Thursday he prepared two magnesium printing plates for "Mike

Hansen"—a man prosecutors identified in earlier court testimony as Mark W. Hofmann. . . .

Jack Smith, DeBouzek Engraving and Colorplate Co., told the court that on Dec. 5, 1984, a man who said his name was Mike Hansen ordered an engraving plate with the signature of famed American novelist Jack London. On Nov. 1 of the same year, Mike Hansen ordered an engraving that police later found reproduced on the back page of a hymn book belonging to Emma Smith, wife of the founder of the LDS Church.

Prosecutors said Thursday they will tie the two engraving plates to six felony theft and fraud counts Hofmann faces. (*Deseret News*, April 17, 1986)

Employees of Salt Lake Stamp testified that Mark Hofmann obtained four rubber stamps from them in 1982. These stamps have now been linked to the forgery of notes Mark Hofmann sold which were known as the "Spanish Fork Notes." In December 1984 a "Mike Hansen" ordered another stamp which was used to falsify a book by Jack London to give it more value. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 18, 1986, reported the following concerning the receipt for this transaction:

The fingerprint of Mark W. Hofmann was found on a receipt bearing the same name investigators believe Mr. Hofmann used as an alias when he allegedly bought components used in last October's deadly bombings, an expert testified Wednesday.

State Crime Laboratory Latent Print Examiner Scott Pratt told 5th Circuit Judge Paul G. Grant that a single print found on a receipt for a rubber stamp from the Salt Lake Stamp Company that was purchased by a "Mike Hansen" in December 1984 matched the print of Mr. Hofmann's left hand ring finger.

It was the most substantial piece of evidence thus far in the prosecution's attempt to link Mr. Hofmann to the purchase of mercury switches and battery packs experts have said are identical to those used in the shrapnel bombs. . . .

Barbara Zellner, of the Denver based Cox-Clark Engraving Co., testified that a "Mike Hansen" ordered plates for the Deseret Currency. Investigators later determined that these plates were used to print counterfeit copies of this early Mormon currency. Mark Hofmann made tens of thousands of dollars when he sold these forged notes.

It is interesting to note that "Mike Hansen" gave the following address to the engraving company in Denver: **2730 West 25th Street**. When I checked this address on my mailing list of those who receive the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, I found that it was very close

to an address I had—i.e., **3730 West 25th Street** in Denver. That the address only differed in the first digit seemed very suspicious. I later learned that the address on my list was that of Mark Hofmann’s brother-in-law. It appears, then, that when Mark Hofmann (using the alias “Mike Hansen”) was asked for an address by the engraving company, he just gave his brother-in-law’s address with one digit altered.

In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Detective Jim Bell claimed that investigators had found that Mark Hofmann also did business with an engraving company in Kansas City using the alias “Hansen.” In addition, he testified as follows: “We have a couple of the engraving companies where Mark Hofmann has gone in, ordered things under the name of Mike Hansen, paid cash and then turned around and also paid the rest of the balance with a check with his name Mark Hofmann and address and his phone number on it.” Detective Bell said that there were “a total of three” items seized from Hofmann’s home that had the “Mike Hansen” name on them. One receipt had a date of “1982” on it.

When taken together, the evidence clearly establishes that “Mike Hansen” is Mark Hofmann. One alternative to this conclusion might be to say that Mike Hansen is one of Mark Hofmann’s associates. If this were the case, however, Hofmann would have to know who this individual is because he ended up with and sold the forgeries that came from the plates. This explanation does not really hold water because Mark Hofmann’s fingerprint appears on a “Mike Hansen” receipt.

The link between the bomber Mike Hansen and Mark Hofmann is clearly brought out in an article by Mike Carter:

... Detective Bell said, almost a dozen agents were sent out to canvas area Radio Shack stores after an ATF agent, searching the scene of the Sheets homicide for the second time, located a mercury switch identical to a brand sold by the retail electronics firm. In that search, investigators turned up two receipts from different stores for the purchase of mercury switches, battery cases and 12-volt lamps that an ATF agent later testified could be used to test a bomb’s firing circuitry.

One of those receipts has been entered into evidence at the hearing, but the clerk who made the sale was unable to identify Mr. Hofmann as the buyer.

That receipt bears the name “Mike Hansen.” Detective Bell testified the second receipt is made out to “M. Hansen.” The address on the receipts, 2034 E. 3900 South and 2056 E. 3900 South, are vacant lots, he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 17, 1986)

At the preliminary hearing it was revealed that “Mike Hansen” was not the only alias Mark Hofmann used. He also used the name “Mike Harris,” and when Detective Bell was asked if there were any other aliases, he said that Hofmann had used the name “Bill Edwards”:

Q—Other than the name Mike Hansen, do you have any evidence of any other aliases that you believe Mark Hofmann to have used this date?

A—Yes.

Q—What is that name?

A—Bill Edwards.

.....

Q—Do you know where that name was used?

A—Yes.

Q—Where?

A—Radio Shack in Logan, Utah.

This could relate to the purchase of other parts for the bombs, but we will have to wait until the trial to find out the details. A scholar who knows Mark Hofmann has told me that Hofmann was in Logan the very day the “Bill Edwards” alias was used at Radio Shack.

In any case, Deputy Salt Lake County Attorney Robert L. Stott did a very good job of summing up the importance of the link between Mark Hofmann and Mike Hansen:

On the 6th and 7th of October—two different occasions—a person using the name M. Hansen or Mike Hansen, . . . purchased from Radio Shack mercury switches, . . . C-cell battery packs [and a] light tester. Now why are these so important? Well, Jerry Taylor testified that the bombs contained Radio Shack battery holders identical to the ones purchased by this . . . Mike Hansen. All three bombs. Why? Because the logo Radio Shack was right on the component itself. He also testified that these . . . three bombs contained mercury switches, found one at the Sheets’ and it was identical to the one purchased at Radio Shack. . . .

Well, who’s Mike Hansen? Well, this Mike Hansen who bought the materials, . . . consistent with the materials used in the bombs, gave a false address. Both addresses he gave, two different addresses, are barren lots. I think we have pictures of those two lots. Trying to hide his identification. Well, Mike Hansen is Mark Hofmann. Mike Hansen ordered . . . a number of stamps and engraving plates that

shortly after a Mike Hansen picked them up, Mark Hofmann was in possession of the actual document that was made from the engraving plate or the stamp. . . . We're talking about the Jim Bridger notes, the Deseret Currency notes, the Austin Lewis stamp, the 2 Buck engravings in the *Call of the Wild* book. We're talking about the Spirit of God which is the last page of the Emma Smith hymnal, and we're talking about the second Oath of a Freeman. In Mark Hofmann's possession, after the bombing, was found an envelope from Utah Engraving with the name Mike Hansen written on it. We had found in his possession a slip of paper with the name Mike Hansen written on it and next to it an engraving company's name. We had a Jim Bridger note, not a Jim Bridger note but a xerox copy of a blank Jim Bridger note, found in his possession. Under the Jim Bridger note is the name Mike Hansen. Jim Bell also testified that there was a tire bill, a receipt for a tire, with the name Mike Hansen in Mark Hofmann's possession. And finally, if that isn't enough, Mark Hofmann's finger print was found on the piece of paper containing the artwork submitted by Mike Hansen to Salt Lake Stamp for the Austin Lewis stamp. [A] fingerprint of Mark Hofmann on the document given to Salt Lake Stamp by Mike Hansen. . . . I think it's clear . . . that this Mike Hansen is Mark Hofmann and that just as a pattern of using Mike Hansen to commit crimes, the engraving crimes, the stamp crimes, he used that pattern to commit another crime—prepare to commit another crime—buying bomb components.

OTHER EVIDENCE

Besides the evidence concerning the alias "Mike Hansen," prosecutors have some evidence which could place Mr. Hofmann near the scene of the first two bombings. In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 13, we find this information:

On October 15, 1985, 8:10 a.m., Steven F. Christensen was killed by a bomb blast. . . . According to Janet McDermott Reynolds, the brown package containing the bomb was placed outside the office door in the hall and she nearly picked-up the package to hold for Christensen. She was also injured as a result of the blast. Said package was addressed to Steve Christensen. On the same morning approximately 1 to 2 hours earlier, Bruce Passey saw a person who he identified as Mark Hofmann carrying a brown package address[ed] to Steve Christensen in the elevator of the Judge Building.

At the preliminary hearing, Bruce L. Passey "positively identified Mr. Hofmann, who he said was

sporting a Kelly green high school letter jacket, as the man he rode with in the elevator early that morning" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1986). When asked if the person was present in the court room, Mr. Passey responded: "He is sitting next to Mr. Yengich, wearing glasses and a blue suit." Mr. Hofmann's attorney, Ronald Yengich, argued that Mr. Passey had originally told police the jacket had brown sleeves, while Mr. Hofmann's jacket has gray sleeves. Nevertheless, "Mr. Passey did not budge on his identification of Mr. Hofmann as the man who carried a package into the Judge Building that morning. And his insistence about the letter jacket was bolstered by another prosecution witness who said that she saw Mr. Hofmann shortly after the first bomb exploded and that he was wearing that jacket.

Margene Robbins, a broker's assistant at Summit Financial Concepts, said Mr. Hofmann stopped in to see Thomas R. Wilding that morning about 9 a.m.—barely a half-hour after Mr. Christensen was killed—and that he was wearing that letter jacket. (Ibid.)

The *Deseret News* for February 7, 1986, reported: "The day after Christensen was killed, police found a letterman jacket matching the description the Passeys gave turned inside out and hidden in a closet in Hofmann's home, the prosecutor said." At the preliminary hearing, Detective Jerry Thompson, of the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office, testified that the jacket was found at the back corner of a closet and that it was "inside out." He said that the sleeves were either "gray" or "light tan" depending on the light it was viewed in. Before Mark Hofmann retained an attorney Detective Jim Bell was able to ask him about the jacket:

Bell then asked him if he had set the bombs. "He said he didn't do it," Bell said. The detective then told Hofmann he was fairly confident he (Hofmann) had set the bombs because they had found Hofmann's green jacket.

"That set off the medical alarms," said Bell, and he was ordered by hospital personnel to leave the trauma care unit where Hofmann was being cared for. (*Deseret News*, April 17, 1986)

Thomas Wilding met with Mr. Hofmann the morning Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets were murdered. At the preliminary hearing, Wilding testified that Hofmann "seemed upset . . . breathing very heavily—almost to the point of overventilating, so to speak."

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 13, information is given which could show that Hofmann's van was seen in the vicinity of the Sheets' home before the bombings:

On the same date at approximately 9:45 a.m. Kathleen W. Sheets was killed by another bomb blast at 4630 Naniloa Drive, Salt Lake County. Investigation showed that the bomb was housed in a brown package delivered outside at the Sheets residence . . . addressed to Gary Sheets. Witness Aaron Teplick stated that approximately nine hours before the 9:45 blast a Toyota vehicle, identical to one registered to the defendant was seen in a driveway common to the Teplick and Sheets residence. Teplick also stated that such [a] vehicle had not been seen there before and investigation showed that there are no identical vehicles belonging to any of the neighbors. Interview[s] showed that no one at the Sheets nor Teplick residences had any visitors that late at night no less any visitors specifically in such a vehicle.

A vehicle similar to the defendant's vehicle was again spotted by Kathi Wirthlin, a neighbor, driving up and down Naniloa Drive in front of the Sheets residence at approximately 6:00 a.m. that same morning.

According to the testimony of Shannon Flynn, Mark Hofmann was driving his van the night Aaron Teplick saw a van matching that description:

Q—How did you get there?

A—We drove in a vehicle.

Q—And whose vehicle was it?

A—Mr. Hofmann's.

Q—And what vehicle of Mr. Hofmann's was it?

A—It was . . . what is commonly known as a Toyota mini-van.

Q—And do you know approximately what time you left the presence of Mr. Hofmann in that particular van that evening?

A—Well, I believe it was approximately 10:30 [p.m.].

The *Deseret News* printed the following information on April 15, 1986:

Also on Tuesday morning, Aaron Teplick, 15 . . . testified that late on the night of Oct. 14 he saw a gold Toyota "wonder wagon" drive slowly along the private lane shared by the Teplick and Sheets houses.

Ho[f]mann owns an identical gold-colored Toyota. Mrs. Sheets died instantly when she picked up a booby-trapped bomb in her driveway the following morning.

Teplick described in detail how the van drove slowly along the lane, stopped, turned around and then sped away. He was able to identify a photograph of a gold Toyota "wonder wagon" as the car he saw that night. "That's what came down our driveway," Teplick said.

Since the van seen near the Sheets' residence could have been used to transport the bomb, investigators combed Mr. Hofmann's van for evidence. Jerry Taylor, of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, testified that "One of the laboratory reports stated that a flake of smokeless powder, Hercules Bulls Eye" was recovered from the van. He was asked how this compared to the gunpowder used in the bombs:

Q—How did the Hercules smokeless double-base powder taken from the van compare to the Hercules double-base smokeless powder which was used in the Hofmann bomb, the Sheets bomb and the Christensen bomb:

A—Same type.

Jerry Spangler observed that "The Hofmann case has become arguably the biggest crime story in Utah history—pipe bombs, dead bodies, a critically injured suspect and a passel of forgeries involving everything from rare Mormon money to a pilgrim oath purported to be the oldest printed document in American history" (*Deseret News*, May 24, 1986). The day after the third bomb exploded (October 17, 1985), the *Deseret News* reported:

Tales of shrapnel bombs and terror are hardly the normal sustenance of the tight little community of Mormon historians, publishers and collectors.

But that community reeled with shock, terror, then aftershock Thursday as violence blew it open this week. One might expect bombs and violence among cocaine smugglers or international terrorists—but not among Utah's small cadre of mild-mannered historians and collectors. . . .

When Hofmann became a suspect in the bombings, as well as a victim, the besieged community reacted with disbelief, bafflement and horror. . . .

Hofmann's name has become the history buffs household word in the last five years, for he reawakened the Mormon past with significant, and sometimes controversial, documents. . . . This week scholars on both the traditional and nontraditional sides of the "white salamander letter" have been threatened and have fled with their families, sources in the community say. Others fearfully evacuated homes or businesses with or without a telephoned

warning. . . . Utah's Mormon intellectuals agreed to talk to the *Deseret News* only if they were not quoted by name.

Linda Sillitoe commented as follows in the *Deseret News*, October 27, 1985:

A pall, acrid as bomb smoke, drifts over a community that only two months ago met by the hundreds to share information and celebrate their very existence. Now, in late October, grief and suspicion have replaced August's excitement.

In their wildest dreams, no one in the tight group of Mormon document collectors and scholars could have imagined that bombings and talk of forgery and missing documents would shatter their scholarly world.

Two months ago, the seventh annual Sunstone Symposium, an unofficial forum on Mormon thought and history, met 1,200 strong in the Westin Hotel Utah. . . .

At the August symposium, the Martin Harris "white salamander" letter was the topic of several lively sessions and dominated the informal hallway debates. . . .

Two months later, the McLellan collection and the Martin Harris letter are media copy, tied to rumors of forgery, fraud and to a brutal double murder. Many people connected with the Martin Harris letter have somehow been labeled "victim," "target," "suspect," or "potential witness."

Because many Mormon historians were personally acquainted with Mark Hofmann and have promoted his discoveries, they have found it very difficult to believe that he is guilty of either forgery or murder. Many anti-Mormons feel exactly the same way. Consequently, a number of theories have been set forth in an attempt to exculpate Mr. Hofmann. Jerry Spangler wrote:

. . . many court watchers, history buffs and LDS Church adversaries aren't buying the prosecution's neatly packaged contention that forgery and fraud created a scenario that led to murder.

Among the theories being batted about by those claiming insight to the Hofmann case is one that Hofmann was the victim of an elaborate frame orchestrated by organized crime figures who had been burned by bad deals with CFS Financial. Those mafiosos, according to that theory, wanted to even the score with J. Gary Sheets and Christensen, a former vice-president in the company. By framing Hofmann and then targeting him (he was only injured in the third blast), police would pursue the investigation exactly as they have done, virtually dismissing the organized crime motive.

Other theories attribute the killings to fundamentalist groups who have broken away from the LDS Church. The groups, the theory says, violently dislike any document that diminishes the orthodox view of LDS Church founder Joseph Smith.

Some of the theories border on the unbelievably bizarre. One suggests that the LDS Church was angry at the discovery of embarrassing historical documents that challenged orthodox historical interpretations of LDS history.

One proponent of this theory even goes as far as to claim that local and federal law enforcement officers were co-conspirators in the murder plot and were the ones who actually framed Hofmann. (*Deseret News*, May 24, 1986)

The *Los Angeles Times* for November 8, 1985, reported concerning the theory that "the bombs were planted by people radically opposed to the teachings of the Mormon Church." In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986, I gave my reason for doubting that the murders were committed by anti-Mormons. I also commented on the idea that the Church itself was behind the crimes:

Another theory is that a Mormon (or Mormons) committed the bombings to retaliate against those who were bringing embarrassing church documents to light. Some even feel that the church itself is involved in the murders. This idea seems to be very popular with those who are opposed to the church. While I must agree that the church was deeply involved in the financial transactions which may have led to the murders, it is rather hard to believe that the leadership of the church would be so foolish as to handle the situation in such a manner. The use of bombs, of course, brought immediate attention to everything church leaders wanted to conceal. It has brought a flood of reporters to Salt Lake City and a great deal of unfavorable publicity to the church. Anything, of course, is possible in such a bizarre case, and if we do find any evidence pointing to the church, we will certainly pursue it.

So far we have found no good evidence to support any of the conspiracy theories. On the other hand, the evidence against Mark Hofmann seems to be mounting. Prosecutors claim they only revealed a portion of their evidence at the preliminary hearing. It will certainly be interesting to see if Mr. Hofmann's lawyers can successfully counter the prosecution's case when the matter comes to trial.

3. THE MCLELLIN DECEPTION

“Utah is third in the nation for business loan defaults, and last year had 11 major business frauds. It’s bizarre, but it’s true,” said Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, a member of the LDS First quorum of Seventy. . . . Elder Pinnock called Utah’s white collar crime an overwhelming embarrassment and said it can and should be stopped. (Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 10)

An attorney representing Hugh W. Pinnock has filed a suit . . . seeking to recover more than \$170,000 from Mark W. Hofmann. (Deseret News, April 1, 1986)

In the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake Messenger*, we related that Mark Hofmann claimed he had obtained some documents known as the McLellin collection. He had mentioned these documents to Sandra on August 23, 1984. (Sandra made some notations concerning this conversation with Hofmann on the day it occurred. This paper is now in the possession of the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Office.) Four months later we received an anonymous letter (postmarked December 20, 1984). The letter contained this information:

I am writing you anonymously to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discover[er] Mark Hoffmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyptian Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G.P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church go[t] it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

We turned this letter over to the Salt Lake County Sheriff’s Office shortly after the bombings. Although I believed that it was a genuine letter at the time I received it, I now feel that it is possible that it was written by Hofmann or one of his friends for the purpose of giving publicity to the McLellin collection and driving the price up.

In the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, page 15, we wrote:

It has recently been reported that Mark Hofmann has obtained the original Egyptian Papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. It is also claimed that Hofmann plans to

secretly sell the document to the Church so that it can remain hidden from the eyes of the public.

Dawn Tracy, a reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, began working on the story of the McLellin collection. She soon learned, however, that it was difficult to get any meaningful information and found that it was very hard to get in touch with Mr. Hofmann. Finally, on July 6, 1985, she was able to write an article which contained the following:

One of the most famous relics in Mormondom—considered by the faithful to be sacred scripture—has been located and sold in Texas. But the manuscript’s location and name of the buyer are secret, according to a collector who discovered the relic and other significant documents.

The relic, called Facsimile No. 2, is part of a collection containing papyrus fragments that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe church founder Joseph Smith translated into the Book of Abraham. . . .

Mark Hoffman, a Salt Lake seller of historical autographs and manuscripts, said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle. . . .

Mr. Hoffman said other items in the latest find are diaries of William McLellin, including “day-to-day and weekly activities, and papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830’s.”

“The collection is of considerable historical value in regards to the early [Mormon] church,” he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1985)

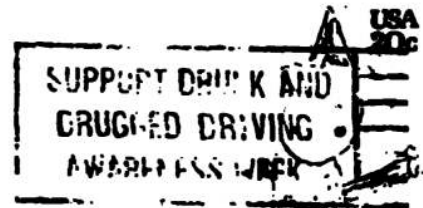
While we found evidence from letters written between 1872 and 1901 that Apostle McLellin did have a collection of documents, in the *Messenger* for

JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER,

I am writing you anonymously to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discover Mark Hoffmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyptian Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G. P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church go it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

I am telling you these things because I do not think it should be covered up and I think you can find out more about it. Mark payed over \$1,000 from someone in Texas. Please do not tell ANYONE you were tipped off by this letter. Good Luck.



**JERALD AND SANDPA TANNER
P. O. BOX 1864
S. L. C., UTAH 84110**

A photograph of an anonymous letter and the envelope in which it was sent. This letter was probably written in an attempt to deceive us so that we would give publicity to the so-called McLellan collection.

August 1985, we wrote: “So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it [in] 1842.” Although I cannot say for certain that Mark Hofmann never had any of Apostle McLellin’s papers, his claims now appear to be doubtful. Furthermore there is strong evidence that he fabricated at least a portion of the so-called McLellin collection. As strange as it may seem, Kenneth Rendell, the man who authenticated the Salamander letter, appears to be the strongest witness against Hofmann with regard to this attempt to deceive.

Just before the bombings occurred, I had become very suspicious that Hofmann did not really have the McLellin collection. I felt that the documents which he claimed to have might be forgeries. I knew, however, that it would be very difficult to forge the fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri which Hofmann claimed were part of the McLellin collection. I decided to discuss the matter with the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. I told Mr. Ashment that we would have to be very careful about accepting the original of Fac. No. 2. I theorized that it might be possible for a person to obtain a real Egyptian hypocephalus that looked somewhat like the one Joseph Smith used for Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. The areas which did not agree with the drawing could be broken off or damaged. In this way, I reasoned, another piece of papyrus could be palmed off for the one owned by Smith. Mr. Ashment agreed that it might be possible to buy a hypocephalus, although it would be rather expensive.

While I do not know whether Mr. Hofmann ever actually obtained a hypocephalus, evidence now shows that he did, in fact, obtain some pieces of genuine Egyptian papyrus which he tried to palm off as part of the Joseph Smith Papyri in the McLellin collection. According to the *Deseret News*, October 28, 1985, Kenneth Rendell “said he also sent two pieces of Egyptian papyri to Hofmann on a \$10,500 consignment. . . . He said he found it strange that Hofmann wanted something from the first- or second-century A. D. containing hieratic script rather than hieroglyphics, which are much more desirable to collectors. He said Hofmann stressed how secret this transaction had to be.”

At the preliminary hearing, Kenneth Rendell “definitely” identified the papyrus which Hofmann represented as being from the McLellin collection as being material he had let him take on consignment: “. . . the two came to a total of [\$]10,500. I told him

that if he took both of them I would knock the 500 off. It would be 10,000 for the pair. They were clearly on consignment. It wasn’t a sale.” Mr. Rendell also testified concerning Mark Hofmann’s request that the matter be kept “very confidential”:

Q—Now, pursuant to the conversation between Mr. Hofmann and Leslie Kress, was there a memorandum circulated around your . . . office?

A—Yes, there was.

Q—And . . . what that memorandum said was approximately what, to the best—

A— . . . the memorandum basically said that Mark Hofmann had called and he wanted to make certain that we understood that this transaction was to be considered very confidential and no information given out to anyone about the transaction.

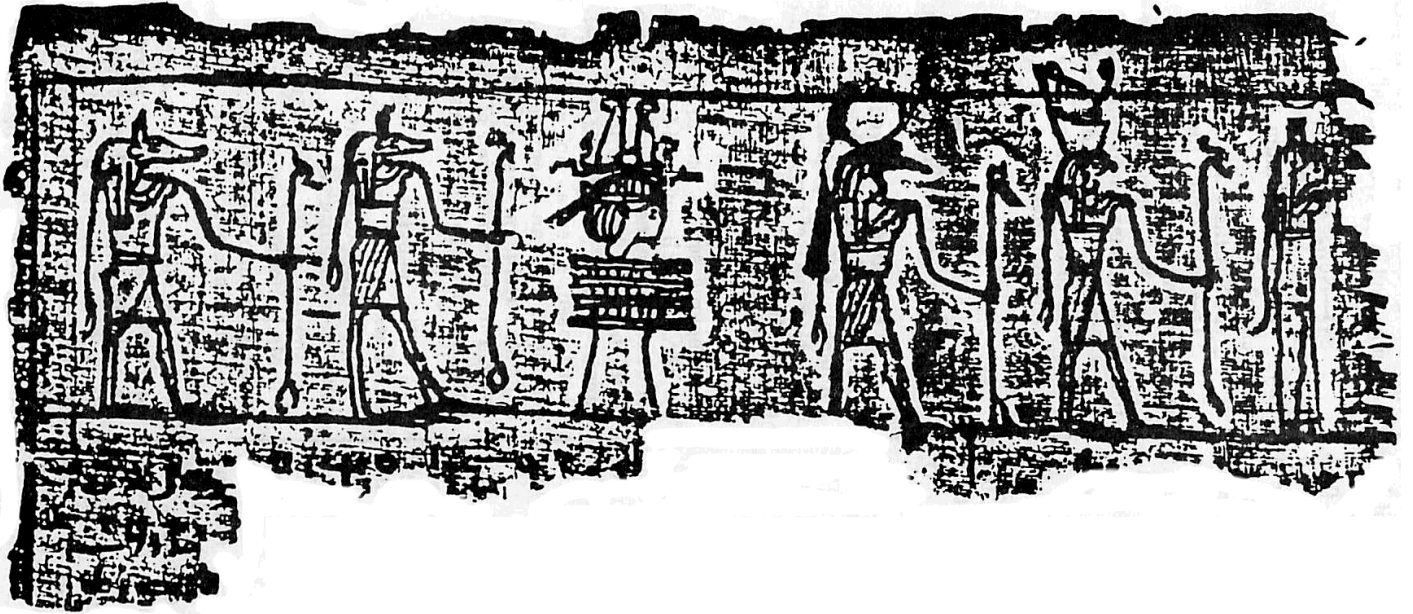
The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 28, 1985, printed this revealing information:

Detectives removed pieces of papyrus from Mr. Hofmann’s home and burned-out automobile. Officers, acting on a search warrant, also took a piece of papyrus from a safe deposit box used by Mr. Christensen. . . .

Detectives believe that Mr. Hofmann, 31, fragmented either one or both of the 30-inch by 9-inch papyrus scrolls lent to him on consignment by Mr. Rendell in mid-September, and then showed the pieces to various investors, telling them that they belonged to the missing McLellin papers. Some investigators feel that Mr. Christensen, hired as an “authenticator” of these documents by an anonymous buyer, may have told Mr. Hofmann he intended to go to Mr. Rendell for authentication of the Egyptian script, thus threatening to expose the scam.

The papyrus was apparently broken in such a way that it would make it very difficult for an Egyptologist to read the text. This, of course, would help disguise where it came from. In any case, the *Deseret News* for October 31, 1985, revealed that Mark Hofmann took the fragmented papyrus to the very man with whom I had discussed the possibility of a papyrus switch:

Ashment said he was first contacted by Hofmann in July about the papyri fragments in the McLellin papers. Ashment later photographed one fragment during a meeting in the Church History Library. But Ashment said the fragment did not match previous descriptions of the four papyri purported to be in the McLellin papers. . . . Rendell said the fact that the papyrus was fragmented suggested some sort of illicit dealings. He said there could be no legitimate reason for fragmenting the papyrus because the individual



A photograph of the papyrus Mark Hofmann said he found in the McLellan collection. It was identified by Kenneth Rendell as coming from his collection.

pieces would be worth dramatically less than the whole, which he valued at about \$6,000.

“The document in pieces is worth 10 percent of what it is as a complete unit,” Rendell said. “The piece that now remains is worth well under \$1,000.”

It is certainly ironic that the very man who authenticated the Salamander letter would turn out to be one of the first to speak of fraudulent dealings with regard to the McLellin collection. Mr. Rendell’s statement that breaking up the papyrus greatly diminishes its value is certainly true in any regular transaction. In Mr. Hofmann’s case, however, this would not necessarily be true. The fact that he represented it as a part of the Joseph Smith Papyri greatly enhanced its value. Wade Lillywhite claimed that Mark Hofmann contacted him before the killings “and offered to sell for \$100,000 a papyrus document purported to be an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 22, 1985). From this it would appear that Mr. Hofmann was greatly inflating the price of common Egyptian papyri by claiming it was part of the McLellin collection. Brent Metcalfe, who was doing some work for Mark Hofmann, acknowledged that Hofmann even deceived him by telling him that the papyrus once belonged to Apostle McLellin.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 15, the following information appears:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Curt Bench, a representative of Deseret Book, that on or about September 19, 1985, Mark W. Hofmann showed Mr. Bench a piece of papyrus, claiming it to be a part of the “McLellin Collection” and that Mr. Bench could purchase it for \$40,000.00.

At Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, Curt Bench testified as follows:

A—Mark showed me a piece of papyrus encased in plastic that he wanted to sell to us for a figure of \$40,000.

Q—And what did you say about that?

A—I asked him specifically if it was from the so-called McLellin collection, and he indicated that it was.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 15, we find this information:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigations and reports that Wade Lillywhite, a representative of Deseret Book, that on or about (September 30, 1985) Mark W. Hofmann showed Mr. Lillywhite a piece of papyrus, claiming it to be part of the “McLellin Collection.” Subsequently, on (September 30, 1985), Mark Hofmann and Wade Lillywhite contacted Hugo Gardner and Jack Wignall in an attempt to obtain \$150,000.00, part of which was to be collateralized by the papyrus which Mark W. Hofmann maintained, to Jack Wignall was part of the Joseph Smith collection used to translated the Book of Abraham for the Pearl of Great Price.

Wade Lillywhite confirmed these statements in the testimony he gave at the preliminary hearing:

. . . on the 30th when we were reviewing the items to be used as collateral, he said . . . that the papyrus came from the McLellin collection; that it was [a] piece of papyrus that had been in possession of Joseph Smith and probably one of the items used in production of the Book of Abraham.

This information is found on page 16 of *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Brent Ashworth . . . between the dates of September 23 through September 26, 1985, Ashworth had negotiations with Mark W. Hofmann in which Mr. Hofmann showed Ashworth a piece of papyrus representing it to be a part of the “McLellin Collection,” and offered to sell it to him for over \$10,000.00. These negotiations were precipitated by a phone call from Mark Hofmann.

Brent Ashworth was also called upon to testify at the preliminary hearing. He said that Hofmann told him that the fragment of papyrus he showed to him “came from the Joseph Smith Papyrus from the McLellin collection.” He further testified that Hofmann told him he had “kept back” this piece of papyrus when he sold the McLellin collection. Ashworth asked Hofmann if he could show the papyrus to Dr. Hugh Nibley but Hofmann responded, “no, I don’t want you showing it to anybody. This has to remain absolutely quiet.”

According to *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 16, Leslie Kress and Kenneth Rendell maintained that the papyrus actually “came from a European Collection which was consigned to defendant for an expected sum of \$10,000.00. Rendell positively identified the papyrus as having never been part of a ‘McLellin Collection’ nor known as a Joseph Smith Papyrus.”

Mr. Hofmann's attempt to make the contents of the McLellin collection seem very sensational must have been motivated by a desire to extort more money from those who wished to keep it hidden from public view. His claim that some of the Joseph Smith Papyri were in the McLellin collection undoubtedly stems from a rumor that some of the papyri had been found in Texas. We had reported this in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in May 1971. We quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that "there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri."

At first Mark Hofmann only claimed that he had the original of Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham and some fragments of papyri. After the bombings, however, I learned that he also asserted that he even had the original of Fac. No. 3. As I have stated earlier, the *Tribune* reported that Hofmann offered to sell Wade Lillywhite "an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers." Mr. Hofmann wanted "\$100,000" for this document. I assumed, of course, that this was Fac. No. 2, but when I called Mr. Lillywhite, he informed me that it was really Fac. No. 3 that Hofmann offered him! At the preliminary hearing, Wade Lillywhite testified that he received a telephone call the day before the bombings: "He [Hofmann] indicated that he was in need once again of raising some money; that he had an item that he wished to sell, which was Facsimile No. 3 from the Book of Abraham . . ." Mr. Lillywhite confirmed that Hofmann wanted "\$100,000 for it." He also testified that Hofmann said it "came from the McLellin collection, and I asked him once again how that could be seeing I thought the collection had been previously sold, and he once again indicated that was one of those items that he had retained from the McLellin collection."

Although Kenneth Rendell indicated that the papyrus Mark Hofmann broke up was "worth well under \$1,000" because it was damaged, Hofmann tried to sell it for over forty times its value by representing that it was part of the McLellin collection. When a list of collateral was prepared for a loan Mr. Hofmann was planning to obtain, the value was listed as \$100,000—over 100 times the amount Rendell said it was worth. As I have already shown, Hofmann even told his friend, Brent Metcalfe, that this fragment was part of the McLellin collection. The *Deseret News*, November 30, 1985, reported that "Ashment said that Metcalfe had offered that papyrus fragment to a West Coast investor for about \$30,000."

Steven Christensen's belief that Mark Hofmann was a "crook" may have partly come from the fact that he learned Hofmann was trying to sell this piece of papyrus, which was supposed to be part of the McLellin collection to someone else. The whole collection, of course, was supposed to eventually end up in the hands of the Mormon Church through a donation by an investor. In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Curt Bench claimed that he informed Steven Christensen of this duplicity on Hofmann's part:

Q—Did you have an occasion to tell a Mr. Steven Christensen about this papyrus transaction or attempted transaction with Mr. Hofmann?

A—I did. Mark had asked me to not tell anyone about it and I was keeping it confidential, but when Steve had been talking to me about some matters concerning Mark, I felt it best, at that time, to tell him that Mark had offered that piece of papyrus to us and indicated that Mark had said it was from the McLellin collection—

Curt Bench said that Mark Hofmann later "asked if I had told anyone about the piece of papyrus and I told him that I had." Hofmann then indicated that Steven Christensen had discussed the matter with him and he was "curious" how Christensen "found out." Mr. Bench went on to testify:

A—At some point . . . I had indicated to Steve the fact that Mark had offered a piece of papyrus, and that, of course, made Steve curious because he was wondering where the McLellin collection was and why would there be a piece offered for sale if indeed it was supposed to go to the church.

Q—You conveyed that information to him?

A— . . . Yes, I told him . . . that Mark had attempted to sell that to me because I felt in light of the seriousness of the situation, Steve should know that.

The information that Mark Hofmann was trying to sell a part of the collection out from under the Church must have come as a real shock to Steven Christensen.

"ATTEMPTED BLACKMAIL"

Up until the time of the bombings, Hofmann's friends were leaking out all kinds of information concerning what was in the McLellin collection and how damaging it would be to the Mormon Church if it fell into the hands of the public. The Church leaders apparently became very concerned that the material be suppressed.

The *Chicago Tribune* for October 25, 1985, printed this interesting information:

SALT LAKE CITY—After questioning a leading authority on rare documents, police here are piecing together a theory that the wave of bombings that hit this city last week was part of a daring scheme to conceal an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.

The scenario revolves around a plan to threaten the church leadership with a collection of artifacts deliberately concocted to appear particularly damaging to the credibility of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith.

At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Wilford Cardon testified that Hofmann asked him for "\$185,000" so that the McLellin collection could be obtained. According to Cardon, Hofmann claimed that he was trying to keep the collection from falling into the hands of critics of the Church:

. . . Mr. Hofmann told me it was important that they be given to the Church. That others who were not friendly to the Church also knew of the documents; that it was important that he purchase the documents . . . and give them to . . . President Hinckley, . . . it was important that the Church not purchase the documents outright or that they not be donated to the church, but that they be . . . put in the Church's possession for safe keeping.

Fortunately for Mr. Cardon, he became suspicious of Hofmann's story and did not provide any money for the project.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, October 25, 1985, document dealer Kenneth Rendell claimed:

. . . in repeated interviews with the Salt Lake City Police Department, officers told him they believe Hofmann had planned to use those papyri as part of the so-called McLellin collection.

Then, according to this scenario, Hofmann would try to sell the collection to somebody in the church or affiliated with the church who would want to keep the items from public view to avoid embarrassment.

Just two months before the bombings we had printed some important information about the purported McLellin collection and condemned Mr. Hofmann's attitude with regard to the Church suppressing documents. We said that this behavior was "deplorable, to say the least" (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, page 10). In the *Los Angeles Times* for November 8, 1985, we read:

According to Flynn, who often worked with Hofmann on deals, church officials and Hofmann had heard that anti-Mormon groups were "hot on the trail" of the McLellin Collection. Flynn said

Hofmann told him the papers were being held by a Texas bank as loan collateral.

"I was told by Mark that President Hinckley was anxious to get this stuff," Flynn said in an interview. "Evidently, they had caught wind the 'antis' were after it, and they were anxious to get it here to Salt Lake as soon as possible."

Mark Hofmann made it clear to Wade Lillywhite that the McLellin collection contained material that would cast doubt on Joseph Smith's story of the First Vision of 1820 in which both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to him. Furthermore, it was supposed to have information about Smith's practice of polygamy. In his testimony, Mr. Lillywhite related that he had learned from Hofmann that the McLellin collection included affidavits:

Some of the affidavits such as Emma Smith's affidavit concerning the First Vision of Joseph Smith—that his first experience with the divine was to have been the visit from the Angel Moroni, other affidavits regarding Joseph Smith's plural relationships with women, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and so forth.

Mike Carter reported that Hofmann told Shannon Flynn that "President Hinckley . . . 'was nervous' to have the collection" so that it would not fall into the hands of "the anti-Mormon group, Saints Alive" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 28, 1986).

SPALDING-RIGDON SCARE

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for April 1986, we printed the following:

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reveal that "Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen's personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something 'too sensitive to mention,' that the late Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 58). It has been suggested that the item that is "too sensitive to mention" may be the gold plates of the Book of Mormon or a "seer stone." Both of these suggestions appear unlikely. One thing that might qualify, however, is evidence that Solomon Spalding or Sidney Rigdon wrote the material which Joseph Smith used for his Book of Mormon. Although we have never put a great deal of stock in the theory, many critics of the Mormon church have maintained that Sidney Rigdon stole a manuscript written by Spalding and that this was used to create the Book of Mormon. If this idea could be proven, it would destroy the claim that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired. Any hard evidence on this subject

would certainly be “too sensitive to mention.” Like the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon, such “evidence” might be sold to the Mormon church for millions of dollars. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to murder.

We have recently learned that investigators have been looking into a document which was in the possession of Hofmann or Jacobs which has the signatures of both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon on it. The document apparently bears clear evidence of falsification.

At the Mormon Church’s press conference concerning the bombings, Apostle Dallin Oaks stated: “Mark Hofmann has shown Elder Pinnock a letter that he said was part of the [McLellin] collection . . .” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1986). When the preliminary hearing was held, it was revealed that the “letter” which Hofmann showed to Mr. Pinnock was actually the mysterious Spalding-Rigdon document which links the two men together. Hugh Pinnock, a member of the Church’s First Quorum of Seventy, testified as follows:

Q—Could you tell us what transpired at that meeting?

A— . . . well, he reported he’d been able to get the collection . . . and showed me . . . a document that he reported was from that collection.

.....

Q—Do you know what that item was?

A—It . . . was a deed or some legal document . . . between Asa and Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon and some other parties. It dealt, if I remember correctly, with the transfer of property.

Q—Did he tell you anything else more about that particular item?

A—No. I asked him if I could have a copy and he said, ‘Yes, as long as we wouldn’t distribute it.’ So we made a copy.

Q—Was there anything of significance, that you noticed about this document?

A—Well, . . . in the Church we’ve all heard of . . . Solomon Spalding and . . . that document would have established the fact that Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon knew one another.

.....

Q—Were you told anything about keeping that document or confidentiality or anything like that?

A—Yes.

Q—_____ you told?

A—Just to keep it confidential. That there would be a number of other people interested in the collection and its location and it should be kept . . . secret.

Hugh Pinnock seemed to believe that this document was genuine, and he probably realized that it could have a devastating effect if it became known by critics of the Church. That Hofmann would show this particular document to Pinnock certainly supports the accusation that he was engaged in “an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.”

As it turns out, the document is a very obvious forgery. Document experts have testified that the names Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding were not on the document when it was originally written and that the date has been changed from 1722 to 1822. (We will have more information on this later in this book.) Even the altered date, however, presents a serious problem to those who are informed concerning the Spalding-Rigdon theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon. Solomon Spalding could not have signed any document in 1822 because he died in 1816!

In any case, although Hofmann represented to Pinnock that the document was part of the McLellin collection, he turned right around and sold it out from under the Church. Steven Barnett gave some very interesting testimony concerning the Spalding-Rigdon document:

Q—Let me show you what’s been marked State’s Exhibit 114. I’ll ask you if you can identify that exhibit.

A—Yes, I can.

Q—What is that exhibit?

A—It . . . is a document with the signature of Sidney Rigdon and a Solomon Spalding.

Q—When did you first come in contact with that document?

A— . . . about the 18th of September, last year.

Q—1985?

A—Right.

Q—Tell us where you were and who, if anyone, brought that document to your attention.

A—I was at my desk in the rare book room and Mark Hofmann brought it into me.

Q—[Was] that the first time you’d ever seen such a document?

A—Yes, it is.

Q—What did he do with the document when he brought it in to you?

A—He put it on the counter and asked me if I’d like to look at it.

Q—Did he make any other comments about it?

A— . . . he had invited me to come over and look at it. I did and it appeared to have two signatures on it that were rather unusual as far as Mormon history is concerned.

To all people to whom these presents shall
 Come Greeting
 Know ye that Asa Spalding of Stonington in
 New London County & State of Connecticut for &
 in Consideration of Twenty one shillings lawful money
 to me in hand Paid by Jesse Yorks of sd. Stonington, which
 to my full Satisfaction & in Consideration thereof has
 sold by these Presents Bargain & Sale unto the sd. Yorks his
 own assigns for ever a certain Piece or Parcel of Land
 Containing half an acre be the same more or less &c.
 Bounded as Follows Beginning at a heap of Stones
 which sd. heap of Stones is the Southeast Corner of a lot
 of Land the sd. Yorks bought of Sabely Breed thence Run
 North 9° East 11 Rods & 18 Links to a heap of Stones which sd.
 heap of Stones is the North west Corner of a lot of Land the
 sd. Spalding bought of Penham Breed thence Easterly by sd.
 Land in the line of P. Spaldings Lot 14 3/4 Rods to Small Black
 Oak tree on the S. S. & I. V. thence South 71 West 15 Rods
 to the first mentioned bounds
 I have & do hold the sd. granted Premises with all the
 Rights & appurtenances thereto belonging unto him the
 sd. Yorks his heirs & assigns for ever in fee Simple
 & the said Asa Spalding do by these Presents bind my de
 self heirs & assigns for ever to warrant & defend the
 above granted Premises unto the sd. Yorks his heirs
 assigns for ever In witness whereof I have hereunto
 set my hand & seal in sd. Stonington this 19th
 Day of January Anno Domini 1822
 Asa Spalding
 Sidney Rigdon
 Elisha Babcock
 Mary Jay
 Abner Minner
 Isaac Dickman
 Solomon Spalding

A photograph of a document supposed to have been signed by both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon. Document experts testified that the two names were added to the document and that the date has been altered from 1722 to 1822. Hofmann misrepresented it as being part of the McLellin collection.

Q—Two signatures that you recognized?
 A—Well, I recognized Sidney Rigdon . . . as a witness on the item but I'd never seen a item signed by a Solomon Spalding.
 Q—So those two names caught your attention?
 A—Right.
 Q—Now, did . . . Mr. Hofmann say anything about . . . the document to you?
 A—. . . [he] commented that it was probably going to be a controversial item. It had the possibility of being.
 Q—Were there discussions about you purchasing the item.
 A—Ah, yes.
 Q—Now, would this be for yourself or . . .
 A—No. For the store.

 Q—Okay. What were those conversations?
 A—Well, . . . we discussed the fact that it apparently was signed by both Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding and so at that particular point, since I'd never seen anything signed by Spalding, I decided I'd better do some research on it.
 Q—Was there any figures, monetary figures, discussed?
 A—Yes. \$2,000.
 Q—Was that the price he wanted for the document?
 A—Right.
 Q—You wanted to do a little research?
 A—Yes.
 Q—Where did you want to research?
 A—Well, I wanted to find out if I could . . . find some handwriting of Solomon Spalding to compare it with.

 Q—What did you do?
 A—I researched that evening and found out that the Solomon Spalding had died several years prior to the date on the item.
 Q—Okay. What did you do with that information?
 A—Mark called me the following day and I just informed him of the discrepancy of the date.
 Q—What happened then? Did he respond?
 A—Yes. He said that he'd check back with me later in the day.
 Q—Did he do so?
 A—Yes, he did.
 Q—Tell us about that conversation.
 A—Well, what he told me was, would I be interested in the item as a Sidney Rigdon autograph?
 Q—And your response?

A—I thought that could be arranged but I wouldn't be able to pay as much money for it as such.

.
 Q—Did . . . you come to a figure you could pay for it simply because of the Sidney Rigdon signature?

A—Mark, I believe asked four hundred, at that point, based upon the value of the Sidney Rigdon autograph.

Q—Did you subsequently . . . pay him some money?

A—Yes.

Q—And what did you pay him?

A—Two hundred dollars in two payments.

Q—A total of four hundred dollars?

A—Right.

Q—And that is from Cosmic Aeroplane?

A—. . . yes.

Mark Hofmann's attempt to make it appear that William E. McLellin left a collection that would be very embarrassing to the Mormon Church was certainly a success. A number of prominent Mormons became concerned about helping Hofmann. About the middle of November, 1985, it was reported to me that KSL, a television station owned by the Mormon Church, had run a brief story at noon concerning Hugh Pinnock offering Mark Hofmann an armored car, an airplane and cash to obtain the McLellin collection. I discussed this matter with an employee of KSL, who told me that the information came from the diary of Steven Christensen. Mr. Christensen claimed that when Mr. Pinnock said he would provide an armored car and an airplane, Mark Hofmann declined the offer saying that this would not be necessary. Pinnock said that since the transaction was to be made on a day when the banks were to be closed, the individual receiving the cashier's check would not be able to call and verify that the check was legitimate. He wondered, therefore, if Hofmann would prefer to take cash from a fund that was available. Hofmann, however, thought that this would not be necessary. The fact that Hugh Pinnock felt that an armored car might be necessary to carry out the transaction may show that he was very concerned that the documents not fall into the wrong hands. In any case, I certainly would like to know more about this cash fund. In a paper prepared for the 1986 Sunstone Theological Symposium, John Heinerman and Anson Shupe gave this information:

Also, KSL-TV news reporter, Lynn Packer, told one of us late last year that when Hofmann met with

Pinnock and explained he needed the money right away, that Pinnock reassured him that if the bank loan didn't go through that he (Pinnock) could get some from the Nielsen Trust, a private trust fund administered by the Church through their Deseret Trust (Packer, 1985). ("Mark Hofmann and the Mormon Manuscript Bombings: Fraud and Deceit in a Religious Context," pages 6 and 7)

Before Hugh Pinnock began helping Mark Hofmann obtain the McLellin collection, Hofmann had approached Alvin Rust about the matter. Mr. Rust testified:

Q—Sometime in the first part of April or March of 1985 were you approached by Mr. Hofmann concerning a McLellin Collection?

A—Yes, I was.

Q—And can you tell us approximately when this occurred and where it was?

A—Well, his first approach on the McLellin collection was possibly February or March, indicating to me there was a very important collection in New York called the McLellin collection.

Alvin Rust said that Hofmann told him that the McLellin collection was "twenty times more important than anything we had ever purchased before." Mr. Rust went on to testify that, "The one thing he stressed was that this had to be very confidential. The collection was only known by he and two or three of the hierarchy of the Mormon Church. . . . Gordon B. Hinckley being the agent that he was dealing with and . . . he stressed emphatically that I couldn't tell a soul and that no one was supposed to know about the transaction."

After Mr. Rust invested in the collection, Hofmann pretended that he obtained it. Later he told Rust that he had actually "sold the entire collection to the LDS Church for \$300,000." Hofmann, however, did not repay Alvin Rust's investment and began to give Mr. Rust a number of different stories about what was happening with this mysterious collection. Rust claimed that Hofmann gave him four different accounts about what was going on:

Q—From April 23rd through October the 12th, how many different accounts of what was transpiring with the McLellin collection did Mr. Hofmann give to you?

A—Well, it'd be four different accounts.

Q—Did he ever return your money?

A—No, he has not.

Alvin Rust said that in the "latter part of August—I think it was August 25th or so—Mark came into my

store and gave me a check for \$132,000 . . ." Mr. Rust said he deposited the check in the bank "and it didn't clear." When Rust was asked if he ever got his "funds from the check," he replied, "No, I did not." Mr. Rust finally filed a lawsuit against Hofmann in which he claimed "he was defrauded of \$132,000 in the deal for the McLellin papers" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 15, 1985). Hofmann had repaid Mr. Rust \$17,900, leaving a balance of \$132,100.

The Mormon Church's involvement in the McLellin transaction was discussed at the Church's press conference held October 23, 1985. Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the Church's First Presidency, admitted that Mark Hofmann had approached him about the McLellin collection but said that Hofmann "wanted to donate the collection to the church. There was no discussion of our purchasing it" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). However this may be, Mr. Hofmann not only obtained \$150,000 from Mr. Rust, but he also approached the Church claiming that he needed \$185,000 to buy the collection. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks revealed the following:

In late June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about \$185,000. . . .

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann \$185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction. . . . to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it. . . . We discussed whether the church would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. It was my judgment that the church probably would at some future time, but in that event it had to be a genuine gift from a real donor. . . . Elder Pinnock inquired whether it would be appropriate to put him in touch with banking officials. I said I saw no harm in that provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan. . . . The bank made the loan to Hofmann. Hofmann said he had acquired the McLellin collection in Texas and shipped it to Salt Lake City where it was stored in a safety deposit box. The loan came due and it was not paid by Hofmann. . . . Mark Hofmann at that point said or implied, he would have to sell the collection entirely or a piece at a time. This information reached me sometime in September; . . . Elder Pinnock mentioned at that time

that he knew of at least two individuals who might be interested in purchasing the collection. Was there any harm in calling its availability to their attention? . . .

I was later informed that a buyer was interested but he wanted to remain anonymous. . . .

Sometime about the time of October Conference, the potential buyer phoned me. . . . He also asked whether the church would be interested in receiving it as a gift at some future time if he purchased it and later saw fit to give it. I said I supposed so, . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

During the press conference, Apostle Oaks was asked the name of the potential buyer. He replied, “He wished to remain anonymous and the police are aware of his identity and I think it would not be ethical for me to make it aware [*sic*] except to say that he is a person who is a member of the church” (Ibid.). The name of the potential buyer was a real secret. Donald Schmidt, formerly Church Archivist, testified that the man’s lawyer “said his client wanted to remain anonymous.” The *Salt Lake Tribune* found out the buyer’s name, but he would not let his lawyer talk about the transaction unless the paper agreed to “maintain his anonymity” (*Tribune*, October 25, 1985). At the preliminary hearing, Hugh Pinnock had to reveal the name of the anonymous buyer:

A—. . . I called a friend of mine and he said, yes, he would purchase it.

Q—Who was that you called?

A—David Sorenson.

Q—And where was he at the time?

A—He’s a mission president in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Hugh Pinnock became very concerned when the loan for \$185,000, which he helped Hofmann obtain from First Interstate Bank, became due. According to Pinnock’s testimony, Hofmann did take a check to the bank to pay off the loan but he understood “the check bounced.” A month later Mr. Hofmann visited Pinnock at his home:

A—. . . on October the 3rd, about 10:30, I got—

Q—In the evening?

A—In the evening . . . I got home and . . . Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Christensen were in my front room.

Q—At that time, did you have a discussion with them?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell us . . . what that conversation consisted of?

A—Mr. Christensen said to Mr. Hofmann, “You’ve got to let Elder Pinnock know the situation.” And at that time, Mr. Hofmann mentioned that the Library of Congress was not able to authenticate or validate the Oath of a Freeman, at least at that time, and that he owed a doctor some money, and that he was now concerned about being able to donate the McLellin collection to the Mormon Church.

From Curt Bench’s testimony, it would appear that just before the bombings Hugh Pinnock was pressuring Steven Christensen to relay to Mark Hofmann that he was headed for serious trouble if he did not fulfill his promises. In his testimony, Mr. Pinnock told of a brief encounter he had with Hofmann in the underground parking lot at the Church Office Building after the bombings:

Yes. One thing that I said is that it appeared as if the bombings were related to the business that Mr. Christensen and Mr. Sheets had shared together, and we also talked about . . . going ahead with the closing of the McLellin collection.

Apostle Dallin Oaks met with Mark Hofmann about seven hours after Steven Christensen was murdered. They discussed the possibility of completing the transaction with the anonymous buyer:

Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve, said in a memorandum about his meeting with Mr. Hofmann the day of the homicides that he had a conversation “from a potential buyer” referred to him by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock. . . .

Elder Oaks also suggested to Mr. Hofmann that he “ought to get in touch with the buyer’s attorney, who undoubtedly would be wondering what would be happening in view of the news reports about Christensen’s death,” and reminded Mr. Hofmann that another person would have to be found to verify the authenticity of the documents—a task that was to be Mr. Christensen’s, according to Mr. West and the church reports. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 25, 1985)

In the Mormon Church’s press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the Church has a “mandate” to obtain important historical documents. Apostle Oaks, however, indicated that the Church was “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection:

FRED MOSS: Fred Moss with KBYU News. I just have a question. Why is the church so intent on getting the papers? Is it to secure them in the right hands so that they are not taken advantage of and make the church look bad? And where does the money come to purchase these letters?

ELDER OAKS: Can I answer the first part . . .

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: Yes, go ahead.

ELDER OAKS: Again, why, you say, is the church so intent on getting the papers? I thought it was clear from my statement that the church was very intent on not getting the papers, so that there would be no misunderstanding about this. Could you rephrase that question? (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

From all I can learn about the McLellin transaction, it appears obvious that while Church leaders may have been “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection in a way that would become known to the public, they were working behind the scenes to see that the papers were acquired secretly. On November 15, 1985, KUTV News did a story concerning the discovery of Steven Christensen’s diary. Christensen was quoted as saying the following about the McLellin collection: “Elder Pinnock has saved the Church time, money and effort in countering an avalanche of negative publicity should the collection have fallen into the wrong hands.”

If the Church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not have found themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. The McLellin fraud cost Hugh Pinnock a great deal of money. He claimed that although he was not “legally obligated to the bank,” he felt morally responsible to pay back the balance of the \$185,000 loan that Hofmann owed to First Interstate Bank. On October 26, the *Deseret News* announced that he had repaid the loan out of his own money. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1986, page 13, we commented that Pinnock’s actions “avoided the sticky situation of the bank taking Hofmann to court and the embarrassing testimony that might follow. It is also obvious that neither Pinnock nor the church would want Hofmann to become an enemy.” Mr. Pinnock may have felt that his action in paying off the loan made him appear a little too generous to Hofmann. In any case, a few months later he turned right around and filed a lawsuit against Mark Hofmann: “An attorney representing Hugh W. Pinnock has filed a suit in 3rd district court seeking to recover more than \$170,000 from Mark W. Hofmann” (*Deseret News*, April 1, 1986). Since this suit was filed just before the preliminary hearing, one wonders if it was an attempt by Pinnock to put some distance between himself and Mr. Hofmann. In any case, it certainly appears to be an exercise in futility since it is very unlikely that Hugh Pinnock will be able to collect anything from

Hofmann. I doubt very much that Mr. Pinnock will allow this suit to actually end up in court.

A COLLECTION FOUND

On November 28, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported: “The *Tribune* has located what may be the McLellin collection, . . .” The discovery of this collection was made possible because of research done by Wesley P. Walters some years ago. Mr. Walters obtained a copy of a letter written by J. L. Traughber on August 21, 1901, from the New York Public Library. Mr. Traughber lived in Mobile, Tyler County, Texas. Michael Marquardt made a typed copy of a portion of this letter, and we printed it on page 10 of the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*: “I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-2-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism.”

We felt that it was possible that the collection could have been preserved in the “area of Texas” where Mr. Traughber had lived. Dawn Tracy, a reporter for the *Tribune* followed up the lead furnished by Mr. Traughber’s letter and found at least a portion of the McLellin collection in the possession of his son, H. O. Traughber. While the collection does not appear to have the 1831-36 diaries, it does have the “little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin.” I have compared the handwriting of the documents shown in the photographs published in the *Tribune* with copies of letters written by McLellin. Although I am no expert, it does appear to me that the documents bear the handwriting of McLellin. Furthermore, the contents of the material appears to be exactly what one would expect from the hand of McLellin. For example, in his list of 55 reasons he could not be a Utah Mormon, McLellin wrote: “35. Polygamy. Mrs Joseph Smith, the widow of the Prophet, told me in 1847 that she knew her husband, the Prophet practiced both adultery and polygamy.” This agrees with a letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son. The letter is dated July, 1872, and is preserved in the RLDS Archives. This letter agrees in stating that McLellin talked with Joseph Smith’s widow concerning adultery in 1847:

Now Joseph I will relate to you some history, and refer you to your own dear Mother for the truth. You

will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, . . . I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams . . . told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. she went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true. (Letter from William E. McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872, typed copy)

Unlike most of the documents discovered by Mark Hofmann, the documents Mr. Traugher has in his possession have a good pedigree stretching back to McLellin himself. There seems to be no reason, therefore, to doubt that the documents are genuine. While most of the material in H. O. Traugher's possession is in the handwriting of his father, it still throws important light on the subject because it quotes from the original papers of Apostle McLellin. For instance, Traugher quoted McLellin as questioning the restoration of the priesthood by angels: "I joined the church in 1831. For years I never heard of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver. I heard not of James, Peter and John doing so. These things were gotten up in after years in order to sustain them in their false priesthoods" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1985).

The reader will notice the similarity between this quotation and a statement that appears in the letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith's son in 1872:

But as to the story of John, the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver on the day they were baptized: I never heard of it in the church for years, altho I carefully noticed things that were said. And today I do not believe the story.

J. L. Traugher's papers are extremely important in showing how unlikely it is that Mark Hofmann could have found the large collection of McLellin material he spoke of in the hands of one person in Texas. In one of the documents, Mr. Traugher indicated that the McLellin collection was scattered and some of it was even burned by his wife:

After the death of Dr. McLellan, his widow broke up housekeeping and left Independence, Mo.,

where they had been living from 1869 to 1883. As she had no particular use for them, she burnt a great many of the Doctor's papers, and gave away others to persons who asked for them.

I believe that Mr. Hofmann undoubtedly made up the idea of a large and important McLellin collection after reading some of McLellin's letters located in the RLDS Church Archives. On August 23, 1984, Hofmann told Sandra that he was aware of papers concerning McLellin which were possessed by that Church. In McLellin's letters he speaks of some items he had in his possession. In the July 1872 letter, for instance, McLellin stated: "Now all L.D. Sism claims that Joseph Smith translated the Book [of Mormon] with Urim and Thummim, when he did not even have or retain the Nephite or Jaredite Interpreters but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a *small stone*. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver's widow,) Martin Harris, and Emma [Smith] Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer." From information obtained from Mark Hofmann, Brent Metcalfe helped an LDS Institute teacher compile a list of the material found in the McLellin collection. This list mentions the identical items contained in the McLellin letter: "d. Affidavits he collected about translation of Book of Mormon process: Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma Smith."

The evidence provided by the papers in Mr. Traugher's possession seems to show that although Mr. Hofmann knew from McLellin's 1872 letter about these statements concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon, Hofmann never actually obtained them. Brent Metcalfe said on KUED that it was his understanding that some of the affidavits dated back to 1831 and that the one by Emma Smith cast doubt on Joseph Smith's story of his First Vision. (Metcalfe's statement agrees with Curt Bench's testimony on the content of the Emma Smith affidavit.) Another report given by a local television station claimed that Steven Christensen wrote in his diary that the Emma Smith affidavit was very damaging to the Mormon Church. The Traugher papers seem to demonstrate that Hofmann did not know what the Emma Smith statement contained and that he was probably trying to raise the price of the collection by claiming that there was embarrassing information found in it. If Mr. Hofmann really had a document with Emma Smith's name on it which was exceptionally damaging to the Church, I would be inclined to believe that it was a forgery created within the last few years. In any case, Dawn Tracy reported that at some point J. L.

Traugher was shown the Emma Smith affidavit by William E. McLellin and copied it “for a book.” The entry originally written by Emma Smith reads: “The first that my husband translated was translated by the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost. After that, he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather of a dark color. March 29, 1870” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 3, 1985).

When I read Emma Smith’s statement in the *Tribune*, I felt that it had a familiar ring. In discussing the matter with Michael Marquardt, he correctly identified it as being a quotation out of a letter Emma Smith wrote to Mrs. Emma Pilgrim. We had printed this statement many years ago from an article by James E. Lancaster in the *Saints’ Herald*, an RLDS publication. It is found in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 42:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, and that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color. . . .

The reader will see that the statement is essentially the same as Traugher’s copy made from McLellin’s collection. Michael Marquardt gives the date of the letter as March 27, 1870. Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker give the same date in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 67, n. 78. Dawn Tracy’s article lists the date as “March 29, 1870” but it is very likely that someone has just misread a seven for a nine. William E. McLellin seems to have copied the item from Emma Smith’s letter to Mrs. Pilgrim. Traugher, in turn, copied it into his manuscript and Dawn Tracy recopied it for publication in the *Tribune*. In the letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, Joseph Smith’s widow even asked about Mr. McLellin. This would indicate that Mrs. Pilgrim was in touch with McLellin. In his letter of July 1872, McLellin referred to the statements he had collected concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon as “certificates.” It may be that when he copied the material from the letter, he had Mrs. Pilgrim certify that it was a correct copy. This might explain why Emma Smith’s statement was later referred to as an affidavit.

While it is true that the statement that Joseph Smith used “a small stone” to translate the Book of Mormon is damaging to the Mormon position because it links Joseph Smith to magic, the fact that it had already been published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and other publications would make it of very little value. That Steven Christensen was so worried about

the “affidavit” seems to show that Mr. Hofmann had misrepresented its contents.

The statement of Oliver Cowdery’s widow, which Hofmann claimed he had found, was quoted by McLellin himself in a letter written in February 1870. It has already been published by Van Wagoner and Walker in their article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 51:

I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father’s house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.

The Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn says that he told Mark Hofmann about the possibility of McLellin material surviving in the Traugher family. It appears, however, that Hofmann was not very interested in the matter. H. O. Traugher insists that Mark Hofmann never even contacted him.

AN IMAGINARY COLLECTION

The inconsistencies found in Mark Hofmann’s statements about the McLellin collection cast serious doubt upon its existence. For instance, according to Hugh Pinnock’s testimony, Hofmann claimed “he had located the collection down in Texas.” He told many other people the same story. However, when he approached Alvin Rust, he informed him the McLellin collection was in New York:

Q—Where was the collection?

A—It was in New York City.

At one point Hofmann told Rust that a potential buyer—not the seller—was in Texas: “. . . the Church had decided not to purchase the collection—that he had a buyer in Texas that was going to purchase the collection and he was going to in turn donate it to the LDS Church.” When Alvin Rust originally gave the money to Mark Hofmann to purchase the McLellin collection, he made it clear that he wanted his son to go back to New York with Hofmann to obtain the papers. Although this must have caused Hofmann some concern, he found a way to trick Mr. Rust’s son into believing he had obtained the collection without actually showing it to him:

In April, Hofmann borrowed \$150,000 from Rust to buy the McLellin papers, which he told Rust were in New York City. On April 23, Hofmann and Rust's son, Gaylen, flew to New York City to get the papers.

Gaylen Rust accompanied Hofmann to New York because of the size of his father's investment. "I was going back as a safety precaution," Gaylen said. "This had been the largest amount we had given Mark, and my father and I felt it was critical that Mark not go alone."

Gaylen said he and Hofmann planned to carry the more valuable documents back on the plane with them. The rest were to be shipped back to Rust's Coin and Gift for inventory. They would later be sold by Rust and Hofmann.

It didn't happen that way. On the morning of April 26, Gaylen went to Hofmann's hotel room to go with him to buy the papers. Hofmann had already left.

Hofmann met Gaylen later in the day and told him he had bought the papers and shipped them back to Salt Lake City. He showed Gaylen three shipping receipts for \$75,000 each.

Hofmann didn't send the papers to the Rust store, as agreed, but instead shipped them to himself.

"At that time, he told me he felt it was safer to ship everything back registered than to carry it around New York City until Monday," Gaylen said. When they got back to Salt Lake City, Hofmann told Gaylen he would come to the Rust store the next day with the documents. He didn't show.

Gaylen didn't doubt Hofmann because Hofmann had been scrupulously honest in several other business deals with Gaylen's father. "We trusted him implicitly," Gaylen said. "If I had doubted the (purchase of the papers), I would have made sure I had been there, even if it had been against his wishes." (*Deseret News*, October 23, 1985)

At the preliminary hearing, Deputy Salt Lake County Attorney Robert Stott argued as follows:

The only logical conclusion that can be drawn from the evidence is that . . . there is no so-called McLellin collection, [it] just doesn't exist. Or if by some chance it does exist, it certainly isn't what Mark Hofmann claimed it to be. . . . No one's ever seen this McLellin collection, not his creditors [to] whom he promised to show it. Promised Al Rust he'd show it, promised Hugh Pinnock of First Interstate Bank, never showed it to them. His business associates—Wade Lillywhite, Curt Bench, Brent Ashworth—none of those ever saw it. His close friends didn't see it—Lyn Jacobs, Flynn—they never saw it. . . .

I think kind of important, even Wilding never saw it. And you know how much—how important it was for Mark Hofmann to please Mr. Wilding and his friends those last couple of weeks. He was attempting to placate them and to satisfy them in any manner he could. But they never even saw the McLellin Collection. Mark Hofmann gave a variety of versions and conflicting stories as to the whereabouts of the McLellin collection. He told Al Rust in April that it was in New York, but yet in June, he told Hugh Pinnock it was in Texas. Directly conflicting stories. He told Wade Lillywhite clear back in March before Al Rust that he, Mark Hofmann, had already bought the collection and had given it to or sold it to a third party who [would] give it to the Church. Then he told Wilford Cardon in June that he, Mark Hofmann, had located the collection and had deposited it with President Hinckley. And then he told Brent Ashworth in September that he had sold it to a Salt Lake City businessman. A variety of stories inconsistent with each other.

After the bombings, Mark Hofmann still maintained that the McLellin collection was a reality. The following appeared in *Utah Holiday* in January 1986: "[Brent] Metcalfe was telling *Utah Holiday* in early December that within days Hofmann would reveal his own ties to the McLellin collection of early Mormon documents, and would, in fact, produce the papers as proof of his long-standing connection to the sought-after materials" (page 42). Some people believed that Hofmann would produce the McLellin collection at his preliminary hearing. As it turned out, however, neither Hofmann nor his lawyers mentioned anything about the location of the collection. A number of people felt that Hofmann's friend, Brent Metcalfe, had seen the collection. The *Deseret News*, November 30, 1985, reported:

Many in the historical community attribute to Metcalfe their belief that Hofmann had the McLellin collection and was about to sell it. A number of people told the *Deseret News* that Metcalfe had told them since January that he had seen photographs of the collection or that he knew that the contents were controversial.

Metcalfe told the *Deseret News* after the bombings that he had believed Hofmann had the collection and that it was valuable. However, he said, all his information came from Hofmann and he had never seen the collection or photographs of it himself.

When Brent Metcalfe appeared on the television station KUED, November 19, 1985, he acknowledged that he had “never seen it [the McLellin collection] in his possession.” Ed Ashment had listened to Lyn Jacobs give such a detailed description of the papyri (apparently including the original of Fac. No. 2), that he felt Jacobs must have had access to them:

Jacobs had described four papyri fragments in meticulous detail over the telephone, said Ashment, who took notes at the time. “Lyn gave a physical description of the fragments. Three only had writing. The largest was about three square inches. The fourth had a detailed design and had been cracked and glued. Someone had patched papyrus in. The outer edge had been damaged. It sounded like it was really there in front of him.”

Recently, Ashment said, Jacobs told him he had only repeated Hofmann’s description to him, but had never actually seen the fragments.

After Jacobs’ description, Ashment arranged last July to meet Hofmann and Metcalfe in the LDS Church Historical Library to photograph the four fragments. Instead they showed him a fifth fragment, he said, and allowed him to photograph it. (*Deseret News*, November 30, 1985)

As I have already shown, Lyn Jacobs was a very close friend of Hofmann’s and worked with him on selling the Salamander letter. In *Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 13, Jacobs was questioned about the McLellin collection:

SUNSTONE: . . . Did you work with Mark at all on the M[’]Lellin collection?

JACOBS: No, I didn’t. Anything I have ever understood concerning the M[’]Lellin papers has simply been what Mark has told me about it in passing.

SUNSTONE: Have you seen any part of it?

JACOBS: No, not to my knowledge.

SUNSTONE: Do you believe it exists?

JACOBS: I have no reason to doubt the collection exists as Mark has described it to various individuals.

There appears to be three items that Mark Hofmann actually showed to others which he claimed were from the McLellin collection. In every case, however, it can be shown that he was not telling the truth. We have already shown that the papyrus he broke up and

represented as being part of the Joseph Smith Papyri which survived in the McLellin collection was in reality purchased from Kenneth Rendell. The Spalding-Rigdon document, which Hofmann told Hugh Pinnock was part of the McLellin collection, is clearly a forgery. The third item is the Emma Smith hymnal. Brent Ashworth testified that when Hofmann sold him this book he told him it was from the McLellin collection:

A—He also indicated to me that it was originally from the McLellin collection, and I was impressed by that fact and I asked him, I said . . . Mark its unsigned . . . can you give me an affidavit to that effect, and he said he would do that, but I never received it.

Q—Did he ever tell you where Lyn Jacobs got it? From whom Lyn Jacobs—

A—Just from the McLellin collection.

According to the testimony of both Lyn Jacobs and Donald Schmidt, the Emma Smith hymnal actually came from the Mormon Church Archives. Furthermore, document experts have testified that Hofmann falsified this book to make it worth approximately ten times as much as when Lyn Jacobs originally showed it to him. (I will have more to say about this later in this book.)

Since all three items which Hofmann showed or sold to others as pieces from the McLellin collection can be shown to be either forgeries or obtained from some other source, it does not instill a great deal of confidence in the remaining pieces he claimed to have but never showed to anyone else. All the evidence, therefore, points to the inescapable conclusion that the McLellin collection was only a figment of Mark Hofmann’s imagination.

4. CHURCHS INVOLVEMENT

I have many a time, in this stand, dared the world to produce as mean devils as we can; we can beat them at anything. We have the greatest and smoothest liars in the world, the cunningest and most adroit thieves, and any other shade of character that you can mention. . . . I can produce Elders here who can shave their smartest shavers, and take their money from them. We can beat the world at any game. (President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, vol. 4, page 77)

. . . Hofmann came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? (Apostle Dallin H. Oaks, Salt Lake Tribune, October 27, 1985)

While some people originally subscribed to the theory that “the bombs were planted by people radically opposed to the teachings of the Mormon Church,” the facts seem to completely discredit such an idea. At this point it appears that the entire Salamandergate scandal grew out of an internal problem which took root within the Mormon Church itself. Almost all of those who played a role in the transactions which brought international attention to Salt Lake City were members of the Mormon Church. Mark Hofmann himself was at one time a missionary for the Church. According to the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, October 20, 1985, “Hofmann . . . served in the England Southwest Mission, 1974-76.” On February 4, 1986, the same newspaper said that on “one mission report of average proselyting hours, Hofmann’s name ranks 49th out of 208 missionaries. Part of the time, Hofmann served in the mission office in Bristol.” *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 53, reported that Hofmann married “in the Salt Lake LDS temple.” In an interview published in *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 19, Mr. Hofmann described himself as “an eighth-generation Mormon, and my mother is a stake Relief Society president right now.” Some of Hofmann’s closest associates (Lyn Jacobs, Shannon Flynn and Brent Metcalfe) were returned Mormon missionaries. Linda Sillitoe and Jerry Spangler wrote the following:

. . . [Brent] Metcalfe . . . went to work for Hofmann. Before he worked with Ashment, Metcalfe worked for Christensen, with the support of Sheets, researching the Martin Harris letter. After the letter became controversial, Metcalfe was dismissed and Christensen donated the authenticated letter to the church. . . .

Hofmann, Metcalfe and Jacobs became acquainted during the time Jacobs worked in the Genealogical Department [of the Church] and

Metcalfe worked for Church Security. Both had an interest in Mormon and early Christian history, a friend said. Hofmann was a frequent visitor to the Historical Department and the History Library, a favorite haunt of both Jacobs and Metcalfe.

Flynn was a member of Jacobs’ Sunday School class, and through him met Hofmann. (*Deseret News*, November 30, 1985)

Like Hofmann, Brent Metcalfe had served his mission in England. Lyn Jacobs was a missionary in Canada, and Shannon Flynn served in Brazil. One of the persons that Hofmann defrauded was Wilford Cardon. Mr. Cardon testified: “Mr. Flynn served a mission in Brazil and I was his mission president from July 1978 until the end of his mission.” Shannon Flynn introduced Mark Hofmann to Wilford Cardon, and Hofmann proceeded to talk Cardon into investing heavily in his schemes. Another faithful Mormon who lost a great deal of money by investing in Hofmann’s forgeries is Brent Ashworth. The Church Section of the *Deseret News*, June 23, 1985, said that Mr. Ashworth was “bishop of the BYU 82nd Ward.” On July 23, 1986, Brent Ashworth filed a lawsuit against Mark Hofmann in which he claimed that Hofmann had sold him many forgeries and that he had paid \$225,100 for the documents:

3. At all times herein referred to, the defendant Hofmann represented that he was a document dealer, that he was a document expert, and the documents that he possessed and the documents he sold to the plaintiff were real and genuine. . . .

6. The total amount paid by the plaintiff to the defendant for said documents was \$225,100. . . .

8. The representations of the defendant were in truth and in fact false, were made by the defendant for the purpose of causing the plaintiff to rely upon the same which the plaintiff did, to his detriment.

9. The documents by the plaintiff are in fact without value. . . .

14. Great publicity was attached to the transactions referred to in this Complaint.

15. The documents were presumed by the plaintiff and the news media to be of historical significance and therefore greatly newsworthy and substantial publicity was attached to the discoveries of these documents and the use of the documents by the plaintiff and the public media.

16. The plaintiff had acquired a reputation in the community for being an expert in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an authority on Church documents. The discovery that the documents which were sold to the plaintiff by the defendant were false and fraudulent and which were created by the defendant for the sole purpose of fraud and deception was equally newsworthy and the public portrayal has caused the plaintiff great embarrassment, humiliation and injury to his reputation and stature in the community, all to his general damage in an amount to be established upon proof.

17. The result of the defendant's conduct was to libel and slander the plaintiff and to cause him great and debilitating emotional injury all to his general damage in an amount to be established upon proof. ("BRENT ASHWORTH, Plaintiff, vs. MARK HOFMANN, Defendant," pages 1-3)

Alvin Rust, who invested in the McLellin collection and a number of Hofmann's other forgeries, has served as a bishop in the Mormon Church. Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets, who invested in the Salamander letter and later had bombs delivered to them, were also bishops in the church. (Sheets' wife, of course, picked up the package addressed to him and died in the explosion.)

Mark Hofmann was well acquainted with Wade Lillywhite and Curt Bench who worked at the Church's Deseret Book. Many of Hofmann's forgeries, in fact, were sold to the Church's bookstore. David Sorenson, who was to purchase the McLellin collection on the day Hofmann was injured, was serving as a mission president. Mr. Hofmann was well acquainted with the former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt and sometimes met with Gordon B. Hinckley, of the Church's First Presidency. Hinckley and Apostle Boyd K. Packer often gave approval for the Church to purchase Hofmann's documents. Donald Schmidt testified as follows:

Q—Each one of the items we discussed so far—
A—I believe that is correct.

Q—did have the approval of the advisors . . . ?

A—That is correct.

Q—Any other approval? Who are the advisors to the Historical—

A—At the time I was working?

.

A—I believe I am safe in saying that during that period of time, Elders Gordon B. Hinckley and Boyd K. Packer were the advisors.

Q—All right. Then one or the other or both of them would have approved each of the transactions that we're about to talk about or that you talked about earlier this afternoon?

A—That is correct.

Hugh Pinnock, of the First Quorum of Seventy, helped Hofmann find a buyer for the McLellin collection and secure a loan of \$185,000, and even Apostle Dallin Oaks found himself meeting with Hofmann.

That the Mormon Church was involved in a highly secret transaction (or transactions) with Mark Hofmann became obvious at the Church's press conference. Apostle Oaks claimed that after the bombings began, three different men came to the Mormon Church Administration Building enquiring about what they should tell police:

. . . just before 3 p.m., Mark Hofmann came to the Church Administration Building and asked for Elder Pinnock, who was out at that time. . . . Hofmann came to my office and said he thought the police would question him. What should he say when they questioned him? And I said, "You should simply tell them the truth. You don't have any reason to believe that this bombing has anything to do with you, do you? And simply tell them the truth." And then, when he seemed to be questioning whether we should tell them about the McLellin collection, I said, "Look. That's been handled on a confidential basis, but there's a murder investigation under way. You should tell the police everything you know and answer every question—and I intend to do the same." . . .

On Thursday, the following day, Shannon Flynn came to the Church Administration Building . . . I met with Flynn . . . In brief, Flynn wanted to know what he should say if he was questioned, and I told him to tell the truth, just as I had told Hofmann.

On Friday, Alvin Rust came to the Church Office Building. . . . He said, "I know some things. I've already talked to the police, but I know some more things." And I said, "Whatever you haven't told the police, tell them. Give them everything." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

Alvin Rust was rather upset about Apostle Oaks' comment concerning him:

"I didn't run to the church asking what to say to the police," said Mr. Rust. "I wanted to know about the McLellin papers. I love the church but Elder Oaks' statement sounded funny." (Ibid., October 24, 1985)

In any case, the fact that people would have to seek out an Apostle to know what to tell the police certainly reveals that there were secret activities going on. On November 18, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed that it was learned that church security officers had been a step ahead of the detectives in interviewing some of the people:

Early on, when it was learned that LDS Church officials had dealt with one of the victims, the prime suspect and key witness in the killings, the investigators' lives suddenly became much more difficult. It was learned that some of the people detectives wanted to talk to had been interviewed first by church security officers, and nobody really knew how to approach church general authorities with questions about murder.

The following information appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on November 28, 1985:

Two days after bombs killed two people last month, Shannon Patrick Flynn told Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Apostle Dallin H. Oaks that the "whole room is falling down" and asked what "posture" he should take with police when interviewed, according to a transcript of their conversation. . . .

Mr. Flynn was one of three characters . . . who went to LDS Church officials to ask advice before taking their information to the police in the bombing investigation. . . .

Investigators have said that they found it "disconcerting" that several people they interviewed in regard to the bombings had first consulted with authorities in the church and church security officials.

In his meeting with Elder Oaks, which took place in the presence of a church stenographer and three security guards, Mr. Flynn told the former Utah Supreme Court justice that he was told by Mark Hofmann that President Gordon B. Hinckley, a counselor to the late church President Spencer W. Kimball, "was nervous" to have the [McLellin] collection . . .

Mr. Flynn, like Hofmann and Mr. Rust, went to the church for guidance on what to tell police.

"I need to meet with the police quickly. I have questions to be answered before I go and speak to them so I will know what posture to take," he told the apostle. . . .

Elder Oaks urged Mr. Flynn be truthful . . . "Mark Hofmann has told you some things that are not true," Elder Oaks said.

". . . Let me tell you I know something about this transaction. You will understand when it comes out." Elder Oaks said. ". . . The church is going to cooperate fully and it has absolutely nothing to hide. Sometimes there are some confidential transactions but this is a murder investigation. Confidentiality is set aside. . . .

". . . Tell them what you know. This is no time to withhold anything. I am not going to talk to the newspapers. The less said to the newspapers the better," he advised.

". . . People read the papers and get their whole ideas from the newspapers," he said.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 21, 1985, reported that "Friends of Mr. Hofmann have said he did regular business with President Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church's First Presidency." At the press conference, President Hinckley admitted that the Church had acquired "40-some documents" that came through Mark Hofmann:

I first met Mark W. Hofmann in April of 1980 when he was brought to my office by officers of our Historical Department. . . . he had found what has come to be known as the "Anthon Manuscript" in Joseph Smith's handwriting. . . .

On March 17, 1981, our Historical Department people again came with him to my office with the transcript of the blessing given by Joseph Smith to his son. . . .

Since that time, Mr. Hofmann has sold various documents to the church. . . . The church has acquired by purchase, donation, or trade 40-some documents, some of relatively little importance, and some of significance. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

The *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1985, claimed that "most" of these documents have not been made public.

Mormon Church Archivists have always been very careful who they show documents to, but during the murder investigation they were compelled to show them to detectives. Glen Rowe testified that "We have received several subpoenas . . ." Just before Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Mormon Church leaders had to drastically revise President Gordon B. Hinckley's claim that they had acquired "40-some documents" that came through Hofmann. According

to the *Deseret News*, April 12, 1986, they had found that they had received almost ten times that number:

Approximately 300 century-old court records donated to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1983 by Mark W. Hofmann have been returned to an Illinois court—the place of the documents' origin, a church spokesman announced Friday.

Richard P. Lindsay, managing director of public communications, said the records were found and inventoried while members of the church historical department were assembling documents for study by law enforcement officials conducting a criminal investigation.

The court records—returned to the Circuit Court clerk in Hancock County, Ill.—date from 1831 to 1865 and consist of complaints, summonses, subpoenas, indentures and notices . . .

In addition, 45 other court records received from Hofmann in 1983 were discovered during the inventory. These records, which date from 1839 to 1882, will be offered to public officials in Illinois, Missouri, Utah and Wisconsin.

The church also released a list of 48 other documents acquired by the LDS church from Hofmann and referred to during a news conference Oct. 23, 1985. Lindsay said the list was released to complete the public record and to correct erroneous speculation in the media about the acquisitions.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 12, 1986, indicated that there was a question regarding the legality of “obtaining or receiving” the court records:

Mormon officials have released descriptions of almost 400 documents and court records they received as a gift, traded or bought . . .

Out-of-state officials said they are examining some of the documents to determine if violations occurred in obtaining or receiving the records. . . .

About 300 court documents Mr. Hofmann donated to LDS officials in 1983 were returned to Hancock County, Ill., officials Monday. In examining the court records, LDS workers became “convinced that they were originals of public documents, which would normally be retained at the site of the court and should therefore be turned over to the responsible public official if he desired to receive them,” according to the prepared statement.

Hancock County Circuit Court Clerk John Neally said he has given the records to the state attorney

to determine if any violation has occurred in taking or receiving the records. He said two men from the Mormon Church gave him the records Monday. . . .

Illinois Circuit Court Judge Max Stewart said it's illegal to take court documents out of the courthouse without permission, and he couldn't “imagine anyone getting permission to take out 300.”

Since the Church has already revised the number of Hofmann documents it acquired from “40-some” to almost 400, I wonder if there could be even more. It appears that some of the Hofmann documents that the Church obtained came through his friend Lyn Jacobs. At the preliminary hearing Jacobs testified that he “was in the habit of making a great deal of book trades with Don Schmidt. In other words, with the Church Historian's Office.” In the interview in *Sunstone*, pages 10-11, Lyn Jacobs gave this information about his contact with Church Archives:

SUNSTONE: Who were you trading with?

JACOBS: With Weller and others. I worked primarily with the Church archivist, Don Schmidt. . . .

SUNSTONE: When did you meet Mark Hofmann?

JACOBS: I met him around 1979 or 1980. I remember the occasion clearly. I visited Deseret Book early one day. Mark was there and I had never met him before. He had just spoken briefly with Mr. Scow, who was running the rare book section at that time. I spoke with Scow briefly as well and then looked over at Mark and said, “Well, it looks like we've got the same sort of interest.” . . . He'd come in that day with some Kirtland bills or something like that. . . .

We didn't really consider working together for some time. I knew practically nothing about documents. . . . Consequently, if I found a manuscript, I'd often call Mark up and have him take care of it.

SUNSTONE: Did you ever become business partners?

JACOBS: There has been a certain amount of misrepresentation on this account. When I was working with the Church archives, there were times when Mark and I combined forces as it were. Let's say, for example, that Mark didn't have time to bring some item into the Church archives. Often we agreed that if he gave it to me to deliver for him, I would receive whatever cut I wished in trade. Consequently, I would bring the document in and tell them, “This is what Mark wants, and this is what I want.” We used to do this kind of deal all the time with the Church

archives simply because it was so convenient. Most of my business with the archives was my own, however. I have worked with the institution much more than Mark primarily because I had a rapport with the Church archives . . . I have never thought of myself as Mark's partner but as one of his best friends. The only document we ever worked with in tandem that has any real significance is the Martin Harris letter.

One thing that must be very embarrassing for Mormon Church leaders is that they not only gave Hofmann money for forgeries, but that they also traded genuine material stored in the Archives for bogus documents. At the press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the "Historical Department later traded him other documents of interest for the 'Anthon Manuscript'" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). Hinckley also said that the Joseph Smith III Blessing "was acquired from Mr. Hofmann with a trade of historic materials . . ." (Ibid.)

The Hofmann documents which were not unfavorable to the Mormon Church were proudly displayed in Church publications. The Church's *Ensign* magazine, December 1983, printed an article which was filled with pictures of documents that came through Hofmann. On page 34 we find a picture of the Anthon transcript. The Lucy Smith letter appears on the next page. Pages 37-38 contain portions of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon which came through Hofmann. The following page has the 1873 David Whitmer letter to Walter Conrad. The Grandin contract appears on page 41 of the *Ensign* article, and the 1873 Martin Harris letter to Walter Conrad is found on page 45.

On the other hand, the unfavorable documents which the public were not aware of were buried in the Church's vaults. In the *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 6, 1986, we find the following:

Sources close to the investigation have said the church apparently did little to authenticate many of these documents before they were purchased, stating that church historians felt "they had time and all eternity" to check their veracity. "**They just wanted them off the streets,**" the source said.

Donald Schmidt, former Church Archivist, testified at the preliminary hearing that the Church relied heavily on Dean Jessee's opinion as to the authenticity of the documents. In Schmidt's testimony we find the following:

Q—You mentioned Dean Jessee. . . . Is Mr. Jessee in general a handwriting expert?

A—He is not.

Q—Is he a forensic expert?

A—I don't think so.

Q—Is he more or less just kind of an in house consultant?

A—He is the expert as far as we were concerned with the handwriting of Joseph Smith.

The following appeared in the *Deseret News* on April 18, 1985:

Donald P. Schmidt, former archivist for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, testified Friday under cross-examination that the LDS Church took few steps to authenticate any of the 48 documents the church purchased from Hofmann since 1980.

Defense Attorney Bradley C. Rich grilled Schmidt over minute details of each of the transactions, particularly over the church's apparent lack of interest in providing rigid authentication of the historical documents.

In many of the cases, Schmidt testified, the documents were examined solely on the basis of historical context.

If the Church had not suppressed some of the important documents, it is possible that the forgery scheme would have been detected earlier. In an article published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter wrote the following:

Convoluting deals involving the attempted sale of million-dollar documents, the manufacturing of plates to counterfeit "Mormon money" and the seemingly blind trust of LDS officials in bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann dominated the fifth day of his preliminary hearing Friday. . . .

It was apparent from Mr. Schmidt's testimony that the LDS Church relied on its own people—who the historian acknowledged were "not forensic or handwriting experts"—to authenticate the more [part of] almost 50 documents the church purchased from Mr. Hofmann. It also was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly, to the point where negotiations over the price the church was willing to pay for Hofmann documents reached the offices of the first presidency.

Mr. Schmidt testified that, in a number of the deals, President Hinckley or another member of the general authorities became involved early in the negotiations.

David Hewitt, contributing editor for the *Maine Antique Digest*, commented:

“Considering the value of the items he was selling, acquisition procedures, particularly by the LDS Church, were terribly flawed,” Hewett said. “It would be like a person buying real estate over the telephone or buying pork bellies without an understanding of the commodities market.” (*Deseret News*, April 21, 1986)

COVER-UP FEARED

The following comments concerning the bombings scandal appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on November 8, 1985:

The affair has taken this city through collective spasms of emotion. Initially, there was fear that a mad bomber was loose; . . . “It’s beginning to seem more like Lebanon than Salt Lake City,” one resident told the *Deseret News*.

The immediate shock and fear was replaced with a sense of wonder about the church’s admitted involvement in the transactions, and anticipation of where investigation might lead next. Many people here believe the case could cause the church substantial embarrassment, especially when it comes time to call certain people to the witness stand.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for April 1986, we wrote the following:

Many people are concerned that when Mark Hofmann comes to trial there will be some kind of a cover-up to protect the Mormon Church. One fear that has been expressed is that prosecutors might give preferential treatment to the Mormon leaders. Our greatest concern, however, is how Mr. Hofmann’s lawyers will handle their side of the case. From all indications Hofmann is deeply in debt and would have no way of paying for his defense. Since the case is so complicated, his legal fees could mount to a million dollars. While his lawyers were originally talking about setting up a public defense fund, they have now indicated that funds have become available to them. Our fear is that the church could either directly or indirectly provide funds for Hofmann’s defense. While there would be nothing illegal about this, the church certainly has its own vested interest in how the trial is conducted. If Hofmann’s lawyers were to receive money from the church or its leaders, they might feel somewhat obligated not to cause the church any embarrassment with regard to Hofmann’s document dealings with them. Such a move could possibly influence what witnesses Hofmann’s lawyers called and how church leaders would be questioned.

Furthermore, it might make it hard to subpoena documents the church has in its possession. For instance, if the Oliver Cowdery history really talks about salamanders appearing to Joseph Smith, it could be subpoenaed in an attempt to support the claims for the authenticity of the Salamander letter. If the church were paying the legal bills, however, it is unlikely that the lawyers would want to embarrass church leaders by demanding that it become a part of the public record. (It would, of course, be of no help if the prosecution could show that Hofmann had access to it.)

At this point we have no evidence that the church is paying any of Mr. Hofmann’s legal bills. We do know, however, that the church was willing to pay a great deal of money to get rid of embarrassing documents. It is also reasonable to conclude that church leaders would like to keep their secret dealings with the documents from coming to light. The General Authorities, therefore, will probably do their best to keep on the good side of Hofmann. He knows too much with regard to their secret document deals. Although church leaders could not resist the temptation to suppress embarrassing documents, we hope they have learned their lesson and will not try to influence the course of the trial with their money or power. In any case, the cancellation of Hofmann’s public defense fund is certainly another mystery in this bizarre case. Even if some persons or organizations were willing to give a large amount of money for Hofmann’s defense, we would think that they would let the defense fund be set up first and then pay only the amount which was over that raised through the publicly supported fund.

During Hofmann’s preliminary hearing it became evident that there was a move afoot to excuse President Gordon B. Hinckley from giving testimony in the courtroom. Mike Carter commented:

Meanwhile, *The Tribune* learned that defense attorneys were to meet Tuesday morning with President Gordon B. Hinckley . . . to see if a stipulation to his testimony could be reached in order to prevent the necessity of calling President Hinckley as a witness. President Hinckley is named as a victim of theft by deception in a complaint alleging that a letter he purchased allegedly authored by church founder Joseph Smith is a forgery.

The defense would like to ask President Hinckley about the church leader’s role in pressuring Mr. Hofmann to pay back an overdue \$185,000 bank loan arranged by another church elder. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 6, 1986)

An agreement was worked out and President Hinckley did not have to testify at the preliminary hearing. We find the following in an article by Associate Press writer Michael White:

Health concerns prevented a high Mormon Church official from testifying in the preliminary hearing . . . says the judge who presided.

Fifth Circuit Judge Paul Grant, . . . said President Gordon B. Hinckley, . . . was kept off the stand because it was feared a court appearance would be too stressful.

“I think the attorneys were respecting President Hinckley’s duties and the stress of his position and his age.” . . .

But attorneys for both sides said Wednesday that President Hinckley’s health was never a factor in their agreement to rely solely on out-of-courtroom interviews with the church leader. And church spokesman Don LeFevre said he knew of no problems with President Hinckley’s health. . . .

President Hinckley was spared a court appearance in the 11-day hearing last spring after prosecutors and defense attorneys agreed to a stipulation regarding his testimony. . . . defense attorney Ron Yengich said President Hinckley’s health was never discussed when the stipulation was arranged.

“I stipulated solely for tactical reasons,” Mr. Yengich said. . . . Yengich declined to elaborate on the tactical advantages of the stipulation. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 14, 1986)

I really doubt that Mormon Church leaders have anything to cover up concerning the murders. When it comes to the document dealings, however, I feel that there is a great deal of information Church leaders would like to see suppressed. Although no real evidence has come to light, there could be a possibility that a major document deal had gone sour. There are some rumors concerning a purported translation by Joseph Smith of the Kinderhook Plates—i.e., a set of bogus plates that were created by Joseph Smith’s enemies in an attempt to trick him into making a false translation. As I will later show, Mark Hofmann actually asked President Gordon B. Hinckley if he would be interested in obtaining some of the original plates. While a purported Joseph Smith translation of these plates would be a very good blackmail item to try to palm off on the Church, the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon or a document written by Sidney Rigdon or Solomon Spalding which could be linked to the Book of Mormon would be even more tempting to those who wanted embarrassing documents suppressed. Although it may just be a poor choice of

words, Apostle Dallin Oaks made a statement to Mark Hofmann which might lead one to conclude that there was something besides the McLellin collection which led to the murders:

Elder Oaks also recalled that Mr. Hofmann visited him in his office just hours after Kathleen Sheets was killed. In a typed statement released in conjunction with the press conference, Elder Oaks recalled asking Mr. Hofmann “if he had any reason to suppose that these bombings had anything to do with his activities or connections with Christensen.” He said no. I then asked. “Do you know anyone in your documents business who would enforce his contracts with bombs?” When he said no, I concluded “Well, then, what do you have to worry about? The police probably won’t question you, and if they do, just tell them the truth.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 24, 1985)

Apostle Oak’s question (“Do you know anyone in your documents business who would enforce his contracts with bombs?”) seems to be a meaningless question unless Oaks suspected that Steven Christensen and J. Gary Sheets had invested in some very expensive document(s) and had failed to pay off the money that was owed. It is known that Christensen and Sheets had a very large amount of money at one time but had later fallen on hard times and were in serious financial trouble at the time of the bombings. The company Christensen and Sheets had been associated with, CFS Financial Corporation, finally went under and filed for bankruptcy. In any case, the McLellin collection certainly does not fit with Apostle Oaks’ question. There was no need to “enforce” a contract because no contract had been signed. Furthermore, the lawyer who held the check for \$185,000 was only waiting for the delivery of the collection before he turned over the check.

Although it is just a matter of speculation, it is possible that at some time Hofmann created or had someone else create some major document that was purchased by Christensen and Sheets. The evidence shows that Mr. Christensen was certainly familiar with the concept of buying up sensitive documents and donating them to the Mormon Church for a tax write-off. It is true that Sheets’ testimony at the preliminary hearing does not support this idea. He claimed that he did not even know Mark Hofmann. On the other hand, testimony was given which showed that in some cases Hofmann would have his associates sell the documents as their own and then give him the money. If this were the case, Christensen and Sheets could buy a very controversial document and never know that it came

from Hofmann. In such a situation, Hofmann could not directly put pressure on them to obtain the money because it would expose his role in the document deal. The reader will remember that when the Salamander letter was sold to Christensen and Sheets, Lyn Jacobs posed as the owner of that document. At any rate, the *Deseret News*, February 1, 1986, informs us that when he filed for personal bankruptcy, J. Gary Sheets had over 2,000 potential creditors:

Sheets filed for liquidation under Chapter 7 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. The bankruptcy petition concerns Sheets only, not his company, although rumors of CFS's financial problems have been circulating for months.

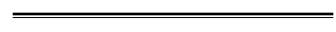
And while CFS is not involved in Sheets' bankruptcy petition, most of the 2,260 potential creditors Sheets lists in a mailing matrix filed with his petition are CFS investors.

The list of potential creditors includes the names of state senators, physicians, businessmen and attorneys. The list includes Brigham Young University, Valley Bank & Trust, Nevada National Bank and the Denver Post Corp.

Also included is Brent Metcalfe, an associate of documents dealer Mark W. Hofmann. . . .

With the filing of the bankruptcy petition, Sheets is now protected from the claims of creditors, many of whom have filed lawsuits alleging Sheets owes them thousands of dollars. . . .

In one such case, U.S. District Judge David K. Winder has awarded an Arizona company \$150,000 in a judgment against Sheets and the estate of Christensen.



5. THE INK THAT CRACKED

Now, however, with the publicity that's been given the tremendous amount of money to be realized (for example, the Trib mentioned a \$30,000 figure for the Lucy Mack Smith letter), there may be some temptation to forge. (Mark Hofmann, Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 16)

But where there's a quill there's a way, . . . (Charles Hamilton, Great Forgers and Famous Fakes, page 53)

During Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Detective Jim Bell called the Judge's attention to a book entitled, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*. Bell claimed that the book was taken from "Mr. Hofmann's house on Oct. 18, 1985, during a search warrant." Investigators feel that this book may have been used by Mark Hofmann to help create his forgeries. While the book is certainly not a manual telling how to commit forgery, it does reveal how the famous forgers tripped up. This information, of course, could be used by someone with a devious mind to avoid the pitfalls that other forgers have fallen into. *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes* was written by the noted document dealer Charles Hamilton in 1980—the same year Mark Hofmann brought the Anthon transcript to light. In the Introduction to this volume, Mr. Hamilton observed:

Because there will always be clever men with misguided ingenuity who find it profitable to duplicate or invent historic letters and documents, the philographers of the future must be forever alert. I have not the slightest doubt that even as I write these words there is somewhere in America a nimble-fingered fellow touching a goose quill to parchment and concocting an exciting document that will fool at least one or two myopic historians and perhaps even a whole gaggle of scholars.

Ironically, Mark Hofmann became personally acquainted with Charles Hamilton, and Hamilton became one of his supporters. The following appeared in the *Maine Antique Digest* in December 1985, page 26-A:

Charles Hamilton, the outspoken New York autograph dealer, vouched for Hofmann's abilities. He said he had authenticated the signature of a Joseph Smith letter for Hofmann. "About three years ago, he brought me a letter signed Joseph Smith, which

he said he had bought from a philatelist for \$15." I said, "Upstate New York was literally alive with Joseph Smiths and the chances of yours being signed by the Mormon prophet are literally nil."

But he got the letter out; it was very early, 1827, and after two or three minutes, I said to him, "I can absolutely warrant it as by Joseph Smith." The letter was genuine beyond any question.

Hamilton gave a date of 1827 for the letter, but since he said the letter mentions a "divining rod," it is clear that he was referring to the 1825 letter of Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell—a document experts now believe is a forgery. At any rate, Mr. Hamilton later turned on Hofmann, and, according to the *Maine Antique Digest*, April 1986, page 13-A, he said: "Mark Hofmann is the most unconscionable liar I've ever met. He's lied to everyone concerned with this case: me, Ken Rendell, everybody." According to the *Deseret News*, February 24, 1986, Charles Hamilton will appear as a witness against Mark Hofmann at his trial:

County Attorney Ted Cannon wrote commissioners, "Hamilton is a forgery expert. He will review various documents and prepare expert testimony regarding (them).

"He is an important witness at trial. He consults with us on a regular basis during this case, and we with him. Expected total witness fee after trial testimony will be estimated at \$10,000."

FAMOUS FORGERS

Kenneth Rendell, another autograph expert who at one time supported Mark Hofmann and then came to believe he was dealing in forgeries, wrote the following for a book published in 1978:

William Henry Ireland . . . was remarkably successful with his forgeries of Shakespearean documents. . . . Ireland produced volumes from Shakespeare's library with annotations by the Bard of Avon, drawings by him, a love poem to Anne Hathaway, a correspondence between Shakespeare and his patron Southampton, and letters written to Shakespeare. The incredible acceptance of his literary creations encouraged Ireland to produce fragments of the manuscripts of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and finally to create a new drama attributed to Shakespeare, entitled *Vortigern and Rowena*. This work proved to be his undoing. . . . The interest in his forgeries gave rise to nineteenth-century forgers who specialized in forging Ireland's forgeries.

During the late nineteenth century the skillful forger Major George Gordon Ce Luna Byron . . . represented himself as the illegitimate son of Lord Byron, . . . He . . . offered his forgeries in his native England, and was very accomplished in forging the writing of his "father" and his "father's" contemporaries, Keats and Shelley. His adeptness in forging postmarks and seals, as well as the handwriting, paper, and ink, was unsurpassed at the time; and his forgeries are uncovered today only through very careful examination. His abilities were reflected in the fact that he was able to sell his forged Byron letters to Byron's own publisher—who, presumably, had a substantial number of genuine letters available for comparison. The detection of his fabrications occurred with a series of Shelley letters in which he plagiarized an obscure magazine article. . . .

"Antique Smith," as Alexander H. Smith was known, was a highly skilled forger whose fabrications can cause problems for the collector of today. His career began in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the 1890's; and with great adroitness he forged letters and manuscripts attributed to Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Mary Queen of Scots, Oliver Cromwell, Edmund Burke, William Pitt, William Makepeace Thackeray, James I of England, Charles I and II of England, and others. His calligraphy was excellent and was accomplished without tracing. His forgeries subsequently have acquired a genuine appearance of age, and they are frequently offered for sale in England and the United States.

The Frenchman Denis Vrain-Lucas perpetrated the most outlandish hoax of the major forgers. Beginning in 1861, he sold to Michel Chasles, a noted French mathematician, a collection of forgeries that over the years totaled 27,000 letters, manuscripts, and documents. No skill was involved in his forgeries,

and his success was based upon his ability to gain the confidence of the gullible Chasles. Among the autographs sold by Vrain-Lucas (all of which were written in modern French) were love letters between Cleopatra and Caesar and letters by Judas Iscariot, Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate, Lazarus (before and after his resurrection), Joan of Arc, Attila the Hun, Alexander the Great, Herod, Cicero, Pompey, Sappho, and Dante. . . . Vrain-Lucas's revelatory error occurred when he forged a letter of Blaise Pascal to Robert Boyle in which the former claimed that he, rather than Newton, had discovered the law of universal gravitation. The date Vrain-Lucas supplied for the letter would have made Newton but ten years old at the time of its writing, and his fabrications were exposed. . . .

Robert Spring has the questionable distinction of being the first significant forger in the United States. His infamous career began in the 1870's. He is noted principally for his numerous forgeries of George Washington payment orders, initially written on genuine printed forms of the Office of Discount and Deposit at Baltimore and later, when his supplies of these forms were exhausted, in completely holograph form. His forgeries of Benjamin Franklin payment orders are equally excellent, . . . All of Spring's work is characterized by a lack of hesitation, relative speed, and confidence. . . .

While Spring was the first major forger in the United States, Joseph Cosey was undoubtedly the most prolific. . . . Cosey's career began with his discovery of a batch of unused Monnier's 1851 watermarked paper of the same blue shade that Abraham Lincoln favored for his legal documents, and he undertook a series of legal briefs in the forged handwriting of Lincoln. . . . Cosey studied the types and colors of paper favored by various persons, and dyed his own stock of antique papers to match that normally employed by the persons whose writing he was forging. Among the persons in whom he specialized are Francis Bacon, John Marshall, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Lynch, Button Gwinnett, Aaron Burr, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Mary Baker Eddy, Samuel L. Clemens, Edgar Allan Poe, and Mary Todd Lincoln. (*Autographs and Manuscripts: a Collector's Manual*, New York, 1978, pages 93-96)

Charles Hamilton claimed that the forger Joseph Cosey "could dash off Lincoln's signature as fast as his own" (*Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 2). Hamilton tells of another forger who wrote on "the very type of paper used by Lincoln and in the dark

ink favored by him. It was a flawless freehand copy, not a tracing, so perfectly executed that it was almost impossible to tell it from Lincoln's original" (Ibid., page 24). On page 48 of the same book, Charles Hamilton informs us that Robert Spring "had spent so many hours practicing the handwriting of our first president that he was familiar with every curve and flourish and could write Washington's script almost as swiftly as his own." Mr. Hamilton noted that William B. Sprague, "America's greatest pioneer philographer," compared one of Spring's forgeries of a Benjamin Franklin letter with known Franklin material of the same period and endorsed it as unquestionably authentic: "... I find so near a resemblance as to have no doubt of its genuineness. I should not hesitate to accept it as a veritable autograph of Franklin." On pages 62-63 of the same book, Hamilton tells of a forger by the name of Charles Weisberg:

Weisberg's great successes in the forgery business were with Stephen Collins Foster manuscripts, Washington and Lincoln letters an original surveys of Mount Vernon. His last forgery was an inscription by Katharine Mansfield in a copy of her book *The Dove's Nest*. The imitation of Mansfield's script was flawless, but Weisberg tripped up on a foolish anachronism. The buyer discovered that the book was published posthumously and complained to the cops. In Philadelphia Weisberg was tried and sentenced to two and a half years in Lewisburg Prison, where he died on May 4, 1945.

The reader will remember that Kenneth Rendell felt that Joseph Cosey was probably "the most prolific" forger in the United States. Charles Hamilton commented:

... Cosey reached great heights. Once he daringly forged a complete draft of the Declaration of Independence in Jefferson's hand. Every pen stroke, every word, every letter, every comma was perfectly executed by the master of fabrication. The ink was strikingly similar to Jefferson's and the huge sheets of foolscap were the same as those often used by Jefferson. (Ibid., page 100)

Chapter 12 of Mr. Hamilton's book bears the title, "He Could Sign Any Name." This is the story of Arthur Sutton, a young man in his early twenties, who turned to forgery:

In the spring of 1976 an unemployed grocery clerk in Rumford, Maine, began peppering the nation with forged signatures of celebrities. These were

so adroitly scrawled that half a dozen autograph dealers were delighted to buy them at bargain prices. Collectors all over the country spruced up their collections with brand-new signatures of John F. Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, W. C. Fields, Adolf Hitler, Picasso, Errol Flynn, Walt Disney, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Charlie Chaplin and even George A. Custer and Sitting Bull.

The forger, . . . had been quietly turning out forgeries for three years and had honed his chirographic skills to the point where not even Richard Nixon could tell his own signature from Sutton's imitation. . . . he could scribble them freehand with every curlicue and flourish in place. . . . he began flooding the market with bogus signatures of his famous contemporaries. Stan Laurel, Eleanor Roosevelt, Al Jolson, Judy Garland, Betty Grable, Fay Wray, Otto Skorzeny, John Carradine, Picasso, Bela Lugosi, Lyndon Johnson—the list was almost without end. And the signatures of all of them executed with extraordinary skill. (Ibid., pages 157, 159-160)

Charles Hamilton felt that Clifford Irving was "the most audacious forger of this or any century." Hamilton related that Irving forged a 230,000-word "autobiography" of Howard Hughes while Hughes was still alive and sold it to "a top publisher (McGraw-Hill) for a vast sum of money (\$750,000)." Irving also forged handwritten letters of Hughes to help promote the scheme. Hamilton commented concerning one of those letters: "The imitation is almost flawless, capturing not only Hughes's handwriting but his atrabilious disposition" (Ibid., page 169). When Hughes Tool Company denied the authenticity of the Irving material, McGraw-Hill "consulted a handwriting expert who declared that the scribbling of Hughes in the letters and in the margins of the typed manuscript was authentic.

Then the one thing, the only thing, that Irving feared happened. Howard Hughes broke his silence for the first time in fourteen years and telephoned a reporter: "The book is a phony and Clifford Irving is a phony," said the billionaire. . . .

Life magazine had bought first magazine rights, and it now demanded that McGraw-Hill consult the world-famous handwriting experts Osborn, Osborn and Osborn . . . Paul Osborn and his brother Russell gave the handwriting a very careful scrutiny. . . . Then they delivered their report.

"Both the specimen and questioned documents reveal great speed and fluency of writing," read their analysis. "Yet the questioned documents accurately reflect in every detail the genuine forms and habit variations thereof which make up the basic handwriting identity of the author of the specimen

documents. Moreover, in spite of the prodigious quantity of writing contained in the questioned documents, careful study has failed to reveal any features which raise the slightest question as to the common identity of all the specimens and questioned signatures and continuous writing. These basic factors . . . make it impossible . . . that anyone other than the writer of the specimens could have written the questioned signatures and continuous writing.” (Ibid., pages 170-171)

Even Mr. Hamilton felt that the forgery was so well done that Irving might have gotten away with it if Howard Hughes had been dead:

. . . as a handwriting expert I must concede that Irving’s forgeries of Howard Hughes were masterfully executed. . . .

Irving’s diabolically accurate imitation of Hughes’s style of speech and handwriting leads us to the inevitable question. Suppose Irving had forged the autobiography of some person who was not alive to speak up and denounce him? (Ibid., page 171)

On page 257 of *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, Charles Hamilton points out that “For many forgers the ultimate goal is not to get rich by swindling easy marks but to see their fabrications touted as authentic by historians. Henry Cleveland created ‘unknown’ Lincoln letters just to fool historians and even took in Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln’s secretaries and biographers.”

A MASTER FORGER?

On April 21, 1986, the *Deseret News* printed the following:

Auction houses, document collectors and dealers in rarities from coast to coast are watching with keen interest the mounting evidence presented in the preliminary hearing for bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann.

But the national interest is not focused on the tragedy of the murders . . . It’s centered on the prosecution’s assertions that Hofmann is an expert forger of historical documents—a perpetrator of crimes that could rock the entire business of documents dealing for years to come.

“On a national scope, it makes a lot of people who deal in documents and rare books extremely uneasy,” said David Hewett, contributing editor for the *Maine Antique Digest*, one of the nation’s foremost publications on art, rare coins and American antiquities.

“It’s pure speculation at this point . . . but if the prosecution’s supposition is correct—that Mark Hofmann is this master forger—it’s going to have a tremendous impact on collectors and dealers, particularly those who deal in Mormon rarities. There’s enough suspicion already that anything that has gone through Mark Hofmann’s hands is tainted.” . . .

Hewett, who is in Salt Lake City covering the Hofmann hearing, said if Hofmann is convicted of the theft and fraud charges, it would not make him the most prolific forger in American history, but he could go down in history as one of the most successful and far-ranging of the 20th century.

“We’re talking about everything from rare early American history to bank notes, to documents and letters of a religious history, to American literary first editions,” he said. “As far as I know, that has never been done before on the kind of scale we’re talking about.” . . .

“What will be particularly disconcerting to national dealers,” Hewett said, “is the apparent ease with which printing plates can [b]e made of rare documents and currency.

Paper of the right age has always been available, but I have [ne]ver heard of a case where we’ve had someone order printing [pl]ates to forge something on old paper. This kind of forgery, if [in]deed it proves to be a forgery, opens a whole new spectra of [f]raud. It’s going to make a lot of people extremely uneasy.”

It did not take long after the bomb exploded in Hofmann’s car for investigators to become suspicious that he may be involved in forgery. On October 18, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

. . . Sheriff Hayward and other police officials speculate that Mr. Hofmann may have been involved in a historical document forging scam in which he sold hundreds of thousands of dollars in forged papers to collectors and high LDS Church officials. . . .

Mr. Hofmann’s possession of the white-salamander letter, the purported McLellan journals and numerous other documents which he has sold to other collectors—including high LDS Church officials—does raise some interesting questions, the sheriff said—the first being, “Why him?”

“Where does he get them? All of the sudden there’s this one guy who keeps coming up with these things, worth all that money. These kind of documents, don’t just lie around for years and years,” Sheriff Hayward said.

“I know for a fact that 50 of us couldn’t find these papers in 50 years if we were looking for them,” the sheriff said. “But he keeps coming up with them.” . . .

Also Thursday, . . . Police returned to his house with another search warrant after retrieving some evidence Wednesday night. Among that material, which included blank parchment-like paper, personal documents and clothing, were items which Sheriff Hayward said “that there is speculation that these things could be used in forging documents.”

The *Deseret News*, October 18, 1985, reported that “When police found evidence of forging in Hofmann’s possession, the case took another turn.” On October 20, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed the following:

Forgery, according to Chief Willoughby, continues to be a prime consideration as a motive. . . .

Speculation that the controversial 1830 Mormon “white salamander” letter . . . is a forgery has prompted the church to send that letter to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s laboratory for authentication. Some of the voluminous documents found in both Mr. Hofmann’s home and his burned-out car . . . also will be taken to the FBI lab for tests.

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin wrote the following in *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 58:

One investigator working on the murder case believes evidence may point to a long-term, premeditated fraud plan on Hofmann’s part. Evidence is not self-interpreting but the fact that police found in Hofmann’s possession photo enlargements of historic manuscripts with recent notes in the margins about grammar and syntax, plus supposed “practice sheets” of old signatures, paper-making and electrolyting equipment, and a book on “famous forgeries” suggests to this investigator the makings of a forgery operation.

According to this theory, Hofmann may have taken advantage of his knowledge that, despite its gigantic collections of rare and valuable documents, the LDS church has no employees qualified to perform forensic authentication. Add to this the fact that church leaders had previously demonstrated a concern that sensitive documents may fall into hostile hands, and we may have a perfect setup for a seller of forged documents of presumed spectacular content. Naive, overly-motivated and highly secretive buyers are vulnerable targets for expert exploiters, theorizes one investigator close to the case.

Although there has been some speculation, we will probably not know exactly what investigators discovered in Mark Hofmann’s home and car until the case goes to trial, but whatever it was, it seems to have

led investigators to believe that forgery was involved. On December 22, 1985, the *Deseret News* revealed that forensic experts were examining documents that came through Hofmann:

LDS historical department employees say federal and county investigators have sifted documents all week in a room recently provided with a special lock. A forensic specialist from the Utah attorney general’s office and another from Arizona are assisting in the examination, with the help of infrared and other special equipment.

Allen Roberts, a local architect and historian, said [Richard P.] Howard told him Tuesday that all documents relating to Hofmann were being examined.

On February 7, 1986, the *Deseret News* revealed that Kenneth Rendell had been consulted concerning some of the Hofmann documents:

Nearly a dozen historical documents located by Mark W. Hofmann are “obvious fakes,” according to a Massachusetts documents dealer who performed the original tests on the so-called “White Salamander Letter.”

“The ink looked good. It looked old. The documents were quite well done. But they were obvious fakes,” said Kenneth Rendell.

Rendell, of Newton, Mass., says investigators from the Salt Lake County attorney’s office flew to Boston last Friday and brought with them about a dozen of the documents that were alleged to be fraudulent in charges filed this week.

Rendell said he examined the handwriting on each document and found that nearly all of them featured the blotchy, shaky and uneven appearance that indicates the letters were copied rather than drawn freely. He also said similarities in the style among the documents suggests that some of them were done by the same person.

What’s more, virtually all of the documents glowed a bright blue when placed under ultraviolet light—a sign that a chemical may have been used to artificially age the paper.

DOCUMENTS FLAKY

At the preliminary hearing the evidence against Mark Hofmann’s documents was finally revealed to the public. I had always felt that the best way to examine Hofmann’s documents would be to get them all together and see if there was something they

shared in common that could not be found in other 19th century documents. For instance, if it could be shown that the paper or ink was exactly the same in many of Hofmann's documents, this would certainly cast a shadow of doubt on their authenticity. At the preliminary hearing we learned that experts did, in fact, examine the documents as a group and concluded that there were features that many of the Hofmann documents exhibited which indicated they were forgeries. William Flynn, a noted forensic document expert, testified concerning the research that revealed the documents were forgeries. Mr. Flynn is the Chief Questioned Documents Examiner for the State of Arizona. He has been with "the Arizona State Lab for 14 years," and prior to that he served as "the document examiner for the city of Philadelphia" for a period of about four and a half years. Mr. Flynn was first asked concerning his qualifications:

Q—Do you have membership or position in any particular professional associations or boards?

A—Yes.

Q—What would that be?

A—I'm on the board of directors of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners.

Q—Can you tell us what that is?

A—Yes. There are . . . in the United States and Canada . . . currently 232 board certified examiners. The American Board of Forensic Document Examiners is an arm of the American Academy of Forensic Scientists, which board certifies forensic doctors, forensic pathologists, . . . around 1977-78, we began to board certify forensic document examiners.

Q—Do you have any particular duties in relationship to that certification?

A—Yes. I'm one of the ten document examiners in the United States that now administers the . . . one year testing process to all of the other document examiners in the United States that wish to become board certified.

Q—Have you been board certified?

A—I was in the first 25 board certified document examiners in the United States.

William Flynn claimed he examined "about 461 documents." In his testimony he disclosed that it was the contents of the ink used on the documents and the attempt to artificially age it that produced a flaky or cracked appearance which gave the whole scam away:

Q—With respect to the ink, did you find any peculiar or abnormal characteristics associated with any of the documents?

A—Yes.

Q—Can you tell us . . . what that would be?

A—Yes. On many of the documents, . . . there appeared a microscopic cracking on the surface of the ink. These appeared on the questioned . . . documents that we were examining.

Q—Besides the cracking, was there any other characteristics?

A—Yes. Under ultraviolet examination, on several of the questioned documents, there was a one-directional running of the inks or a constituent part of the inks, as if they had been wet.

Q—Were you able to determine if there had been any additions on any of the documents—any additional applications of ink?

A—Yes. On several of the documents, there were inks that were not consistent with the body of the document. That is to say that data had been added to the document with a different ink.

Q—Now, . . . besides these characteristics, was there anything common about the documents that you found these characteristics on?

A—Yes.

Q—What was that?

A—These anomalies that I spoke of all occurred on documents that had been dealt by the defendant in the case, Mark Hofmann.

Q—Can you tell us which documents these were?

A—Yes. The documents, in particular, that we found problems with were . . . the Anthon transcript, the Joseph Smith III Blessing, four different white notes, the Lucy Mack Smith document . . . the Josiah Stowell letter of June 18th, 1825, the document we call the E. B. Grandin contract, the Martin Harris—W. W. Phelps document called the Salamander letter, . . . the General Smith, General Dunham (I'm sorry)—Joseph Smith letter, the David Whitmer to Walter Conrad document, the document later called the Betsy Ross letter, the Solomon Spalding—Sidney Rigdon land deed, the letter to Brigham Young from Thomas Bullock, dated June 27, 1865, a promissory note to Isaac Galland from Joseph Smith, a letter called the Maria and Sarah Lawrence letter, the Samuel Smith Bible, the Nathan Harris prayer book, the Bithel Todd—Peter and David Whitmer document, and then later there were several types of currency that were also examined.

Q—Did you mention Jim Bridger in that? I'm not sure.

A—The Jim Bridger notes would have been part of the currency . . .

Q—Let me ask you this. Besides these particular ones that you've mentioned, associated with Mr. Mark Hofmann, were there any other documents out of the 461 or so that you have examined that exhibit these characteristics?

A—No.

Q—Were there any other documents, to your knowledge, that came through Mark Hofmann other than the ones you mentioned here that did not exhibit those characteristics?

A—Yes, . . . actually there were many documents that had been associated with Mark Hofmann that did not exhibit those particular phenomena.

Q—And were there any documents that were not associated with Mark Hofmann that exhibit those characteristics?

A—No.

Q—Did the fact that these characteristics appeared only on the documents associated with Mark Hofmann have any significance to you?

A—Well, insomuch as it formed . . . a pattern that was significant to me, yes.

Q—And associated with that pattern, did you conduct any research or experimentation? And if so, what was your purpose?

A— . . . I had not seen that cracking phenomenon that appeared . . . in the ink morphology of these questioned documents on any of the other documents that were examined. And I did not initially know what caused that, so part of my research was to determine what the ink cracking was and . . . why it was caused.

Q—Let me ask you this, if I may, . . . did you do some research as far as looking up literature and trying to determine whether or not that particular characteristics or patterns had been observed before?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell us what you did and what the results of your research were.

A—Well, like all good researchers, I tried to see if someone else had done the research first so I wouldn't have to do it. In that respect, I researched all of the texts concerning questioned documents of that time period that I could lay my hands on.

Q—Did you have any particular special library or materials associated _____?

A—Yes. The Questioned Document Laboratory at the Department of Public Safety where I work has probably the most extensive historical library on questioned documents west of the Mississippi. We have documents, we have texts in that library that date back to 1620, for instance. I researched all of those texts. I then went to the Arizona State University Science Center and researched the materials that were there on early ink manufacture, . . . I tapped the resources of many of the other document laboratories around the United States, including the library of probably the top ink forensic chemist in the United States. As well as the Food and Drug Administration, which was also kind enough to supply me with texts involving gums and sugars.

Q—And from that, were you able to determine whether or not this particular phenomenon that you had observed, had it been observed naturally, in a natural setting, by any of the other people in any of the literature?

A—I found no other reference to that cracking phenomenon in any of the other literature, albeit literature that would have dealt with genuine documents or documents that had been fraudulently made. I didn't find any other reference to that ink cracking.

Q—How about in communication with other experts?

A—None of the other . . . forensic experts that I talked to around the United States had ever observed that cracking phenomenon.

Q—During this examination . . . were you able to examine other 19th century documents besides the ones that you saw in Salt Lake City?

A—Yes.

Q—And approximately how many of these and where did they come from, if you know?

A—Yes. There were 25, I think they are called blank covers, that were acquired here in Salt Lake City and sent to . . . my laboratory in Phoenix, Arizona for some testing.

Q—Were these . . . coverless stamp letters or stampless cover letters—excuse me?

A—Yes.

Q—And when were these documents reportedly written?

A—These documents covered the time span from about 1830 through about 1850.

Q—And did any of these documents exhibit that cracking or the other phenomenon you thought _____?

A—No.

Q—Were you able to . . . determine the characteristics or the formula or the type of ink that was used on these particular documents that you mentioned?

A—Yes.

Q—Can you tell us what you did and what you found out as far as the kind of ink?

A—The inks on the questioned documents are . . . iron gallotannic inks. These are inks that would have been typically used in that time frame, from 1800 through 1940's, really. They form the basis of what fountain pen [ink] still is to this day, iron tannic or iron gallotannic inks. These are very simple inks. I made some of these inks in my kitchen sink, to give you some idea. There's not a lot of technology that's involved in forming the iron gallotannic inks.

Q—Were you able to determine the make-up of the ink or were you able to determine the formulas?

A—Yes. . . . there are innumerable formulas for iron gallotannic ink. Typically, in that time frame, I believe, there was a lot of experimentation going on. A lot of different ink manufacturers added a little bit of this or a little bit of that, but the general formula for the iron gallotannic inks is a very simple formula and—

Q—Were you able to go any particular place or read any place where these different formulas for iron gallotannic ink [are located]?

A—Yes.

Q—For example?

A—Well, Charles Hamilton had a formula for iron gallotannic ink in his text.

Q—Do you know what text that is?

A—*Famous Fakes and Forgers*.

.....

Q—Is it [iron gallotannic ink] comprised of items that would be readily accessible?

A—Yes.

Q—To the average person?

A—Yes.

.....

Q—Let me ask you this. In your research or in your experimentation, were you able to come to a conclusion or able to determine, from the gallotannic ink as a basis, how it was that the cracking effect would occur?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell us what you did, what your experimentation was, what you came to conclude.

A—. . . . There were actually two problems that I attacked. One was whether or not the ink could be artificially aged so that it could not be, it would not be detectable under normal laboratory procedures. And secondly, whether that procedure would also crack the ink. And my research showed that was, indeed, the case. . . . I found it in one of the old texts that referred to the forensic examination of some old forged instruments where they talked about the artificial aging of iron gallotannic ink by exposing it to ammonia. . . . that was the first reference I had seen to that. After I read that, I made iron gallotannic inks of various types myself and exposed them to ammonia, both ammonia and sodium hydroxide, and found that . . . it did, indeed, artificially age the inks. As a matter of fact, the reaction's immediate. The sodium hydroxide, in particular, will immediately take the iron gallotannic inks and turn them a deep rust color on the paper. It won't crack the inks, however. It was not until I began adding some of the additives that were typically added to the inks of

that time period, in particular, the sugars and the gums and probably the most . . . commonly used additive in that time period would have been gum arabic, . . .

Q—It was something that was common to the iron gallotannic ink at that time?

A—Yes. . . . gum arabic had been used . . . [for] thousands of years really. Gum acacia is another name for it. It comes from the acacia tree. But it was commonly added to the ink to give it body, as a viscosity adjuster to adjust the thickness of the ink, and also as a preservative. It slowed down the oxidation of the ink on the paper. When I mixed the iron gallotannic inks and added either the sugars or the gum arabic and then artificially aged them with the sodium hydroxide, I got exactly the same . . . phenomenon that I described in the examination of the questioned documents. The ink both artificially aged and cracked.

Q—. . . I think you mentioned two chemicals. One of them was ammonia—

A—Ammonium hydroxide.

Q—Is that something that is readily available?

A—Yah. Ammonium hydroxide, delute ammonium hydroxide is household ammonia.

Q—Did you experiment with household ammonia?

A—Yes.

Q—And what was the results of your _____?

A—It worked. It would artificially age the iron gallotannic ink.

Q—Produce that cracking effect?

A—Yes.

Q—Then you mentioned another chemical too?

A—Sodium hydroxide.

Q—Is that something that's very common and readily available?

A—Yes.

Q—Did it perform the same results?

A—Yes. Actually, the sodium hydroxide is a stronger base, actually works better . . . but both will produce the same results.

Q—Were you able to determine . . . the explanation for how it is that ammonia or the other chemicals affect the iron gallotannic ink to produce results that you're seeing?

A—Yes. I can tell you only empirically why I believe it works. The actual reaction [that] takes place is fairly complex because the iron reacts with the dozens of different tannins that are available in the ink to form many different compounds. But the sodium hydroxide reacting with tannic acid will immediately produce a brown precipitate and I believe the sodium hydroxide or ammonium hydroxide reacts with the ferrotannins in the ink . . .

Q—How about the cracking effect?

A—The cracking effect . . . on the surface of the ink takes place, I believe, because of the viscosity change that the gums and sugars undergo when they go from an acidic state to an alkaline state. The iron gallotannic inks are typically very acidic. It's not unusual to have iron gallotannic inks that have a pH as low as 3.5, for instance, or 4. . . . in the past that was actually [a] desirable quality because it allowed the ink to penetrate into the paper fibers. . . . That worked very well until steel pens were developed and then the acid would actually corrode the steel tips, so in later years, they began to neutralize the ink more and more, but as long as the gum is in that acidic ink, it's fairly fluid. When the pH is raised by the exposure to ammonia or sodium hydroxide, the gums undergo a drastic viscosity change. They . . . become much thicker and brittle. And its amazing under a microscope, you can put a drop of sodium hydroxide on iron gallotannic ink with gums or sugars and watch the ink crack. It will, as soon as the liquid portion evaporates. What remains will be a dark brown rusted ink with cracked surface morphology.

Q—When you say the application, in what way can . . . these chemicals, the ammonia, be applied?

A—They can be fumed. They're quite volatile. You can simply tape a document inside a tank and the fumes will attack the ink. You can spray them with a air gun. You can dip them.

It appears from William Flynn's testimony that the forger was tripped up by the use of gum arabic or sugars in the ink. Although I do not know that the ink found in the Hofmann documents was composed from the exact ingredients mentioned in the formula in Charles Hamilton's book (the book found in Hofmann's house), it is interesting to note that this formula "To Make Black Ink" calls for "one Ounce *Gum Arabic*" (*Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 267).

Although William Flynn seems to have been the expert who solved the mystery of the cracked ink, George Throckmorton did a great deal of work on the documents. Paul Larson called Mr. Throckmorton "the only forensic document examiner now practicing in the State of Utah" (*Utah Holiday*, December 1985, page 84). In his testimony, Mr. Throckmorton said that "In this investigation, I examined 688 documents that were written in iron gallotannic ink." George Throckmorton, like William Flynn, testified that when many of Hofmann's documents were examined under a microscope, they had cracked ink. Mr. Throckmorton described the cracked ink as looking like the "skin of an alligator." He claimed that "There were a total, if I recall from my memory, of the 688 I observed, 21

that had this characteristic cracking effect." When Throckmorton was asked where the 21 documents that had cracked ink came from, he replied that it was his understanding that they all came "through Mark Hofmann." When he was asked if the ink on any of the remaining 667 documents showed evidence of cracking, he responded: "No, there was none."

Albert H. Lyter, the ink specialist who had previously examined the Salamander letter for Steven Christensen, was called upon to help in the research on the Hofmann documents. Throckmorton said that Mr. Lyter "spent a couple of days" working with the investigators in Salt Lake City.

Some of Mark Hofmann's defenders have suggested that a number of his documents have been deacidified to preserve them and that this might have produced the cracked ink and other unusual characteristics found on the Hofmann documents. George Throckmorton, who deacidified a number of documents as a test, commented that "in all of the experimentations that I did, I found no observable change in the ink whatsoever." Mr. Throckmorton testified that deacidification was not responsible for either the ink cracking or the one-directional running observed under ultraviolet light:

Q—Were you able to reproduce the cracking in the ink or the running that you observed under ultraviolet light through the treatment of ink and paper through deacidification . . . ?

A—Through the deacidification process?

Q—. . . through the deacidification process solely?

A—No, sir.

Kenneth Rendell was also asked about deacidification. In his testimony he stated:

Q—You were also asked by Mr. Rich if you were aware as to, shall we say, deacidification of papers, which would be a normal course of routine for the preservation of documents. Is that correct?

A—Yes.

Q—And you had seen under ultraviolet light at other times deacidified documents, had you not?

A—Yes.

Q—And you had seen this [a] number of times?

A—Yes.

Q—And had you ever seen the fluorescence that you talked about that you saw under the ultraviolet light on other deacidified documents other than the ones that Mr. Forbes and I showed you in your office approximately—

A—No, I have not.

William Flynn was asked whether archival treatments could cause the unusual phenomena found in the Hofmann material:

Q—Let me ask you this. In your experimentation, did you take into effect whether or not any normal preservatory effort by archivists would have any effect on this cracking phenomena? For example, whether or not a document had been deacidified or had been washed or bleached?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell me what you did and what your results were.

A—Yes. I had access to, on my, I guess it was on the second trip the State Crime Lab, we had obtained some typical fixing compounds. One of the techniques that archivists use is . . . to deacidify the document. Again, that's done primarily because of the highly acidic nature of the inks. Many of the old inks would literally eat right through the paper over a given period of time. Those typical archival preservatives were used on the ink that I made and on some of the older documents that were not in question. And in no instance did we find those archival treatments to affect the ink and crack the surface.

Q—So, the application of any of these preservative methods was not a, could not contribute to the cracking of the ink. Is that correct?

A—As far as we could tell, that's correct.

I have previously quoted a newspaper article in which Kenneth Rendell commented concerning the way Mr. Hofmann's "documents glowed a bright blue when placed under ultraviolet light." At the preliminary hearing, Mr. Rendell testified:

A—Well, first of all, the documents other than the Harris letter . . . all had strong indications of being forged . . . just on a strictly handwriting basis. They had a drawn appearance. They had slow, hesitating strokes. There was rewriting and so on. All the standard types of things that I would look for. When I was in my office, I put them under very strong ultraviolet light and they fluoresced a very bright blue, and you could see . . . that a chemical of some type had been put on the paper. I had never seen anything like it before. There were marks where it had either been put with clips so the documents had been dipped or they had been painted. In one case, there was a document made out to Joseph Smith, which was perfectly genuine, there were three lines on the back which were very questionable and only those three lines were covered with the chemical.

There was no question in my mind that there was very probable reason to believe that . . . these documents were not genuine.

Mr. Rendell claimed that when the documents were first shown to him in Massachusetts, he "was told nothing" about where they came from. He said that after examining them under ultraviolet light, he told investigators that "the key thing I thought where they had to go was into chemical analysis, and they had to find out why these are blue under fluorescent light. I had never come across documents fluorescing blue like this. It clearly was something that was added on. You had all kinds of paper but they all fluoresced exactly the same. They shouldn't, and I said you've got to go to chemists."

George Throckmorton also noted that "many of the documents" had a "characteristic blue hazing effect under ultraviolet examination." Mr. Throckmorton experimented and found that ammonium hydroxide, which was used by William Flynn to artificially age the iron gallotannic ink, gave the documents a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light:

The blue hazing effect which was observed could have been produced in two different manners . . . I noticed in my personal tests that on some of the papers—some of the old papers that we had for experimentation purposes—some of those papers after being dipped or treated with ammonium hydroxide did leave sort of a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light. Others also when they were treated with a sodium hypochloride solution—a very weak solution—it left a blue hazing effect on the documents. So the hazing effect could have been duplicated by either one of those procedures. I'm not sure which.

It appears, then, that a solution used to age the ink on the Hofmann documents could cause all the peculiar characteristics found on them—i.e., cracked ink, a blue hazing effect under ultraviolet light and a one-directional running of the ink. At the hearing William Flynn testified:

A—As I'll use it in my testimony, it [bleeding] refers to a portion of the ink that would normally be invisible but is made visible under ultraviolet light. On several of the documents, . . . some constituent part of the ink . . . ran from the characters. In most instances, it ran in a unidirectional way. That is to say, it appeared that the document had been held

vertically and wet so that the running was down, in one direction. It was not even haloing, where the running extended outward evenly in all directions, but rather it was more like a one-directional running.

Mr. Flynn also gave this testimony concerning the one-directional running of the ink:

Q—. . . Did you find any indications of this same sign of running under ultraviolet light on any of the documents other than the Hofmann documents?

A—No.

Q—Out of all the hundreds you examined it was only on the Hofmann documents?

A—Yes. Of the 461, I did not see it on those documents.

George Throckmorton testified that some of the Hofmann documents seemed to have been cut with scissors or a razor blade. According to Mr. Throckmorton, this problem was detected in the following way:

By placing the paper on a flat surface, and by putting a straight edge of some type on top of that and examining it under a microscope, you can see how close the edge of the paper would correspond with the straight edge. It would also be possible to detect, many times, individual scissor marks or razor blade cuts or things similar to this.

Mr. Throckmorton indicated that the Spalding–Rigdon document had “very obviously been cut in several places.” He claimed that “a small portion” had been cut out of the “bottom right hand side. Also the uneven nature of the bottom portion indicates that it also had been cut. The top portion had been cut on this one.” Throckmorton said that the Betsy Ross letter “had been cut on both the upper and bottom portion of the letter itself.” He also noted that “The letter had been cut after it had been folded.” With regard to the letter by David and Peter Whitmer to Bithel Todd, he said that “The upper portion of the letter has been cut off. Again, it appears to have been cut after it was folded.” Mr. Throckmorton also testified that Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell had been cut: “. . . this is one of the letters that also had been cut. . . . I do remember that it was cut but I can’t remember whether it was the left or the right hand portion that had been cut off.” With regard to the Salamander letter, Throckmorton commented: “This document had been cut.” He went on to state: “There are two cut marks in this particular document. There’s a small square cut in the upper right hand corner of the document. Also, . . . on the address side, . . . there is a sealing wax that remains on the letter. This side closest to the

sealing wax has been cut off. A portion of the paper has been removed.

Although it is certainly possible that cutting could have occurred on letters written in the 19th century, the fact that so many of the Hofmann documents were cut points toward falsification. Throckmorton claimed that he examined other 19th century cover letters and did not find evidence of cutting: “From those that I examined, I was unable to find any of the covers that had been cut, where a section had been cut off.” One would infer from Mr. Throckmorton’s testimony that he believed that some of the Hofmann documents were actually cut off larger pieces of paper that had been used in the 19th century. Cutting could also indicate that material which was originally on the paper was being suppressed.

Although the experts all seemed to believe that the ink had been artificially aged in the Hofmann documents, they felt that in most cases the paper was actually genuine paper of the period. William Flynn said that “The initial examination disclosed that the papers . . . appear to be genuine period papers—that is to say . . . the morphology of the paper conformed to the papers that would have been available . . . throughout the 19th century.” Kenneth Rendell indicated that it was fairly easy to get paper dating back to the 19th century. Speaking of the Salamander letter, Rendell commented:

Everything appeared to be perfectly normal of that period, and that was what the paper report was, which I fully expected because to get paper is not difficult at all for that type of thing.

Before the bombings, one of Mark Hofmann’s associates did his best to try to convince Sandra and I that it would be impossible to apply ink to ancient paper without the ink feathering in such a way that the forgery would be detected. Charles Hamilton speaks of this problem in his book *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 206: “The feathering of ink is one of the most obvious marks of a modern fake on old chain-lined paper.” Mr. Hamilton informs us, however, that it is possible to size the old paper so that the modern ink would not feather.” On page 10, Hamilton says that Charles Weisburg “failed to ‘size,’ or chemically gloss” a Lincoln forgery, and therefore “his ink has feathered or fuzzed, when it went on the old paper.” Speaking of Joseph Cosey, Mr. Hamilton gave this information:

Cosey cannot be faulted on his paper. It is the typical, chain-lined, hand-laid pure rag paper of the Revolutionary era. No doubt Cosey stumbled upon a supply of it, or else removed blank portions of paper from insignificant or valueless documents.

“I am convinced, too,” I went on, “that Cosey ‘sized’ or treated his paper chemically to prevent his fresh ink from blurring, since modern ink tends to fuzz or ‘feather’ when it goes on old paper.” (Ibid., pages 99-100)

Mark Hofmann not only had access to many old collections from which he could have obtained old paper, but he also acquired letters with old postmarks. Lyn Jacobs indicated that Hofmann bought letters from Palmyra which dated back to the time of Joseph Smith:

This has been Mark’s approach: For the last several years he has written to various dealers asking for oval-shaped Palmyra postmarks, say, from 1825 to 1835, the period when the Mormons were there. . . . He used to order almost everything that said Palmyra on it. Mark has had to buy hundreds of Palmyra covers just to find three or four decent ones. (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 14)

HARD EVIDENCE

Some of Mark Hofmann’s supporters are still having a very difficult time accepting the possibility that many of his documents are forgeries. Since George Throckmorton is a member of the Mormon Church, some people have felt that his judgment with regard to the documents may not be objective. I seriously doubt, however, that this is the case. Kenneth Rendell, a non-Mormon who was one of Mark Hofmann’s supporters, seems to have reached the same conclusion. Moreover, William Flynn, the expert who solved the mystery of the cracking ink, testified that he is not a Mormon:

Q—Are you a member of either the LDS Church or the Reorganized LDS Church?

A—No, I’m not.

That the documents are not authentic seems to rest upon very solid scientific evidence. While some people have been willing to admit that part of the printed material Hofmann sold was forged, they have not been willing to concede that the handwritten documents are spurious. This argument, however, seems to be destroyed by Mark Hofmann’s connection with the Jim Bridger notes. These notes combine printed material with handwriting and signatures, and there is no way that the handwriting and signatures could have been added to the documents before they were printed.

We first became acquainted with the Jim Bridger notes when we received the April 1985 issue of a catalogue published by Cosmic Aeroplane Books. This

catalogue contained a photograph of a Jim Bridger note and a statement that this is an “Excessively rare partly printed document signed with his [Bridger’s] ‘X,’ March 8, 1852 . . . Auction records and catalogues going back 70 years have been consulted and no other example of Bridger’s X was located therein. In other words, this is an incredibly rare and highly desirable autograph.” The price asked for this document was “[\$]9,995.00.” Sandra and I looked at this document and commented concerning how easy it would be to forge someone’s “X.” We even joked about the possibility that it might be a Hofmann document. We, of course, had no evidence at that time to link him to the Jim Bridger note. At any rate, in chapter 2 we noted that one of the first clues detectives found that Mark Hofmann was using the alias “Mike Hansen” was an envelope with the name Utah Engraving written on it. On April 17, 1986, the *Deseret News* printed the following:

On March 3, detectives went to Utah Engravings and looked through boxes of engraving plates. In one box, investigators discovered a negative of a promissory note that Bell called the “Jim Bridger note.” Hofmann is charged with theft by deception in connection with the sale of a promissory note purportedly carrying the “X” signature of American frontiersman Jim Bridger.

As I have already shown, Deputy County Attorney Robert L. Stott claimed that “a xerox copy of a blank Jim Bridger note” was found in Hofmann’s house, and “Under the Jim Bridger note is the name Mike Hansen.” Although Mr. Stott did not comment on the matter, it seems logical to believe that this sheet of paper is either the artwork or a copy of the artwork that was submitted to the engraving company to make the metal plate for printing. In any case, after the plate was prepared, Mark Hofmann seemed to have a good supply of Jim Bridger notes:

[Shannon] Flynn said he arranged a three-way partnership between himself, Hofmann and an Arizona investor to purchase the [Betsy] Ross letter for \$18,000 in October 1984. In December that same year, Hofmann suggested to Flynn that the three trade the letter for 16 promissory notes purportedly signed by Utah frontiersman Jim Bridger. Hofmann then sold the 16 Bridger notes for an average of \$5,000 each . . .

Flynn said that on October 3, 1985, Hofmann drove him to the downtown Deseret Book store to sell a Bridger note with five Valley Notes (handwritten

currency issued in Utah in 1849). Flynn testified that Hofmann insisted on waiting in the car while he made the \$20,000 transaction because of other dealings Hofmann had had with Deseret Book. (*Deseret News*, April 18, 1986)

According to Shannon Flynn, Mark Hofmann wanted him to deceive Deseret Book concerning the ownership of the notes:

Q—What did you tell them about those items?

A—Ah, I probably told them that they were mine.

Q—Now, was that something that was worked out beforehand between you and Mr. Hofmann?

A—Yes, it was.

Mark Hofmann seems to have also deceived Shannon Flynn concerning the sale of the 16 Bridger notes. As Hofmann claimed to sell the notes, he informed Flynn where they went and the amount received from each sale. Mike Carter wrote:

Mr. Flynn, who said he made a meticulous accounting of the transactions he and Mr. Hofmann were involved in, said two of the notes were sold to noted handwriting analyst Charles Hamilton for \$5,000 each; two to Provo attorney and antiquities collector Brent Ashworth for \$5,000 each; one to Deseret Book for \$4,500; one traded to Cosmic Aeroplane Books; one sold at auction at Sotheby's Auction House in New York City for \$8,602.50; and later eight more to Mr. Ashworth for \$24,000 cash and trades.

That left one note, which Mr. Flynn said he sold to Deseret Book . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 18, 1986)

David Hewett investigated the matter and found that there had been a great deal of misrepresentation by Hofmann with regard to the sale of the Jim Bridger notes:

Brent Ashworth is listed as buying a total of ten for \$34,000. He actually only bought two. Sotheby's is listed as selling one and delivering an auction net of \$8602.50. Mary-Jo Kline at Sotheby's has been their Americana paper expert for the last three and a half years. She says in all that time they have never listed, sold, had withdrawn, or failed to sell one single Jim Bridger note.

New York autograph dealer Charles Hamilton is listed as buying two for \$10,000 on January 2, 1985. Hamilton says flatly that is not true. "If I'd had \$10,000 then," he says, "I'd never had gone bankrupt."

At this meeting in the Hotel Utah, Flynn gave Cardon a check for \$19,034 as his share of the sale proceeds. That check was later returned for insufficient funds. (*Maine Antique Digest*, July 1986, page 7-C)

Steven Barnett, of Cosmic Aeroplane, did testify "that he purchased two Jim Bridger promissory notes from Hofmann, one for the store for about \$5,000 and one for himself for which he traded autographs worth about \$5,000.


The prosecution has shown in earlier testimony that Hofmann had printing plates made up of those Jim Bridger notes. (*Deseret News*, April 22, 1986)

In his testimony, Brent Ashworth claimed that the price "was \$5,000," on a Bridger note he bought from Mr. Hofmann. He later obtained a second note for "the same amount." Between the two transactions, Hofmann called him and said there "were four Jim Bridger notes." Mr. Ashworth says he was "a little upset about that because we'd spent some time talking about this single Jim Bridger note, and all of a sudden there were four." Ashworth claimed that Hofmann had informed him "that he'd gotten these all out of a book from Livingston and Kinkead, which was the outfit that they're all made out from."

Document examiner George Throckmorton said that he examined the negative Hofmann obtained and found it to be the source of the printed notes: "This negative was used to make a plate. The plate was later used to print this note." In addition to the hard evidence furnished by the negative, the handwritten portions of the notes were examined and it was found that some of them had the cracking of the ink found in the other forgeries. William Flynn testified: "The . . . Bridger notes . . . contains handwritten text which is in the cracked ink that I've mentioned earlier." When asked about the authenticity of one of the notes, Mr. Flynn responded: "It's a non-genuine document in my opinion." When George Throckmorton was asked if he observed any cracking in the ink, he stated: "Yes. I was able to observe a characteristic cracking of the ink on three of the Jim Bridger notes . . ." Mr. Throckmorton reported concerning one of the notes he examined under ultraviolet light: ". . . this note showed under ultraviolet light a running effect of the ink as if it had been clipped or tipped or tied from the upper right hand corner, . . . and then treated with some type of a chemical. As the chemical reacted with the ink, it caused the ink to run in a downward portion. And that was visible, that running effect was visible under the ultraviolet examination." When Throckmorton was asked about the purported Jim Bridger "X" on the

91. Bridger, James. (1804-1881). American fur Trapper, Pioneer, and Scout. Excessively rare partly printed document signed with his "X", March 8, 1852, G(Great) S (Salt) L (Lake) City, Utah Ter. A promissory note promising to pay the early Salt Lake merchants, Livingston and Kinkead, \$830 in Gold at 12% per annum. Also signed by LOUIS VASQUEZ, another early fur trapper and partner with Bridger at Fort Bridger, and by W. Bell, who later became a partner with Livingston after Kinkead departed from the firm. Auction records and catalogues going back 70 years have been consulted and no other example of Bridger's "X" was located therein. In other words, this is an incredibly rare and highly desirable autograph.

9,995.00


 P. S. L. City, Utah Ter. March 8th 1852
 One week after date we promise to pay
 Geo. H. Livingston & J. H. Kinkead trading in the name and style
 of Livingston & Kinkead, Eight hundred and thirty dollars and - 00 cents
 in Gold for value received, with interest thereon at the rate
 of - 12 - per centum per annum from the — day of June
 18 — until paid as witness our hand and seal.
 Witness
 W. Bell
 In name
 James X Bridger Seal.
 Louis Vasquez Seal.

A photograph from the catalogue of Cosmic Aeroplane Books for April, 1985. Notice that a Jim Bridger note is being offered for \$9,995. After the bombings investigators discovered that this note was obtained from Mark Hofmann and that it is a forgery.

notes, he replied that he “could not” determine if it was actually Bridger’s “X.” He did have an opinion concerning two other signatures which appeared on the notes: “. . . the [Vasques] signatures themselves are inconsistent with each other. From that there’s a high probability . . . he did not sign all four of these . . . there is too much variation between the signatures to have been written by the same person. . . . In fact, it is more consistent if someone were trying to disguise or change their own handwriting and write the name of Louee Vasques. It’s more consistent with that.” Throckmorton also noted that the “W. Bell” signatures on the notes were “not the same; they’re not consistent, as if . . . there was a person by the name of W. Bell signing his name. . . . It’s more consistent with somebody else trying to write the name W. Bell on two different occasions.”

From the evidence presented here, the reader can see that it is impossible to separate the printed forgeries from the handwritten documents. The Jim Bridger notes, which Hofmann began selling in 1984, had to come from the engraved plate which he ordered. The negative establishes this beyond all doubt. It is evident, therefore, that the handwritten material, including the two signatures, was added after the notes were printed. This, of course, means that someone had to forge these signatures. There is just no way to get around these conclusions. Furthermore, if Mark Hofmann is not the forger, he would have to know his or her identity.

FORGER ON VACATION?

While George Throckmorton’s testimony on the Bridger notes seems to cast doubt on the skill of the forger who added the handwritten material, other testimony which he and William Flynn gave indicates that there was a master forger involved in the handwriting which appears on some of the documents. In many cases they could not say the documents were forgeries on the basis of the handwriting or signatures alone. Kenneth Rendell was more critical of the handwritten documents, but even he admitted he could see no obvious evidence of forgery in the handwriting appearing in the Salamander letter and the Lucy Mack Smith letter—Rendell, of course, had only signatures of Martin Harris to compare the Salamander letter with and did not have an example of Lucy Mack Smith’s handwriting.

One thing that is extremely interesting to note is that the major handwritten forgeries seem to have almost ceased with the appearance of the Salamander

letter in late 1983. From that time, Hofmann seems to have produced mostly printed forgeries. In fact, instead of forging Jack London’s name and a short inscription in a first edition of *Call of the Wild*, Hofmann ordered a metal plate to do the job! If Mark Hofmann was the master forger who created the earlier documents, it seems very strange that he would have to resort to such an inferior process to reproduce Jack London’s writings. This leads me to question the idea that Mark Hofmann was the master forger who did the handwriting on the earlier documents. It appears to me, in fact, that this individual almost ceased to function in the last two years of Mr. Hofmann’s career. While one could theorize that Hofmann himself was the master forger and that he may have become fearful of being detected if he continued to produce sensational documents, all the evidence points to the fact that he was becoming even bolder in his final days. Take, for instance, the Spalding–Rigdon document he showed to Hugh Pinnock. This would be a highly controversial item which should have been created in a way to prevent detection. Instead, however, it was done in a very crude way. An old document was obtained, the date was altered and the two signatures were added in a different ink than the original. The whole thing is so clumsy it almost cries out for detection.

The method in which the purported Betsy Ross letter was produced was even more bizarre. Instead of the letter being written out in a consistent style (as in the case of the Salamander letter), an old letter written by someone else with the first name *Betsy* was obtained. The last name was removed from the letter and the word *Ross* was inserted in its place. The date also had to be altered so that it would fit into the period in which Betsy Ross actually lived.

If Mr. Hofmann had the ability to create such documents as the Salamander letter, the Lucy Mack Smith letter and the Grandin contract, why would he use such outlandish methods to produce these documents? It seems strange, also, that a man with such ability could not create the McLellan papers he had talked so much about. It would almost be possible to believe that the “master forger” died in late 1983 if it were not for the fact that an inscription purporting to be in the handwriting of Martin Harris was added into the Nathan Harris *Book of Common Prayer* just about a month before the bombings. The document examiners seem confident that this inscription was written in the very hand found in the Salamander letter. Because of this inscription, I am left with just two theories. The first is that the “master forger” was for some reason

unavailable or unable to continue the work for about two years. If he had moved and Hofmann had no way to contact him for some time, this might explain the situation. Another explanation might be that he went to prison in late 1983 or early 1984. It would be very difficult to work on forgeries of this nature while in prison. It would also be extremely dangerous for a person to attempt to sneak in the old paper and special ink needed to make them. It is conceivable, however, that one page from the Nathan Harris *Book of Common Prayer* could be smuggled in and the short 21-word inscription made without detection.

My second theory is that the “master forger” became unwilling to go on with the work. One reason for this might be that he feared exposure. In early 1984 we not only suggested the possibility that forgery was being committed, but we also spoke of the source from which portions of the Salamander letter was apparently derived. By August 1984, I wrote that I was also investigating other Mormon documents discovered since 1980. Although few people took the matter seriously, the forger could have become concerned that some hard evidence would eventually turn up. The fact that a major newspaper like the *Los Angeles Times* would tell of my suggestion of forgery might have been very disconcerting to someone who was not as bold as Hofmann. Under these circumstances, such an individual might inform Hofmann that it would be too dangerous to continue to flood the Mormon market with sensational documents. The creation of a controversial collection like the one Hofmann proposed

for McLellin would be out of the question. On the other hand, Hofmann might have been able to convince such an individual to write the Martin Harris inscription in Nathan Harris’ *Book of Common Prayer*. This is a poem which was apparently known in the 19th century. Its contents would not be controversial in any way, and it could not be checked stylistically. Furthermore, Hofmann could argue that it would increase support for the authenticity of the Salamander letter.

As I have already stated, it could be argued that Hofmann himself was the “master forger” and that he was totally responsible for all the forgeries. He certainly seems to have had the same formula for the ink during the period when he produced the Jim Bridger notes as he had earlier—the ink cracked in the same way as on the Salamander letter and the 1825 letter. It appears, also, that the documents were aged in the same way. One could probably argue that Hofmann just became lazy and no longer desired to exercise his calligraphic skills. At the present time, however, I find this explanation a little difficult to accept. It seems to me that the time and money he spent getting the Jack London inscription onto a metal plate and the work of actually printing it in the book would far exceed that required to just write the inscription with a pen. I must admit, of course, that anything is possible in this bizarre case, and I do not pretend to have all the answers. Perhaps the truth about this matter will come out when the case goes to trial.

6. THE DOCUMENTS EXAMINED

“I don’t think forgery is a possibility,” asserts Rendell. “Mark Hofmann, for example, is too sophisticated to try that. . . .” (Document expert Kenneth Rendell, Utah Holiday, December 1985, page 86)

“I can’t understand why he would do that. Up until I saw that photocopy I thought Mark was rational. But [cutting it up]—that was crazy.” (Statement by Kenneth Rendell after learning that Hofmann had cut up his papyrus, Ibid., page 88)

In this chapter the reader will find a detailed and critical look at many of Mark Hofmann’s documents which have been sold to the Mormon Church and other collectors.

ANTHON TRANSCRIPT

The Anthon transcript was Mark Hofmann’s first major “discovery.” This sheet of paper is believed to contain copies of the characters which appeared on the gold plates, from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated. On May 3, 1980, the Mormon owned *Deseret News* printed an article entitled, *Utahn finds 1828 writing by Prophet*. In this article we find the following:

A handwritten sheet of paper with characters supposedly copied directly from the gold plates in 1828, and also bearing other writing and the signature of Joseph Smith, has been found in an old Bible by a Utah State University student.

This would make it the oldest known Mormon document as well as the earliest sample of the Prophet’s handwriting. His earliest known writing previously dated to 1831.

Experts believe the paper may be the original one copied by Joseph Smith from the plates and given to Martin Harris in February 1828 to take to New York City for examination by linguistic experts.

The story of how Harris showed the characters to a Professor Charles Anthon . . . is a well-known episode in Mormon history and also is considered fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The paper, written in faded brown ink, was discovered by Mark William Hofmann, a premedical student at USU. . . . Written on the back, apparently after Harris brought the paper back from the encounter with Professor Anthon, are the following words (and spellings):

“These caractors were dilligently copied by my own hand from the plates of gold and given to Martin Harris who took them to New York City but the learned could not translate it because the Lord would not open it to them in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaih written in the 29th chapter and 11th verse. (signed) Joseph Smith Jr.”

The paper has been compared with other samples of the Prophet’s writing and appears to match them in style and spelling on numerous points, experts said.

“In my judgment, this writing is that of Joseph Smith,” said Dean C. Jessee, senior historical associate in the Church Historical Department. He is a recognized authority on the handwriting of the Prophet.

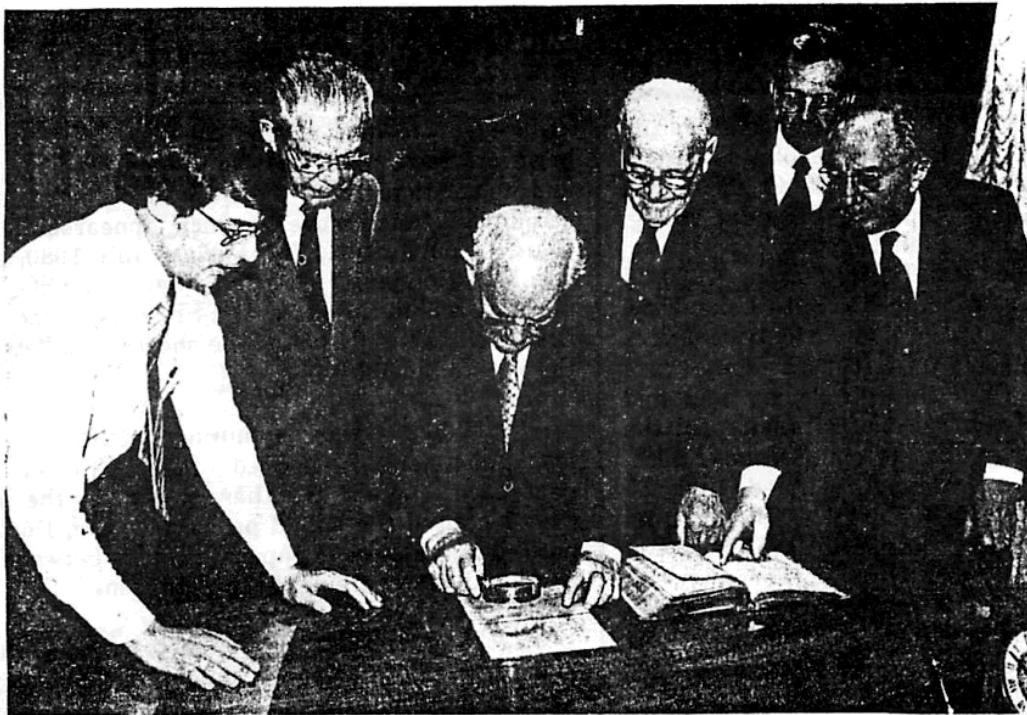
At a press conference held April 28 in the Church Office Building, Brother Jessee said that after a preliminary examination, the paper and ink also give every appearance of being authentic materials of the 1828 period. . . . “we can see more clearly than ever before what the characters were like on the gold plates,” Brother Jessee said. . . .

The discovery of the historic paper by Brother Hofmann was quite accidental. . . .

President Spencer W. Kimball expressed gratitude to Brother Hofmann for his discovery and “for bringing it to our attention and for leaving it in the custody of the Historical Department.”

In an affidavit, dated October 25, 1980, Mark Hofmann gave this account of his discovery of the Anthon transcript:

I have been an avid collector of LDS antiques, books, manuscripts, and related material for the past eight years. During that time I have owned,



President Spencer W. Kimball looks at paper with magnifying glass, flanked by Mark Hofmann, left, who found it; President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Elder Boyd K. Packer, and Elder Gordon B. Hinckley.

Photo by Jed A. Clark

BY HAL KNIGHT
Church News staff writer

Utahn finds 1828 writing by Prophet

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The story of how Harris showed the characters to a Professor Charles Anthon and the professor's reaction is a well-known episode in Mormon history and also is considered fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The paper, written in faded brown ink, was discovered by Mark William Hofmann, a premedical student at USU. He is a collector of documents and antiques relating to early Mormon history.

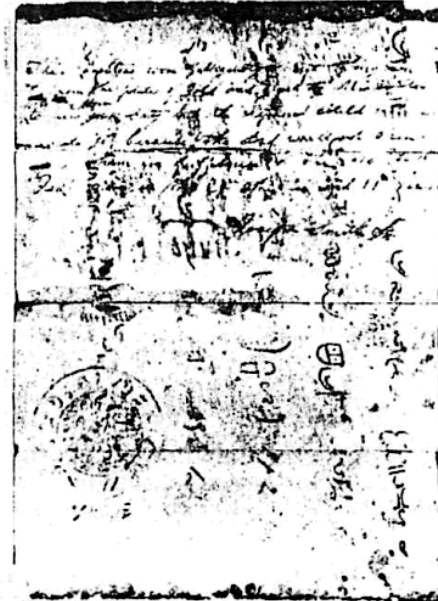
One side of the transcript contains vertical columns of characters and a small circle of figures something like the Aztec calendar. Written on the back, apparently after Harris brought the paper back from his encounter with Professor Anthon, are the following words (and spellings):

"These characters were diligently copied by my own hand from the plates of gold and given to Martin Harris who took them to New York

Continued on page 4



Characters were copied from the gold plates. The circle was described by Charles Anthon.



Back of the paper had note by Joseph Smith. Lower figures show through from other side.

A photograph from the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, May 3, 1980. Notice that Mark Hofmann is showing the Anthon transcript to the Prophet, Seer and Revelator and other leaders of the church.

or do now own, documents bearing the signatures of such Mormon notables as Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, George Miller, John C. Bennett, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and William Clayton. . . .

During the month of March, 1980, I acquired from a gentleman in Salt Lake City, Utah, a 1668 Cambridge edition of the King James Bible. I had previously purchased some rare Mormon material from this gentleman and had an interest in this Bible because it contained the handwriting and signature of one Samuel Smith. Furthermore, this gentleman claimed that he obtained it in the 1950's in Carthage, Illinois from the granddaughter of Catherine the sister of Joseph Smith Jr. Although this gentleman friend of mine said that he could not remember the name of Catherine's granddaughter, he described her as an elderly lady whose home was full of antiques.

In my Logan, Utah, apartment, on Wednesday, April 16, 1980, between 4:30–5:00 pm, I noticed that two of the pages of the Bible were stuck together about halfway down from the side of the page. I had flipped through the Bible several times before but had not previously noticed the joined pages in the beginning of the Book of Proverbs. While carefully trying to separate the pages it was discovered that a folded piece of paper with a black glue-like substance was between the pages and holding them together.

I succeeded in prying off the top page of the Bible which exposed a document bearing the name "Joseph Smith Jr." still stuck to the bottom page. Carefully I used a razor blade to separate the folded document from the Bible. The document was folded in fourths and stuck together with the glue-like substance. After giving up the attempt to pry the document apart without damaging it, I decided it best to wait until the next morning and have a manuscript expert at Utah State University help me separate it.

In the morning of April 17, 1980, I took the document to Jeff Simmonds, Curator of the Utah State University Special Collections and Archives Departments. After evaluating the manuscript for several minutes he succeeded in separating it out with the aid of toluene and various tools.

The reader will note that Mark Hofmann did not open the document himself; instead, he solicited the help of A. J. Simmonds. While Mr. Hofmann's request for help would be considered as a wise move by those who are interested in the preservation of documents, there could be another interpretation of this action—i.e., to involve someone else in the discovery process and thus gain support for the authenticity of the transcript. In any case, Mr. Simmonds says that when the paper was opened, Hofmann professed to

have no knowledge of what it was all about. Simmonds, however, recognized the importance of the find and its relationship to the Book of Mormon. In an account of the discovery which appeared in the Church's publication, *The Ensign*, July 1980, page 73, Mr. Hofmann indicated that his wife also played a role in the discovery. She was, in fact, the first one to actually notice the sheet stuck between the pages of the Bible:

When I was examining it [the Bible] in my apartment . . . I noticed that two of the pages . . . were stuck together . . . this was the first time I noticed the joined pages. My wife, Doralee, noticed that a piece of paper was stuck between the pages while I was trying to separate them.

Mark Hofmann went on to say that after A. J. Simmonds helped unfold the sheet, he

dashed over to the LDS Institute of Religion and showed it to Danel W. Bachman, who studied it for a few minutes and excitedly telephoned Dean Jessee in the Church History Division in Salt Lake City.

We made an appointment for the next day, not daring to hope that we had found the original transcript that Martin Harris showed to Professor Anthon or that the name on the back was actually the Prophet's signature. However, we were on cloud nine the next day when Brother Jessee gave a preliminary opinion that not only the signature, but also the paragraph, was in Joseph Smith's own hand.

Of course my wife and I felt that such an important document should be in the keeping of the Church. (Ibid.)

The Mormon Church published color photographs of the Anthon transcript and an article containing "compelling reasons for accepting it as genuine" in the July 1980 issue of *The Ensign*. The Mormon leaders were completely sold on the document. According to the testimony of Donald Schmidt given at the preliminary hearing, Hofmann was eventually given "roughly \$20,000" worth of items from the Church Archives in exchange for the old Bible and the sheet of paper found within its pages.

In 1980 Mormon scholars were rejoicing that Mark Hofmann had made such an outstanding discovery. Richard L. Anderson, of Brigham Young University, was quoted by the *Provo Herald*, May 1, 1980, as saying the following:

"Joseph Smith's story is really vindicated by the finding of the document because he mentioned that he sent Harris to the East to show the characters on the gold plates to 'the learned.'

“We have Anthon’s story in letters explaining exactly what Harris showed to him. What Anthon describes is quite remarkably like what is on the new transcript.”

Dr. Anderson also commented: “This new discovery is sort of a Dead Sea School [*sic*] equivalent of the Book of Mormon (Ibid.). The noted Mormon scholar Hugh Nibley was quoted as saying: “This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get as to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon (Ibid.). In the same paper, Dr. Hugh Nibley triumphantly announced: **“Of course it’s translatable.”** According to *The Herald*,

Nibley also said he counted at least two dozen out of 47 characters in the Demotic alphabet that could be given phonetic value.

“This offers as good a test as we’ll ever get. **Nobody could have faked those characters.** It would take 10 minutes to see that this is fake.”

On May 12, 1980, the *Provo Herald* reported:

The Herald called Hugh Nibley to see if he was still confident about his earlier assessment.

“I still say just what I said before. **It can be translated.**”

As time passed it became evident that neither Dr. Nibley nor any other scholar was able to produce an acceptable translation of Hofmann’s transcript. The President of the Mormon Church is supposed to be a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” and according to the Book of Mormon a “seer” can “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Mosiah 8:13). Instead of using the “seer stone” to translate the characters, President Spencer W. Kimball examined them with a magnifying glass (see photograph in *Deseret News*, Church Section, May 3, 1980). He was apparently unable to throw any light on the subject.

When the Anthon transcript first came forth historians were very excited about what it might reveal. Sandra and I had no reason to doubt the authenticity of the new find and published our findings in a booklet entitled, *Book of Mormon ‘Characters’ Found*. Some people felt the transcript might contain magic characters. We tried very hard to find evidence to support this idea but were finally forced to conclude that the “similarities” were not “sufficient to prove the case” (*Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, page 42). Sandra and I compared the Anthon transcript with many documents and samples of ancient writing, but in the end we found ourselves feeling frustrated with the transcript. Instead of containing anything related to any language, the Anthon transcript appeared to be composed of meaningless doodlings. In February 1984,

just after I began feeling apprehension concerning the authenticity of the Salamander letter, Sandra and I took color photographs of the Anthon transcript with us to Chicago and compared them with rare magic books in special collections at the University of Chicago. I still found nothing that paralleled the transcript and began to develop grave doubts concerning its authenticity. While doing research with regard to the Salamander letter, I noticed something about Hofmann’s first discovery that bothered me. This was Charles Anthon’s letter describing the sheet of paper which contained the characters copied from the Book of Mormon. Anthon stated that the “letters . . . were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, . . .” This description exactly matched the document which Mark Hofmann found in 1980—i.e., the Anthon transcript. Before Hofmann’s discovery, the Church had a photograph of another old sheet of paper containing Book of Mormon characters. It was believed at that time that this was the sheet Harris had taken to Professor Anthon. Instead of having the characters running in vertical columns, this paper has them going horizontally. Furthermore, it does not have a circular object. When Hofmann made his remarkable discovery, Anthon’s letter was appealed to as evidence that the real “Anthon transcript” had been found. At the time, this seemed to be a good argument for the document’s authenticity, but when I later examined E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* in the light of its possible relationship to the Salamander letter, I discovered that Anthon’s letter is printed on page 272 of that book. This could be quite significant because the important parallels to the Salamander letter begin on the very next page (page 273). I could not help but wonder if Howe’s book had provided the creative impulse for both the Anthon transcript and the Salamander letter.

By August 22, 1984, I made it rather plain that I was critically examining all the documents Hofmann had found since he first announced the discovery of the Anthon transcript in 1980: “. . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980’s. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents” (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 9). On July 10, 1985, I published a study of the Anthon transcript which suggested that there may be spelling problems in the material written on the back of the document which is supposed to be in the handwriting of Joseph Smith. The following appeared in the publication *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*:

One thing that should be of great concern to Mormon scholars is the fact that there seems to be an attempt in the Boren material to duplicate the spelling errors of Joseph Smith. . . .

Misspellings can be useful in helping authenticate documents. When Mark Hofmann discovered the original “Anthon Transcript” in 1980, this method was used by Dean Jessee. After talking to Mr. Jessee, Danel W. Bachman wrote: “In addition to paper, ink, and script comparisons, there are other indications that the document is authentic and is the original ‘Anthon transcript’ . . . 2. There are typical misspellings of words, such as ‘caractors,’ ‘coppied,’ ‘Citty,’ ‘propscy,’ and ‘Isaih.’”

The Boren documents show us that in the future we will have to be very careful about using misspellings as evidence of a document’s authenticity. It is obvious, of course, that if someone came forth with a letter bearing the signature “Joseph Smith” which had all the words he usually misspelled written correctly, we would have to question its authenticity. On the other hand, however, the fact that typical misspellings appear must not carry too much weight in determining a document’s authenticity. It might only prove that we are dealing with a clever forger.

It is interesting to note that both the Anthon transcript and the purported letter of Joseph Smith to Morley (the Boren document) misspell the word *city* as “citty.” My brief examination of the documents written in Joseph Smith’s own hand leads me to believe that Joseph Smith knew how to correctly spell *city*. In the eleven different places I have found it in his writings it is spelled “city” (see *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pages 7, 16, 252-253, 468, 515, 557, 560 and 616). It is true that Smith misspelled the word *cities* as “Cittys” on at least one occasion—when he spoke of Martin Harris taking the Anthon Transcript “to the Eastern Cittys” (see “Joseph Smith’s 1832 Account of His Early Life,” as photographically reproduced in *Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary*, page 10; also found in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 7). It would appear to me that Joseph Smith knew the correct spelling of *city*, but added an extra *t* when he tried to make the plural form of the word. The 1832 account has the correct spelling of the word just three lines above the word “Cittys”: “. . . to new York City . . .” The Anthon transcript, on the other hand, reads: “. . . to new York Citty . . .” As I have already stated, the Boren manuscript uses the spelling “citty”: “. . . Brother Gilbert and Brother Hadly are now in the citty . . .”

In looking over “Joseph Smith’s 1832 Account of His Early Life,” I notice that it has a number of important parallels in both wording and spelling to

the writing on the back of the Anthon transcript. Parallels between the two documents, of course, would be expected because both documents deal with the same subject and were supposed to have been written by the same author. In both documents the word *characters* was originally written without the letter “h,” and in both cases it is added above the line. The 1832 account uses the word “copy” and the Anthon transcript reads “coppied.” It is interesting to note, however, that in a letter to his wife, dated March 21, 1839, Joseph Smith spelled the word copied as I “copy-ed” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 409).

If we exclude letters written above the lines to correct spelling, there is an interesting parallel between Joseph Smith’s 1832 account and the Anthon transcript. The 1832 account speaks of . . . “the Propicy of Isah.” (This, of course, is supposed to read, “the prophecy of Isaiah.”) The Anthon transcript also refers to “the propicy of Isah.” The 1832 account has the letters “ia” added above “Isah” in an attempt to correct the spelling. The Anthon transcript has the letter “i” above “Isah” and “h” over “propicy.” That these words were identical before corrections were added above the lines might be used as evidence that Joseph Smith himself wrote both documents. Unfortunately, however, according to Dean Jessee’s transcript of the 1832 account (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 8), the words “Propicy of Isah” were written by Joseph Smith’s scribe Frederick G. Williams. Joseph Smith’s handwriting ended in the line just before these words appear. In an entry Joseph Smith recorded in his own hand in his diary (November 29, 1832), he spelled *prophesied* as “Prophecyed” (*Ibid.*, page 16). (*Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, pages 9-10)

As I indicated earlier in this book, Mark Hofmann refused to reveal from whom he had obtained the Bible in which the Anthon transcript was discovered. In the affidavit he speaks of him as a “gentleman friend of mine.” In *The Ensign*, July 1980, page 73, he referred to him as “a collector friend.” The Church Section of the *Deseret News* called him “the unnamed Salt Lake Collector” (May 3, 1980). At one time Mark Hofmann told a scholar that the name of the man was confidential but some people knew him as Mr. “White.” As far as I can learn, no one has ever found out the identity of this mysterious individual. Lyn Jacobs said that “Mark bought the Bible for almost nothing. I don’t know if the seller knew the significance of the Smith names in the Bible, . . .” (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 12). Jacobs was asked if it were true that “most [book] dealers go

through every page of a book before they bought it? If so, why didn't the person who sold it to Mark notice the transcript stuck between the pages?" In his answer, Jacobs said that a book dealer would "go through every page," but he claimed that it was an antique dealer who had it and that many "antique dealers don't take old books seriously." Jacobs statement on how Mark Hofmann obtained the Bible is somewhat different than the story Hofmann gave in the affidavit. Jacobs claimed that "Mark told me that the Bible belonging to Joseph's sister which had the Anthon transcript in it originally came from a small antique store in the Midwest. The Bible made its way to Utah, where Mark acquired it" (Ibid.). Hofmann's affidavit, of course, says nothing of the antique store in the Midwest. It says that he got it from a "gentleman in Salt Lake" who obtained it directly "from the granddaughter of Catherine, the sister of Joseph Smith Jr."

In any case, Hofmann claimed the transcript was "folded in fourths" within the Bible (*The Ensign*, July 1980, page 73). After I became suspicious of his story, I did an experiment with a Bible and a single sheet of paper. I found that when the paper is "folded in fourths" it becomes four times as thick and this makes it rather obvious that something is in the book.

In the interview published in *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16, Mark Hofmann made a very strange statement concerning the "glue-like substance" found in the transcript:

But in the case of the Anthon transcript, they haven't done everything I thought they were going to do. For example, there's a black glue-like substance which held it in the Bible. They still don't know what that substance is. I know that laboratory identification could be made on that. Perhaps someday the Church will do it.

I couldn't understand what Mr. Hofmann's fascination with the contents of the "glue-like substance" would be unless he had spent a lot of time creating it and was disappointed that the Church never bothered to check it out.

The reader may be curious as to why anyone would forge such a document as the Anthon transcript and why Mormon historians did not question its authenticity. Actually, this transcript seems to solve a number of problems. Prior to its appearance on the scene, scholars had only a handwritten manuscript which Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer preserved and two published versions of the characters Joseph Smith was supposed to have copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The published versions did

not appear until 1844—one was a broadside and the other appeared in a Church publication known as *The Prophet* on December 21, 1844. Although the printed versions are shorter than the Whitmer manuscript, they contain some characters not found on it. Since Hofmann's manuscript has these missing characters, it has been claimed that this provides evidence for its authenticity. Now, while it is true that the Hofmann transcript seems to solve this problem, it should be pointed out that scholars have been aware of these sources for many years. In the Spring 1970 issue of *Brigham Young University Studies*, Stanley B. Kimball published an excellent article on the Anthon transcript in which he listed these sources, and Ariel L. Crowley has photographs of them in his book, *About the Book of Mormon*, published in 1961. Anyone making a serious study of the Anthon transcript could come into contact with them. At the time Mark Hofmann made his affidavit on the Anthon transcript he claimed that he had a number of original editions of early church publications and "other books published for and against the Church during the last century."

Although David Whitmer claimed that he had the original sheet containing the characters Martin Harris took to Anthon, this has been questioned by some scholars. In his article in *Brigham Young University Studies*, page 349, Stanley Kimball commented that it is possible that Whitmer was "mistaken about the originality of the 'Anthon transcript' he claimed to have." In *The Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society For Early Historic Archaeology*, December 1976, page 2, John L. Sorenson quoted Charles Anthon's statement that the transcript Martin Harris showed him had vertical columns of characters and a circular object—the Whitmer transcript, of course, has horizontal rows of characters and no circular object. Professor Sorenson went on to point out that "No Mormon student apparently ever took Anthon seriously in his statement that they were vertical, although his is the only eyewitness account." Sorenson went on to say that if "Anthon's recollections were accurate, we are led to suppose the following characteristics of the source document for the Book of Mormon which Joseph Smith had in his possession: . . . These symbols were arranged in vertical columns. . . . At the end of the columns appeared a circle, divided into compartments . . ." Professor Sorenson's description of what the document would look like, matched what Mark Hofmann came up with less than four years later!

While the Joseph Smith writing on the back of the Anthon transcript would be very difficult to forge, the front side containing the characters could have been

done by a child. It appears that all the forger did was copy the characters from the Whitmer manuscript and the early printed reproductions. It is true that there are some additional characters and that others were altered to some extent, but this would not require much skill. The characters, of course, were changed from horizontal rows to vertical columns. Even the circular object contains characters from the bottom of the Whitmer manuscript. (For an excellent study of the relationship between the Hofmann transcript and the other documents see Danel W. Bachman's article in *BYU Studies*, Summer 1980.)

At the preliminary hearing George Throckmorton testified that he examined the purported Joseph Smith writing on the back of the Anthon transcript. He reported that he was unable to reach "a positive identification" on the handwriting. He noted, however, that Joseph Smith "was not very neat. In fact, in my own terms I would say he is quite a sloppy writer." His opinion concerning the writing on the Anthon transcript was that the "quality of the writing is too neat for the writing that I saw from Joseph Smith. It's not consistent with how he normally wrote. In fact, the writing appears to be a higher quality than he was ever capable of doing."

Mr. Throckmorton observed that the Hofmann document had "a characteristic glowing effect" under ultraviolet light. Kenneth Rendell said that the "color of the ink" did not seem right in the Anthon transcript.

Document experts did not find evidence of cracking in the ink on the Anthon transcript itself, but they were convinced that heat had been used to artificially age the ink. William Flynn noted: "What was unusual about the heating pattern on the document was that . . . it was not uniform throughout the document, but there was an area that was more highly scorched . . ." George Throckmorton seemed to feel that a common household iron could have been used on the transcript:

Q—What did you do to duplicate, or at least in your opinion, duplicate what's exhibited on the Anthon transcript—this scorching?

A—I, first of all, used modern-day papers to experiment with and by placing an iron at different temperatures for varying lengths of time to see how long it would take before that scorching effect occurred. Later on, I progressed backwards and eventually was able to use some of the cover letters that we were able to obtain for experimentation purposes.

Q—You say cover letters from the time period of the 19th century, . . . ?

A—That's correct. And the same experiments were conducted then. I also dipped some of those in an ammonium hydroxide solution and other types of solutions and after drying, heated them or during the process of drying I also heated them and was able to come up with this same characteristic feature.

The most devastating evidence against the Anthon transcript came when the Bible in which it was discovered was examined. The Mormon writer Danel W. Bachman gave this information about the Bible: ". . . inserted in the center of the Bible is a handwritten copy of the entire book of Amos with the signature of Samuel Smith at the end . . . Hofmann's supposition was that this Samuel was either the great-grandfather or the great-great-grandfather of the Prophet Joseph Smith" (*BYU Studies*, Spring 1980, page 327). William Flynn noted that the purported Samuel Smith addition to the Bible "bears the dated watermark of 1819, showing that the paper was manufactured in 1819." Mr. Flynn testified that the signature *Samuel Smith* did not agree with the handwriting found in the text of the document and that it was written in a different ink:

Q— . . . Did you have an occasion to compare the handwriting of the body of the writing with the signature itself?

A—Yes.

Q—And what was the results of that comparison?

A—The writer of the text, which comprises the book of Amos, is not the same writer that signed the name Samuel Smith at the end of that writing.

Q—How about the ink itself on the signature. Is there a difference in that and the body of the text?

A—Yes. The ink comprising Samuel Smith appears nowhere in the text of the writings of the book of Amos.

Flynn went on to testify that he believed another name had been written where "Samuel Smith" now appears and that this had been "bleached out": ". . . there was an area around—the signature Samuel Smith that had been bleached out. What it appears is that there had been a different signature at that location which had been—old writing—that had been bleached out and the name Samuel Smith written on top." That the name *Samuel Smith* was a fraudulent addition to the document was clearly revealed when William Flynn observed it under a microscope: "The Samuel Smith signature in the Bible was indeed one of the cracked inks." Mr. Flynn also testified: "The writing in the text itself exhibited no cracking, The writing of the signature Samuel Smith did."

William Flynn's research revealed that the Anthon transcript could not have been in the Bible for any great length of time:

If the document had been in intimate contact with the pages of this Bible over a prolonged period of time, I would have expected the characters themselves which were made of the iron gallotannic ink to transfer onto the pages themselves. The highly acidic ink would have burned the pages in the form of the letters themselves—the characters which comprise the ink. In fact that did not happen. There is a uniform browning across the page rather than the ink itself, the characters of the ink, burning the pages in the shapes of the . . . letters and the characters on the page.

When Mr. Flynn was asked his opinion concerning the authenticity of the Anthon transcript, he replied: "My opinion [is] it is not a document from that at period."

THE BLESSING DOCUMENT

Less than a year after the Mormon Church announced the discovery of the Anthon transcript, another important discovery was reported in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*:

A handwritten document thought to be a father's blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr., first president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to his son Joseph Smith III, has been acquired by the Church Historical Department.

The document, which includes the possibility of Joseph Smith III succeeding his father as prophet and church leader, was presented Thursday to authorities of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in exchange for another valuable church document. . . .

[Earl E.] Olson and other LDS officials said they are convinced the blessing is authentic. Handwriting and the paper were examined and compared with other documents. . . .

The blessing document, dated Jan. 17, 1844, is thought to have been written by Thomas Bullock, one of several men who served as clerk to Joseph Smith Jr. . . .

Church officials obtained the document from Mark William Hofmann, a collector of historical documents and antiques. He said he received it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. Church officials declined to say how much was paid for the document. . . .

The document outlines a blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. to his son, then age 11, and includes the possibility of the son succeeding his father "to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: A Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church." (*Deseret News*, March 19, 1981)

The Utah Mormon Church has always claimed that Brigham Young was the true successor of Joseph Smith. The Reorganized LDS Church, on the other hand, maintained that Joseph Smith had appointed his son, Joseph Smith III, as his successor. Joseph Smith III rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and became the leader of the RLDS Church. Mark Hofmann's discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document seemed to sew up the case for the RLDS Church. The text of the blessing reads as follows:

A blessing, given to Joseph Smith, 3rd, by his father, Joseph Smith, Jun., on Jan. 17, 1844.

Blessed of the Lord is my son Joseph, who is called the third,—for the Lord knows the integrity of his heart, and loves him, because of his faith, and righteous desires. And, for this cause, has the Lord raised him up;—that the promises made to the fathers might be fulfilled, even the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation. For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church; which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.

Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but if he abides not in me, I, the Lord will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.

When he is grown, he shall be a strength to his brethren, and a comfort to his mother. Angels will minister unto him, and he will be wafted as on eagle's wings, and be as wise as serpents, even a multiplicity of blessings shall be his. Amen.

The blessing seemed to provide devastating evidence against the Utah Mormon Church; therefore, officials from the Church tried to downplay its importance. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 20, 1981, Church spokesman Jerry Cahill referred to it only as "an interesting historical footnote." At the 151st Annual Conference of the Church, President. Gordon B. Hinckley tried to explain away the obvious implications of the document:

a blessing, given to Joseph Smith, 3rd, by his father, Joseph Smith, Junr, on Jan. 7 1844

Blessed of the Lord is my son Joseph, who is called the third, - for the Lord knows the integrity of his heart, and loves him, because of his faith, and righteous desires. And, for this cause, has the Lord raised him up; - that the promises made to the fathers might be fulfilled, even that the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation. For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priesthood a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church; which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.

Truly, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.

When he is grown, he shall be a strength to his brethren, and a comfort to his mother. Angels will minister unto him, and he will be wafted as on eagle's wings, and be as wise as serpents, even a multiplicity of blessings shall be his. Amen.

Jan. 7 1844
Joseph Smith
Blessing

A photograph of both the front and back sides of the document purported to be Joseph Smith's blessing to his son, Joseph Smith III.

I think I should like to say a few words this afternoon about the recently discovered transcript of a blessing, reported to have been given January 17, 1844, by Joseph Smith to his eleven-year-old son. This has received much attention in the media of late. . . .

Our Historical Department secured it in pursuit of their practice of obtaining artifacts of many kinds related to our early history. We determined that we would give full publicity to the discovery, even though we were confident that critics, knowing little of the factual history of the Church, would seize upon it as suggesting a flaw in our line of authority. . . . for those who may feel that the document casts a cloud on the principle of transfer of authority through the Council of the Twelve Apostles, I desire to review briefly a few facts concerning the document and the history of the period to which it is related, . . .

First, it should be said that the document is a transcript of a blessing. It is not a record of ordination to an office. . . .

Thomas Bullock had joined the Church in England in November 1841. . . . Would have been willing to pay so heavy a price for his membership in the Church and to have suffered so much . . . if he had any doubt that President Young was the proper leader of the Church and that this right belonged to another according to a blessing which he had in his possession and which he had written with his own pen? . . .

We are glad to see our brethren of the Reorganized Church get the document which contains a father's blessing given upon the head of a son he loved. It is a precious artifact, with great sentimental value for the family of Joseph Smith. It does not seriously raise any question concerning the validity of succession in the presidency . . . Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. (*The Ensign*, May 1981, pages 20-22)

Earlier in this book I observed that Mark Hofmann believed that the Mormon Church would buy up embarrassing documents to suppress them. He certainly seemed to have been acting under this theory when he approached the Church about the Joseph Smith III Blessing. He even admitted that he was willing to promise to keep quiet about the document if that was what the Church leaders desired:

On February 16th, 1981, I first showed a xerox of the Blessing to the LDS Archivist, Don Schmidt . . . I was also **willing to promise not to breathe a word of its existence to anyone**—Don being the first person I had contacted. Since I had previously made several trades with Don in this same price range which were completed immediately. . . . (not wanting to come across like I was trying to blackmail

the Church) I fully expected to relinquish ownership immediately. (*Sunstone Review*, August 1982, page 1)

The whole transaction seems to have been rather bizarre. Hofmann told Schmidt that he thought the Reorganized LDS Church “might possibly trade a *Book of Commandments* for it,” yet he was “willing to trade the document [to the Mormon Church] for about a quarter of the value of a *Book of Commandments*” (Ibid.). This would mean that Hofmann would take approximately \$5,000 when he could have obtained \$20,000. (The price of the *Book of Commandments* has continued to go up. It is believed that one might sell for \$50,000 at the present time.) In the *Money-Digging Letters*, page 9, I made these comments about this strange transaction:

In the September 1982 issue of *Sunstone Review*, page 17, Hofmann says, “I’m in this for the money.” If this is the case, we find it a little hard to understand why he would sacrifice \$15,000 just so the Mormon Church could hide the blessing document.

In any case, Schmidt did not jump at the offer. Hofmann later commented: “It surprised me a bit that the Church didn’t buy it up quick and stash it away somewhere, . . .” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 19). Hofmann then offered the document to officials from the Reorganized Church, and they agreed to give him a *Book of Commandments*. Instead of selling it to them, however, he turned it over to the Mormon Church. This caused the Reorganized Historian, Richard Howard, to accuse Hofmann of “duplicitous negotiating” and to consider “the possibility of legal action in response to Hofmann’s breach of contract. (His written, self-imposed deadline of March 8, extended verbally to March 17, had been violated by his March 6 sale of the document to the LDS Church)” (Statement of Richard Howard, published in *Sunstone Review*, August 1982, page 7). In an attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement, the Mormon Church turned over the blessing document to the Reorganized Church in exchange for a *Book of Commandments*.

By the time the Mormon Church decided to buy the document, it was too late to attempt to suppress it. Officials from the RLDS Church already knew of its contents and it is doubtful that they would have kept silent about the matter. According to the testimony of former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, Mark Hofmann came out very well on the deal. Schmidt claimed that Hofmann received material from the Archives which was valued “in the neighborhood of \$20,000.”

At the time the Blessing came to light, the Mormon scholar Van Hale noted an interesting parallel between the blessing document and the Anthon transcript—i.e., both items have a description of what they are about on the back side in handwriting which was identified as belonging to Joseph Smith himself. Mr. Hale felt this was not consistent with other documents he had examined in the Church Archives. He believed, however, that the documents were both genuine and that what he observed was only a remarkable coincidence. In retrospect, it is evident that Van Hale was probably onto something important. If the Anthon transcript did not have the handwritten statement on the back of it that Joseph Smith personally copied the characters with his “own hand from the plates of gold,” the Church would have had no way of knowing when it was prepared or whether it was an accurate copy of the characters. Joseph Smith’s personal endorsement is the thing that gives the transcript its great value. The same thing is true of the Joseph Smith III Blessing. Since the scribe, Thomas Bullock, lived until 1885, there would be no way to know when it was written if it were not for the words “Joseph Smith 3 blessing” in Joseph Smith’s handwriting on the back of the document. The purported Joseph Smith inscription, of course, convinced scholars that the document was actually written in 1844 before Smith’s death. These four words also made the document more official and, consequently, worth a great deal of money.

The idea that Joseph Smith wanted his son to be his successor and gave him a blessing to that effect was certainly nothing new. Donald Schmidt testified: “Most historians knew or know that there was supposedly a blessing given to Joseph the III by his father.” A person could have learned this from a number of books about Mormonism. For instance, in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 195, we wrote the following:

After Joseph Smith’s death it was expected that his son would someday lead the Church, although he was too young at the time. John D. Lee stated: “It was then understood among the Saints that *young Joseph was to succeed his father*, . . . Joseph, the Prophet, had bestowed that right upon him by ordination, *but he was too young at that time to fill the office* . . . Brigham Young arose and roared like a lion, imitating the style and voice of Joseph, the Prophet. Many of the brethren declared that they saw the mantle of Joseph fall upon him. I myself, at that time, imagined that I saw and heard a strong resemblance to the Prophet in him, and felt that he was the man to lead us until Joseph’s *legal successor should grow up to*

manhood, when he should surrender the Presidency to the man who held the birthright” (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, page 155).

On June 29, 1856, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency, stated: “At present the Prophet Joseph’s boys lay apparently in a state of slumber, everything seems to be perfectly calm with them, but by and bye God will wake them up and **they will roar like the thunders of Mount Sinai**” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, page 6).

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, made this statement on June 3, 1860: “What of Joseph Smith’s family? What of his boys? . . . They are in the hands of God, and *when they make their appearance before this people, full of his power, there are none but what will say—Amen! we are ready to receive you.*”

“The brethren testify that brother Brigham is brother Joseph’s legal successor. **You never heard me say so.** . . . I do not think anything about being Joseph’s successor. That is nothing that concerns me.” (*Ibid.*, vol. 8, page 69)

As it ended up the Mormon people *did not receive Joseph Smith’s sons as Brigham Young prophesied*. One of Joseph Smith’s sons [Joseph Smith III] became the president of the Reorganized L.D.S. Church—this is the church which actively fought against some of the doctrines of the Utah L.D.S. Church.

As to the actual composition of the text of the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Joseph Smith’s revelations found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* could have provided structural material. For instance, the wording in Joseph Smith’s revelation of January 19, 1841, resembles some of the wording found in the blessing given to his son. In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 124:57 and 59 we read: “. . . this **anointing** have I put **upon his head**, that his blessing shall also be put upon the head of his posterity after him. . . . let . . . **his seed after him** have place in that house, **from generation to generation**, . . .” In the blessing to Joseph Smith III we find this: “the **anointing** of the progenitor shall be **upon the head of my son**, and **his seed after him, from generation to generation.**”

One document which was undoubtedly used to write the blessing was mentioned as early as 1976 by the Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn. In *BYU Studies*, Winter 1976, page 225, Dr. Quinn wrote concerning a “patriarchal blessing given to Joseph Smith III by his grandfather, which stated in part: ‘You shall have power to carry out all that your Father left undone when you become of age.’” In footnote 104, on the same page, Dr. Quinn gives his source as:

“Blessing of Joseph Smith III, given by Joseph Smith, Sr., in Kirtland, written by Lucy Mack Smith from memory in 1845, Church Archives; *Saints’ Herald* . . . 65 (28 July 1909): 702.”

Fortunately, I obtained photocopies of this document and was able to compare it with the Hofmann document. The Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing says that Joseph Smith III “shall live long upon the Earth.” The Hofmann document promises, that “his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, . . .” The blessing written in 1845 informs the boy what he will do “after you are grown.” The purported 1844 blessing uses the words, “When he is grown, . . .” The Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing says to young Joseph: “You shall be a help to your brothers.” The Hofmann document claims that “he shall be a strength to his brethren, . . .” The 1845 document contains these words: “**And a comfort to your Mother.**” The 1844 blessing is almost identical: “. . . **and a comfort to his mother.**”

From what I have been able to learn, Mark Hofmann had a copy of the 1845 Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing at the time he “discovered” the Joseph Smith III Blessing document.

At the time Mr. Hofmann brought the Anthon transcript to light (almost a year before he found the Blessing document), I thought that it was such an incredible discovery that it was almost too good to be true. I felt, in fact, that if a stranger had brought the document to me with the story Hofmann told, I would be suspicious that it might not be genuine. I would not feel comfortable about publishing it as an authentic document unless I had some additional evidence. Since the Mormon Church leaders bought the Anthon transcript, I assumed that they would do everything in their power to determine if it was authentic. In the Church’s publication, *The Ensign*, July 1980, page 71, we were told that “Scientific paper and ink analysis will provide objective evidence of the document’s authenticity, . . .” Donald Schmidt’s testimony, however, seems to show that these tests were never performed. The Church leaders seem to have relied entirely on their own scholars to authenticate the document. Since I was a critic of the Mormon Church, I knew that I would never be allowed to see the original of the Anthon transcript or any document relating to it in the Church Archives. I was forced to rely upon the information printed by the Church or its scholars. It seemed to me that the Church would take a very hard look at this transcript because it elevated the statement of Charles Anthon, printed in an anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, over that of Joseph Smith. In the *History of the Church*, vol. 1, page

71, Smith plainly stated that the language on the gold plates ran “the same as all Hebrew writing in general; . . .” A footnote on the same page informs: “That is, from right to left.” The characters on the Hofmann document certainly do not run from “right to left” as “all Hebrew writing in general.” The writing, in fact, is in perpendicular columns,” just as Professor Anthon described it! I felt that if the Church leaders accepted the Hofmann transcript as authentic, they were forced into a position of believing that Joseph Smith later altered the way the characters appeared on the gold plates—i.e., changed them from horizontal lines to vertical columns. Moreover, this would also seem to indicate that Joseph Smith suppressed the circular object in the copy of the transcript which David Whitmer preserved. Under these circumstances, it did not seem logical that Church leaders would welcome the Hofmann transcript with open arms unless they had some very good reasons for believing it to be authentic. Unfortunately, it now appears that I should have been more careful and not allowed myself to be swayed by the opinions of others.

When the Joseph Smith III Blessing was discovered, Church leaders found themselves faced with a document that was much more embarrassing to the Church than the Anthon transcript. This blessing undermined the entire concept of an unbroken chain of succession in the presidency of the Church. Again, one would expect that Church leaders would have had every reason to order a critical examination of the document before commenting on its authenticity. It appears, however, that the matter was left entirely in the hands of their own scholars. These scholars, without exception, concluded that the document was authentic. D. Michael Quinn wrote:

All internal evidences concerning the manuscript blessing of Joseph Smith III, dated 17 January 1844, give conclusive support to its authenticity. Anyone at all familiar with the thousands of official manuscript documents of early Mormonism will immediately recognize that the document is written on paper contemporary with the 1840s, that the text of the blessing is in the extraordinarily distinctive handwriting of Joseph Smith’s personal clerk, Thomas Bullock, that the words on the back of the document (“Joseph Smith 3 blessing”) bear striking similarity to the handwriting of Joseph Smith, Jr., and that the document was folded and labeled in precisely the manner all one-page documents were filed by the church historian’s office in the 1844 period.

Moreover, the fact that the document is in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock makes impossible any suggestion that the blessing is an invention of

someone sympathetic with the later claims of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. (*The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, vol. 1, 1981, page 12)

After the Reorganized Church obtained the document, it was submitted to document experts. On June 1, 1981, RLDS Church Historian Richard P. Howard reported the following in the *Saints' Herald*: "The transcript of the January 17, 1844, blessing . . . has been authenticated by the work of two document examiners and a paper testing laboratory." Unfortunately, the tests made on the document did not delve into the one area which could have revealed the fraudulent nature of the document—i.e., the ink. The First Presidency of the Reorganized Church made this comment in a printed statement: "Ink tests were not conducted due to the general opinion among researchers that there is a lack of scientific standards and data applicable to nineteenth-century inks" (*Saints' Herald*, March 1986, page 40). These experts, of course, did not have access to the other Hofmann documents. It is doubtful, therefore, that they could have detected the forgery even if ink tests were made. One thing that should be noted about this matter is the fact that the RLDS Church was willing to seek outside help. RLDS Church leaders certainly did everything in their power to determine if the Blessing was authentic.

I was absolutely astounded when the discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing was announced. If Mark Hofmann had claimed that he found it in an old book (as in the case of the Anthon transcript) or in some similar manner, I certainly would have been suspicious. It would be almost impossible to believe that one person could randomly find two such documents in less than a year. As it was, however, it was reported that the Blessing document came from a descendant of Thomas Bullock and that Mr. Hofmann was only playing the role of dealer in the transaction. The Church's own newspaper reported that Hofmann claimed "he received it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock" (*Deseret News*, March 19, 1981). I naturally assumed that the Church leaders had checked Hofmann's story out and knew all about this descendant of Thomas Bullock. On the basis of this information, combined with the fact that the handwriting looked like that of Thomas Bullock, I had every reason to believe the document was authentic. Therefore, I published a pamphlet concerning it which was entitled, *Joseph Smith's Successor—An Important New Document Comes to Light*. Unfortunately, it now appears that Church officials did not do their homework. There was no serious attempt to check out the story that the

Blessing document actually came from a descendant of Bullock, and the Reorganized Church Historian who was interested in the source of the Blessing was discouraged from checking it out.

I first became concerned about the authenticity of the Joseph Smith III Blessing after I began to have misgivings about the Salamander letter. I wanted to talk to the descendant of Thomas Bullock who was supposed to have originally had the document. I felt that if I could trace the document back beyond Mark Hofmann to the Bullock family, I would be sure of its authenticity. I soon found, however, that it was virtually impossible to learn the name of the descendant of Thomas Bullock. I became very suspicious and on August 22, 1984, I published the following:

In his public statement about the Joseph Smith III Blessing document Hofmann has said he a[c]quired it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. An official from the Reorganized Church [RLDS Church Historian Richard P. Howard] told us that when he asked Hofmann the specific source of this document, he would not reveal it. The same man [Howard] asked us the question, "Would you want to buy a used car from someone who wouldn't tell you who the last owner was." At any rate, he was given a name by the Mormon Church historians, but never followed up on the matter because he was told it could prove embarrassing for the Mormon Church. The reason why it would prove embarrassing was not explained. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 8-9)

As I indicated earlier in this book, on August 23, 1984, Mark Hofmann came to our home and talked to Sandra for a long time about the questions I had raised in *The Money-Digging Letters*. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young's finances that would be embarrassing to the Church.

Strange as it may seem, testimony given by former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt at the preliminary hearing, confirms that Hofmann actually gave the Church a notarized statement with the name of a man he was supposed to have obtained the Blessing from:

A—. . . He furnished me with a notarized . . . statement.

Q—Does that statement state where or whom he received the Joseph Smith III Blessing from?

A—The statement was signed by an Allen Bullock.

Q—That being the person he obtained it from?

A—Yes.

Q—Were you able to receive any more information about an Allen Bullock?

A—Yes. In a conversation on [the] telephone with Mark Hofmann, he told me his full name was Allen Lee Bullock.

Q—Did he give you any information concerning whether or not this particular person was related to Thomas Bullock?

A—It was my understanding that he was.

Donald Schmidt even testified that Hofmann told him when “Allen Lee Bullock” was born:

Q—Did he also give you a date of birth for this Allen Lee Bullock?

A—Yes. As I recall the birth year is 1918 or in that general period of time.

The testimony of Donald Schmidt reveals that the Church failed to verify whether there was such an individual as “Allen Lee Bullock”:

Q—As a result of those investigations, what did [you] have in your . . . files verifying the provenance of this document?

A—We were unable to do so.

Q—Did you have any personal contact with this Allen Lee Bullock?

A—I did not.

Q—Did anyone in your department have contact with him.

A—No, sir.

Q—Did you provide the RLDS Church with a copy of this affidavit or the original of it.

A—Yes.

Mark Hofmann told one scholar that the descendant of Thomas Bullock from whom he obtained the Blessing document had a collection of 37 items. Hofmann also indicated that this individual lived in Coalville, Utah. Jeffery O. Johnson, who used to work for the Church Historical Department, also indicated that Hofmann claimed that he obtained the blessing in Coalville:

LDS historian Jeffery O. Johnson, . . . said that, since the document controversy following the bombings, he has questioned the source of the Joseph Smith III blessing.

“The Smith family logically would have had such an important blessing,” Johnson said. “It’s never been clear where it came from. Hofmann said it came from the Bullock family in Coalville. But why did the clerk keep it through all those generations? Thomas Bullock worked in the church history department. This is more like a historical document than something he would keep in his family.” (*Deseret News*, December 22, 1985)

Even with all the information that Hofmann gave concerning “Allen Lee Bullock” (his name, city and when he was born), no one seems to be able to locate him. One would think that if Mr. Bullock actually existed, his name would be found in genealogical records of the Bullock family or that someone in Coalville would have heard of him. To date, all efforts to confirm his existence have failed.

William Flynn examined the handwriting on the Joseph Smith III Blessing document. The *Deseret News*, May 8, 1986, reported:

It was difficult, Flynn testified, to determine if a blessing purportedly given by Joseph Smith to his son was authentic based on the precise “handprinting” style of church clerk Thomas Bullock. The writing resembles calligraphy more than fluent cursive writing. The printing would be easier to imitate than handwriting because a forger can stop and lift his pen without disturbing authentic appearance of letters, he said.

Mr. Flynn made his own copy of the Blessing in the style of Thomas Bullock with a turkey feather formed into a pen for writing. This copy was given to the court in an attempt to prove that Bullock’s handwriting could be duplicated. Flynn testified that although he could not condemn the document on the basis of the handwriting, he did note that the indentation of paragraphs did not match that found on authentic Bullock documents.

George Throckmorton testified that the document was not authentic because he found the “characteristic cracking effect” in the ink. William Flynn also observed this phenomenon: “This is another one of the documents where the surface of [the] ink is extensively cracked throughout the document.” Mr. Flynn commented that he also saw “one-directional ink running on that document.” When asked if he believed the Joseph Smith III Blessing was authentic, Flynn responded: “I don’t believe that’s genuine either.”

1825 SMITH LETTER

When I originally published *The Money-Digging Letters* on August 22, 1984, I included some information concerning an 1825 letter written by Joseph Smith:

The second letter has never been published. It is also reported to be in the possession of the LDS Church. Although its existence has been known by Mormon scholars for months, the Church has never publicly announced that it has possession of it. This is a letter written by Joseph Smith. We have been told that Dean Jessee confirmed its existence, and when he was asked why he did not publish it in his book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, he said that it would take an entire volume to explain it. In any case, the text of the document has leaked out. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 2-3)

I printed the entire text of the letter in *The Money-Digging Letters* and again in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, September 1984. The text of the letter, purportedly written by Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell on June 18, 1825, reads as follows:

Dear Sir

My Father has shown me your letter informing him and me of your Success in locating the mine as you Suppose but we are of the oppinion that since you cannot asertain any particulars you Should not dig more untill you first discover if any vulluables remain you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit and if such is discovered so also is the treasure so do this take a hasel stick one yard long being new Cut and cleave it Just in the middle and lay it asunder on the mine so that both inner parts of the stick may look one right against the other one inch distant and if there is treasure after a while you shall see them draw and Join together again of themselves let me know how it is Since you were here I have almost decided to accept your offer and if you can make it convenient to come this way I shall be ready to accompany you if nothing happens more than I know of I am very respectfully

Joseph Smith Jr.

(*Deseret News*, May 10, 1985)

Since I only had a typed copy of the letter at the time I printed *The Money-Digging Letters* in 1984, I realized that there must be some mistakes in it. At that time I made these comments concerning the 1825 letter:

The spelling and punctuation appear to be too good for Joseph Smith. We must conclude, therefore, that they have been corrected by the person who copied it. In any case, when the original is made available to scholars the spelling, words used and the grammar should be checked against other things known to have been written by Joseph Smith. This may present a few problems since we do not have anything else written by Smith at this early period of his life. His testimony in the 1826 trial shows that he received some of his schooling after the date appearing on the letter. One question that needs to be studied is if Joseph Smith was able to write so well at this early period.

As far as the historical setting of the letter is concerned, we see no obvious problems. Joseph Smith acknowledged in his history that “In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stowel. . . . He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards After I went to live with him, he took me, with the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine. . . . Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger” (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 17).

In his 1826 trial Smith admitted that “he had a certain stone which he occasionally looked at to determine where hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth were; that he professed to tell in this manner where gold mines were a distance under ground, and had looked for Mr. Stowel several times, and had informed him where he could find these treasures, and Mr. Stowel had been engaged in digging for them.” (See *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 32, for the complete text of the trial.)

As to Joseph Smith’s use of “a hazel stick” to find treasures, C. M. Stafford said that Smith “claimed he could tell where money was buried, with a witch hazel consisting of a forked stick of hazel. He held it one fork in each hand and claimed the upper end was attracted by the money” (*Naked Truths About Mormonism*, April 1888, page 1).

In the *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 1877, vol. 3, pages 810-819, we find an article on the use of the hazel stick. This article says that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “commenced their education with the use of the hazel-rod or forked stick, in searching for hidden treasures—though afterwards they used what they called enchanted stones.”

In a revelation given by Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, we read that Cowdery had the “gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things:

Canandaigua June 18th 1825

Dear Sir

My Father has shown me your letter informing him and one of your success in locating the mine as you suppose but we are of the opinion that since you cannot ascertain any particulars you should not dig more until you first discover if any workables remain you know the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit and if such is discovered so also is the treasure so do this take a hazel stick one yard long being new but well cleave it just in the middle and lay across on the mine so that both inner part of the stick may look one right against the other one inch distant and if there is treasure after a while you shall see them draw and join together again of themselves let me know how it is since you were here I have almost decided to accept your offer and if you can make it convenient to come this way I shall be ready to accompany you if nothing happens more than I know of I am very respectfully

Joseph Smith Jr

behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands, . . .” (*Book of Commandments*, Chapter 3:7). When this revelation was reprinted in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 8:6-7, the words “the gift of working with the rod” were changed to “the gift of Aaron.” The other mention of the “rod of nature” was also replaced with the words the “gift of Aaron.” The Mormon writer D. Michael Quinn presents some evidence that this same rod was brought to Salt Lake City and that Brigham Young used it to point out where the temple should be built (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Fall 1978, page 82).

Although we can see no historical problems with the letter to Stowell, we will withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it. We have learned, however, that it was discovered by Mark Hofmann. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, page 3)

Rick Grunder, who was an associate of Mark Hofmann, claimed that it was his understanding that the 1825 letter came from Charles Hamilton, the New York autograph dealer:

Rick Grunder is certain that Hofmann maintained to his associates that he, Hofmann, bought the letter from Charles Hamilton, not that Hofmann took it to him for authentication. Rick Grunder is also willing to admit that there is a possibility that Hofmann was not above telling a white lie to impress people. (*Maine Antique Digest*, April 1986, page 13-A)

Mr. Hamilton had a different story. As I have shown earlier, he said that Mr. Hofmann brought the letter to him to authenticate and that Hofmann told him he had bought it “from a philatelist for \$15” (Ibid., December 1985, page 26-A). Hamilton also claimed that Hofmann “took the letter to some Mormon elder [President Gordon B. Hinckley] and sold it to him for \$25,000, and the guy salted the letter away” (Ibid.). When Lyn Jacobs was asked how much the 1825 letter sold for, he replied: “I don’t remember exactly, but I believe it was just under twenty thousand” (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 16). At the Church’s press conference, President Hinckley refused to reveal how much he paid for the letter. At Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, the prosecution indicated that in the stipulated statement Gordon B. Hinckley had claimed that “Mark W. Hofmann was given a check from Church funds for \$15,000 for the letter.”

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, June 1985, page 19, we wrote the following:

Although the Church later claimed that it had possession of the letter, in a letter to the editor of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, May 6, 1985, the Mormon scholar George D. Smith said that it was his understanding that “Gordon B. Hinckley, second counsellor to President Spencer W. Kimball, purchased the letter in 1983 in his own name from collector Mark Hofmann . . .”

If President Hinckley bought the document in his own name, this must have been an attempt to give the Church deniability—i.e. the letter could be safely kept out of the hands of the public, and yet the Church could officially deny that it had it.

Gordon B. Hinckley’s statements at the Church’s press conference did not really clarify the matter:

RICK SHENKMAN: Second thing is, there has been speculation that President Hinckley, that you personally were buying documents from Mark Hofmann, either out of your own funds or using the church funds. Did you in your negotiations with Hofmann ever personally acquire documents from him and were any of the payments ever made in cash?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: The payments were made by check and they are fully authenticated, receipted for, on two occasions. Two items. Nothing like the figures you have been hearing today. Relatively small. What’s that?

REPORTER: Excuse me, can you tell us what items were paid for from Hofmann.

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: One was the Joseph Smith, Sr. [*sic*] letter to Josiah Stowell and the other, I do not remember.

REPORTER: Can you tell us the price of the letter?

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: Well, I don’t know that I’m going to tell you the price, but I’m going to tell you that it was nothing like the kind of figures that you’ve talked of this morning. Nothing like that. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

The idea that President Hinckley bought the letter in his own name seemed to receive support when the charges were filed against Mark Hofmann:

Your affiant has been informed by Gordon B. Hinckley of the following: That on or about January 11, 1983, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement to sell to Gordon B. Hinckley a document purported to be “The Josiah Stowell” letter dated June 18, 1825, in exchange for cash in excess of \$1,000.00. (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 5)

As I have already shown, Gordon B. Hinckley was never called upon to testify at the preliminary hearing. After the stipulation was reached, the prosecution asked to amend the wording concerning who purchased the 1825 letter:

. . . we would move to amend, nothing of substantive importance, but only as to the wording involved in the count. We . . . charged that originally as being . . . property of President Gordon B. Hinckley, when in fact as the evidence clearly indicated through the stipulation, that he was only acting as an agent of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And so I would move at this time, to strike out the word *President Gordon B. Hinckley* and by delineation change it to *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

However this may be, it is obvious that President Hinckley bought the letter so that it could be suppressed. Church leaders apparently felt that it would endanger the Church if its members were allowed to read a letter linking Joseph Smith to money-digging and magic. One would think that after we printed the contents of the letter in 1984, the Mormon Church would admit that it had the letter. Instead, however, the Church decided to “stonewall.” At about the time we printed the letter, I had a discussion with one of the top historians in the Mormon Church. He lamented that the Church had allowed itself to become involved in a cover-up situation with regard to the 1825 letter. On April 29, 1985, *Salt Lake Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy wrote:

A letter reportedly written by Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith describing money-digging pursuits and treasure guarded by a clever spirit seems to have disappeared from view.

If authentic, the letter could link Joseph Smith directly—by his own admission—to folk magic. . . .

Dr. Hill said he is convinced the letter is authentic or he wouldn't have cited the document . . . He said he doesn't know where the letter is located now.

“It's a sad business that the letter is buried,” said Dr. Hill. “With copies of the letter circulating, I can't see much benefit.”

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from “very reliable, first-hand sources” the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it.

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim.

“**The church doesn't have the letter,**” said Mr. Cahill. “It's not in the church archives or the First Presidency's vault.” . . . He said none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter.

Someone may be playing word games, said George Smith, president of Signature Books, a Mormon publishing house focussing on scholarly publications.

“The church clearly has possession of the letter,” he said. “If the exact question isn't asked, someone can wink and say the church doesn't have it.”

No, said Mr. Cahill, the church does not have possession of the letter. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

On May 6, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a letter George Smith wrote to the editor. In this letter he revealed that “some scholars have reported seeing it at the church offices, . . . A number of scholars have photocopies of the letter, . . .” When it became apparent to the Church leaders that the letter was going to be published in a major newspaper without their consent, they decided to back down and admit the existence of the letter. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Church, admitted in a letter to the editor that his earlier statement was incorrect:

. . . staff writer Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn't have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowel (or Stool) either in the church archives or in the First Presidency's vault.

My statement, however, was in error, for which I apologize and for which I alone am responsible. Some months ago I was asked the same question by another inquirer and made a thorough check before responding. Dawn Tracy called me twice as she prepared her article and I responded without checking again.

When my published statement came to his attention, President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency of the church informed me of my error. The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency's archives and perhaps some day may be the subject of the kind of critical study recently given to the purported letter of Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders were caught in a very embarrassing cover-up with regard to the letter and that they only published it because their own scholars were preparing to release it to the press. Since the Church or President Hinckley secretly bought this letter in 1983 and never mentioned its existence, it is obvious that Church leaders intended to suppress it. *Time* magazine for

May 20, 1985, reported that “The church offered no explanation for withholding news of the earliest extant document written by Smith, . . .” John Dart commented: “As it became clear during this week that photocopies of the letter would soon be circulated by sources outside the official church, Cahill announced that the church would discuss the contents and release a photocopy of the letter” (*Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1985). It seems obvious that if the letter had supported the Church in any way, it would have been published immediately in the *Deseret News* with a large headline announcing its discovery. When Mark Hofmann “discovered” Joseph Smith’s mother’s 1829 letter, Mormon officials proclaimed it to be “the earliest known dated document” relating to the Church, and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work. Since the letter to Stowell was supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself some four years earlier, we would expect it to receive even greater publicity. Instead, the Mormon leaders buried it and engaged in a cover-up.

In the *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1985, Dawn Tracy revealed that even top Mormon historians, including the Church Archivist, were kept in the dark concerning the purchase of the 1825 letter:

Don Schmidt, retired LDS Church archivist, said members of the First Presidency didn’t tell him or church historians about the 1825 letter. Nor did they ask him or anyone in his department to authenticate the letter.

The document, released by church officials in May, was purchased from Mr. Hofmann at least two years ago for a reported \$20,000. Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said Dean Jesse[e], an expert in writings of Joseph Smith, had authenticated the letter at the time church officials purchased it.

Dr. Jesse[e] said he did not see the letter until after church officials purchased it and publicly released its contents. He said the man who invited him in May to authenticate the letter was Mr. Cahill.

In April Mr. Cahill said the church did not possess the 1825 letter. A few days later he said he had been in error and apologized.

In the list of charges against Mark Hofmann we read that the letter was actually purchased by President Hinckley on “January 11, 1983.” Church officials, of course, never admitted that they had the letter until May 7, 1985. From this, it is obvious that the Mormon leaders were able to hide the fact that they had the letter for 28 months!

When the text of the letter was finally published in the *Deseret News* on May 10, 1985, it was announced that it was “The earliest known surviving document written by Joseph Smith . . .” The Church’s newspaper tried to defuse the explosive contents of the letter by saying:

The use of a device similar to the “dowsing rod” that is still used by some rural societies to find water is not unusual in context of the early 1800s, the First Presidency said. Folk magic was a common phenomenon, and Smith was reflecting the beliefs of the society in which he lived. (*Deseret News*, May 10, 1985)

On May 12, 1985, the following appeared in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*:

The 1825 Joseph Smith letter is almost certainly authentic, said Dean C. Jessee, associate professor of Church history and research historian at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at BYU. He is a leading expert on early historical documents relating to the Church.

“The document appears definitely to be in the hand of Joseph Smith,” he said. “As such, it is the earliest document we have that is written and signed by the prophet.”

Although I could find no historical problems in the 1825 letter, I had grave doubts with regard to its authenticity. These doubts, of course, stemmed from the research I had done on the Salamander letter. It seemed almost incredible that two letters would be found at almost the same time which linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and magic. In the June 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, Sandra and I printed the results of a study I had done on the 1825 letter. This study seemed to cast some doubt upon the authenticity of the letter:

According to Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Joseph Smith’s widow, Emma, claimed that at the time he wrote the Book of Mormon, he “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon . . .” (*Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 1984, page 26). The 1825 letter hardly seems to support this conclusion. Actually, the spelling in the letter is much better than we would have expected, and for some reason appears to be even better than in some letters written in the 1830s. This is surprising because the testimony Joseph Smith gave in the 1826 trial shows that he received some of his schooling after the date which appears on the letter (June 18, 1825). According to our research, Joseph Smith made only 2.8 spelling mistakes per hundred words in the 1825 letter. From Dean Jessee’s book,

The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, we learn that the first extant letter in the handwriting of Joseph Smith after the 1825 letter is dated March 3, 1831. Using Dean Jessee's typescript of the letter (pages 230-232), we find that Smith made 7.1 mistakes per hundred words. The next letter is dated June 6, 1832, and contains 4.9 mistakes per hundred words (see pages 238-239). The third letter is dated October 13, 1832. This letter has 6.2 mistakes per hundred words (see pages 252-254). We are unable to explain why the spelling would seem to get worse, but it could be that the 1825 letter is too short (only 180 words) to make a good comparison. . . .

One other thing about the 1825 letter which is somewhat different from Joseph Smith's other writings is that it does not seem to have any words or parts of words crossed out and no words or parts of words are inserted above the lines. In the three later letters and the Anthon Transcript we find numerous examples of this type of thing. There are, in fact, an average of four words or portions of words added or deleted per hundred words in the four documents. The 1825 letter, therefore, should have about seven of these mistakes to be consistent with the other documents. That the 1825 letter has no examples of this nature could be a cause for concern, and we feel that it should be carefully checked by experts who are qualified to make meaningful judgments with regard to spelling, grammar and style. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, June 1985, page 18)

Although document examiners did not comment about the "spelling, grammar and style" of the 1825 letter, at the preliminary hearing William Flynn noted that the handwriting appeared to be too good for Joseph Smith:

Q—Okay. Tell us about the handwriting itself. What did you notice?

A— . . . in this particular document, I don't believe that that is the writing of Joseph Smith on that Josiah Stowell letter.

Q—What do you base that on?

A—The examination of the Joseph Smith handwritings that I had available to me at that time that were records from both LDS and RLDS that were . . . provided as known samples of Joseph Smith.

Q—In what way can you tell us, if any, that this handwriting on this document differs from the other handwriting?

A— . . . one of the things I believe is wrong with this document is that Joseph Smith himself was not a good writer. Not only was he not a good writer,

but once I began to cut my own quills I realized how important it was to keep the quills sharp. Everybody in those days that wrote with a quill had to carry a pen knife. That's where pen knife gets its name from. You had to constantly sharpen the pen with your knife. Otherwise, it wouldn't write very well, and it did not appear in the writings of Joseph Smith that he was very adept at either cutting or maintaining . . . the point on his quill because the writing was terribly sloppy. Now you could always write worse than you could write, but you can never write better . . . An example would be, if all you can play on the piano is chopsticks, you can pound on the keys with your fists but you can't play Mozart. You know, if you have a certain degree of skill, you can write, you can always write worse but you can never write better. I believe that the writing on the Josiah Stowell letter exhibits a handwriting skill higher than Joseph Smith is capable of. . . .

When George Throckmorton was asked concerning the ink on the 1825 letter, he replied: "That also contained the same characteristic cracking." William Flynn testified as follows:

Q—And . . . were you able to determine whether or not any of these characteristics you've talked about appeared on that document?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell us what you observed.

A—The ink cracking phenomenon, that I'm talking about, is present in the Josiah Stowell letter as well as . . . there was some work that was done on the handwriting also on that document.

William Flynn went on to testify that he believed the 1825 letter was a forgery:

Q—Do you have an opinion as to whether or not this document—the Josiah Stowell letter of 1825—is an authentic document of that purported era?

A—I don't believe it's a genuine document of that era.

SALAMANDER LETTER

I have already presented a great deal of information concerning the Salamander letter. I have presented evidence of plagiarism, dissimilarities to other things Martin Harris was reported to have said and the fact that Lyn Jacobs changed his story as to how the letter was obtained. In Appendix A the reader will find

additional material concerning the Salamander letter. Information concerning the *Book of Common Prayer* and its relationship to the Salamander letter will also be found in that portion of the book. In this chapter I want to present material on the forensic evidence against the letter.

In my opinion the Salamander letter stands out as a real masterpiece among the forgeries Mark Hofmann sold. While it has defects as far as the text is concerned, the handwriting is beautifully executed and the physical appearance is so good that it could fool the best of experts. Even examination under ultraviolet light does not seem to reveal the flaws found in many of Hofmann's other documents.

Mr. Hofmann must have known that the letter would receive a great deal of scrutiny because of its controversial contents and that it would probably end up in the hands of document examiners. Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin wrote the following with regard to the Salamander letter:

Jacobs and Hofmann said they realized they possessed something which would make the controversy over the Joseph Smith III blessing pale by comparison. . . .

The implications of the letter were not lost on Hofmann and Jacobs. If Harris's description was taken literally, it challenged Joseph Smith's later official testimony that he had received the plates from an angel. The letter was a potential source of conflict and controversy in Mormon history. (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 54)

Back in 1982 Mark Hofmann spoke of what would happen if a controversial letter concerning Mormonism was discovered:

HOFMANN: . . . as far as a Joseph Smith letter, there are several laboratory tests that can be performed . . . If it's something spectacular or earth shattering, something with important doctrinal or historical implications, an all-out effort would likely be made. There is a very complicated science involved. For example, it is possible to determine the rate of oxidation of the ink in relation to the paper. This would show how long the two were in contact. And so forth. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16)

Since Mark Hofmann was acquainted with Kenneth Rendell, it is possible that he knew what kind of tests Rendell would subject the letter to. At the preliminary hearing Mr. Rendell testified that Hofmann asked him to authenticate the Salamander letter the very month he was supposed to have discovered it:

Q—Now, at the book fair in Boston on November, 1983, did Mr. Hofmann have occasion to approach you regarding authentication of a document?

A—Yes, he did.

Q—Would you please tell us, at that time, what occurred with respect to yourself and Mr. Hofmann and over what document?

Q—As I recall, Mark Hofmann told me that he had come across a letter that was quite important to Mormon history and he wanted to have it authenticated. . . . I don't believe he had the letter with him, but I was not particularly interested in doing it and I told him that at the time.

After Mark Hofmann sold the letter to Steven Christensen, Christensen "and Hofmann agreed to split the cost of \$6,000 to have the letter authenticated by Kenneth Rendell, a . . . rare book dealer recommended by Hofmann" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 55). Mr. Rendell examined the letter and sent it to other experts for their opinions. He was unable to find any evidence of forgery. At the preliminary hearing he testified that when he examined the letter he felt that it was authentic but that he could not actually prove that this was the case: "First of all, I did not determine authenticity. I mean, I dealt with the question of authenticity, but I did not determine it to be genuine." Rendell said that there was no material to compare the handwriting with although he was given a few Martin Harris signatures: ". . . I did compare the signature to four or five signatures, but frankly, I just couldn't rely on the signatures." As I have already shown, after Kenneth Rendell saw other forgeries Mark Hofmann had sold and found out that Lyn Jacobs had admitted that he fabricated a story as to how the Salamander letter was obtained, he began to have doubts with regard to its authenticity. At the preliminary hearing he stated: "If someone came to me with this letter in this context, I would not buy it. I could not offer it as probably being genuine." He also said that he "would not sell this letter."

Mr. Rendell claimed that he was unable to find a relationship between the Salamander letter and the other forgeries, but "If there is one it's in the ink . . . and I . . . don't do ink analysis . . . that's out of my area, and it now passes on to being a question of ink." Document examiners, of course, did find the common denominator between the Salamander letter and the other forgeries in the ink. William Flynn testified: "The . . . Martin Harris-W. W. Phelps letter also is one of the documents that has the extensive surface cracking of the ink that I have talked about several times now." The *Deseret News* for May 12, 1986, reported:

A Utah documents expert has given additional testimony that the controversial Martin Harris letter—better known as the “White Salamander Letter”—is a forgery. . . .

The Martin Harris letter Hofmann claimed to have discovered was different in two respects, Throckmorton said Monday. First, after it was folded, it was still possible to look inside and read the letter; and second, the sealing wax was in the extreme right-hand corner, not the center of the document.

The suspicious cut marks on the Harris letter also were discovered on several other documents Hofmann claimed to have discovered, . . .

Throckmorton said the suspicious cut marks were discovered only on documents Hofmann said he discovered and not on any of the other documents he examined. . . .

Throckmorton also testified about the unusual cracking effect exhibited in the ink on Hofmann’s documents. He said he personally examined 688 documents and that 21 showed microscopic ink cracking. Mark Hofmann was the source of all 21 documents. . . .

Throckmorton added he had never seen the ink cracking phenomenon before and was unaware of similar ink cracking on any legitimate historical documents. After examining hundreds of documents, the expert said, the phenomenon was apparent only in those documents Hofmann claimed to have discovered.

William Flynn testified that he did not believe that the writing on the document “is authentic writing from that time period.” Mr. Flynn also said: “The paper itself appears to be genuine period paper. The writing itself does not appear to be genuine writing of that time period.” Flynn also noted that “One edge of the document had been cut.” He said the cut “probably [was done] with the scissors. It’s an irregular cut.”

Kenneth Rendell said that when he originally examined the Salamander letter he noticed it was not folded in the way normal cover letters were folded, but he felt that this in itself would not cause him to reject the letter’s authenticity. He did state, however, that “There’s no logical reason that this letter is folded in the way that it is.”

Throckmorton and Flynn seem to feel that the peculiar way that the letter is folded and the evidence of cutting on the side may indicate that the paper used for the Salamander letter came from a larger sheet of old paper.

1873 LETTERS

At the preliminary hearing former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt testified:

A— . . . Mark Hofmann told me that he had two letters—one from Martin Harris and one from David Whitmer to Walter Conrad.

Q—And was there a provenance on . . . these particular documents?

A—I understood that they were obtained from someone who collected . . . the correspondence. . . .

While a number of Mark Hofmann’s documents were embarrassing to the Church, some of them were very faith promoting. The 1873 letters of Book of Mormon witnesses David Whitmer and Martin Harris certainly fit into this category. Speaking of the David Whitmer letter, Donald Schmidt testified: “Basically it reaffirms his testimony of the Book of Mormon.” A photograph of this letter is proudly displayed in the December 1983 issue of the Church’s publication, *The Ensign*, page 39. The letter, dated April 2, 1873, reads as follows:

Dear Sir

Anyone who is without prejudice can easily learn the Book of Mormon is the word of God if he will earnestly seek the truth. Upon investigation it is evident that the Bible and the Book of Mormon perfectly agree; all else is darkness.

People who believe in the Book of M. who do not understand this are spiritually blind.

In regards to my testimony in that Book as one of the three witnesses: I have always been true to what I have said. I know for myself that Angels minister to man in these last days. I have also seen the golden plates and the interpreters.

Yours Very Truly,
David Whitmer

Donald Schmidt testified that President Gordon B. Hinckley made the decision to purchase the Whitmer letter from Mark Hofmann:

Q—Was anyone else involved in the . . . negotiations for the purchase of this particular document?

A—Yes.

Q—Who else was involved?

A—Managing Director G. Homer Durham, as well as President Hinckley.

Q— . . . did they have an opportunity to examine this document during the course of these negotiations?

A—They saw it.

.....

Q—And did there come a time when you determined . . . to purchase this letter?

A—That's right.

.....

Q—And who made that decision?

A—President Hinckley.

In the charges against Hofmann we find that he sold the letter to the Church on “October 2, 1982.” Donald Schmidt testified that Mr. Hofmann received “a check for \$10,000” for this letter.

When William Flynn testified, he was asked if he found cracking in the ink. He replied: “Yes. Certain portions contained that.” Flynn went on to say: “I don't believe that was authentic either.”

The idea of having two of the Book of Mormon witnesses write to a man by the name of Conrad could have been suggested by another letter that came through Hofmann to the Church—i.e., “A letter, dated Aug. 5, 1844, from Susan Conrad Wilkinson to Mary Wooley, . . .” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). At the preliminary hearing, Brent Ashworth claimed that this was a genuine letter that he had given Mark Hofmann in a trade.

Because of the brevity of the David Whitmer letter to Walter Conrad and the lack of historical details, it is almost impossible to find any fault with it from a historical point of view. While I must admit that the wording in the letter sounds very much like that of David Whitmer, I have had doubts about its authenticity for a long time. These doubts arose because of the fact that it is obviously related to the 1873 letter of Martin Harris to Walter Conrad—a letter I was very suspicious of. The purported Martin Harris letter, dated January 13, 1873, reads as follows:

Brother Walter Conrad.

Dear Sir.—Your favor of the 7th inst. has been purused with much pleasure, and I am pleased to reply. it is truly gratifying to hear of the continual increase of influence manifested by the Book of Mormon and as you have entreated me to write my witness of said Book (and have graciously enclosed

a stamp for the same) I now solemnly state that as I was praying unto the Lord that I might behold the ancient record, lo there appeared to view a holy Angel, and before him a table, and upon the table the holy spectacles or Urim and Thummim, and other ancient relics of the Nephites, and lo, the Angel did take up the plates and turn them over so as we could plainly see the engravings thereon, and lo there came a voice from heaven saying “I am the Lord,” and that the plates were translated by God and not by men, and also that we should bear record of it to all the world, and thus the vision was taken from us.

And now dear brother, I would that you might look upon my countenance and know that I lie not, neither was I deceived, but it pleases the Lord that I must be content to write these few lines. Yours in the Gospel of Christ.

Martin Harris

The text of the 1873 letter is supposed to be in the handwriting of Martin Harris' son, although it appears to bear the signature of Martin Harris himself.

Mark Hofmann mentioned this letter when he was interviewed by *Sunstone Review* in 1982:

And I know of a super good letter written by Martin Harris. Someone had asked him to put in writing his testimony of the Book of Mormon. He gives details in that letter which are not found anywhere else concerning hearing the voice of the Lord and the things that he saw on the table and the angel appearing, etc. Very significant, at least in my mind. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18)

Mr. Hofmann sold this letter to the Mormon bishop Brent Ashworth. Ashworth, of course, liked to buy documents that were favorable to the Church. When he would announce these discoveries, the Church's newspaper would usually give him a great deal of publicity. Lyn Jacobs said that Ashworth was later offered the Salamander letter, but “he decided not to purchase it, although I don't exactly know why. It might have been because of the content, or perhaps the price we were asking” (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 15). Mr. Ashworth must have realized that possession of the Salamander letter would only bring him embarrassment. In any case, after Ashworth obtained the 1873 Harris letter, the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, October 9, 1982, carried a full-page write up about the letter. In this article we find the following:

Discovery of a 110-year-old letter containing the only known signed testimony of Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses, was announced Oct. 5 by Brent F. Ashworth, . . .

In a press conference at the Church Historical Department in the Church Office Building, Ashworth said the letter reaffirms Harris' testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon. . . .

In his declining years in Utah, Harris testified often of the angelic visitation. Yet, until the present discovery, no signed copy of his testimony was known to historians. Signed letters containing the testimonies of the other two witnesses are in the possession of the Church. . . .

Ashworth said he brought the letter to the attention of the Church because he was impressed by Elder Boyd K. Packer's conference address Oct. 3. Elder Packer announced that the subtitle, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," would be added to the Book of Mormon.

"I feel like the letter supported that new title; that this is also a testament of Christ," Ashworth said. "I felt like the Church would use the letter in the way the writer intended."

In another article on the same page, G. Homer Durham, managing director of the Church Historical Department, commented:

The Martin Harris letter . . . written to Walter Conrad in response to the latter's inquiry, is new and additional documentary support for the account recorded by the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . It also sustains, by his own signature, the testimony of the Three Witnesses. Because it is a signed statement, it represents one of the most significant documents regarding [the] coming forth of the "Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ." In its own way it constitutes Martin Harris' "personal" witness.

I first began publicly criticizing the 1873 Martin Harris letter in 1984 in *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 19 of that booklet, I stated that the signature appeared too good for a man "who was just four months from his ninetieth birthday." In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1985, I wrote the following:

It is disturbing to note that the Salamander letter, which seems to remove all religious elements out of the Book of Mormon story, comes right on the heels of the discovery of another letter reported to have been written by Martin Harris in 1873. . . . It is a strong affirmation of the testimony concerning the angel appearing to show the gold plates: . . .

The Salamander letter almost appears to be a rebuttal to the powerful testimony of the 1873 letter. When it comes to Harris' view of the gold plates it merely states: ". . . Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon. . . ."

I have made a comparison of the religious content of the two letters and found the following: the 1873 letter uses the word *Lord* three times. The words *Angel* and *holy* appear twice, and the words *God*, *Christ*, *heaven*, *vision*, *Gospel* and *praying* all appear once. In the Salamander letter all of these words are missing, and since it is almost three times as long as the 1873 letter the discrepancy becomes even more important.

In *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 19, I wrote: "The style of the Salamander letter seems to differ from that of the 1873 letter. Although Harris was in his late forties at the time the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written, it appears to have been penned by someone who did not have a very good education. The 1873 letter, on the other hand, is very well written. One very obvious difference is that it uses the word *and* three times as often as the Salamander letter." After sorting the words in the two letters alphabetically on our computer, I found that the figure should be 2.6 instead of 3. The Salamander letter uses *and* 2.9 times per hundred words, whereas it appears 7.5 times per hundred words in the 1873 letter. I also made this observation in *The Money-Digging Letters*: "The Salamander letter is composed mostly of short sentences (an average of 12 words in each sentence), whereas the 1873 letter has an average of 73 words per sentence." If the original punctuation of the 1873 letter is not followed, it is possible to divide it into more sentences. While this would reduce the number of words per sentence, the new sentences would all have to start with the word *and*. The other letters attributed to Harris which I have examined do not seem to use the word *and* to start sentences. It is also interesting to note that the sentences in these letters are about twice as long as those in the Salamander letter. I really do not profess to know how significant the length of sentences and the number of times *and* is used are for determining authorship. It would seem that both could be affected by the contents of the letter. I do feel, however, that the two letters bear little resemblance to each other. The differences have led me to question whether both could be genuine. Although the 1873 letter seems to fit more comfortably with the picture I have obtained of Martin Harris from many other sources, I must admit that I am not absolutely convinced that it is authentic.

If I accept the statement that Martin Harris was a man “of small literary acquirements” when he was over forty years of age, then I find it very hard to believe that he would have improved his style to the point where he could have written the 1873 letter. One explanation for this, however, might be that Martin Harris’ son imposed his own style into the letter. For that matter, he could have composed the entire letter, and as long as his father signed it, it would be considered the work of Martin Harris, Sen. The most important thing, then, is the signature. . . .

I would expect Harris’ signature to be somewhat shaky by the time he was supposed to have signed the 1873 letter. I have been told by a scholar who has seen the original that it does show evidence of an unsteady hand. If this is the case, the photograph published in *The Ensign* does not seem to reveal it. In any case, after I published *The Money-Digging Letters*, I received a photocopy of an application for a U. S. Military pension which Martin Harris signed on April 21, 1871. Since it was signed 21 months before the 1873 letter was supposed to have been written, I would expect it to be as good as or even better than the one appearing on the letter. Instead, it seems to bear evidence of deterioration. . . .

While the 1871 signature does raise some questions about the signature on the 1873 letter, caution must be used. It could be that when Martin Harris signed the document in 1871 he was having an exceptionally bad day. Although I am suspicious of the signature on the 1873 letter, I cannot say for certain that it did not come from Martin Harris’ pen. It is interesting to note, however, that in the letter dated January 1871, which was published in the *Millennial Star*, Harris commented: “I reply by a borrowed hand, as my **sight has failed** me too much to write myself.” If Harris was having such a severe problem when he was 87, I would think that it would even be worse by the time he was 89. This could not only affect the appearance of the signature but also its orientation to the writing which had already been dictated. A close examination of the photograph in *The Ensign* shows that the signature is placed perfectly between the lines on the paper and that it is parallel to the other writing.

I do not know whether any physical tests have been made on this letter. The Church’s press release, dated October 5, 1982, only told that, “Preliminary studies, comparing the handwritings in the letter with known examples of handwritings of both Martin Harris and his son, substantiate the letter’s authenticity.”

As to the pedigree of the letter, the Church’s press release said that Brent F. Ashworth “declined to identify the collectors from whom” he obtained it.

We have since learned that it passed through the hands of Mark Hofmann . . . Martin Harris’ 1873 letter was addressed to Walter Conrad. Mr. Ashworth was apparently unsuccessful in tracing the letter back to the Conrad family. In the press release, we read as follows: “He said the Martin Harris letter was previously owned by at least three collectors. The first of these, he said, kept the letter in a collection of postmarked covers from early Utah and apparently didn’t realize its import.”

It would appear, then, that the first person known to have had the letter was a collector. This, of course, provides no real evidence for the document’s authenticity. (It could be of some value, of course, if the collector furnished evidence that it was in his collection for a number of years.) In my opinion, the fact that a document has been in the hands of a collector does not really give it a pedigree. A forged document could be funneled through an unsuspecting collector to help convince someone else of its authenticity. The important thing, then, is where the document was **before** it arrived in the hands of the collector. Although many authentic documents have no pedigree, I would still feel better about the 1873 letter if it could be traced back beyond a collector.

The 1873 letter is worth a great deal of money because it fills a real vacuum for believers in the Book of Mormon. While Harris often claimed that an angel showed him the gold plates of the Book of Mormon . . . he seems to have had little to say about the details of the vision. According to a number of sources, when Harris was questioned about the matter, he said he “never saw the plates with his natural eyes only in vision . . .” (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 96-C; *Gleanings By The Way*, pages 256-57). In the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 142, Mormon historian B. H. Roberts concluded that “So far as any direct personal statement is concerned, Martin Harris is silent as to the manner in which the plates were shown to him; . . .”

The following appeared in the Church’s press release which announced the discovery of the 1873 letter: “Through the years several interviews with Martin Harris have been published, reaffirming his testimony . . . But this letter is the first statement to be discovered since then that carries his signature.

Mormon officials were elated with this remarkable discovery. . . . The rejoicing was short-lived, however. Scarcely a year had elapsed when rumors began to surface that another letter by Martin Harris had been discovered. Instead of confirming the divine origin of the Book of Mormon, the Salamander letter turned out to provide devastating evidence against it by linking it to money-digging and the occult.

At any rate, the 1873 letter contains some interesting parallels with two documents printed in the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 142-43. The first is a statement by Edward Stevenson in which he claimed that Martin Harris gave important details concerning the vision of the gold plates at his (Stevenson's) home. B. H. Roberts' source for Stevenson's statement is listed as *Millennial Star*, vol. 48, page 367-389. When this reference was checked, it became evident that it was only a reminiscence. It was not published until June 21, 1886—eleven years after Martin Harris' death. Furthermore, Stevenson seemed to have been relying at least to some extent on James T. Wood's memory: ". . . Brother James T. Woods, who is now present while I am writing this article, reminds me that himself and G. D. Keaton were present on that occasion, and asked him [Harris] to explain the manner in which the plates containing the characters of the Book of Mormon were exhibited to the witnesses." Since a number of similar statements by Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer had already been published, it is possible that some of Whitmer's ideas were unconsciously attributed to Harris. However this may be, Stevenson said that Harris related that "the **angel** stood on the opposite side of the table . . ." The 1873 letter told of "a holy Angel, and before him a **table**, . . ." Stevenson's account said . . . "**the angel . . . took the plates** in his hand **and turned them over**." The Harris letter also claimed that "the **Angel did take up the plates and turn them over . . .**" Both accounts use the words, "to all the world." Stevenson went on to say that Harris claimed "he **lied not**." In the 1873 letter Harris said that "**I lie not . . .**"

While there are a number of interesting parallels between the two accounts, there is one significant difference. Stevenson claimed that Harris spoke of the "angel" who declared that the Book of Mormon was translated correctly, whereas the 1873 letter said it was "the Lord." This is interesting because the other document used by Roberts in the *Comprehensive History*, page 143, agrees with the 1873 letter in this matter. This is a report of an interview with David Whitmer which appears on the same page Stevenson's account ends. In this report we find Whitmer (who seems to be borrowing heavily from the printed "Testimony of the Three Witnesses") quoted as saying: ". . . I heard the **voice of the Lord**. . . declaring **that the records of the plates . . . were translated** by the gift and power of **God**." In the letter attributed to Harris, we read that, "there came a **voice . . . saying 'I am the lord,' and that the plates were translated by God. . .**"

These parallels, of course, do not prove that the 1873 letter was created from the accounts used by B. H. Roberts. They only show that there was a source available which was printed after Harris' death which someone could have used to write the letter. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1985, pages 9-12)

In his book, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, pages 94 and 99, Charles Hamilton related that the notorious forger Joseph Cosey made the mistake of not taking into consideration the deterioration of handwriting as a person gets older:

After my visitor's first flush of embarrassment subsided, he pressed me for more details, saying: "But the signature of Franklin perfectly matches a facsimile with which I compared it."

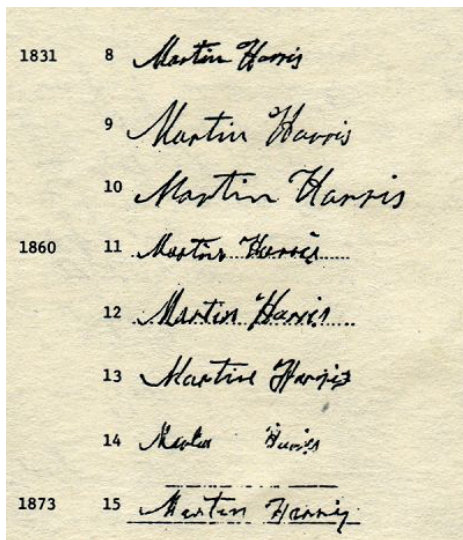
"It is a superb counterfeit," I said.

"Then how can you tell it's not genuine?"

"Notice the date of your document—1787—only three years before Franklin's death. Yet the signature is firm and bold, unlike the writing of an old man. Cosey never grasped the fact that like most handwriting, Franklin's disintegrated toward the end of his life. It became shakier, almost tremulous. The tremor is especially obvious in his handwritten documents, but even the huge signature which the aging statesman affixed to land grants and pay warrants reveals a slight quaver, easily visible without a magnifying glass.

"Yet, whether Cosey writes an early or late Franklin document, he never varies the handwriting. His scribbling Franklin is timeless, an eternal youth whose hand never trembled and whose handsome script remained firm and bold to the very end."

I feel that the person who created the 1873 Martin Harris letter has made the same mistake as Joseph Cosey—i.e., failed to take into consideration the deterioration of Martin Harris' handwriting as he got older. Dean Jessee has prepared a study which shows 15 signatures of Martin Harris. While at least three come from alleged forgeries sold by Mark Hofmann, some of them are undoubtedly authentic. Below is a photograph of the signatures from *Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 425:



Although Mr. Jessee did not make his comparison for that purpose, it certainly seems to show that the purported 1873 signature, which appears on the letter to William Conrad, is very questionable. On page 406 of the same article Dean Jessee says that after “1860” Martin Harris’ “writing shows deterioration possibly due to illness or age.” The reader will notice that signature number 15, from the Hofmann document, compares very well with number 8—a signature which was undoubtedly penned by Martin Harris 42 years earlier. This signature comes from an 1831 “Bishop’s license” signed by 20 early Mormons. This document has been preserved in the Church Historical Department. The signature on the 1873 letter is certainly better than the last signatures on Jessee’s list (see especially signature number 14).

As I have indicated earlier, the letter of David Whitmer to William Conrad has been shown to have cracked ink, indicating that the ink was artificially aged. Unfortunately, the Martin Harris letter to Conrad cannot be tested in the same way as the David Whitmer letter. According to the Church’s press release, page 3, it “was written in indelible pencil on lined paper.” There is, therefore, no way to determine when it was actually written. The forger would probably be smart enough not to use a modern pencil that might contain some 20th century ingredients.

I believe that it is possible that the real purpose for the 1873 Harris letter was to prepare the way for the Salamander letter. Since it was favorable to the Church and contained nothing really controversial, both Church leaders and scholars accepted it as a genuine document. Mr. Hofmann probably felt that once the letter was accepted, the signature would be used to help validate the Salamander letter. Moreover, if there was a plan to produce the missing 116 pages of the Book of Mormon in the handwriting of Martin

Harris, the Harris to Conrad letter would be one of the preliminary steps. In this scenario, the forger would first “seed the mine” with bogus Martin Harris signatures (as in the case of the forged Hitler diaries). These signatures would be used in authenticating the Salamander letter—a letter which not only contains a signature but also over 600 handwritten words. The handwritten words, in turn, would be used to validate the 116-page manuscript.

Although Mark Hofmann was not charged by the County Attorney’s Office with “theft by deception” with regard to the 1873 Martin Harris letter, Brent Ashworth has listed it as a forgery in the complaint for his lawsuit against Hofmann. Mr. Ashworth revealed that he paid \$27,000 for this letter. Since it is unlikely that Ashworth can recover much, if anything, from Mark Hofmann, it would be very foolish for him to list this letter as a forgery unless he had very good reason to doubt its authenticity. By charging Hofmann with selling him a forged document, Mr. Ashworth stands to lose his entire investment in the Martin Harris letter.

GRANDIN CONTRACT

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, pages 2 and 5, we read that Mr. Hofmann was charged with “a Second Degree Felony” with regard to the sale of the Grandin Contract:

Your affiant has been informed by Donald Schmidt of the following: That on or about March 3, 1983, Mark W. Hofmann completed an agreement to sale [*sic*] to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a document purported to be the “E. B. Grandin Contract,” in exchange for cash in excess of \$1,000.00.

This document is actually a contract between Joseph Smith, Martin Harris and the publisher Egbert B. Grandin concerning the printing of the Book of Mormon. The document is dated August 17, 1829, and contains another Martin Harris signature. It was printed in the Church’s publication, *The Ensign*, October 1982, pages 72-73. When I wrote *The Money-Digging Letters* in 1984, I felt that this document contained a genuine Martin Harris signature which did not come through the hands of Mark Hofmann. As it turns out, however, this is another document that Hofmann sold to the Church for a large amount of money. At the preliminary hearing former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt was asked how much the Church paid for the document. He replied: “I recall it [was] \$25,000.” Donald Schmidt also revealed that President Gordon B. Hinckley was involved in the purchase of the Grandin contract:

Q—Did President Hinckley become involved in these negotiations?

A—Yes.

Q—At what point?

A—Very early.

Q— . . . did he examine the document himself?

A—I'm sure he did.

When handwriting expert Kenneth Rendell examined this document, he noted that there was “an awful lot of shakiness in the Joseph Smith signature—an unusual amount of shakiness.”

William Flynn testified that this is another Hofmann document in which the ink was artificially aged:

Q—Could you tell us what, if anything, you observed about the characteristics of the ink on that document?

A—Yes. This, the entire document, the ink was extensively cracked throughout the writings of this document.

Q—Under the ultraviolet, did it _____ showing anything?

A—Yes. This was one of the documents that had one-directional running under ultraviolet. Again, some constituent part of this ink bled in one direction only on this paper as if it had been wetted down with a material that dissolved a portion of the ink out and ran it down.

Mr. Flynn concluded by saying: “I do not believe it’s a genuine document from that time period.”

LUCY SMITH LETTER

According to the charges filed against Mark Hofmann, “on or about July 29, 1982, Mark Hofmann completed an agreement to sell to Brent Ashworth a document purported to be ‘The Lucy Mack Smith’ letter, dated January 23, 1829, in exchange for property valued at over \$1,000.00.”

In his interview in *Sunstone*, Lyn Jacobs said that Mr. Hofmann acquired the Lucy Smith letter through the cover trading business. This, of course, would mean that he would have paid very little money for the letter. When Brent Ashworth was asked how much Hofmann originally paid for the letter, he replied: “. . . I believe . . . \$25 was the figure.” Alvin Rust, however, testified that Hofmann borrowed “\$15,000” from him “for the purchase of the ‘Lucy Mack Smith letter’” (*Deseret News*, April 22, 1986). In any case, Hofmann later sold the letter to Mr. Ashworth for items Ashworth

valued “at around \$33,000.” The *Deseret News* for May 7, 1986, reported:

Ashworth said he was initially impressed with Hofmann. Hofmann arranged the purchase of a letter purportedly written by Lucy Mack Smith, the mother of Joseph Smith Jr., founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In July 1982, Ashworth exchanged six documents valued at \$33,000—including letters written by Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson and John Brown—for the Smith letter.

Ashworth exuded enthusiasm for document collecting as he spoke on the witness stand of his great finds, and said he was thrilled to obtain the letter.

“I didn’t know at the time that Lucy Mack Smith could write. This letter is extremely rare,” Ashworth testified.

Brent Ashworth testified that he wanted to know where Hofmann had obtained the letter, but he was unable to obtain an answer:

. . . after my purchase of the Lucy Mack Smith letter, I guess my curiosity was getting to me on where exactly the letter came from, and I continued to pursue that, although quite unsuccessfully as to the dealer and so on . . .

At any rate, the Mormon leaders rejoiced over the letter and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith’s work. The Church’s publication, *The Ensign*, October 1982, pages 70-72, printed the following:

A previously unknown 1829 letter by Lucy Mack Smith to her sister-in-law in which the mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., discusses her son’s work has been made available to the Church Historical Department.

The letter, dated 23 January 1829, is “the first [earliest] known dated document relating to the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” said Heber C. Wolsey, managing director of the Public Communications Department of the Church, in a news conference held Monday, August 23, in Church Historical Department offices. . . .

The letter was acquired by Brent F. Ashworth, a Provo, Utah, member of the Church from a private collector who obtained it from another collector in the eastern United States. . . .

After closely examining a copy of the letter, Dean Jessee, senior research historian of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History at Brigham Young University, said, “The letter appears to be Lucy Mack Smith’s handwriting . . .”

According to Brother Jessee, the letter is significant to the Church for several reasons. “It is probably the earliest signed and dated letter dealing with events surrounding the Restoration, and it is also probably the oldest known dated document of any type—excluding newspapers—prior to the organization of the Church that deals with the restoration of the Church.” In 1980 the Church received a copy of a transcript of characters thought to have been taken from the gold plates . . . but the document is undated. . . .

The letter, said Brother Jessee, “shows that right at the beginning, when the curtain first goes up in 1829, the Smiths are talking about and saying the same things that they say in their histories later on, in Joseph’s history beginning in 1838 and in Lucy’s in 1845.”

On August 24, 1982, *Seventh East Press* printed the following:

The letter mentions Joseph Smith’s being led to the location of the gold Book of Mormon plates by an angel. “This pretty much knocks in the head the old evolution theory of Joseph’s doctrinal development,” Jessee said, alluding to the concept that Joseph Smith invented the stories of the First Vision, origin of the Book of Mormon, etc., later in his life in order to vindicate his prophetic calling. “Here’s Lucy, repeating the Moroni story in 1829, when the curtain of Church history was just going up. Obviously Joseph didn’t think all this up later on.”

Actually, a careful examination of the letter reveals that it says absolutely nothing about the First Vision, nor does it refer to “being led to the location of the gold Book of Mormon plates by an angel.” It only says that “the Lord . . . made his paths known to Joseph in dreams and it pleased God to show him where he could dig to obtain an ancient record engraven upon plates made of pure gold . . .” While the letter is not as faith promoting as some Mormon apologists would have us believe, it does at least have God directing Joseph Smith to the gold plates. The Salamander letter, on the other hand, has Smith communicating with an “old spirit” and entirely omits all mention of God.

To those of us who believe in the theory that Hofmann was planning to bring forth the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, the Lucy Smith letter is extremely important. It is the only document accepted by the Church which seems to reveal anything concerning the contents of these missing pages. For instance, the printed Book of Mormon says that Lehi and his family left Jerusalem with a man named Ishmael and his family. Lucy Smith’s letter adds that

Ishmael was the brother of Lehi’s wife. This would mean, of course, that Nephi and his brothers married their cousins when they “took the daughters of Ishmael to wife” (1 Nephi 16:7). The Church publication, *The Ensign*, page 70, commented about this matter:

Of special interest to members of the Church are several details in the letter apparently from the lost 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. . . . Lucy Mack Smith’s understanding, described in this letter of January 1829, presumably came either from what she had read or heard from her son or from the material contained in the 116 lost manuscript pages. Sister Smith describes a synopsis of the manuscript’s contents and the negative response by the people to the Smiths because of their beliefs.

Mark Hofmann’s friend, Lyn Jacobs, also mentioned the matter: “. . . the Lucy Mack Smith letter was important because we have never had any verifiable notion of the contents of the 116 lost manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. The reference to the contents of the 116 pages made the letter incredibly important to many people” (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 16). The obvious implications of this matter seem rather clear—the Lucy Smith letter could be used to help validate the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon if they ever came forth. It seems like more than just coincidence that Mark Hofmann, who has openly stated that he has been searching for these lost pages, would find a letter which seems to reveal some of their contents.

The Lucy Smith letter may have some relationship with another letter written by Mrs. Smith which has been preserved by the Church. It was published many years ago in *Scrap Book of Mormon Literature*, vol. 1, by Ben E. Rich. On pages 543-545, we find a copy of a letter written by Lucy Smith to her brother, Solomon Mack on January 6, 1831. We find the following in that letter:

God . . . sent out a prophet named Lehi and commanded him to declare unto the people that unless they repented of their sins that the city would be destroyed, but they would not hear him, . . . the Lord commanded him to take his family, together with another man named Ishmael, and his family, and flee out of the city, and they were led by the hand of the Lord on to this continent . . . and the more wicked part of them being led by one of the sons of Lehi named Laman, arose up in rebellion against their brethren, and would not keep the commandments of God, therefore He sent a curse upon them, and caused a dark skin to come over them, . . .

Manchester January 23^d 1829

Dear Sister

It is my pleasure to inform you of a great work which the Lord has wrought in our family, for he has made his path known to Joseph in dreams and it pleased God to show him where he could dig to obtain an ancient record engraven upon plates made of pure gold and this he is able to translate. Those forefathers of God in all ages here had to suffer persecutions for his name's sake and so it is with us there being such a determined effort in this place to thwart the translation that Joseph was obliged to remove his wife to Pennsylvania, in nevertheless on account of negligence the translation of the first part of the record was carried off by some unknown person but God is faithful and the work is now about to proceed; yesterday Mr. Smith and myself returned from a visit to Pennsylvania which occupied us about the last 3 months in singing praises to our Gods and it is natural at times of rejoicing that we should think on the welfare of our kin; my object in rehearsing these events is to soften your heart that you may seek for a witness of the truths of this work; for the Lord himself has said that they that seek shall find and to them that knock it shall be opened. I now come to say some thing of the record it was placed in the earth many hundred years ago by the forefathers of our Indians, they descended from a prophet of the Lord whose name was Lehi he fled from Jerusalem with his family and also his wife's brother's family a few days before Belshazzar besieged the City and layed it in ashes, for although Lehi prophesied unto the Jews in the name of the Lord that they must repent of their sins yet they would not, neither would they believe the wonders which were shown to him in dreams concerning Christ that he should be Crucified, therefore God commanded the people of Lehi to get out of Jerusalem and flee into the wilderness and at length they were directed to enter upon the Land of America; now a part of the people of Lehi whose head was named Laman a son of Lehi became savage and they sought to exterminate their more righteous brethren who were called the people of Nephi therefore

The reader will notice that there are a number of parallels in the letter sold by Mark Hofmann:

... they descended from a prophet of the Lord whose name was Lehi he fled from Jerusalem with his family and also his wife's brother's family a few days before Nebuchadnezzar besieged the City . . . Lehi prophesied unto the Jews . . . that they must repent of their sins yet they would not, . . . God commanded the people of Lehi to get out of Jerusalem and flee into the wilderness and at length they were directed to enter upon the Land of America: now a part of the people of Lehi whose head was named Laman a son of Lehi became savage and they sought to exterminate their more virtuous brethren who were called the people of Nephi therefore God cast off the people of Laman and he cursed them with a dark skin . . .

Back in 1982 Dean Jessee noticed some similarities between the two letters and commented:

"It is very similar to another letter that is dated 1831, when she wrote to her brother Solomon. The handwriting on the two documents is the same." (*The Ensign*, October 1982, page 70)

While the parallels could be used as evidence to show that Lucy Smith wrote both letters, under the circumstances, it seems more likely that Mark Hofmann or one of his friends obtained a copy of the 1831 letter and that it provided structural material for the 1829 letter.

It is interesting to note that although Dean Jessee believed the Lucy Mack Smith letter was authentic, when he published it he did note that the letter showed no evidence of handling and that it was addressed to an address that had been incorrect for nearly six years:

... there is a question whether Mary ever received the letter from Lucy: In the first place, the letter was part of a large collection of letters valued for their postmarks and may have come from a dead letter file. Furthermore, although separated at the fold, the letter shows no evidence of handling or wear. And finally, the letter is addressed to Royalton, Vermont, whereas the Pierces had moved to Lebanon, New Hampshire, in 1823, nearly six years prior to the postmark date of Lucy's letter. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Fall 1982, page 455, footnote 4)

Document expert George Throckmorton examined the document, and at the preliminary hearing he reported: "There was cracking on that letter, on the ink." William Flynn also testified concerning the "extensive ink cracking again throughout this document . . . There

was also that ink running . . . visible under ultraviolet on the last page of the document." Mr. Flynn concluded: "I don't believe it's genuine."

SPALDING DOCUMENT AND 116 MISSING PAGES

In Chapter 3 I discussed a document which Mark Hofmann represented as being part of the McLellin collection. Hugh Pinnock, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, testified that Hofmann showed him this document and allowed him to make a photocopy. It "was a deed or some legal document . . . between Asa and Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon and some other parties." As I pointed out, the appearance of the names Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon on the same document would prove they knew each other and go a long way toward confirming the story that Rigdon stole a manuscript of a novel written by Spalding and that this manuscript was later transformed into the Book of Mormon. I indicated also that Hofmann's connection with such a document "supports the accusation that he was engaged in 'an attempted blackmail of the Mormon Church itself.'"

Experts who have examined the Spalding-Rigdon document agree that it is an authentic document written in 1722. The date, however, has been altered to 1822 and the signatures of Spalding and Rigdon have been added. Charles Hamilton pointed out:

A favorite trick of fakers is to add the signature of a famous person to an otherwise genuine document of little or no value. The forged signatures of Gwinnett and Lynch are often found on authentic old documents, usually as witnesses on a deed. (*Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 267)

Kenneth Rendell, who only made a brief examination of the Spalding-Rigdon document, testified that the 8 in the date "1822" appeared to be in a "different ink" and "also the ink is run, and to me it seems to be clearly written over the 7. There was a perfectly genuine 1722 document where the date was changed to make it 1822." Mr. Rendell also noted that the Sidney Rigdon signature "could have been added in." William Flynn, who did a more detailed examination of the document, confirmed Kenneth Rendell's observations:

Q—And as a result of your examination, were you able to make any findings concerning that document?

A—Yes.

Q—What are those findings?

A—The Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon signatures that appear on that document were written with a different ink than the other text of the document and the other signatures that appear on the document.

Q—Were you able to determine if they were the same inks themselves?

A—Yes. It appears that the Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon inks are the same inks within themselves but different than the remainder of the ink on . . . that document.

Q—Were you able to notice any other alterations or changes on that document?

A—Yes.

Q—What was that?

A—The date, anno Domini 1822, had been altered.

Q—Can you tell us from what to what?

A—It had been altered from anno Domini 1722 to 1822.

Q—Now, . . . among the signatures that you have mentioned, too, are several signatures. Let's see. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Is that correct?

A—Yes.

Q—And out of those eight signatures you mentioned, there are two that appear to be of a different ink.

A—Yes.

Q—And that is Spalding and Sidney Rigdon?

A—That's correct.

In his testimony George Throckmorton brought out the fact that the ink used on the alteration of the date and the two signatures was cracked (indicating, of course, that it was artificially aged):

Q—Now, did you have occasion to look at the writing, the actual ink, in the date of 1807, I believe it is?

A—It's got 1892 on this document. . . . 1822, I guess, is what it is . . .

.....

Q—And out of that 1822, did you look at the ink specifically on that date?

A—Yes.

Q—And were you able to make a determination with respect to the cracking phenomena that you had observed in other documents as to whether or not that date exhibited it?

A—Yes.

Q—What was that conclusion?

A—The number eight exhibited not only a cracking effect but also a diffusing or running effect, which was not found on the one or the other twos.

.....

Q— . . . Looking further down, to the signatures at the bottom, we have one of Asa Spalding and Solomon Spalding. Looking at the Solomon Spalding signature, were you able to make a determination as to whether or not that ink exhibited characteristics of the cracking that you had observed in other documents . . . that came from Mark Hofmann?

A—The Solomon Spalding signature also exhibited that characteristic cracking.

Q— . . . And the Solomon Spalding signature, how did the cracking compare to the cracking seen in the ink of the number eight on the date?

A—The number eight is such an accumulation of ink. It was actually built up, it looks like maybe two or three times, I'm not certain, and hence we have a slightly different cracking effect. But it's still that and one other place, is still the only place on the document where . . . I was able to observe that cracking.

Q— . . . What about the Sidney Rigdon signature?

A—That was the other place I observed the cracking.

Q— . . . And you observed cracking through what part of the signature . . . there being two words—Sidney, the other, Rigdon?

A—It was throughout the signature itself, as I recall.

Q—And that for the record, is located in the lower left hand corner?

A—Yes. In the left hand corner, at the bottom, there's several different names written. The name Sidney Rigdon was different because of the ink than all the rest of the document. It was consistent with the type of ink found in the Solomon Spalding signature and also a lot of appearances in the 1822 date.

Q—Now, . . . the remainder of the body of the document, do you consider that to be authentic, the top part of the document?

A—Other than the change of the date—that's not an accurate date by any means—and also the two signatures, the rest of it appears to be a genuine document.

Q— . . . Now, taking the remainder of the document besides the Solomon Spalding, the Sidney Rigdon and the date that you just testified to, do you have an opinion with respect as to the signatures of Asa [Solomon?] Spalding and Sidney Rigdon, as to their authenticity regarding this remainder of a 17th or 18th century document?

A—I do.

Q—And what is your opinion with respect to those two signatures, Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon, in comparison to the remainder of the document?

A—I do not believe that those signatures nor the date as we discussed was originally put on that document, nor is it from that time period.

This document is certainly one of the crudest forgeries that Mark Hofmann ever sold. As I pointed out in an earlier chapter, even the altered date of 1822 does not fit historically because Solomon Spalding died in 1816! Another problem with this document is that it locates Spalding and Rigdon together in Connecticut at the time of the transaction. The evidence shows that Spalding spent his last years in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and Sidney Rigdon became a pastor in a Baptist church in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1822. Even if Spalding had been alive in 1822, the only logical place for the two men to sign such a document would be in Pennsylvania. Another serious problem with the document is that the signature of Solomon Spalding does not resemble that found on a deed he signed in 1811. From all this it is obvious that the creator of this document did not do any real homework on the subject.

The reader will remember that Steven Barnett testified that Mark Hofmann offered him this document for “\$2,000.” After Barnett told Mr. Hofmann that Solomon Spalding died in 1816, Hofmann allowed him to buy the document for \$400.

When I learned that Mark Hofmann had been involved with a document supporting the Spalding-Rigdon theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon, I recalled a series of events that occurred in 1983. A reporter from one of the largest newspapers in the United States asked us if it were true that the Mormon Church had bought the long-lost Spalding manuscript for \$6,000,000. We replied that we had no information to support such an accusation. Some time after this, we received a phone call which seemed to explain the source of the rumor. The woman on the phone told us that if we would call a Mr. D. _____ in St. James, N.Y., within half an hour, he could give us the details concerning the discovery of the Spalding manuscript. The number we were given was 516-862-6448. At first Mr. D. seemed rather indignant about the intrusion and was reluctant to talk about the matter, but with some prompting, he finally told us that he had discovered the lost manuscript. In this and other phone conversations he revealed that he had found the 339-page manuscript in an old piano. He not only claimed he found the manuscript, but he maintained that he also had a sixteen-page document written by Sidney Rigdon in which he confessed the part he played in the whole deception. This was not all, however; he also found an 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon

which was marked to reveal the portions which were plagiarized from the Spalding manuscript!

We, of course, concluded that these fantastic claims were ridiculous and published an article concerning this in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in November 1983. Later we discussed the matter with Mark Hofmann. He told us that Mr. D. was a “kook” and no credence should be given to his story. Hofmann said that the noted document dealer Charles Hamilton could tell us all about Mr. D.’s bad reputation. Some time later we heard that Mark Hofmann had found the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon—also known as the book of Lehi. We were told that the contents of the book of Lehi were “dynamite.” The manuscript was supposed to contain information about money-digging interwoven with material that reads like the book of Nephi—one of the books appearing in the published Book of Mormon. When we discussed the matter with Mark Hofmann, he admitted that a manuscript purporting to be the 116 missing pages had been found in Bakersfield, California. He claimed, however, that it was a forgery. In telling about this manuscript, Mr. Hofmann said that a Book of Mormon was found with the manuscript which was marked to reveal which parts of the printed Book of Mormon were the same as those appearing in the unpublished book of Lehi. Mr. Hofmann’s story concerning the marked Book of Mormon sounded strangely similar to Mr. D.’s claim that he found a Book of Mormon which was marked to show the portions which were plagiarized from the Spalding manuscript. We felt that the two stories were so similar that we were almost forced to the conclusion that one was borrowed from the other. This, of course, also raised the question of whether there was some connection between Hofmann and Mr. D. We later wondered if Mr. D. was trying to get us to print an article on the matter so that the Mormon Church would become concerned and try to buy up the purported Spalding manuscript.

It is also interesting to note that about that same time Church Archivist Donald Schmidt called me on the telephone. He seemed very concerned that I might have the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and was preparing to print them. He claimed that he had been told that I had boasted in the library of the Utah State Historical Society that I had the missing pages. I, of course, assured Mr. Schmidt that there was no truth in the statement. In retrospect, I wonder if someone told Schmidt this story to stir the Church leaders up so that they would pay a higher price to buy a forged copy of the manuscript.

In his interview in *Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 13, Mark Hofmann's friend, Lyn Jacobs, told of the report of the discovery of the book of Lehi manuscript in "southern California":

Mark decided not to attempt to go after the stuff when he found out exactly what it is. It may have something to do with a fictional account supposedly written in the nineteenth century by Sidney Rigdon called "The Book of Lehi." I suspect that's what it is. It is certainly not the 116 pages, or Mark would have gone after it.

It is possible that someone could have had plans to forge as many as three important manuscripts relating to the Book of Mormon. The first is the long-lost Spalding manuscript. The second might be Sidney Rigdon's rewritten version of the Spalding manuscript, which Jacobs refers to as "The Book of Lehi." The third, of course, would be the lost 116 pages of the book of Lehi in the handwriting of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. Any one of these three manuscripts would be worth millions of dollars. While at first glance it would seem unlikely that the Mormon leaders would be gullible enough to buy more than one of these manuscripts, if a common thread ran through all the manuscripts, such a swindle might be rather convincing. For instance, the Spalding manuscript could be more of a secular history of the Nephites. The Rigdon version of the "Book of Lehi" might contain a great deal of the same material with some religious information interspersed. The final product (the lost 116 pages in the handwriting of Martin Harris) could contain essentially the same material as Rigdon's manuscript with changes made to fit the vocabulary and style of Joseph Smith. While this all may be just a matter of speculation, an individual who talked privately with one of Mark Hofmann's close associates just before the bombings informed us that he was told that a manuscript "like" the 116 missing pages of the Book of Mormon had been discovered. Moreover, the fact that Hofmann sold a Spalding-Rigdon forgery makes me even more suspicious.

As I have shown in the chapter concerning the McLellin collection, Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin claim that "Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen's personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something 'too sensitive to mention,' that the late 'Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths'" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 58). I have pointed out

that the item which is "too sensitive to mention" could be "evidence" that Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon wrote material which Joseph Smith used for his Book of Mormon.

With regard to Hugh Pinnock's desire that Mark Hofmann locate the 116 missing pages of the Book of Mormon, it is interesting to note that Pinnock himself claimed he had a lead as to their whereabouts, and I have been told that Hofmann was supposed to be following up on this matter. Mr. Pinnock, who is currently serving as a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, claimed that "during the years of 1973 to 1976" he served as "mission president in Pennsylvania." He maintained that while he was there, "two of our missionaries claimed to have tracked out a lady that said she had them, or that her brother had them" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). The mission president who succeeded Pinnock "did some looking around for those 116 pages" but never found them. Hofmann was supposed to have picked up the trail after he found the Anthon transcript. In any case, it is possible that Hofmann could have discussed these missing pages with Pinnock. While I do not know that the book of Lehi or a Spalding-Rigdon document had anything to do with the murders, such a document would be worth a tremendous amount of money. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the Mormon Church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to violence. In another chapter I have suggested that before their financial problems, Steven Christensen and Gary Sheets would have been good candidates to buy expensive manuscripts. As I indicated earlier, however, I have no evidence to show that such a transaction ever took place. Nevertheless, I still find it hard to forget the question Apostle Oaks directed to Mark Hofmann: "Do you know anyone in your documents business who would enforce his contracts with bombs?" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 24, 1985)

However this may be, as early as 1982 Mark Hofmann publicly stated that he was searching for the missing Book of Mormon pages:

REVIEW: Is there anything you know exists that you are looking for specifically?

HOFMANN: I'm hoping the lost 116 manuscript pages exist.

REVIEW: Do you have any evidence that they exist?

HOFMANN: I've heard a lot of rumors, and I've tracked down lots of leads. In fact, I have spent thousands of dollars in the pursuit of them, phone calls, research, and trips back and forth to the East. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18)

As I have already stated, Mr. Hofmann told me that he had located a forgery of the 116 pages in California. When I pressed him as to how he knew it was a forgery, he replied that it quoted verbatim things that were peculiar to the “Wright” edition of the Book of Mormon—an edition published after Joseph Smith’s death and used by at least some members of the early RLDS Church. Later, when I began to feel that the 116-page manuscript in California might be nothing but a figment of Hofmann’s imagination, I began to realize that if Hofmann ever did create the 116 missing pages and used any quotations from the book of Nephi, he would probably take into consideration readings obtained from the original manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. Since changes were made in the text between the manuscript and the first printed version and even more changes were made in later additions, it would be very wise to consult the original manuscript before making any quotations. Actually, there are two handwritten manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. The original copy is housed in the Mormon Church Archives. Richard Howard says that this manuscript is very fragmentary: “Only pages 3-22 plus about one hundred smaller, partially legible fragments exist today (*Restoration Scriptures*, 1969, page 27). The second manuscript is in the possession of the Reorganized Church. Richard Howard refers to it as the “*Emended transcript*”—the manuscript which was prepared for the printer. Since there are some variations even between these two manuscripts, it would be important for a forger to know about these changes. From information I have been able to obtain, it appears that Mark Hofmann did, in fact, have a great deal of interest in the original manuscripts of the book of Nephi. He told one scholar who was making an exact typescript from the printer’s manuscript that he, Hofmann, was having someone else make a typescript of the very original manuscript pages in the Church Archives. Mr. Hofmann said that when the two typescripts were completed, an exchange would be made. Hofmann, therefore, would end up with an exact typescript of the early part of both manuscripts—i.e., with material which was supposed to have been written by Nephi. The trade never actually took place, but Mark Hofmann told the scholar that the whole thing should be kept confidential.

If a manuscript came forth which purported to be the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and it contained portions similar to the book of Nephi, a comparison of these portions with the original manuscripts would become very important. If the long-lost manuscript strictly followed the printed version, it might be declared a forgery. If, on the other hand,

it contained peculiarities found only in the original manuscript, this would probably be interpreted as evidence for its authenticity.

As I have already pointed out, Mark Hofmann came up with at least three documents which had Martin Harris’ signature on them—i.e., the Grandin contract, the 1873 letter of Harris to Conrad and the 1830 Salamander letter. The Salamander letter, of course, is by far the most important because it is supposed to have over 600 words in the actual handwriting of Martin Harris. With the authentication of Harris’ handwriting in the Salamander letter, the stage was well prepared for the ultimate discovery—the book of Lehi. The reader will remember also that Mark Hofmann’s discovery of the Lucy Smith letter provided us with our first eyewitness view of the possible contents of the book of Lehi.

Although I have no evidence to verify the accusation, it has been claimed that sheets of paper were found in Hofmann’s home which appeared to have been used to practice the handwriting of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. If attempts to imitate Emma Smith’s handwriting have indeed been found, it would fit very well with the idea of a plan to forge the 116 pages. It is believed that Emma Smith was Joseph Smith’s scribe for some of the first pages of this manuscript. It would be very convincing to have the manuscript begin in Emma Smith’s handwriting and then switch to that of Martin Harris. With respect to Emma Smith’s handwriting, it is interesting to note that the police found a photograph of her handwriting in Hofmann’s possession and it was traced to a museum owned by Mrs. Wilford C. Wood. This photograph would prove helpful to anyone trying to imitate Emma Smith’s handwriting.

The day following the explosion in Mark Hofmann’s car, the *Deseret News* printed the following:

After media reports said Hofmann would be charged Thursday, an observer theorized that the Harris letter is a forgery—and provides the only extensive sample of Harris’s handwriting. Thus it could be a prelude to a forged copy of 116 pages dictated by Smith to Harris but lost by Harris.

The lost document’s fate has long been a source of speculation. Hofmann has often said he wanted to be the person to find those pages, the observer said. But if the 116 pages were discovered, they could not be authenticated without an extensive sample of Harris’s handwriting—provided by the “white salamander letter.”

The 116-page document would be extremely lucrative, the theory goes, if authenticated. (*Deseret News*, October 17, 1985)

It appears that the police feel that there may be something to the theory that Hofmann was at least planning a forgery of the book of Lehi. The *Deseret News* for October 23, 1985, reported:

One of the scenarios Willoughby admitted police are seriously investigating is the possibility that the Martin Harris letter, called the “white salamander” letter, may be forged and that it may be part of an elaborate scheme to set up a much larger forgery or scam. . . .

Police are investigating the possibility that the letter was forged by someone who later intended to forge pages from the 116 pages of missing Book of Mormon manuscript, known as the Book of Lehi—something police say would be worth millions of dollars. Many of those 116 pages are in Harris’ handwriting.

Because there are only fragments of Harris’ handwriting on file in church archives, historians seeking to authenticate it would have a difficult time determining absolutely its authenticity.

“If (Hofmann) should just happen to come up with pages from the missing manuscript, they would be tested for authenticity against the Salamander letter,” said one police source. If the letter was forged, the manuscript “would be easier to authenticate. It would be worth millions.”

Police say physical evidence has been recovered that may corroborate that theory.

“You bet your bottom dollar,” said Willoughby when asked if police were seriously considering such a scenario.

Police are not the only ones to consider that possibility. A. J. Simmonds, curator of special collections and archives Utah State University, presented a similar hypothesis shortly after the three bombings.

“If the salamander letter is a forgery, the only basis I see for it is to set up a possible sale for the Book of Lehi,” Simmonds said Tuesday. “We know that the bulk, at least, of the Book of Lehi was written by Martin Harris. Emma apparently wrote part of it and her brother Reuben may have written part of it. But a substantial portion, at least, was in Martin’s handwriting. Heretofore, we’ve never had much of an example extant of Martin Harris’ handwriting. There have been four, five or six words and a couple of signatures. Those were the only things that could ever be verified of his handwriting.”

“If it is in the same handwriting as the salamander letter and the salamander letter has been verified, you’re a leg up on verifying the 116 pages.”

When asked if Hofmann had ever expressed an interest to him about finding the 116 missing pages, Simmonds said: “He just indicated to me on

a couple of occasions that that is what he was after. Any Mormon collector would be after that. It is the ultimate find.”

In his lawsuit filed against Mark Hofmann, Brent Ashworth has made a charge which could throw some additional light on the question. In his suit Mr. Ashworth alleges that Hofmann sold him forged sections of the original Book of Mormon manuscript. Since over two-thirds of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon is believed to have been lost or destroyed by the elements, this would give a forger ample opportunity to bring forth an almost unlimited supply of pages or fragments which could be sold for a great deal of money. The text for these fragments could be obtained from the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon (Mr. Hofmann bought a xerox copy of this entire manuscript in 1983). All one would have to do is make a few minor changes in spelling (and perhaps in grammar), and the fraud would be very hard to detect. At one point Hofmann even claimed that he found “a half page of the original Book of Mormon manuscript” which matches with another half page preserved at the University of Utah:

REVIEW: Where is the rest of the manuscript?

HOFMANN: Only about a third of it is known.

You see in October of 1841 Joseph deposited the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House. It laid there until about 1882 when Emma’s widower, Major Bidamon, dug it up. It was really in poor condition from being in the ground all that time, with water and soil seeping into it. In fact, most of it fell to pieces when it was touched. The ink was also quite faded, difficult to read. Nonetheless, Bidamon gave away parts of it to visitors as he wished. Because it was in such bad shape, I am pretty sure that most of it is no longer in existence. The Church has nearly a third of it, and there is some in private hands still.

REVIEW: So you found a half page in someone’s private collection?

HOFMANN: Actually, I have had three fragments at various times. That half page is the largest piece I’ve found. Incidentally, that half page matches the half page the University of Utah has which was acquired by Joseph W. Summerhays from Bidamon. Interestingly, there are word variations between the manuscript fragment and the first printed version of the Book of Mormon. I’m not sure who was responsible for the change: the printer or Joseph later revised it or perhaps Oliver Cowdery when he was making the printer’s manuscript. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, pages 17-18)

While the discovery of an entire half page of this deteriorated manuscript would be quite a feat, Mr. Hofmann went even further; at one point he came forth with almost an entire page. He sold this page to Brent Ashworth in “April, 1983” for “25,000” (BRENT ASHWORTH, Plaintiff, vs. MARK HOFMANN, Defendant, Exhibit “A”). The Church publication, *The Ensign*, printed photographs of both sides of this page in the December 1983 issue (see pages 37-38). It was noted at that time that this sheet was in a “remarkable state of preservation”:

This dictated manuscript was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House on 2 October 1841, where it remained until 1882. When the manuscript was removed, it was found that water had seeped in and destroyed the majority of the pages, especially those farther down in the stack. For this reason, most of the extant pages are from the earlier part of the manuscript; in fact, no pages are known to have survived from the books beyond Helaman. . . .

Two . . . pages from the dictated manuscript appear on page 37 and at right. They are from a recently discovered leaf containing the text of Helaman 14:20 through 15:12 . . . No text farther along in the original manuscript is known to exist. **This leaf is in a remarkable state of preservation, considering that it was positioned low in the water-damaged manuscript.** (page 38)

Utah State University purchased about one-third of a page from Hofmann which was even a little farther into the manuscript (Helaman 16:1-4 and 18-21). A. J. Simmonds, who was one of the first to suspect forgery, became suspicious of this fragment and asked if he could inspect the portion of the manuscript which is in the Church Archives. After making a comparison, Simmonds determined that this fragment was probably too well preserved to be authentic.

In addition to these portions of the manuscript, Brent Ashworth’s complaint against Mark Hofmann says that he bought a “Mosiah 2:17 Fragment, original Book of Mormon manuscript (1829)” from Hofmann in the fall of 1982 for “\$5,000.” Since there are only ten words on the fragment, Mr. Ashworth was paying \$500 for each word. This fragment was published in *The Ensign*, December 1983, page 38. Although it is not listed in the complaint, it has been claimed that Ashworth also obtained two other fragments from the book of Nephi from Hofmann. There is really no way to determine how many other fragments purporting to be from the original manuscript Hofmann may have sold to others. In any case, if one accepts the charge that Hofmann was selling forged portions of the original Book of Mormon manuscript, it is easy to believe that he would consider creating the missing 116-page book

of Lehi manuscript. This manuscript would certainly be worth far more than the original Book of Mormon manuscript, and the reader will remember that Mr. Ashworth paid \$25,000 for just one leaf from this manuscript. Obviously, the missing 116 pages of the book of Lehi would be worth millions of dollars.

ISAAC GALLAND NOTE

In the list of documents the Mormon leaders admitted they had obtained either directly or indirectly from Mark Hofmann, we find the following: “. . . a promissory note dated Sept. 11, 1837, also signed by I. Galland” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). Document experts felt that this was a genuine document with a spurious portion concerning Joseph Smith added at a later date. Kenneth Rendell testified as follows concerning this document:

You could see [on the documents] where the ink was running in one constant direction, as well as the handwriting problems . . . I pointed out that on this particular document here, which is the September 11, 1837 document, that the chemical only appears in the area supposedly written by Joseph Smith. The entire document had not been dipped.

George Throckmorton said that “Portions of that note contained characteristic cracking of the ink. Others did not.” He noted that the part concerning Joseph Smith “had that characteristic cracking effect.” William Flyn also found the cracked ink only on one portion of the document:

. . . there was cracking of the ink in the portion of the note that obligates Joseph Smith as a trustee-in-trust for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That ink down to the word[s] *his agent* . . . were in a different ink than the rest of the document, and only that portion that obligated Joseph Smith had the cracked ink on it.

LAWRENCE LETTER

On page 597 of his book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean Jessee says:

At daybreak on June 23, [1844] Joseph crossed the Mississippi River westward with his brother Hyrum and Willard Richards with the ultimate anticipation of heading east. The place of William Jordan in Montrose was evidently the “Safety” whence he wrote these letters to Emma and to Maria and Sarah Lawrence.

Montrose, June 27, 1844.
7 O'Clock A.M.

Dear Maria & Sarah:— I take opportunity
this morning to communicate to you two
some of the feelings of my heart, for you
know my thoughts for you & for the
City & the people that I love. God bless
& protect you all! Since I dare not linger
in Nauvoo. Our enemies shall not cease
their infernal howling until they have
drunk this life blood. I do not know what
I shall do or where I shall go, but if possible
I will try to interview with President
Tyler. Perhaps California or Austin will be
more suitable. Speak of this to no one
& want you two to make arrangements with
R. Cahoon for passage at your earliest conven-
ience. I want for you to tarry in Cincinnati
until you hear from me. Keep all things treasured
up in your breasts. Burn this letter as you
read it. I close in haste. Do not despair.
Pray for me as I bleed my heart for you.

I remain your loyal friend and companion,
Maria and Sarah Lawrence

Joseph Smith

A photograph of a letter Joseph Smith was supposed to have written to his plural wives, Maria and Sarah Lawrence. Document experts claim it is a forgery.

Mr. Jessee published the purported letter of Joseph Smith to the Lawrence girls on page 598 of his book. The letter reads as follows:

Montrose, June 23, 1844.
9 O Clock a.m.

Dear Maria & Sarah:—I take opportunity this morning to communicate to you two some of the peepings of my heart; for you know my thoughts for you & for the City & people that I love. God bless & protect you all! Amen. I dare not linger in Nauvoo Our enimies shall not cease their infernal howling until they have drunk my lifes blood. I do not know what I shall do, or where I shall go, but if possible I will try to interview with President Tyler. Perhaps California or Austin will be more sy[m]pethetic. Speak of this to no one I want you two to make arrangements with R. Cahoon for passage at your earliest convenience. I want for you to tarry in Cincinnati untill you hear from me. Keep all things treasured up in your breasts. burn this letter as you read it. I close in hast. Do not dispare. Pray for me as I bleed my heart for you.

I remain your loyal friend and companion.
Maria and Sarah Lawrence.

Joseph Smith

In the list of documents the Church admitted came through Mark Hofmann, the letter to the Lawrence girls is printed as No. 45: “A letter, dated June 23, 1844, from Joseph Smith to Maria and Sarah, including family information” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). This seems to be a rather innocuous description of a letter which Joseph Smith purportedly wrote to two of his plural wives concerning his desire for a rendezvous in Cincinnati. In a footnote on page 697 of *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean Jessee says that “Maria and Sarah were sealed to Joseph Smith in 1843.”

If the handwriting in this letter is supposed to be Joseph Smith’s, it is a very poor imitation. Dean Jessee felt that it was a copy made after Joseph Smith’s death. Even though he believed in the authenticity of the letter, Mr. Jessee admitted that the handwriting could not be identified:

Tr. In an unknown hand, Joseph Smith Papers, LDS Church Archives. Handwritten characteristics suggest that the letter is probably a copy made at a later time, after the reason for burning it had passed.

Before the Church obtained the letter, Mark Hofmann tried to sell it to A. J. Simmonds at Utah State University. Mr. Simmonds examined the document

and came to the conclusion it was a forgery. He even told Mr. Hofmann that he did not believe the letter was authentic. Mr. Simmonds, however, had no reason to believe that Hofmann had forged the letter. He felt, in fact, that Hofmann had innocently obtained a 19th century forgery. Although Mr. Simmonds feels the contents of the letter are the same, he believes that the copy that the Mormon Church obtained may not be the same one that Hofmann showed to him. Mr. Simmonds told investigators that he remembers that the letter was hand printed, whereas the copy obtained by the Church is in cursive handwriting. In any case, this forgery could have been made even before the Anthon transcript. Hofmann told one scholar that he knew about this letter a couple of years before he found the Anthon document.

When George Throckmorton testified at Mark Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, he was asked if the ink on the Lawrence letter exhibited signs of cracking. He replied: “Yes, sir.”

The idea for a letter from Joseph Smith to his plural wives undoubtedly came from an authentic Joseph Smith letter to the Whitneys. We published a typed copy of this letter in 1967 in our book *Joseph Smith and Polygamy*, page 40. In 1973 Michael Marquardt included this letter in a pamphlet we published for him. The pamphlet is entitled, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball*. Mr. Marquardt found a photograph of this letter in the “George Albert Smith Family Papers” in the “Special Collections, Western Americana, Marriott Library, University of Utah.” In this letter, dated August 18, 1842, Joseph Smith begged Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his wife to come with their daughter, Sarah Ann Whitney. In his book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, which was published eleven years after Marquardt’s pamphlet, Dean Jessee photographically reproduced the original letter which is in the possession of the Church. In introducing the letter, Mr. Jessee freely admitted that Joseph Smith had recently taken Sarah Ann Whitney as a plural wife:

When the practice of plural marriage was introduced at Nauvoo in the early 1840s, the Whitney family were among those involved. Seventeen-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney was sealed to Joseph Smith on July 27, 1842, her father performing the ceremony. Three weeks later Joseph wrote the following letter to Newel, Elizabeth Ann, and Sarah Ann.

Michael Marquardt gives this interesting information concerning the letter:

While Joseph Smith concealed himself in the house of Edward Sayer, he wrote a letter to his first wife Emma, to whom he had been married for more than fifteen years. At the close of this letter to Emma Smith, dated August 16, 1842, he wrote: “Yours in haste, your affectionate husband until death, through all eternity; for evermore.”

It was reported that Joseph Smith then “went to Carlos Granger’s.” While he was hiding at the home of Carlos Granger . . . he wrote a very revealing letter to *three* of his closest friends. They were Bishop Newel K. Whitney, his wife Elizabeth Ann and the person whom he refers to as “and &c”—Sarah Ann Whitney whom he had been married to for twenty-two days. The letter refers to this event in his life in the words “Since what has passed lately between us.”

From the reading of this letter one can gain an insight into the thought pattern of Joseph Smith, especially what he thought of his wife Emma Smith. In this letter written by Joseph Smith in his own hand, dated August 18th 1842, he wrote the following remarks concerning Emma: “the only thing to be careful of, is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be Safe, but when She is not here, there is the most perfect *Saftey*” also “I think Emma wont come tonight if she dont dont fail to come to night.” (*The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney . . .* pages 4-5)

This letter not only seems to have provided the forger with the idea for another letter, but it even contains some of the same words. For instance, the letter to the Whitneys contained the following:

I take this oppertunity to communi[c]ate, . . . burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all locked up in your breasts, . . . your . . . companion, and friend.
Joseph Smith

The reader will notice how similar this is to the wording found in the letter to the Lawrence girls:

. . . I take opportunity . . . to communicate . . .
Keep all things treasured up in your breasts. burn this letter as you read it . . . your loyal friend and companion, Joseph Smith

It is interesting to note that in his interview published in the *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 18, Mark Hofmann shows that he was familiar with the letter to the Whitneys:

We know of a couple of letters that he wrote to plural wives. One was to Sarah Ann Whitney. (The Church now owns this document; it is in the First

Presidency’s vault.) In it Joseph says that he wants Newell Whitney, his wife, and his daughter, Sarah to visit him. Then he says something about not coming if Emma is around. Also at the conclusion he says to burn the letter which probably accounts for the lack of material on this subject. There’s also the letter written to Mary [*sic*] and Sarah Lawrence along similar lines. Joseph was planning to leave Nauvoo (this was at the end of his days) and the letter indicates he was thinking of going to Texas or out west. In the letter, he asks the Lawrence sisters to meet him in Cincinnati, which probably indicates some sort of relationship there.

The reader will remember that Dean Jessee said that Joseph Smith also wrote a letter to his first wife, Emma, the same morning (June 23, 1844) that he wrote to the Lawrence girls (see pages 597-598 of Jessee’s book). These two letters also have some similarities. Both letters speak of “Cincinnati” and use the phrase, “Do not despair.” The letter to Emma says: “My heart ble[e]ds,” and the Lawrence letter says “I bleed my heart.” In the letter to his first wife, Joseph Smith wrote: “I do not know where I shall go, or what I shall do, but shall if possible endeavor to get to the city of Washington.” The Lawrence letter contains a similar statement: “I do not know what I shall do or where I shall go, but if possible I will try to interview with President Tyler.”

As I have pointed out before, the discovery of parallels between two works purported to be from the same author does not prove that one of them is a forgery. It could, in fact, be taken as evidence that they came from the same hand. In the case of the Lawrence letter, however, we have hard evidence that the ink was artificially aged. On the basis of this evidence, the parallels seem to provide strong circumstantial evidence that this letter was created from the two genuine letters of Joseph Smith.

In his master’s thesis, written at Brigham Young University, the Mormon writer Andrew Ehat indicated that Joseph Smith was acting as guardian for the Lawrence girls and that his plural marriage to Maria led to the belief that he “committed adultery with the eldest child of whom he was personal guardian”:

. . . he knew his responsibility as guardian to the Lawrence Estate could be misunderstood given the fact that he was sealed to Maria Lawrence—a fact that made him particularly vulnerable to William Law.

In June 1841, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and William Law had assumed the responsibility of

the deceased Edward Lawrence's estate valued at \$7,750.06. Joseph was named as guardian of the Lawrence children. Somehow during his period of indecision, William Law found out that Maria Lawrence was sealed as a wife to Joseph; in fact, Law, as he later stated, found Joseph in a compromising situation with Maria on 12 October 1843. Two weeks later, 26 October 1843, Joseph ostensibly sealed Maria for time to John M. Bernhisel, an outsider to the Lawrence estate arrangements. But in January 1844, Joseph apparently felt this would no longer calm the angered William Law. The day after Joseph and William's final confrontation, Joseph began arrangements to relinquish the estate affairs entirely. From the ninth to the twenty-third, William Clayton was working with the Prophet preparing the transfer of the estate affairs to John Taylor. Undoubtedly, if William Law, one of the appointed trustees of the estate, I "claimed" that Joseph had not only extorted the funds of the estate, but had also committed adultery with the eldest child of whom he was personal guardian, that would make an explosive expose. . . . Law appeared before the first sitting of the Grand Jury of the Hancock County circuit court to swear out charges against Joseph. Law filed charges and presented such evidence that the Grand Jury authorized an indictment against Joseph Smith for "adultery and fornication." While Law made oath that Joseph "live[d] . . . an open state of adultery and fornication" with "certain women," the only woman he named was Maria Lawrence. Law testified of two dates when Joseph Smith allegedly committed the illegal acts—specifically the one date already mentioned, 12 October 1843, and the other date 1 January 1844, the day Law began his diary. ("Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, December 1982, typed copy, pages 132-135)

The William Law Diary, which Mr. Ehat speaks of at the end of the quotation above, seems to be a very mysterious document. In footnote 268 on page 270 of his thesis, Ehat claims it is in "private custody":

William Law, "Record of Doings at Nauvoo in 1844," undated entry after 28 June 1844 entry, in private custody. I am extremely grateful to Lyndon W. Cook for his generosity in permitting me to use his copy of this significant diary.

In an article published in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1982, Lyndon W. Cook quoted extensively from the William Law Diary, but, like Andrew Ehat, he refused to reveal its location:

William Law, "Record of Doings at Nauvoo in 1844," 8 January 1844, in private custody; hereafter cited as Dairy of William Law.

In the lawsuit that the Mormon scholar Andrew Ehat filed against us, we learned that Lyndon Cook had given Mr. Ehat a typed copy of the William Law Diary at the same time Mr. Cook received the extracts from the William Clayton Journals (the extracts Ehat sued us for printing). At the trial, Lyndon Cook was unwilling to reveal where his typed copy of the William Law Diary had come from:

BY MR. MADSEN:

Q. Did you give Mr. Ehat anything in exchange for receiving from him his portion of those Clayton notes? Was it a matter of trading?

A. Was it a matter of trading?

Q. Yeah, was it a matter of you giving something in return for his sharing those extracts from the William Clayton journal?

A. I don't—I didn't feel that I had to give him anything.

Q. Did you in fact give him any specific document or copy of a manuscript?

A. Yes, I remember almost simultaneous I believe I gave him a copy of my typescript of the William Law diary at the time.

.....

RECROSS EXAMINATION

BY MR. BARNARD:

Q. You mentioned that you have notes or extracts from the William Law diary?

A. Yes.

Q. And where is the original of the William Law diary?

MR. MADSEN: Your Honor, again I object as to materiality here, going on a—

THE COURT: Overruled. If you know.

THE WITNESS: I do know but I received them in confidence.

MR. MADSEN: May I ask on *voir dire*, your Honor?

THE COURT: What do you claim for this?

MR. BARNARD: Simply again, the practice, your Honor, Mr. Cook acquired access to a historical document. He doesn't want to reveal the source and he is sharing those with Mr. Ehat. It's the situation that I think is the construction of the case, that there is this sharing of secret documents. Once Mr. Cook gains access to them he has no problem giving them to Mr. Ehat.

THE COURT: You may ask whether the original is in the archives of the church.

BY MR. BARNARD:

Q. Are they—

A. It's not in the archives, it has never been owned by the church and is not in the state of Utah.

Q. You gained permission from the owner to make the extracts; is that correct?

A. No, that's not true.

Q. Okay. How did you gain permission to make the extracts?

A. From someone else who had had that permission.

Q. So, did you make the extracts from that other person's notes?

A. I received a copy from another person.

Q. A copy of what?

A. Of a typescript of the original.

.....

Q. You made a complete copy of that typescript?

A. Yes, I did.

.....

Q. Did you get permission from the owner of that document to give Mr. Ehat a copy of that typescript?

A. I had permission from the individual who gave it to me to do it.

THE COURT: By "him" you don't represent that the one that gave it to you was the owner?

THE WITNESS: I do not.

(*Andrew F. Ehat, v. Jerald and Sandra Tanner*, Case No. C83-0593C, pages 282-285)

When I began to question the authenticity of some of the documents, the thought came into my mind that Mark Hofmann could have been the person who was circulating the typescript of the William Law Diary. This might account for the secrecy with regard to the location of the original document or who the person was who gave the typescript to Lyndon Cook. (I do not mean to imply that Mr. Cook was involved in anything that was improper. It is possible that he received strict instructions to never reveal where he obtained the typescript.) Mr. Cook seemed to be very deeply troubled when Judge Christensen asked him to tell where the diary was located, and it was obvious that he was very relieved when he did not have to reveal the source.

Since the purported dairy begins on the same day that Joseph Smith is accused of committing adultery with Maria Lawrence, and we now are aware that there is a spurious letter by Joseph Smith to the Lawrence sisters, I have some doubts concerning the authenticity of the William Law Diary. At the time we were preparing for the Ehat lawsuit, I asked Mark Hofmann if he knew where the William Law Diary was located. He responded that it was now in the vault of the First Presidency.

If Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook are going to continue to maintain that the William Law Dairy is authentic, they should reveal where it is located and whether it has any provenance. At the present time I suspect that it could be either a forged document Hofmann was using to blackmail the Church or that it may not really exist at all. I would be very pleased to learn that there is an original of the diary and that it can be traced to someone besides Mark Hofmann.

Although the letter of Joseph Smith to Maria and Sarah Lawrence is clearly a forgery, the fact that Joseph Smith had a relationship with them is supported by a great deal of historical evidence. Andrew Jenson, who was Assistant LDS Church Historian, included the Lawrence sisters in his list of 27 of Joseph Smith's wives:

Maria Lawrence, a sister of Henry W. Lawrence of Salt Lake City, married in 1843. . . .

Sarah Lawrence, . . . married to Joseph in 1843. (*Historical Record*, May 1887, vol. 6, page 243)

While Maria Lawrence was nineteen years old at the time of her marriage to Joseph Smith, Sarah was only seventeen. According to Fawn Brodie, William Law told W. Wyl about the Lawrence girls in 1887:

Soon after my arrival in Nauvoo the two L _____ girls came to the holy city, two very young girls, fifteen to seventeen years of age. They had been converted in Canada, were orphans worth about \$8,000 in English gold. Joseph got to be appointed their guardian. . . . Emma complained about Joseph's living with the L _____ girls, but not very violently . . . she used to complain to me about Joseph's escapades whenever she met me on the street. (*No Man Knows My History*, 1957, page 457)

The fact that William Law accused Joseph Smith of adultery is obvious from the entry that appears in the *History of the Church* under the date of May 23, 1844, (vol. 6, page 403):

A. A. Lathrop came to my clerk, Dr. Richards, and told him an officer was on his way with an attachment for him, and that the grand jury had found a bill against me **for adultery, on the testimony of William Law**; he had come from Carthage in two hours and thirty minutes to bring the news.

Under the date of June 4, 1844, the following is attributed to Joseph Smith in his *History*:

At 6 p.m. I was in council . . . on the propriety of prosecuting the Laws and Fosters for perjury, slander, &c. Counseled Taylor to go on with the prosecution in behalf of Maria Lawrence. I concluded to go to Quincy with Taylor, and give up my bonds of guardianship as administrator of the Lawrence estate. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 427)

THE DUNHAM LETTER

One of the most unusual stories I encountered in my research with regard to Mark Hofmann's documents is that concerning the purported letter of Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham. This is a document that seems to have been created specifically to fill a request that Brent Ashworth made of Mark Hofmann. At the preliminary hearing, Mr. Ashworth testified that he had once examined two letters Joseph Smith had written from the Carthage jail just before he was murdered. Ashworth became fascinated with these letters written by the Mormon Prophet from the jail and became obsessed with the desire to obtain such a letter. According to his testimony, he asked Mark Hofmann if he ever had a letter written by "Joseph Smith from Carthage jail or do you know of any?" Ashworth went on to say: "And I told him, I said, . . . I can't think of any LDS item that would be more of an honor to own than a letter of Joseph Smith from Carthage jail, and I asked him . . . would you agree to sell me a Carthage jail Joseph Smith letter if you ever acquire one. And he agreed that he would do that."

It did not take Mark Hofmann long to come up with the desired letter. Brent Ashworth testified: "Within about three to four months thereafter, Mark indicated to me that he had located a Carthage jail letter; . . ." Mr. Ashworth went on to say: ". . . I felt like this was—had to be one of the greatest finds of Mormon documents, and right then and there I again renewed my agreement or he did with me that I would have a first option to purchase that letter were he able to . . . finalize the transaction on it." Ashworth felt that he just had to have the letter: ". . . I couldn't get it out of my mind. I kept thinking about it, being a collector that would be the ultimate in Mormon collecting, in my opinion . . ."

At this point in the story a very extraordinary thing happened. Instead of selling the letter to Brent Ashworth, who wanted the letter so badly that he would have been willing to pay up to \$30,000 for it, Mark Hofmann sold it to Dr. Richard Marks for \$20,000. Brent Ashworth soon became aware of the fact that Hofmann had sold the letter out from under him and became extremely upset:

A—. . . I was disgusted, quite frankly, and . . . got in my car and drove straight to Mark's house . . . I didn't get there till after 10:00 o'clock at night, and I must have got Mark out of bed or at least he was dressed in his pajamas with a robe on . . . I was extremely angry, and I just said, "Mark I received a

phone call an hour or so ago that the Carthage jail letter was sold to Dick Mark[s]," and I expressed great dissatisfaction over that. I said, "You lied to me." And he didn't really respond to that much. And—

Q—Did he say anything?

A—He really didn't at that point. In fact, I was so upset over not really getting an answer or a response that I got up to leave his home. And as I did so Mark said, "Oh, come on back. Sit down Brent. . . . get it off your chest. You'll feel a lot better." I said, "Mark I just got it off my chest and I feel worse than ever." . . . his was kind of a disgusting . . . meeting to me, and I was really distraught over the whole thing.

Mr. Ashworth still could not get the letter off his mind:

. . . I never gave up on the Joseph Smith letter to Dunham. I felt that it was my letter or should have been my letter and that it was stolen from me . . .

The story becomes even more bizarre as it goes on. Ashworth claimed that in April of 1985 he was "still hot" over the fact that Mark Hofmann had broken his agreement with him. At that point Hofmann may have realized that if he wanted to continue victimizing Brent Ashworth, he would have to do something to rectify the matter. Mr. Ashworth testified that Hofmann finally called him and said that the letter was available to him again, but this time the price would be \$60,000! Ashworth told Hofmann that he was not interested at that price and the conversation was terminated. Ashworth went on to say:

And, in fact, I was still fuming, even though I wanted to get that letter. . . . I told Brent Christensen, I said, "of all the gall . . . after all this time—we had originally agreed . . . that I would pay up to around \$30,000 for that letter. I sort of got robbed of it, I felt, and here I was being offered it by Mark . . . at twice the price."

Mr. Ashworth's obsession to obtain the letter finally got the best of him: "I loved that letter so much that I got over my pride for a moment or two and decided that I better try and go after it." On July 29, 1985, Mark Hofmann finally turned the letter over to Brent Ashworth for \$60,000. What Mr. Hofmann did not tell Ashworth was the price he had to pay to get the letter back. Hofmann had prearranged for the Church's bookstore, Deseret Book, to obtain the letter for him. Curt Bench, of Deseret Book, testified that he bought the letter back from Richard Marks for "\$90,000" and resold it to Hofmann for "\$110,000 plus tax. It came to \$116,000 plus." Mark Hofmann later had a discussion with Curt Bench concerning how much Mr. Ashworth

Carthage Jail June 27th 1844
 Major General Dunham,
 Dear Sir
 You are
 hereby ordered to resign the defence of
 the City of Nauvoo to Captain Singleton
 and proceed to this place without
 delay with what ever numbers of the
 Nauvoo Legion as may safely and
 immediately come. Let this be done
 quietly and orderly but with great
 haste we are in the hands of
 our sworn enemies.
 Joseph Smith

A photograph of a letter purported to have been written by Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham just before Smith was murdered in the Carthage jail. This photograph appears in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 618.

was paying for the letter. Mr. Bench probably would have been very suspicious of the deal if Hofmann had told him he was reselling the letter for only half what he paid for it. According to Bench's testimony at the preliminary hearing, Hofmann claimed he was receiving about one hundred thousand dollars more than Ashworth actually paid him: "Mark told me that it would be around 150 or 160,000 thousand in cash and trade." According to Brent Ashworth's testimony at the preliminary hearing and the complaint he later filed against Hofmann, the actual price was \$60,000. Just why Hofmann would take such a loss to get back in favor with Brent Ashworth is not known. Perhaps he was planning on setting Ashworth up for a much larger deal like the "Oath of a Freeman."

When the document examiners looked at the letter of Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham, they noted the same signs of forgery found in the other documents. George Throckmorton was asked if the ink was cracked in this letter. He replied, "Yes." William Flyn also noticed the cracked ink: "This is another document that I believe was extensively washed and perhaps washed and fixed . . . the surface of the ink is pretty well—has been removed. The portions of the ink that remain . . . are cracked." Mr. Flyn also testified that "The General Dunham letter did have ink running . . . visible under ultraviolet." Flyn compared the letter with two authentic letters written from Carthage jail the same day. At the preliminary hearing he was questioned concerning this comparison:

Q—Was there any differences in the letters.

A—Yes.

Q—What were those differences?

A—The two letters . . . were written on the same paper. The questioned document before me . . . was written on a different paper than the other two.

William Flyn also pointed out that "There was no indication of the cracking on the other two Carthage jail letter documents." Mr. Flyn concluded: "I don't believe it is genuine either."

To most people the text of the letter of Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham would not appear detrimental to Mormonism. In fact, Brent Ashworth, who seemed to have no interest in obtaining anything which would tend to injure the Mormon position, seems to have been very proud of it. A careful examination of the text, however, reveals that it flies in the face of a statement attributed to Joseph Smith just before his death. This statement is canonized in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 135, verse 4: "I am going like a

lamb to the slaughter; . . ." In the letter to Dunham, Joseph Smith is actually calling for the commander of the Nauvoo Legion to come and rescue him from the jail. Given the intense feelings on both sides, such a move could have set off a conflict that could have resulted in hundreds, if not thousands, of deaths. The text of the letter reads as follow:

Carthage Jail June 27th 1844
Major General Dunham

Dear Sir

You are hereby ordered to resign the defence of the City of Nauvoo to Captain Singlton and proceed to this place without delay with what ever numbers of the Nauvoo Ledgion as may safely and immediately come. Let this be done quietly and orderly but with great hast[e] we are in the hands of our sworn enemies.

Joseph Smith

Although I do not believe that the Hofmann document is genuine, it is certainly possible that Joseph Smith could have panicked and written such a letter. We know that when it came right down to it, Smith was unable to go "like a lamb to the slaughter"—i.e., die without putting up a struggle. The actual truth is that he died in a gun battle. John Taylor, who became the third president of the Mormon Church, made these statements concerning the death of Joseph Smith:

Elder Cyrus H. Wheelock came in to see us, and when he was about leaving drew a small pistol, a six-shooter, from his pocket, remarking at the same time, "Would any of you like to have this?" **Brother Joseph** immediately replied, "Yes, give it to me." whereupon he took the pistol, and put it in his pantaloons pocket. . . . I was sitting at one of the front windows of the jail, when I saw a number of men, with painted faces, coming around the corner of the jail, and aiming towards the stairs. . . . the mob, . . . fired a ball through the keyhole; . . . almost instantly another ball passed through the panel of the door, and struck Brother Hyrum . . .

I shall never forget the deep feeling of sympathy and regard manifested in the countenance of Brother Joseph as he drew nigh to Hyrum, and, leaning over him, exclaimed, "Oh! my poor, dear brother Hyrum!" He, however, instantly arose, and with a firm, quick step, and a determined expression of countenance, approached the door, and pulling the six-shooter left by brother Wheelock from his pocket, opened the door slightly, and snapped the pistol six

successive times; only three of the barrels, however, were discharged. I afterwards understood that **two or three were wounded by these discharges, two of whom, I am informed died.** (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, pages 100, 102 and 103)

The idea for creating such a document as the Dunham letter could have come from a number of books. For instance in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 259, we wrote the following:

There is some evidence that just before his death Joseph Smith sent for the Nauvoo Legion to rescue him from the Carthage jail. Harold Schindler states:

“Because Ford had permitted Joseph to use the debtor’s apartment in jail and allowed several of the prophet’s friends access to him, it was possible to smuggle messages out of Carthage. Realizing time was precious, Joseph dictated a note to Major General Jonathan Dunham ordering him to call out the Legion and march on the jail immediately. Dunham received the communication in Nauvoo but failed to carry out the command. One of the Legionnaires, Allen Stout, said, ‘Dunham did not let a single man or mortal know that he had received such orders and we were kept in the city under arms not knowing but all was well.’” (*Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder*, page 130)

In 1873 T. B. H. Stenhouse told the story of the letter to Jonathan Dunham. Mr. Stenhouse implied that Dunham was later assassinated because he did not follow Joseph Smith’s order:

. . . it is understood that he managed to send from prison a communication to the Mormon officer in military command at Nauvoo, to bring with all possible dispatch a portion of the Legion to protect him from treachery, and from that assassination which he had then so much cause to apprehend. This military commander put the Prophet’s communication into his pocket and gave no heed to the call for help. No one was acquainted with the contents of the paper, and the officer was, therefore, he presumed, safe in disregarding it.

After the Prophet’s death, by some accident or other, this communication was lost and was picked up on the street and read. The intelligence that Joseph had called for aid and none had been rendered him was soon bruited among the Saints and excited their deepest indignation, as they were not only ready to march at a moment’s notice, but were eager for the opportunity.

Some time afterwards, when all was quiet, this “coward and traitor” as some of the Mormons called

him, or “fool and idiot” as others said, was sent on a mission to the Western frontiers, accompanied by a faithful elder. While travelling alone with his companion, he fell ill and died, **it is said of dysentery.** His companion buried him. (*Rocky Mountain Saints*, page 164)

Dawn Tracy wrote the following in an article published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, February 6, 1986:

Wade Lilywhite of Deseret Book’s rare-book division said Mr. Hofmann told him that Mormons accused Dunham of abandoning the prophet. Mr. Lilywhite said Mr. Hofmann said the commander was later found dead with his throat slashed. Historians generally agree that Dunham died a violent death from unknown causes.

One thing that must have influenced Brent Ashworth to pay \$60,000 for the letter was the claim that it was written just before Joseph Smith’s death. Dean Jessee commented that it “was probably his last written communication . . .” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 616).

EMMA SMITH HYMNAL

In his lawsuit against Mark Hofmann, Brent Ashworth claims that on November 30, 1984, Mr. Hofmann sold him an 1835 “Emma Smith Hymn Book” for “\$10,000.” Mr. Ashworth claimed that Hofmann told him it was “one of the most beautiful copies he had ever seen. He said it was better than the two copies which the Church possessed.”

When investigators examined this volume, they found that the last page was spurious. It was, in fact, printed in November 1984 on old paper. The *Deseret News* for April 17, 1986, reported that Jack Smith, of DeBouzek Engraving, testified that on “Nov. 1 of the same year [1984], Mike Hansen ordered an engraving that police found reproduced on the back page of a hymn book belonging to Emma Smith, wife of the founder of the LDS Church.”

At the preliminary hearing George Throckmorton testified that he compared the negative obtained from the engraving company with the last page of the hymnal and concluded:

The negative in Exhibit No. 71 was used to make a plate and a plate was then used to imprint on the very last page of the fly leaf of the Emma Smith hymnal, which is Exhibit No. 87.

While the counterfeiting of one page might not seem too important, Lyn Jacobs testified that without this page, the book—which was sold to Ashworth for \$10,000—was only worth “about a thousand dollars.” As I have shown earlier, Brent Ashworth testified that Mark Hofmann claimed this book was “originally from the McLellin collection.” Ashworth also said that Hofmann told him he would give him an affidavit to that effect but he “never received it.” Investigators found that the book actually came from the Mormon Church Archives. Former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt testified:

Q—And it was sold . . . by you?

A—Yes.

Q—To a person named Lyn Jacobs?

A—That’s correct.

Q—And the condition of that volume when you sold it?

A—It was missing the last page.

Lyn Jacobs confirmed the testimony of Donald Schmidt. He said that at one time the book “belonged to the Church and subsequently by me.” In his testimony, Jacobs claimed that he had originally made a xerox copy on one of the original end sheets of the book and temporarily glued it into the book:

Q—Did you do anything concerning the last page while you possessed it?

A—Not the last page, but the last free end sheet. Yes, I did do something with [it].

Q—And did that end sheet have any printing on it _____?

A—It did not. It is blank. As is the front end sheet.

Q—What did you do with that last end sheet?

A—I decided that, aesthetically, it might be interesting if there was some printing on it and so I ran the page through a Xerox machine, using the reprint of the hymnal that was made by the Reorganized Church, sometime in the 1970’s, as my model for it.

Q—So now you have a page, the last page, on the hymnal on the end sheet. Is that correct?

A—Yes, I have xeroxed onto it. Yes.

Q—Then . . . actually the xerox is on the actual paper from the book. Is that correct?

A—That is correct. However, it didn’t stick very well.

Q—What did you do?

A—I placed it back in the book.

Q—Tipped it back in?

A—Um hum. Just a few dabs, however, because it was obviously a temporary page. I would have liked to have found a real page eventually, of course.

Mr. Jacobs said that Mark Hofmann later claimed that he found an original page in the possession of “an older lady,” but Jacobs could not “remember the name.” He claimed, however, that he sincerely believed that Hofmann bought “a real last printed page, an actual page.” Lyn Jacobs emphatically testified that he had no knowledge of the forgery:

Q—Did he ever tell you at that time or any other time that that was a modern printing?

A—He certainly did not.

Q—Did he ever tell you that he had had a plate made of that particular—

A—I’ve never heard of such a thing.

Mr. Jacobs said he received some items in trade when Hofmann sold the book. The value was “somewhere around seven or eight thousand” dollars. When he was asked if he could remember what the items were that he received, he responded: “I do not.”

The testimony of Lyn Jacobs (one of Hofmann’s closest friends) with regard to this hymnal is very important because it links Hofmann directly to the printed page that came from the engraving ordered under the alias of “Mike Hansen.”

BETSY ROSS LETTER

Wilford Cardon, who was Shannon Flynn’s mission president in Brazil, testified that Flynn and Hofmann got him to invest in a letter purportedly written by Betsy Ross. He said they represented to him “that there are no written documents . . . no letters of Betsy Ross in existence, and therefore this [is] the only letter of Betsy Ross in existence, and therefore it’s valuable.” Shannon Flynn testified at the preliminary hearing that he had received his information about the Betsy Ross letter from Mark Hofmann:

Mr. Flynn said that in October 1984, Mr. Hofmann said he had found a valuable Betsy Ross letter, but needed money to purchase it. Mr. Flynn testified that he arranged a meeting with Mr. Cardon in Mesa, Ariz., where he convinced his former LDS mission president to contribute \$12,000 towards the purchase—\$6,000 as his investment and another \$6,000 loaned to Mr. Flynn. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 18, 1986)

Like the Spalding-Rigdon document, the Betsy Ross letter is an extremely crude forgery. Whoever produced it certainly didn't take the time to do the homework required to fool the experts. In summing up the evidence against Mark Hofmann at the preliminary hearing, the prosecution pointed out that the man whose name appears on the letter as postmaster could not possibly have been serving in that capacity at the time the letter was supposedly written:

. . . the research that we got from the archives division of the post office . . . shows that the William B. Smith—when you turn over the Betsy Ross letter on the address portion—the postmaster, apparently, has written his name, William B. Smith. Well, those documents . . . given the court by the Post Office authority shows that William B. Smith was not the postmaster in 1807. He was not the postmaster until 1834 through 1844. So that's why the letter is an 1837 letter, . . . because that's when William Smith was postmaster. And so they got an 1837 letter, change[d] it [to] an 1807, added the Ross, now we have a genuine supposed Betsy Ross letter . . .

Kenneth Rendell said that when he examined the so-called Betsy Ross letter, he came to the conclusion that the handwriting “Just didn't hit me as being the same at all . . . I said that the postmark should be pursued to see if that postmark was consistent with 1807 because it appears to be a much later postmark.”

George Throckmorton testified concerning the alteration of the date on the letter:

Aside from the letter being cut, the date in the upper right hand portion under microscopic examination by use of the fiber optic light I was able to detect where some type of a sharp instrument had been used to pluck away the date and alter that date . . . some individual with a very sharp instrument actually removed the ink from the surface of the paper and then changed the lower loop of the 3 and connected it, which made it a 0.

Mr. Throckmorton went on to say:

The date that is presently visible is 1807. Under the microscope you see where the upper portion has been picked away and later on something that appears to be different ink . . . has been added to change the lower loop of the 3 into a 0.

The evidence concerning the alteration of the date from 1837 to 1807 fits very well with the discovery that William B. Smith was actually postmaster in 1837.

It was felt that the first name of the person who originally signed the letter was Betsy but that the last name had been eradicated and the name *Ross* inserted in its place. George Throckmorton testified:

The name *Ross*, in Betsy Ross, appears to be a different ink than the rest of the body of the letter, and also the writing itself appears to be a different style than the rest of the body of the letter.

William Flynn's testimony agreed with that given by Mr. Throckmorton:

Q—And can you tell us the results of your examination?

A—Yes. The . . . name *Ross* is written in a different ink, in my opinion, than the signature *Betsy* appearing on that document. . . . the name *Ross*, in my opinion, is in a different handwriting than the rest of the text on that document.

Q—Were you able to look at the date?

A—Yes.

Q—Did you make any findings concerning the date?

A—Yes.

Q—What was that?

A—The date, November 24, 1807, had been altered.

Q—Can you tell us from what to what?

A—Yes. It had been altered from November the 24th, 1837, to November 24th, 1807.

Q—Based on those examinations, were you able to conclude whether or not that was a genuine letter?

A—In my opinion, it is not a genuine document.

OATH OF A FREEMAN

The *Oath of a Freeman*, as far as monetary value is concerned, was supposed to be Mark Hofmann's greatest discovery. Mr. Hofmann, in fact, claimed that it was worth 1.5 million dollars! Although this figure may be inflated, experts agree that it would be worth a great deal of money if it could be proven authentic. What Hofmann claimed to have was the only extant copy of the first document printed in America. After the bombings, the *New York Times* published an article by Edwin McDowell. In this article we find the following:

A gallery in New York that deals in rare books said yesterday that it was in possession of the first item ever printed on a press in America—the one-page “Oath of a Freeman,” which is said to have been printed in Cambridge, Mass., in 1638 or 1639.

Until now, the earliest known American imprint has been the Bay Psalm Book, published in 1640 by the same printer, Stephen Daye.

The principal owner of the “Oath of a Freeman,” which was purchased for a few dollars in a New York book shop last spring, is Mark Hofmann, . . .

The existence of the “Oath of a Freeman” was noted in 1647 by John Winthrop, the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who recorded in his diary that it was the “first thing” printed by Mr. Daye eight or nine years earlier. No other copy has ever emerged. . . .

The Library of Congress was asked by the Schiller Wapner Galleries, . . . which also owns part of the “Oath of a Freeman,” to authenticate the document. In a statement mentioning that the discovery of the Oath “would be one of the most important and exciting finds of the century,” the Library said its examination “found nothing inconsistent with a mid-17th-century attribution, though additional tests remain to be conducted.” . . .

“I don’t know anything about the bombings, but I do know that Mr. Hofmann’s discovery has the ring of authenticity,” said Raymond Wapner, . . .

The Schiller Wapner Galleries offered to sell the document to the Library of Congress and to the American Antiquarian Society, reportedly for \$1.5 million. The Library of Congress announcement said only that it entered into discussions, “which did not lead to an agreement on a formal offer” . . .

The “Oath of a Freeman,” according to the Library of Congress, was required of all new members of the Massachusetts Bay Company. They had to pledge their obedience to the company’s government, “making this the foundation of our country’s understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

The following appeared in *The ALPHA Newsletter*, a publication of the American Printing History Association, in January 1986, pages 1-2:

. . . the Freeman’s Oath soon vanished as have so many other pieces of ephemeral printing. The only difference in this instance is that it was known to have been printed; it possessed great historical, symbolic, and monetary value; and it has been sought for over 250 years. Now, after three and a half centuries of oblivion, it appears to have been found.

The broadside was bought for \$25 at the Argosy bookshop in New York City, and is now the property of 31-year old Mark Hoffmann, . . .

Hoffmann took the broadside to dealers Justin Schiller and Raymond Wapner in New York, and they compared it to a copy of *The Whole Books of Psalmes*—the first book printed in English America, of which there are now eleven copies extant of the

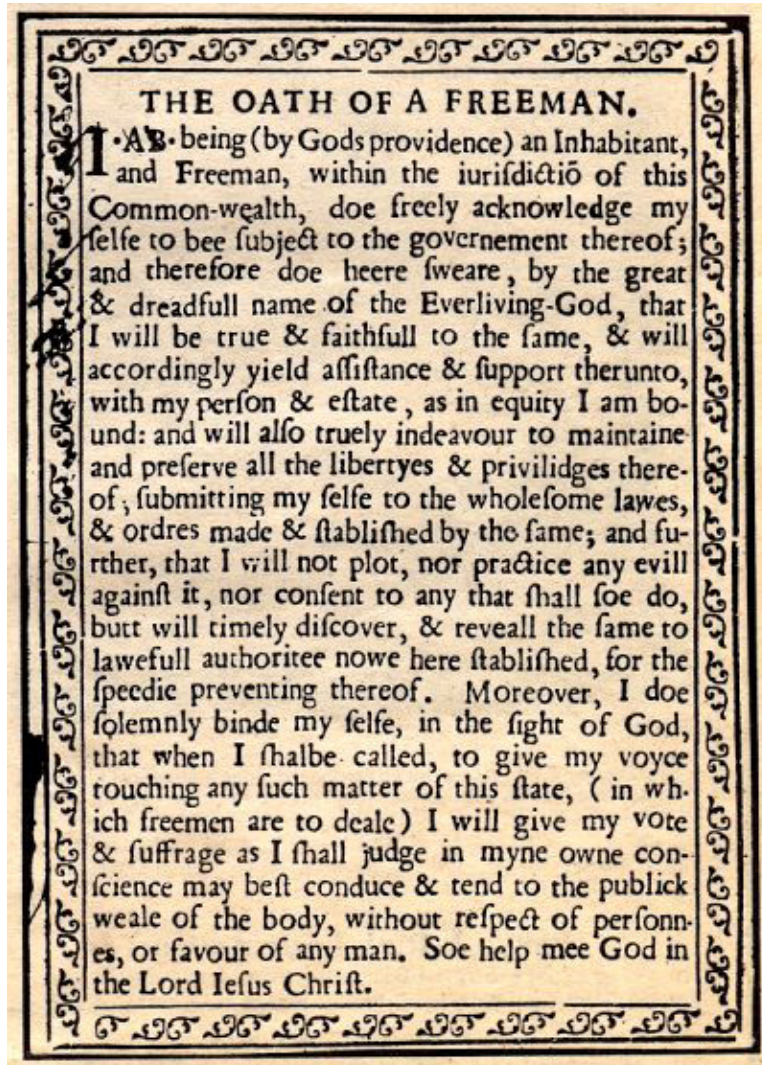
original edition of 1,700 copies. Because the oath and the psalm book matched well, Schiller and Wapner agreed to represent Hoffmann in the sale of the oath, and sent it to the conservation laboratory at the Library of Congress for testing. There the basic elements of the broadside—ink, paper, and text—all appeared correct. . . .

In April 1985 the LC entered into discussions with Schiller-Wapner Galleries, Inc., which, in the LC’s words “did not lead to an agreement on a formal offer.” The asking price was reportedly \$1,500,000. The Library returned the broadside . . . in June. At the time of the discussions LC did not know the name of the owner. James Gilreath, American history specialist at the Library of Congress, has stated that “questions of title, provenance, and price made us decide to return it.”

When I first learned of the Oath of a Freeman I was very skeptical with regard to its authenticity. It reminded me too much of the story of the Salamander letter. The Salamander letter was supposed to have been obtained for only \$25 and sold for \$40,000 (1,600 times the original price). Hofmann claimed he obtained the Oath of a Freeman for only \$25 and wanted to sell it for \$1,500,000, which would be 60,000 times its original purchase price! I also felt that the Oath would be the very type of thing a forger would want to produce. The text fits easily on just one side of a single sheet of paper. In fact, the Hofmann document is only 4 by 6 inches in size. This comment appeared in *The ALPHA Newsletter*, page 2:

There is little doubt that the document presents a prospective purchaser with problems. It is, after all, a 4” x 6” piece of unwatermarked paper, printed on one side with no date or place of printing; it has no provenance; and the owner has found himself in the midst of a scene of violence and intrigue that is unsettling to august institutions. . . . the question of a possible fake in the case of the Freeman’s Oath must also be addressed. Could it be done? On this question we would be interested in hearing comments from any reader with expert knowledge. Our own feeling is that it could be done, but it would not be easy. On the other hand the reward would be great.

The same newsletter said that the search for the original Oath of a Freeman “has been in progress since the middle of the eighteenth century.” It is interesting to note that even the *Freemen Digest*, edited by W. Cleon Skousen had an article on this document in the July



A photograph of the *Oath of a Freeman*. Hofmann said it was worth \$1,500,000.

1984 issue. This paper is published in Salt Lake City and is widely distributed among the Mormon people.

In December 1985, the *Maine Antique Digest* printed some interesting information concerning Hofmann's major discovery:

It appears that Hofmann, a scout with a nose for rare manuscripts, was in New York in March, 1985, and picked up a Sotheby's catalogue for a March 27th sale of American books and autographs . . . Reading the catalogue on the plane back to Utah, he noticed . . . a pamphlet, known as *New Englands Jonas Cast Up at London*, by Major John Child, printed in London in 1647. . . .

The catalogue noted that it also "provides the earliest reprint of 'The Freeman's Oath,' the first issue from Stephen Daye's Cambridge press, of which no copy of the original printing survives."

Hofmann got to thinking that a postcard-size broadside he had bought at the Argosy bookshop in New York for \$25 during an earlier trip East was indeed the only copy of the Freeman's Oath. . . .

The comparison of the oath with the psalm book showed that printer's ornaments found in the psalm book also appeared around the border of the Freeman's Oath, and the type and paper were the same. "The chain line [i.e. border] on some of the [*Psalm Book*] pages matched beautifully to the chain line on the oath," Wapner said. . . .

According to Wapner, although they have had firm offers from both institutions and private individuals below the acceptable price, "it will have to undergo further tests, but we would like the possible purchaser to underwrite the tests." . . .

Others dismissed it as a modern forgery. "I just didn't believe it when I saw it last spring," said Westchester, New York businessman Michael Zinman, who . . . purchased the *New Englands Jonas* at Sotheby's . . .

"Hofmann has come up with too many remarkable documents in disparate areas," said Zinman, . . .

"Even if you want to believe, how can you? You just don't find three Holy Grails in one year," contends Zinman, . . .

Charles Hamilton, the outspoken New York autograph dealer, vouched for Hofmann's abilities. . . .

But Hamilton went on to say he was skeptical about the Freeman's Oath, and he detailed how he would go about printing one so it would pass muster under critical eyes. "First, I'd get a text, possibly from a similar document issued elsewhere. I'd get this from some book on early Massachusetts or about Stephen Daye.

"Next, I'd get some paper. This, I'd steal from a library after getting permission to use the rare book room. Preferably the paper should be the fly-leaf or any blank leaf from a book printed by Daye.

"Then, I'd get a copy of a facsimile edition of the *Bay Psalm Book*—very easy to get, as they are worth only \$5 or \$10 each. I would cut the letters out, paste them together in order to make the text, and then I would add an ornamental border. This is not hard to do, and the very slight irregularity of the pasted-together letters would perfectly simulate the early type composition.

"I would photograph this, in reverse, then I'd have a slightly embossed text of the reverse made up. I would print the Freeman's Oath on the Stephen Daye paper, so that the raised letters would slightly impinge on the verso and give the impression that the actual type was used on an early press.

"This entire job could be done in less than a week. I'd print several so that I could later produce a 'damaged' one that I could sell at a lower price." (*Maine Antique Digest*, December 1985, page 26-A)

As I have already stated, when I first learned of Hofmann's Oath of a Freeman, I felt that it must be a forgery. Like Charles Hamilton, I concluded that a wise forger would probably make a number of copies. If the paper was available, it would probably only take a few minutes more to make extra copies. On December 21, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the startling news that Hofmann did claim he had found two copies of the Oath:

Shannon Patrick Flynn . . . said Friday that Mr. Hofmann claimed he found two copies of the oath, and that he was using the second copy of the oath as collateral in an attempt to raise money to tide him over financial problems until a buyer for the first copy of the oath was found.

The *Tribune* Friday contacted Dickson D. "Duke" Cowley in Phoenix, Ariz., who said he and another Arizona man were approached in September by Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Flynn, who represented that they were in possession of a **second copy** of the oath and wanted Mr. Cowley and co-investor Wilford Cardon to buy a 30 percent interest in that document for \$175,000. The deal later fell through, he said.

At the preliminary hearing, Wilford Cardon was questioned concerning what Hofmann told him about the second Oath of a Freeman:

Q—You were told what the status of the first Oath was?

A—Yes.

Q—And Mark explained to you why it was important to him not to have revealed to you earlier that there were in fact two Oaths?

A—Yes.

Q—And in fact he told you if he revealed to potential buyers that if anyone knows he had two of them, he would radically decrease the value of them both?

A—That's correct.

Q—And so, therefore, it was important to sell first the one and then put the second one on the market, but not to attempt to market them both simultaneously?

A—That . . . was explained to me.

According to Mr. Cardon's testimony, Mark Hofmann told him he had actually sold the first Oath for "a million five hundred thousand dollars; that he had received a down payment of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and a note to be paid over the next twelve months—the amount of a million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars." The truth of the matter, of course, was that Hofmann had not received any money because the deal had fallen through. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 9, 1985, revealed:

Negotiations for the sale of "The Oath of a Freeman" by bombing suspect Mark Hofmann—from which money was promised to pay off a \$185,000 loan from First Interstate Bank—were cut off two weeks before a Mormon church official contacted the bank to secure the loan. . . . In an October prepared statement, Mr. Pinnock said Mr. Hofmann assured him that money to repay the loan would come from the sale of a document to the Library of Congress.

At the preliminary hearing, Thomas Wilding told how Mark Hofmann approached him with the idea of buying the second Oath: "He then said that 'I have an investment that is just phenomenal. I'd really like you to participate in it.' And it was the Oath of a Freeman." Mr. Wilding went on to testify:

Q—And so Mr. Hofmann was now offering a second Oath of a Freeman?

A—That's right.

.....

Q—And what did he tell you?

A—Well, first of all, he told us that the first one had been sold. Second, of all he told us . . . that if the first Oath sold for over a million, that the second Oath had to be worth a million and a half because it was supposedly one of the first printed documents in the colonial United States.

Mr. Hofmann told Thomas Wilding and his investors that he was selling them a part interest in the second Oath. Wilding claimed that Hofmann later gave him a receipt which "reads like this: 'Received from Thomas R. Wilding a check to the amount of \$173,870 for investment in Oath of Freeman manuscript.' Signed by Mark Hofmann, September 12, 1985."

As I have shown in an earlier chapter, Mark Hofmann told Wilding he was flying back east to obtain the Oath. When Wilding learned that Hofmann did not make the trip, he was very upset. Mr. Hofmann claimed, however, that one of his friends went back to pick up the document for him. After Thomas Wilding exerted a great deal of pressure on him, Hofmann finally turned the second Oath over to him. Mr. Wilding claimed that he put the Oath in his "deposit box." He said that when he put it in the vault, Hofmann cautioned him to keep the matter quiet: "'I don't want any of the other people involved to know you've got this.' This was the jest of the sentence."

As in the case of the Salamander letter, Mark Hofmann told Thomas Wilding that Lyn Jacobs was the owner of the second Oath:

Q—And where was it that he was going to get this second Oath?

A—He was going to purchase it from a collector in Boston—a dealer by the name of Lyn Jacobs.

Mr. Wilding went on to give this testimony concerning Mark Hofmann's claim that Lyn Jacobs was the owner of the second Oath:

Q—. . . what information did he [Hofmann] give you concerning the second Oath of a Freeman and the first Oath?

A—That the first one had been sold. And the second one, he was going to buy from Lyn Jacobs, who was supposedly in Boston, for a price of around \$500,000, and that he would fly back to around the Boston-New York area to pick it up.

Q—Now, and you were with _____

A—I further questioned him at that time. . . . if it's worth over a million dollars, why would Mr. Jacobs sell it for 500,000?

Q—And his response?

A—And his response was that he had owned it for a year and that he had a gain sufficient enough that he was willing to let it go.

Mr. Wilding claimed that Mark Hofmann showed him and the other investors "from a distance the back part of a cashier's check made out to Lyn Jacobs. He implied that it had gone to Lyn Jacobs." Although it is apparently true that Mark Hofmann originally had

a cashier's check made out to Lyn Jacobs, he turned it back into the bank and Jacobs did not receive the money. Lyn Jacobs testified as follow:

Q—Have you ever heard of a second copy of the Oath of a Freeman?

A—I have heard of people talking about it and rumors about it, yes.

Q—Have you ever seen that copy or that second Oath of a Freeman?

A—I have not.

Q—Have you ever had possession of it?

A—I have not.

Q—Was that document ever yours?

A—Never.

Q—Did Mark Hofmann obtain that document from you?

A—He did not.

Q—Or through you?

A—He did not.

Q—Did there ever come a time that you received any money from Mr. Mark Hofmann, specifically \$142,000 or whatever, in payment for that item?

A—I have never received any money in conjunction with that document or any other entitled, The Oath of a Freeman.

Q—You never had a proprietary interest in any Oath of a Freeman?

A—I haven't. It was all his business.

After the bombings, the investors in the second Oath took it back to New York and showed it to Schiller and Wapner—the men who were selling the first Oath for Hofmann. Thomas Wilding testified that they were shocked:

A—We pulled the Oath out and showed it to Justin [Schiller] and Raymond Wapner.

Q—When you showed them, Mr. Schiller and Mr. Wapner, the second Oath for the first time, what was their reaction?

A—Totally overwhelmed, dumbfounded, astounded.

At the preliminary hearing it was revealed that the Oath of a Freeman was a forgery which was made from an engraved plate Mark Hofmann—using the alias “Mike Hansen”—ordered from DeBouzek Engraving Company. Jack Smith testified: “This is another one. It is the ‘Oath of a Freeman’ that we made a plate for and approved for a Mike Hansen.” Mr. Smith said the plate was ordered “March 25, 1985.” Although Schiller and Wapner fought the subpoena for their copy of the Oath (they claimed that it was too valuable to risk damage by investigators), the second Oath was compared with the negative from the printing plate and was

declared a forgery: “Prosecutor Stott then showed him [William Flynn] a copy of the purported second ‘Oath of a Freeman’ and a printing negative. Flynn testified that microscopic details in both indicate the ‘Oath of a Freeman’ was made from the master negative” (*Deseret News*, May 8, 1986). In his testimony, Mr. Flynn said that the “negative that’s before me was used as the master from which a plate was produced which ultimately produced the Oath of a Freeman that I have before me.” Mr. Flynn insisted that the printed Oath had to come from the negative:

The anomaly is the emulsion on the negative itself . . . this is something that can be seen quite clearly under the microscope. The anomaly on the final document—that is the positive Oath of a Freeman—those anomalies are printed onto that document because part of the emulsion of that . . . negative did not wash off at the time it was washed and fixed. Those anomalies transferred to the metallic plate—the zinc plate, which then transferred to the positive. . . . My contention is that it’s a one-way street. It could not have occurred the other way. We could not have started out with the Oath of a Freeman and then created that negative as a result.

George Throckmorton gave the following testimony at the preliminary hearing:

Q—What within the negative did you find as a distinguishing feature of which you were able to make the actual comparison to the printed words on the Oath itself?

A—Well, there was one part particularly that was noticeable. On the negative itself, I can’t remember, it was one of the small letter *m*s, as I recall, there appeared to have been some type of a hair or a small hairline crack that was evident on the negative. It was, actually appeared to be . . . a lack of proper washing where the emulsion on the film itself remained intact, and I was able through microscopic examination to find this same discrepancy on the Oath of a Freeman, and that was one particular point that was observed in this examination. There were also several other class characteristics, that we call them, that was observed between the negative and the printed material.

Q—And did you have occasion to formulate an opinion with respect to a natural relationship between the negative, The Oath of a Freeman, and the document printed in Exhibit #137?

A—Yes, sir, I did.

Q—Could you please tell us your conclusion or opinion?

A—The negative in Exhibit 125 was used to make a printing plate. This plate was used to print The Oath of a Freeman, which is exhibit #137.

.....

Q—And you have, again looking at this document as . . . an authentic 17th century document from approximately 1653 [*sic*], do you have an opinion as to the authenticity of that document, the actual oath, as relates to that time frame?

A—Yes.

Q—What is it?

A—It couldn't possibly be authentic because it was made from this negative or from a plate . . . that this negative made.

The reader will remember that we gave Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs a very difficult time because they refused to show a provenance on the Salamander letter—i.e., they would not reveal where it came from. With regard to the Oath of a Freeman, Mr. Hofmann was faced with a similar problem. There was no way that he could furnish a convincing pedigree for the document. Nevertheless, he tried to offset criticism to some extent by obtaining a receipt which showed he had acquired a document entitled, The Oath of a Freeman, from Argosy Book of New York City for \$25. According to Detective Jim Bell's testimony at the preliminary hearing, this receipt is dated "3-13 of 85." The receipt could be taken as evidence for the authenticity of the Oath if it were not for the fact that detectives discovered that five days earlier (March 8, 1985) Mr. Hofmann ordered a metal plate from DeBouzek Engraving. The plate was ordered under the alias "Mike Harris," but the phone number given (484-5444) was at that time Mark Hofmann's unlisted number! This plate is not to be confused with the one Hofmann ordered under the date of March 25, 1985. David Hewett gives this interesting information concerning the plate ordered on March 8, 1985:

Examination of the negative used to make that plate shows it to be of a piece of sheet music titled *The President's Hymn*, a work dedicated to President Lincoln and issued on November 26, 1863. The Library of Congress number for the piece is #107003.

The text at the top of the page bearing the lyrics has been removed and the words "The Oath of a Freeman" inserted in type that is definitely out of style for the rest of the piece. Anyone with the smallest amount of knowledge of 17th-century documents would have no trouble identifying anything made by this plate as out of period.

What does it prove? One of the investigators appearing at the preliminary hearing smiled when he was asked that. "See what it proves when you compare it to the date of the next event," he said. That was in a private conversation, one conducted off the witness stand, with reporters.

The next event happened on March 13, 1985, but proof of it never surfaced until October 25, 1985. On that latter date, a search of Mark Hofmann's van turned up a receipt from Argosy Books of New York City. Among several other items listed on that receipt was The Oath of a Freeman at \$25. "What those two events seem to prove is that Mike Harris (who happened to have the same telephone number as Mark Hofmann) had a printing plate of a bogus Oath made five days before Mark Hofmann bought something also listed as an Oath in New York City." (*Maine Antique Digest*, July 1986, pages 4C-5C)

On page 8-C of the same publication, we find the following:

Some of the Hofmann prosecution team contend that this is what happened:

On March 8, 1985, Hofmann had a printing plate for an obviously bogus Oath made in Salt Lake.

On March 13, he slipped an Oath made from that plate into a folder at New York City's Argosy Books, pretended to find it there, took it to the cashier, bought it for \$25, and received a receipt.

On March 25, he had another, better, printing plate made back in Salt Lake.

On March 26, he took an Oath made from the second printing plate to Schiller and Wapner in New York City, where he consigned it for eventual sale.

DOCUMENTS ON MONEY-DIGGING

I have already shown that Mark Hofmann brought forth two extremely important letters relating to Joseph Smith's money-digging activities. Both of these documents—the Salamander letter and the letter of Joseph Smith to Stowell—have been declared fraudulent by investigators. When the Mormon Church finally published the list of documents it had acquired from Mark Hofmann, I learned that another highly significant letter concerning Joseph Smith's money-digging practices was questionable because it came through Hofmann's hands: "23. A document, dated May 25, to Hiram Smith asking him to come to Far West. No signature. Purportedly originating with Joseph Smith" (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). I had been aware of this letter since 1984 when it was published in Dean Jessee's book, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 358-359. The text of the letter reads as follows:

verily thus saith the Lord unto
 Hyrum Smith if he will come
 straightway to Far West and in
 -quire of his brother it shall
 be shown him how that he
 may be freed from det and ob
 -tain a great treasure in the
 earth even so it is

FAR WEST
 FEB 22
 Mr Hyrum Smith
 Paltisgrove

A photograph of a letter concerning money-digging which Joseph Smith was supposed to have written to his brother, Hyrum. The photograph is taken from *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. The postmark is questionable.

Verily thus Saith the Lord unto Hiram Smith if he will come strateaway to Far West and inquire of his brother it Shall be Shown him how that he may be freed from de[b]t and obtain a grate treasure in the earth even so Amen

When Dean Jessee published the letter, he listed the source as “LDS Church Archives.” Since nothing was said concerning the fact that the letter came through Mark Hofmann, I felt that there was a possibility that it could be an authentic letter the Church had preserved since the time of Joseph Smith. Now that I know that it came through Hofmann, I have no confidence in its authenticity. Since some of the Mormon historians must have been aware that the letter’s source was Hofmann, it is strange that they did not begin to question the improbability of one person turning up three highly significant letters concerning Joseph Smith’s money-digging practices—two of them purported to be in the very handwriting of Joseph Smith.

At any rate, the reader will notice that the 1838 letter from Far West is actually a revelation to Joseph Smith’s brother. This is clear because it begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord . . .” This letter appears to be patterned after another revelation given by Joseph Smith concerning the location of buried treasures in Salem, Massachusetts. This revelation is actually canonized in the Mormon Church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*—one of the four standard works of the Church. In Section 111, verses 1, 2, 4 and 5, we read:

I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, . . . I have much treasure in this city for you, . . . I will give this city into your hands . . . and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours. Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them.

Ebenezer Robinson sadly commented, “It is needless to say they failed to find that treasure, or the gold and silver spoken of in the revelation” (*The Return*, vol. 1, page 106). For a more complete treatment of the Salem affair see our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 49.

The idea for an 1838 revelation concerning buried treasures may have also come from Joseph Smith’s *History*. The letter purports to be written just after Joseph Smith explored some mounds. His *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 37, indicates that he believed these mounds contained treasures:

. . . I returned to camp . . . We discovered some antiquities about one mile west of the camp, consisting of stone mounds, . . . These mounds were probably erected by the aborigines of the land, to secrete treasures.

The “Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith” reported that “valuable treasures” were deposited in these mounds (see the text in our publication *Joseph Smith’s 1838-39 Diaries*, page 10).

Although investigators have not declared the Far West letter to be a forgery, the Mormon writer Richard Anderson has given some information which throws a cloud of doubt on its authenticity:

With the help of the LDS Historical Department staff, six Far West postmarks have been located, all of which match in the orange-brown color of ink used in 1838 and 1839, years which do not appear on the handstamps but are indicated within each letter. However, the disputed treasure revelation has an irregular dark red postmark. This Hofmann document is also out of sequence in its type face. . . . The 1838 marks of 3 February, 3 June, 18 June, and 15 July have a common block-letter design that is symmetrical, with the “Mo.” abbreviation using the lower case *o* and period. But after mid-July a different stamp appears, with more stylized narrow and wide strokes to form unbalanced letters, ending with the “MO” abbreviation in upper case without the period. This face appears in the handstamps of 3 October 1838 and 1 May 1839. Although the letters in the Hofmann stamp are badly formed, they clearly resemble the broad-narrow strokes of the later postmark, including the capital “MO” abbreviation. But since the revelation’s handstamp of 25 May should fit that used in the first half of 1838, available postmarks indicate anachronism, not confirmation.

Moreover, a careful examination of the lettering raises the question of whether the treasure revelation merely imitates a postmark. The six authentic impressions are generally more solid than the Hofmann document because of ink saturation of the paper. . . . No other handstamp shows heavy dots and lines alternating with even spaces, and every other handstamp shows ink flow and other evidence of the pressure of the printing stroke. But every letter in the disputed 25 May 1838 postmark has characteristics of a freehand sketch. Art designer Carma de Jong Anderson feels strongly that this apparent stamp was “drawn painstakingly by an unskilled person.” The straight edges and geometric

clarity of authentic engraving are lacking here. . . . the handwritten postage of six cents adds a location difficulty, for it was the statutory amount for a letter sent within thirty miles of origin. But after careful searches of place names, I have been unable to find a “Plattesgrove” in upper Missouri, or even in the state. . . . Since the 1838 treasure revelation fails too many of the checks that historians can make, it should not be classed as an authentic Joseph Smith document. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, pages 508, 509 and 515)

Besides the three letters concerning Joseph Smith’s money-digging activities, Mark Hofmann also claimed that he rediscovered a money-digging agreement Joseph Smith signed in 1825. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported the following on October 16, 1985:

Friends said Mr. [Steven] Christensen was trying to buy first rights to another Mormon historical document signed by church founder Joseph Smith and his father, Joseph Smith, Sr. In this document, the two men were given shares in a money-digging enterprise.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* had published the agreement between Joseph Smith and the other money-diggers on April 23, 1880. We had reprinted it in our book, *Joseph Smith and Money Digging* in 1970 (see pages 5-6). Although I accepted this as a genuine document, I felt that the original copy had been lost. In late 1982, however, Mark Hofmann began to talk of the discovery of the handwritten document. I had a discussion with him concerning the matter, and he informed me that he knew where the original was and that it would soon come to light. He stated, in fact, that it would probably be published. I later learned that Mr. Hofmann had turned over the “literary rights” to Steven Christensen—the man who was killed in the first bombing incident. I feel that in this transaction Mark Hofmann may have been using Steven Christensen’s ignorance of the copyright laws to his own advantage. Mr. Hofmann claimed that he made a typescript of the original copy of the money-digging agreement Joseph Smith signed in 1825. He then conveyed “all literary and property rights” that he “may have” in the typescript to Steven Christensen. Although I cannot prove it, I assume that Mr. Hofmann received some compensation for this transaction. The strange thing about this matter is that Hofmann would have known he had no literary rights in the manuscript. As I have already shown, when we originally published the Anthon transcript, Mark Hofmann felt that he had manuscript rights in it and that we should have sought his permission before

printing it. We told him, however, that he did not have any manuscript rights in the document. Later he said that he had verified that our interpretation concerning manuscript rights was correct. Although I feel that Mr. Hofmann had a right to sell a typescript of the money-digging agreement for any amount of money Steven Christensen was willing to pay, he should have informed him that he had no “literary rights” to convey. In any case, in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* I reported a statement by a Mormon scholar which indicated that Mr. Christensen may have obtained a photocopy of the original money-digging agreement from Hofmann. Brent Metcalfe, however, informed me this was incorrect. He claimed that Christensen only had a typescript of the document. There is now, in fact, a serious question as to whether Mr. Hofmann ever saw the original document at all. Investigators have apparently been unable to find any evidence he had access to the original, and it may very well be that what he gave Mr. Christensen was only a work of his own imagination which was based upon a printing of the document done in the 19th century.

Of the four documents Mark Hofmann claimed to find on Joseph Smith’s involvement in money-digging, I feel that the money-digging agreement would be the most likely to be authentic. That he apparently had no photograph to turn over to Mr. Christensen makes me very suspicious concerning the existence of this document. It would actually be very dangerous to try to forge the money-digging agreement. This document would require eight different signatures—some of which would probably be very difficult to locate. Unless a forger could be absolutely certain of all eight signatures, he would be in constant fear that someone like Wesley P. Walters, who was very interested in these signatures, would overthrow his work.

MORMON MONEY

One of Mark Hofmann’s greatest interests was old Mormon money. As I have shown earlier, when Hofmann was “about 12” he bought his “first Mormon item: a \$5 Kirtland Safety Society note . . . signed by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16). When he was “about 15 or 16” he “picked up a \$50 Kirtland note at an antique shop” (*Ibid.*). Lyn Jacobs claims that when he first met Mark Hofmann in 1979 or 1980, Hofmann was peddling “some Kirtland bills or something like that” at the Church’s Deseret Book (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 10).

Mark Hofmann soon became a recognized authority on old Mormon money. In the Preface to his definitive work, *Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, Alvin Rust thanked Hofmann for his help. On pages 58 and 59 of his book, Mr. Rust has “Table 7. Serial Numbers of Kirtland Re-signed Notes.” Rust acknowledges that the table was “compiled by Mark Hofmann.” At the preliminary hearing, Alvin Rust testified that Hofmann had given him a good deal of help when he prepared his book.

In August 1980, Mark Hofmann published an article in *TAMS Journal*, the Official Organ of the Token and Medal Society. In this article, page 152, Mr. Hofmann told of “a small copper token promoting Smith’s candidacy. Presumably struck in Nauvoo, the piece bears the date 1844 and the words GEN. JOSEPH SMITH on one side. On the other side, encircling a five-pointed star, are the words FOR U.S. PRESIDENT. The existence of such a token certainly attests to the fact the members of the Mormon Church at the time took Joseph Smith’s candidacy seriously.”

The Mormon Church allowed Mark Hofmann access to a manuscript entitled, “Brigham Young’s Daily Transactions in Gold Dust.” From this manuscript, Mr. Hofmann compiled some important information concerning a type of currency used in early Utah known as “gold notes,” “valley notes” or “white notes.” According to Alvin Rust, these “paper notes . . . were backed 80 percent by the gold dust in the local treasury” (*Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, page 47). Harry F. Campbell utilized Mark Hofmann’s work in his book, *Campbells Tokens of Utah*. On page 312 of this book, Mr. Campbell stated: “The above information, ‘Mormon Currency Table’ was prepared by Mark W. Hofmann and is shown courtesy of the L.D.S. Church.”

After it became apparent that some white notes which Mark Hofmann sold were questionable, Jerry Urban pointed out to me that the “Mormon Currency Table” prepared by Hofmann could have been used in a counterfeiting operation. Mr. Hofmann’s table lists the “DENOMINATIONS,” “NUMBER ISSUED,” “NUMBER KNOWN,” “NUMBER OUTSTANDING” and “SERIAL NUMBERS OF OUTSTANDING NOTES.” In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 5, Hofmann was charged with selling the Mormon Church bogus white notes:

Your affiant has been informed by Donald Schmidt to the following: That on or about March, 1981, Mark W. Hofmann completed an agreement to trade to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, four handwritten white notes supposedly signed by Brigham Young and others in exchange for property valued at over \$1,000.00.

It would appear that Mr. Hofmann used the very information the Church supplied him with to create the white notes and then turned right around and sold the notes to the Church. In his testimony, former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt was asked if there was any description of the white notes:

A—Yes.

Q—In what sources?

A—Brigham Young’s journal called “Gold Account Book.”

Q—. . . Could you tell us roughly what that . . . description is . . . in that document?

A—[It] describes the exact size or the approximate size that they were, the type of paper that they used and the fact that they cut them by scissors, really.

Although printed valley notes were known before Mark Hofmann came on the scene, Donald Schmidt testified that he “had not seen any” of the handwritten kind which Hofmann offered to him. He also testified that to his knowledge “no one” had seen the handwritten white notes before Hofmann’s discovery. He said that the four notes were worth “at least \$20,000.” When Mr. Schmidt was asked the source from which Mr. Hofmann obtained the white notes, he replied that it was the “same source as the Joseph Smith III Blessing”—i.e., Allen Bullock, the mysterious individual who cannot be located.

Alvin Rust gave some very interesting testimony with regard to the white notes:

Q—Prior to March of 1981 had you ever come across a handwritten valley note?

A—I had never seen a handwritten valley note.

.

Q—How was _____ first you came across some some white notes in March of 81?

A—Mark Hofmann came into my store and we were in the back office, and he handed me these eight notes and I looked at them and . . . well, to be honest it really shock me up because I had never seen them. . . . It really blew my mind.

Mr. Rust testified that he bought four of the notes for “\$12,000.” Later, however, Mark Hofmann told Mr. Rust there were nine more notes available:

Q—Now, at that time with the original eight were you informed by Mr. Hofmann that that was all he had or if there were any more?

A—At that time . . . only eight were known, or that’s all that he told me there was.

Q—Later on was you aware that there [were] more than eight?

A—A few months later . . . he came back in the store and told me that he had located nine more of these notes, and that these nine notes had come from the same source. . . .

Alvin Rust said that he bought the additional nine notes from Hofmann: “. . . I purchased the rest of the notes for \$27,000.” Mr. Rust did not actually see these notes, and when he pressed Mr. Hofmann to turn them over to him, Hofmann said he wanted to buy them back: “Without ever seeing the notes, I sold them back to Mark Hofmann for \$40,000.” Although we may never know the truth about this matter, it is possible that Mr. Hofmann had found another buyer who was willing to pay more money for the notes. However this may be, Mr. Rust testified that no one besides Hofmann had ever found a handwritten white note:

Q—To your understanding and knowledge have any white notes . . . come to light independent of Mr. Mark Hofmann?

A—Not that I know of.

In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, document expert George Throckmorton claimed that he found evidence of cracked ink in the notes: “There were signatures that were contained on those white notes, and many of these signatures contained that cracking effect also.” William Flynn also examined the white notes and noted the cracked ink:

A—. . . There were actually two different inks that were used to produce the white notes. One of the inks had gum or sugar as a constituent part. The other did not. There was extensive cracking on the gold note number, serial number 18. That was cracked throughout the document and I believe it was even, yes, it was even cracked on the one-half. It is written on the back of that document. On white note number 143—

On 143, the signature Heber Kimball is extensively cracked. On white note number 15, the cracking takes place except for the phrase “Whitney.” The Whitney name on the document is not cracked. And on number 97, there was little cracking on that document at all. The cracking was around . . . the edges of the writing only.

Q—Do you have an opinion as to whether or not those four white notes are authentic documents of the time period they’re purported to be from?

A—Yes.

Q—What is that opinion?

A—I don’t believe those are genuine documents from that time period.

It is interesting to notice that the serial numbers on the notes Mr. Flynn questioned seem to match the numbers which appear under the “SERIAL NUMBERS OF OUTSTANDING NOTES” in Mark Hofmann’s “Mormon Currency Table.”

While Mark Hofmann also sold some of the printed white notes, I have no evidence that they were counterfeit. He apparently obtained some genuine printed white notes in trade with the Church Archives. This, of course, would not preclude the possibility that he could have made plates from the original printed notes and circulated bogus copies.

The *Deseret News* for April 22, 1986, reported the following:

Rust . . . detailed his dealings with Hofmann beginning in early 1982, when Hofmann sold him a set of four “Spanish Fork Co-op” notes for \$2,500.

Rust said he had seen Spanish Fork scrip before, but the set Hofmann offered was of a type and series he had never seen before. He said Hofmann returned a few months later with a different series of Spanish Fork notes, which Rust purchased for \$1,500. “I would call them very rare items,” he said.

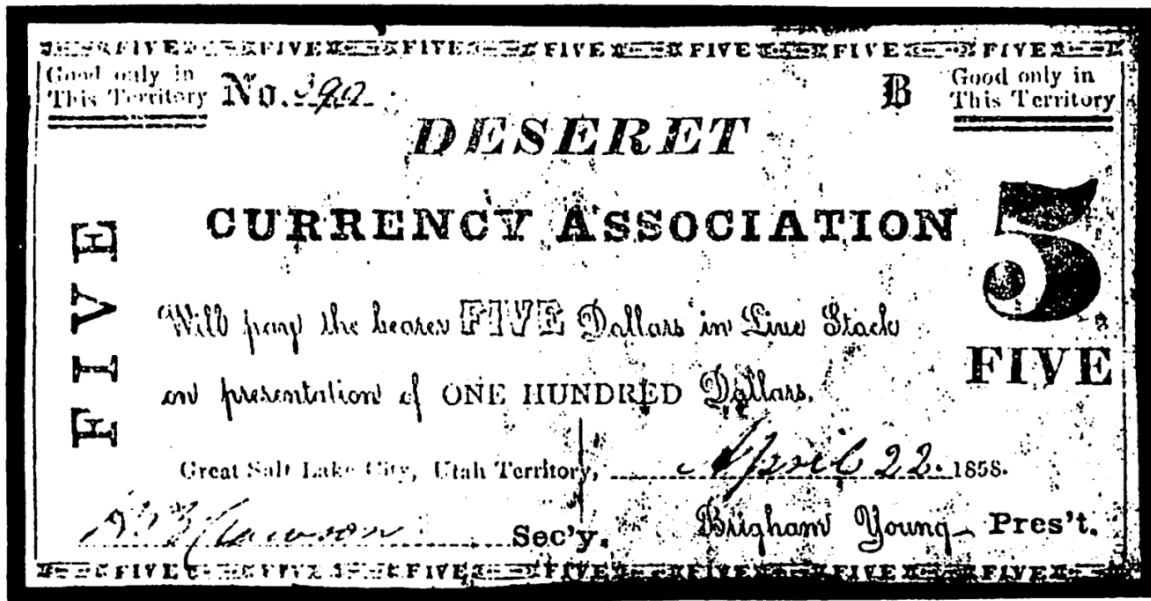
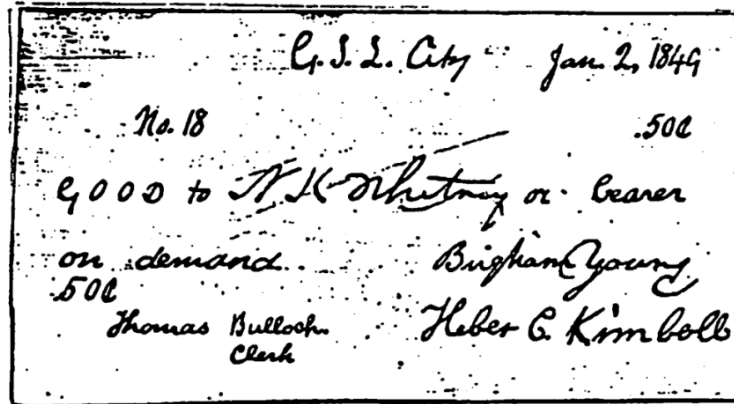
The Spanish Fork notes also turned out to be counterfeits. Jan Thompson and Jerry Spangler wrote:

George Throckmorton, forensic documents examiner with the Utah attorney general’s office, detailed a variety of methods he and prosecutors believe Hofmann used . . .

Rub-on letters commonly available at art supply stores were used by Hofmann to create phony 19th century notes, Throckmorton testified.

Holding up sheets of rub-on black letters, Throckmorton said the missing letters exactly matched size and style of the printing found on early Utah currency purported to be Spanish Fork Cooperative Notes. The rub-on letters had all been removed and then applied to the forged notes with a purple pencil, he said. (*Deseret News*, May 13, 1986)

Mark Hofmann not only used rub-on lettering to create these notes, but he also obtained rubber stamps to stamp on the denominations. David Hewett wrote the following:



At the top of the page the reader will find a photograph of a handwritten white note which the Mormon Church obtained from Hofmann. It is taken from *Campbells Tokens of Utah*, page 308. Below this is a photograph of a Deseret Currency note from *Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, page 77.

Edwin Cannon III was the manager of Salt Lake Stamp Company. On January 11, a man giving his name as Mark Hofmann and his address as 266 East, 9585 South, in Sandy (a suburb of Salt Lake and the former home of Hofmann) ordered from Cannon four rubber stamps: one each for the denominations of ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents, and one dollar. The order was picked up and paid for on January 13, 1982. (*Maine Antique Digest*, July 1986, page 2-C)

George Throckmorton discovered that rubber stamps Hofmann had purchased were used to stamp the Spanish Fork notes:

Q—And what was your conclusion with respect to any relationship?

A—The rubber stamp that made the 10 cent and the 50 cent impressions was the same rubber stamp that was used to make the 10 cent and the 50 cent impressions on Exhibit #155. The 25 cent stamped impression was indistinguishable from the 25 cent impression on Exhibit #155, but due to the color of ink, which is a very light colored yellow ink, I was unable to make a positive identification. And on the \$1 rubber stamp on Exhibit 155, I was not furnished any exemplars to compare with that.

Mr. Throckmorton also testified concerning the age of the ink on Hofmann's Spanish Fork notes:

Q—Now, did you have any opportunity to make an ink comparison from the colored red, green, yellow and blue inks on those Spanish Fork notes with any known inks that you _____?

A—Yes, sir.

Q—What kind . . . of ink was it that you had in your possession that you made the comparison with?

A—I obtained several modern day inks from local stores.

Q—Any brand names associated with them?

A—Yes. Particularly the Carter brand ink that is used for rubber stamp pads and re-inking of the pads.

Q—Now, these inks that you used for comparison, how would they be termed with respect to as to when they were produced, the state of the inks and when they were produced opposed to ancient, old, modern, whatever the case may be?

A—Although it was not possible to give it an exact date as to when these inks were produced or manufactured, there were many areas in the history of ink production which caused changes and these inks that are manufactured also have a rotation on the shelf of the individual store and the ink manufacturing companies change their chemical

formulation periodically, which means these inks theoretically that I obtained, they would probably have been just a matter of a few months old, maybe five, six years old maximum.

The *Deseret News*, May 13, 1986, summed the matter up: "Another type of Spanish Fork Cooperative Notes were printed in multiple colors. Throckmorton said he discovered through intricate testing that the red, green and blue inks used on these notes were only four to five years old." Mr. Throckmorton said he looked for "optical whiteners or any illuminescient pigments" that were used in the paper. On all 12 notes he detected "fluorescence" under "ultraviolet light." This indicated to Throckmorton that one of the above had been used in the paper. He said that "Optical brighteners and illuminescient pigments were first introduced into the fiber of paper between the years 1940 and 1950 . . ." Mr. Throckmorton, therefore, claimed that the paper could not have been manufactured prior to that time. He also testified that the notes could not have come from a time period between 1870 and 1915—i.e., the time frame they would have to fall into to be genuine.

In his book, *Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, page 74, Alvin Rust gives this information concerning the Deseret Currency Association:

During the years 1857, 1858, 1859, and to 4 October 1860, the Mormon Church spent \$70,204 in excess of U.S. money which they had received . . . Brigham constantly reminded the Mormons to pay their tithes in U.S. coin, yet it was nearly impossible to obtain. It was during these four years, when there was a lack of U.S. coin, that the Deseret Currency Association provided the medium of exchange necessary for growth, survival, and development in the valley.

On April 22, 1986, the *Deseret News* reported concerning what was going on at Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing. In this report we find the following:

In 1984, Hofmann sold Rust a complete set of "Deseret currency" scrip, paper money issued in 1858 to finance the Utah War. Rust said he paid \$35,000 for the set, which included denominations [of] two series, one of \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100, and the other of \$1, \$2, \$3 and \$20.

Rust, who is the author of a book on early Mormon currency, described the set as "extremely rare," and said he had never before seen other Deseret currency notes in denominations of \$5 or above.

A short time later, Hofmann approached Rust about purchasing another set of Deseret currency.

Curt Bench, of the Church's Deseret Book, testified that he bought a complete set of Deseret Currency from Hofmann for \$18,000." He later resold this set to Richard Marks for "[\\$]35,000." In his testimony, Alvin Rust commented: "At the time I purchased these I had never seen any other Deseret Currency in those denominations." Mr. Rust was questioned further concerning the larger Deseret Currency notes:

Q—Now, at that time, I believe you told me, you . . . were not aware of any of the notes of five and above. Is that correct?

A—Yes.

Q—You had never seen [them] before then?

A—No, I had never seen any.

Mr. Rust testified that he would not have paid the price he did if he had known that there were more than two sets of the Deseret Currency in existence:

Q—Now, at that time when you purchased these were you informed that there were any others?

A—I was informed of one other set by Lyn Jacobs that he was going to be selling to [the] LDS Church, and he enquired if I would not let the Church know that I was buying a set at the same time because he felt if the Church knew I had a set and they had a set, they wouldn't pay the price that he was asking. And I told him I wouldn't do that, and I called Don Schmidt and told him . . . that I had a set and he was going to be offered a set as well.

Q—Other than that other set, were you ever informed by Mr. Hofmann that there were any other sets of Deseret Currency existing or available?

A—No, when I bought these, paying that enormous price, I questioned how many sets or how many notes and I was under the impression that these were all the notes that were in existence.

.....

Q—Is that something that you have been interested in is the number of series?

A—Very much so. If there was a lot of them in existence, I certainly wouldn't have wanted to pay the price I did.

Alvin Rust also testified that Mark Hofmann told him that Lyn Jacobs had located the Deseret Currency in the eastern part of the country:

Q—Did Mr. Hofmann tell you where he obtained the series and a half that he sold to you?

A—Yes. He told me that a gentleman in the east by the name of Lyn Jacobs had located an elderly lady back there that [had] this collection and that she would be willing to sell it through Lyn Jacobs.

Mr. Rust said Mark Hofmann told him he "went back there and made negotiations with Lyn Jacobs and this lady to purchase them." When Lyn Jacobs was called to the witness stand, he absolutely denied the story Mark Hofmann had told Alvin Rust:

Q—Now, sometime near the end of 1982, where you involved with Mark in obtaining Deseret Currency Association notes?

A—I have never been specifically involved in obtaining any. I have been involved in the transactions in which these notes were sold or traded to other individuals, but never in obtaining them. No.

Q—Mr. Hofmann sold a series to Mr. Al Rust during that time. Are you aware of that?

A—He may have sold several. I'm not aware of a specific number.

Q—In that time, you sold a series to the Church, the LDS Church. Is that correct?

A—I took some in on Mark's behalf, yes, one day, when he was quite busy.

Q—And you sold them. Is that correct?

A—I traded them.

Q—You traded them, and it was a series. Is that correct? A full series of notes?

A—I do not remember it being a full series. I do remember, however, that a hundred and a fifty were in it, but I don't remember it being a complete series. It might have been.

Q—And where did you get the notes that he traded to the Church for?

A—Well, Mark gave them to me and said, "would you take these in for me today?"

Q—Prior to that time, had you ever seen those notes, prior to Mark giving them to you?

A—Not the specific ones that he'd given me, no.

Q—Were you involved in obtaining those particular notes?

A—I have never been involved in obtaining any of them.

Q—Didn't you have a source back east?

A—No. Mark Hofmann had a source back east.

Q—Did he come back east with you and there was a little old lady or something and you were the

one who had the source and he had to work through you and you had to go get them?

A—That is not correct.

Q—Do you know, at all, where Mr. Hofmann got those notes?

A—Mark said that they were somewhere in the state of New York. He had talked about an individual before that had some Kirtland notes and some other Mormon currency and said that this individual also had some Deseret Currency in printed form and in engraved form.

Q—Did he tell you how many series he had?

A—He didn't, but he said there were several. Not the specific number, no.

Q—So, you had nothing to do with that acquisition. Is that correct?

A—I did not. I just simply knew what he told me about it.

As I have shown earlier in this book, detectives discovered that Mark Hofmann had ordered plates to counterfeit the Deseret Currency from the Cox-Clark Engraving Co. in Denver. The *Deseret News*, April 20, 1986, gave this information concerning the plates:

Barbara Zellner, office manager with a Denver engraving company, then testified that in May and June of 1984 a man named Mike Hansen placed two orders for zinc printing plates.

One order was for "Deseret Currency Association" notes in denominations of \$1, \$2, \$3, \$5 and \$10. The second order was for "Deseret Currency Association" notes in denominations of \$20, \$50 and \$100.

Document examiner George Throckmorton compared Hofmann's currency with negatives provided by Cox-Clark Engraving Co. Speaking specifically concerning the Deseret Currency notes obtained by Mr. Marks, Throckmorton testified:

All of the eight Deseret Currency notes in Exhibit 98 and 99 were made from a plate which was made from one of the negatives . . . I could find none of these eight notes that were authentic.

Mr. Throckmorton also compared five genuine notes with those printed by Mark Hofmann:

The five genuine notes, that I believe are authentic, are made of a paper different than the paper found on all of the other notes examined.

It is interesting to note that when Alvin Rust published his book in 1984, he knew that there was some kind of a problem with a surplus of Deseret Currency notes:

The typeset and engraved Deseret Currency totaled \$95,170. Omitting what McKenzie burned . . . and accepting the burning on 1 December 1867 of \$93,544, the most Deseret Currency that still could be outstanding is \$1,626.

In 1984 just at publication time a large number of engraved Deseret Currency scrip notes in \$1, \$2, and \$3 denominations surfaced. This find proved that the \$1,626 in outstanding notes is probably not an accurate figure. Since the scribes for Deseret Currency Association were meticulous in preparing their ledger sheets of currency issued, the author stands behind table 10 and believes the figures to be accurate. The only explanation seems to be that a bundle of each of the three denominations was held back at the burning on 1 December 1867. (*Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, pages 85-86)

Although Mr. Rust knew something was wrong, he apparently never suspected that there was a counterfeiting operation going on.

BITHEL TODD LETTER

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 6, we find the following:

Your affiant has spoken with Glenn Rowe and has been told the following: That on or about April 16, 1985 Mark Hofmann completed an agreement to sell to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints a document identified as a letter from David and Peter Whitmer to Bithell Todd dated August 12, 1828. The church agreeent [*sic*] to exchange property valued in excess of \$1,000.00.

Although I have never seen a copy of this letter, its value probably lies in the claim that it came from "David and Peter Whitmer." David Whitmer, of course, was one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. The "Peter Whitmer" mentioned could be either the Book of Mormon witness, Peter Whitmer, Jr., or his father. In any case, at the preliminary hearing, the document experts testified that this letter is a modern forgery. George Throckmorton stated: "Yes, there was minor cracking on that." William Flynn testified: ". . . on this particular exhibit . . . the cracking of ink is apparent throughout the document, and this also exhibits that one-directional running, as if the document had been wet and held up and the running took place in one direction only." Mr. Flynn gave this opinion with regard to the authenticity of the letter: "I don't believe that's a genuine document either."

CALL OF THE WILD

One of Mark Hofmann's attempts to deceive involved both an engraved plate and a rubber stamp. Jan Thompson wrote the following concerning the preliminary hearing:

Ralph Bailey, a Salt Lake orthodontist, then testified that he loaned Hofmann \$90,000 in the spring of 1985. For collateral, Hofmann gave him a first-edition copy of "Call of the Wild" by Jack London.

Inside the front page of the book is an inscription allegedly signed by London in 1903, reading, "To Buck and his human friend, Austin Lewis . . ." Austin's address is stamped inside the book also.

Bailey's testimony ties in evidence presented earlier in the preliminary hearing.

Printer Jack Smith of DeBouzek Engraving . . . said he took orders for a Mike Hansen, an alias prosecutors allege was used by Hofmann in December 1984. The orders included plates for the reproduction of a Jack London signature, an inscription . . .

Employees of the Salt Lake Stamp Co. testified that a man named Mike Hansen placed an order for a rubber stamp in December 1984. The man emphasized that the stamp, which he wanted printed with the address of an Austin Lewis in Berkeley, Calif., must be exactly like the sample he presented.

The Jack London book with the personalized inscription was valued at about \$9,000, Bailey testified. The signature and inscription greatly enhance the book's value, he said. (*Deseret News*, April 19, 1986)

Speaking of the inscription in the Jack London book, George Throckmorton testified: "That is not handwriting. It is not written with a writing instrument." Mr. Throckmorton went on to say that the inscription came from the plate which was ordered under the alias "Mike Hansen": "The negative I examined in Exhibit #69 was used to make a plate, and this plate in turn was used to print the inscription in the front of this book . . ." Throckmorton, therefore, reached this conclusion: "The date . . . and the entire inscription having come from this negative means it could not possibly have been done in 1903." Mr. Throckmorton also compared the rubber stamp—made by Salt Lake Stamp Co.—with the name and address of Austin Lewis on the front fly leaf of the book and also on the title page and found that "the rubber stamp that was used to make this impression from Salt Lake Stamp was the same rubber stamp that was used to make the impression on Exhibit No. 91, *The Call of the Wild Book*. . . ."

KINDERHOOK PLATES

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 111-115, 125G-125I, we told a story concerning a set of bogus metal plates which Joseph Smith's enemies made for the express purpose of proving he was a false prophet. As one early critic of the Mormon Church expressed it, "Only a bogus prophet translates bogus plates." In any case, Joseph Smith fell for the hoax. The *History of the Church* for May 1, 1843, attributed the following statement to Joseph Smith:

Monday, May 1.—. . . I insert fac-similes of the six brass plates found near Kinderhook. . . .

I have translated a portion of them, and find they contain the history of the person with whom they were found. He was a descendant of Ham, through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and that he received his kingdom from the Ruler of heaven and earth. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372)

Although this statement originally came from the diary of Joseph Smith's private secretary, William Clayton, and was added into the *History* after Smith's death, there can be no doubt that Joseph Smith did pretend to translate at least a portion of the plates. On May 7, 1843, Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt wrote a letter containing the following:

Six plates having the appearance of Brass have lately been dug out of a mound by a gentleman in Pike Co. Illinois. They are small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah. (*The Ensign*, August 1981, page 73)

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 125-H, we pointed out that "if Joseph Smith had not been murdered in June 1844, it is very possible he might have published a complete 'translation' of the Kinderhook plates. Just a month before his death it was reported that he was 'busy in translating them. The new work which Jo. is about to issue as a translation of these plates will be nothing more nor less than a sequel to the Book of Mormon; . . .'" (*Warsaw Signal*, May 22, 1844).

In September 1962, the Mormon Church publication, *The Improvement Era*, reported that one of the Kinderhook plates had been rediscovered. On page 125-G of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we included a photograph of this plate. Before the

Salamander letter was brought to light, I had a discussion with Mark Hofmann concerning the possibility that the remaining plates might be located. It now appears that Mr. Hofmann actually claimed to have the missing plates. Some people have gone so far as to claim that Mr. Hofmann sold the plates and/or Joseph Smith's purported translation of them to the Mormon Church. Although I cannot prove this to be a fact, there is evidence that he had approached Church leader Gordon B. Hinckley about the matter. At the Church's press conference, President Hinckley revealed:

More recently, Mr. Hofmann called and asked my secretary if he could see me. I was under pressure for time, but agreed that I would see him for a few minutes. He came in. I have no recollection of discussing the so-called McLellan papers with him. This time the subject was the so-called Kinderhook Plates. He said he had access to some of these and asked whether we would be interested in purchasing them. My recollection of this episode of history was dim. But I saw no reason why we should have them and so indicated to him. That is the last time I saw Mark W. Hofmann. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

While I do believe that Joseph Smith could have made a translation of the Kinderhook plates, I find it very hard to believe that Mr. Hofmann could have found the manuscript. Furthermore, if Hofmann actually had plates, I would suspect that they are merely bogus copies of the original bogus plates.

OTHER FORGERIES?

In the complaint for his lawsuit against Mark Hofmann, Brent Ashworth has a list of fifteen items he believes are worthless forgeries that Hofmann sold to him. Only five of these appear to be listed in the criminal charges the County Attorney filed against Hofmann. Ashworth alleges that he has suffered a loss of \$225,100 because of these transactions. His list indicates that he paid \$140,000 for the five items for which Hofmann is facing criminal charges. He paid \$85,100 for the other ten items. As I have indicated earlier, it would be very foolish for Brent Ashworth to list a document as a forgery unless he had good reason to doubt its authenticity. In making the charge that these items are forgeries, Ashworth stands to lose a great deal of money. At any rate, the following is a list of the ten additional documents Ashworth claims are forgeries:

- 1—Letter of Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, dated March 6, 1833. Price: \$6,000
- 2—Letter of Lorenzo Snow to Mary Ann Hyde, dated Sept. 15, 1899. Price: \$5,000
- 3—David W. Patten-Thomas B. Marsh Far West Elder's Certificates (two), dated Oct. 1838. Price: \$10,000
- 4—Letter of Brigham Young to George A. Smith, dated 1841. Price: \$1,600
- 5—Eliza R. Snow Poem, dated 1879. Price: \$5,000
- 6—Book of Mormon manuscript fragment, 1829. Price: \$5,000
- 7—Book of Mormon manuscript page, 1829. Price: \$25,000
- 8—First edition Book of Mormon (1830) with Joseph Smith's signature. Price: \$15,000
- 9—Letter of Joseph Smith to Edwin D. Woolley, dated June 30, 1843. Price: \$6,500
- 10—Letter of Brigham Young to Rose Canfield, dated January 7, 1869. Price: \$6,000

One item on Brent Ashworth's list that is very interesting is the poem of "Eliza R. Snow." Mark Hofmann's associate Lyn Jacobs claimed that one of his friends was selling "an Eliza R. Snow manuscript . . . for \$20,000 because it represents a Snow holograph of 'Oh My Father,' the most famous production she ever penned" (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 18). Although this manuscript could be authentic, anyone thinking of purchasing it would be wise to enquire concerning its provenance and have some tests made on the ink.

Brent Ashworth's list does not include all of the documents which came to him directly or indirectly through Mark Hofmann. For instance, in a list of "MORMON MANUSCRIPTS" Hofmann had for sale in 1982, we find the following: "2. JOSEPH SMITH JR. LETTER . . . November 8, 1839, to James Mulholland . . ." This letter is photographically reproduced in the Church's *Ensign*, January 1984, page 40. The caption for this letter reads: "A letter from Joseph Smith to James Mulholland, dated November 8, 1839, . . . (Photography by Eldon K. Linschoten; shown courtesy of Brent Ashworth.)" Perhaps the reason Mr. Ashworth did not list this item in the complaint is because he had sold it, or it could be that he has some reason to believe it was authentic.

In the first edition of this book, I indicated that I was concerned about the authenticity of John Taylor's Nauvoo Diary which is owned by Brent Ashworth. This diary begins December 26, 1844, and ends with the entry of September 17, 1845. An entire issue of *BYU Studies* (Summer 1983) is dedicated to the diary. A scholar, who was acquainted with Mark Hofmann, had told me that he believed Mark Hofmann was the

March 6th 1833
 Dear Wife
 Brother Williams has this day ^{received} word
 from Brother Morley that we should commit
 the cross pillow unto the hands of the poor you
 will therefor please to trust it to Brother Williams
 by ^{his} hand & send this & subscribe myself your Hus-
 -band
 Emma Smith
 Joseph Smith Jr

A photograph of a letter Joseph Smith was supposed to have written in 1833. In his suit against Mark Hofmann, Brent Ashworth lists it as a forgery. Notice that the letter speaks of Isaac Morley. A descendant of Morley by the name of Kerry Ross Boren has copies of fake documents attributed to both Smith and Morley. In the Appendix we discuss the possibility of a link between Boren and Hofmann.

one who sold the John Taylor Diary to Brent Ashworth and Hofmann had said that Ashworth did not really know where the diary came from. Although I stated in the first edition that I was “not aware of any forensic evidence against the diary” and that it “seemed unlikely that someone would forge a diary of 133 pages,” I felt that if it came from Hofmann it should be carefully examined. While looking through the diary, I noted one entry that made me very suspicious: “Speaking a few days since with a man of the name of Solomon Chamberlin, he related some particulars that I thought interesting . . . I will relate it in his own words” (*BYU Studies*, Summer 1983, page 44). Hundreds of words attributed to Mr. Chamberlain follow this introduction. While the entry was recorded in the diary in the spring of 1845, it seemed to be too similar to a sketch of his life that Solomon Chamberlain wrote some thirteen years later (see *BYU Studies*, Spring 1972, pages 315-317). I reasoned that it would be highly unlikely that Mr. Chamberlain could record hundreds of words on paper in 1858 that were almost identical to his oral report given to John Taylor thirteen years before. Brent Ashworth, however, has proposed a theory that could explain the relationship between the two documents. He feels that Mr. Chamberlain may have had some type of a written document in 1845 which he allowed John Taylor to use. According to this theory, when Chamberlain wrote “A Short Sketch of the Life of Solomon Chamberlain” in 1858, he used the earlier version. This, of course, would explain the many parallels. After considering Mr. Ashworth’s theory carefully, I must admit that a preliminary manuscript is certainly a possibility, and although the John Taylor Diary does not specifically mention such a document, this idea may very well provide a good solution to the problem.

As to the provenance of the diary, there has been some confusion. Some printed sources claimed that it came from the John Taylor family, while others said that it was derived from the B. H. Roberts family. The Church Section of the *Deseret News* for January 30, 1983, reported that Brent Ashworth obtained it from the Roberts family. On February 24, 1983, Mark Hofmann commented to an associate that Brent Ashworth did not know the true provenance of the diary. Hofmann claimed that it had actually been obtained from the John Taylor family. Where Mr. Hofmann got his information from is not known; however, when *BYU Studies* published the diary, Dean Jessee also said that it was “acquired from members of the Taylor family by Brent Ashworth” (vol. 23, no. 3, page 6).

Fortunately, Brent Ashworth was very helpful and we were able to learn that the diary came from the Roberts family. Mr. Ashworth claimed that he received it from a man by the name of Lee Snarr.

Mr. Snarr informed us that he had acted as an intermediary between Ashworth and Robert Decker of Salem, Oregon. Mr. Decker informed us that when his grandfather, Harold Roberts, passed away, the diary was discovered in his closet. Richard Roberts, of Weber State College, confirmed this story and claimed that it was discovered in 1982. As far as we could determine, Mark Hofmann was not involved in any way. The belief that he was apparently stemmed from his claim that Mr. Ashworth did not know the real origin of the diary. While at first glance it would appear that the diary should have come through the Taylor family as Mr. Hofmann maintained, further study shows that B. H. Roberts had access to it. Dean Jessee says that Roberts used it for “his *The Life of John Taylor*, his *Comprehensive History of the Church*, and volume 7 of the *History of the Church*” (Ibid.). B. H. Roberts seems to have kept the volume after he completed his work and it came down through his family. At this point I am inclined to believe that Brent Ashworth is correct in his belief that the John Taylor Diary is authentic, and I apologize to him for adding to the problems he already has with the documents he did acquire from Mark Hofmann.

Besides the many questionable documents I have mentioned in this chapter, detectives are looking into printed forgeries of old books. Investigators have apparently found a forged copy of *The Latter-Day Saints’ Emigrants’ Guide*, by William Clayton. In most cases it would not be worth the expense and time to reprint rare books on old paper. With the *Emigrants’ Guide*, however, we have an entirely different situation. It has only 24 pages and is worth thousands of dollars. Any small item which has a high monetary value would be worth counterfeiting with printing plates. While such forgeries could cause a great monetary loss to those who obtained them, they do not really affect our understanding of Mormon history. It is obvious that they would have to be exact reproductions of original editions. If the contents varied in any way, it would give the whole scheme away.

It is certainly unfortunate that so many letters, manuscripts and books passed through the hands of Mark Hofmann. One dealer estimated that Hofmann sold thousands of items. Although his most sensational finds are probably forgeries, we know that Mr. Hofmann did obtain authentic material from the Mormon Church Archives and collectors like Brent Ashworth. While it is true that everything that passed through his hands is now considered tainted, he undoubtedly sold a great deal of authentic material. It may take a long time to separate the wheat from the chaff, and in some cases we may never know the answer.

7. MARK AND JOSEPH

In the past two years there have been three fairly spectacular finds in the field of Mormon documents . . . Not since the Joseph Smith papyri were found in a New York museum in the sixties have there been such important discoveries for students of Mormon history. All three items were unearthed by the same collector: Mark Hofmann. (Sunstone Review, September 1982, page 16)

The Prophet Joseph Smith produced for the world three new volumes of holy scriptures, . . . No prophet who ever lived has accomplished such a tremendous feat. There are only 177 pages in the Old Testament attributed to Moses, while Joseph Smith either translated through the gift and power of God or received as direct revelation from Jehovah 835. (Deseret News July 18, 1970)

Although the story of Mark Hofmann and his document dealing is a real tragedy for everyone involved, it can provide some very helpful insights with regard to Joseph Smith and the origin of the Mormon Church. In fact, it even throws light on the actions of the present leaders of the Church. While it must be admitted that there are many dissimilarities between Mark Hofmann and Joseph Smith, there are some remarkable parallels between the two men. To begin with, Joseph Smith was only in his twenties when he brought forth the Book of Mormon. Because of his age many people have argued that it would have been impossible for him to produce a book like the Book of Mormon without divine help. Mark Hofmann was about the same age when he began making his discoveries. Hofmann's followers have advanced an argument similar to that used for Joseph Smith—i.e., how could such a young inexperienced man fabricate so many remarkable documents and fool Church leaders, historians and document experts?

Both Joseph Smith and Mark Hofmann had many devoted followers. It is often argued that the rapid growth and dedication of the early Mormon Church is a strong argument for Joseph Smith's divine calling. Joseph Smith himself once boasted:

If they want a beardless boy to whip all the world, I will get on the top of a mountain and crow like a rooster: I shall always beat them. . . . I have more **to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man** that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, **nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I.** The followers of Jesus ran away from Him, but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, pages 408-409)

While it is certainly true that Joseph Smith had many people who firmly believed in him, the same could be said of Mark Hofmann. In fact, the leaders of the Mormon Church had a great deal of faith in "Brother Hofmann" (see *Deseret News*, Church Section, May 3, 1980). In the *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 19, 1986, Mike Carter referred to the "blind trust of LDS officials in bombing suspect Mark W. Hofmann . . ." Mr. Carter went on to say that it "was apparent that church leaders, including President Hinckley, trusted Mr. Hofmann implicitly . . ."

Another parallel between Mark Hofmann and Joseph Smith is that they both became famous because of a document they discovered. The *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1985, printed the following: "Indeed, the very founding of Mormonism was based on the discovery of a document of sorts. Church doctrine holds that . . . Joseph Smith was led by an angel named Moroni to a set of golden plates . . . Smith, the Mormons believe, translated a 'reformed Egyptian' text on the plates into the Book of Mormon, which supposedly corrects the errors of other Christian religions." Mark Hofmann, of course, found himself in the limelight when he discovered the Anthon transcript—purported to be Joseph Smith's own handwritten copy of the characters from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Hofmann went on to discover the first extant letter of Joseph Smith—the 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell. As if this were not startling enough, he found the last extant letter of Joseph Smith, written on the very day of his death. Prior to Hofmann's time, no one had ever found a letter signed by Martin Harris. Hofmann filled this gap by finding two letters signed by Harris—the Salamander letter of 1830 and the 1873 letter, which was written toward the end of his life. Both letters were extraordinary in their content. The 1873 letter contained a glowing testimony to both the Book of Mormon and

the angel who showed Harris the gold plates. The Salamander letter, on the other hand, turned out to be a devastating account of how Joseph Smith found the gold plates. Mr. Hofmann also found the earliest known letter of Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith. Besides these documents and many others, Hofmann claimed to have the McLellin collection—a collection containing extremely important and sensitive Mormon documents. Hofmann's finds even went beyond Mormonism. For instance, he found an original Betsy Ross letter. Then, to top it all off, he discovered the "Oath of a Freeman," the first document printed in colonial America. While the discovery of a copy of the Oath of a Freeman would be astounding enough, Mark Hofmann claimed that he found two copies of the document! Moreover, he claimed that these copies were worth \$1,500,000 each—making a total of \$3,000,000.

While Mark Hofmann's claims almost leave one breathless, they seem insignificant when compared with the claims of Joseph Smith. In *The Changing World of Mormonism*, Sandra and I wrote the following about Joseph Smith:

The validity of Mormonism rests upon the claims of Joseph Smith. When he was a young man, his family moved to the state of New York. Within a few miles of his home there was a hill, which Joseph Smith later called the Hill Cumorah. According to Joseph Smith, this was no ordinary hill, for on this hill two of the greatest battles in history were fought. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie says that "both the Nephite and Jaredite civilizations fought their final great wars of extinction at and near the Hill Cumorah . . . which hill is located between Palmyra and Manchester in the western part of the state of New York. It was here that Moroni hid up the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, page 175).

Apostle McConkie further stated: "It is reported by President Brigham Young that there was in the Hill Cumorah a room containing many wagon loads of plates" (page 454).

An ordinary person would probably see nothing of importance about this hill, but to the Mormons this is one of the most important places on earth.

While Joseph Smith was digging a well for Clark Chase, he found "a chocolate-colored, somewhat egg-shaped stone" (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, by B. H. Roberts, vol. 1, page 129). This might have been just an ordinary stone (maybe a little unusual in appearance), but to Joseph Smith it became a "seer stone." This stone was supposed to have been prepared by God, and through it Joseph Smith received revelations.

Joseph Smith claimed that on the night of September 21, 1823, he had a visitor. But this was

no ordinary visitor, it was an angel sent from God. The angel told Smith that gold plates were buried in the Hill Cumorah. The next day Joseph Smith found these plates, and, if his story is true, he made the greatest discovery in the history of archaeology. Archaeologists have searched for years trying to piece together the history of the ancient inhabitants of this land, but Joseph Smith turned over one stone and found all the answers. Underneath this stone he found a box which held the gold plates. The plates contained "an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang." More important than this, however, they contained "the fullness of the everlasting Gospel." According to the Mormon leaders, the Book of Mormon is far superior to the Bible because it contains the "pure" words of Christ. The Bible, they charge, has been altered by wicked priests. . . .

After the Mormon church was organized, Joseph Smith gave a revelation which stated that the Saints were to gather at Jackson County, Missouri. To the Mormon leaders, this was no ordinary land; they taught that it was the place where the "Garden of Eden" was located. Apostle McConkie explains: "The early brethren of this dispensation taught that the Garden of Eden was located in what is known to us as the land of Zion, an area for which Jackson County, Missouri, is the center place" (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 20).

In Daviess County, Missouri, Joseph Smith found some rocks which he claimed were the remains of an altar built by Adam. McConkie continues: "At that great gathering Adam offered sacrifices on an altar built for the purpose. A remnant of that very altar remained on the spot down through the ages. On May 19, 1838, Joseph Smith and a number of his associates stood on the remainder of the pile of stones at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri" (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 21). . . .

In the year 1835 a man came to Kirtland, Ohio, with some mummies and rolls of papyrus. Joseph Smith examined the rolls and stated that "one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt" (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 236). (*The Changing World of Mormonism*, pages 21-23)

Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham, and it is printed today by the Mormon Church as a part of the *Pearl of Great Price*—one of the four standard works of the Church.

While Mark Hofmann claimed to have some very old and important autographs, Joseph Smith's collection was far superior. On October 17, 1840, the *Quincy Whig* reported the following concerning a conversation Joseph Smith had with a visitor to Nauvoo:

“These ancient records,” said he, “throw great light on the subject of Christianity. . . . There,” said he, pointing to a particular character, “that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham.”

“It is indeed a most interesting autograph,” I replied, “and doubtless the only one extant. What an ornament it would be to have these ancient manuscripts handsomely set, in appropriate frames, and hung up around the walls of the temple which you are about to erect at this place.”

“Yes,” replied the Prophet, “and the translation hung up with them. . . .” (*The Quincy Whig*, October 17, 1840, as quoted in *Ancient Records Testify in Papyrus and Stone*, by Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, pages 51-52)

When Josiah Quincy visited Nauvoo in 1844, Joseph Smith showed him the papyrus rolls. Quincy later wrote:

“And now come with me,” said the prophet, “and I will show you the curiosities.” . . . There were some pine presses. . . . These receptacles Smith opened, and disclosed four human bodies, shrunken and black with age. “These are mummies,” said the exhibitor. “I want you to look at that little runt of a fellow over there. . . . that was Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt!” Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. . . . **That is the handwriting of Abraham**, the Father of the Faithful,” said the prophet. **“This is the autograph of Moses**, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.” . . . We were further assured that the prophet was the only mortal who could translate these mysterious writings, and that his power was given by direct inspiration. (*Figures of the Past*, by Josiah Quincy, as cited in *Among the Mormons*, 1958, pages 136-137)

After Joseph Smith’s death the Egyptian papyri were lost. Unfortunately for his claims, however, his collection was rediscovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see *Deseret News*, November 27, 1967). Egyptologists translated the fragments from the very roll Joseph Smith declared was the Book of Abraham and found that it was nothing but a common Egyptian funerary text known as the “Book of Breathings.” This is a pagan text which has a great deal to do with Egyptian gods and goddesses but has nothing to do with Abraham nor his religion. (For a complete treatment of the Book of Abraham see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 294-369-D.)

There is certainly an interesting parallel to Mark Hofmann with regard to this papyrus. It appears that

both Smith and Hofmann misrepresented the papyrus they had obtained. Joseph Smith claimed that his papyrus was the Book of Abraham, when in reality it was nothing but a mortuary text written for a dead man named “Osiris Hor.” Mark Hofmann maintained that the papyrus he had was from the Joseph Smith Papyri which had been preserved in the McLellan collection. The truth, of course, was that it was a common piece of papyrus which he had obtained from Kenneth Rendell.

INSIGHT ON HOFMANN

Although Mark Hofmann’s actions can not be excused in the eyes of the law because of his background, I cannot help but feel sorry for him. His involvement with Mormon history certainly could have played an important role in his problems. If we assume that he started out as a true believer in the Church, the things he learned from his study of Joseph Smith and early Mormonism could have come as a shattering blow to his faith. When he was asked if his profession had affected his beliefs, Mr. Hofmann replied:

I guess I am a lot more calloused than I was. But generally I just don’t worry about some things. I don’t have to figure everything out, have an explanation for everything. I can just say, “Well, that’s the way it is.” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 19)

Before Mark Hofmann went on his mission for the Church, he would have been thoroughly instructed in the importance of Joseph Smith to those who wish to be good Mormons. For instance, in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 135, verse 3, we read: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; . . .” What a disappointment it must have been to Mr. Hofmann when he found out that Joseph did not tell the truth concerning his involvement in polygamy. History reveals that by 1844, Joseph Smith had dozens of plural wives, yet when he was accused of having “six or seven young females as wives” on May 3, 1844, Joseph Smith replied:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, **when I can only find one.**

I am the same man, and **as innocent as I was fourteen** years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 411)

In a notice published in the *Times and Seasons*, February 1, 1844 (vol. 5, page 72), Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, publicly called polygamy a false and corrupt doctrine:

As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been **preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines**, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan.

This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his **iniquity**; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.

If Mark Hofmann had learned from his study of history that the first Prophet of his Church had been a man of impeccable honesty, it could have made a great difference in his life. Perhaps he would have continued his study of medicine and become a doctor. Instead, he finds himself accused of deceit and treachery. Alvin Rust claimed that Mr. Hofmann told him four stories with regard to the McLellin collection. In this respect Hofmann was no different than Joseph Smith. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 143-150, we demonstrated that the Mormon Prophet told a variety of different stories concerning his most important vision—the First Vision of 1820. In a manuscript written in his own hand in 1832, preserved in the Church Archives, Joseph Smith clearly taught that only one personage (Jesus) appeared to him in this vision. In an entry in Joseph Smith’s diary for 1835, also stored in the Church Archives, Joseph Smith related a different story. He claimed that there were many personages in the vision. In the official account, written in 1838, Joseph Smith asserted that both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to him.

Since Mark Hofmann claimed to have the Kinderhook plates, it is obvious that he knew that Joseph Smith made a false translation of some of the characters on these bogus plates. The Prophet’s example of making up false documents could have encouraged Hofmann in his forgery scheme. It is very clear, also, that Mark Hofmann knew Joseph Smith deceived his people with regard to the Book of Abraham papyrus. Smith had stated that the papyrus dated back to the time of Abraham and contained his signature. When Egyptologists examined the papyrus they claimed that it was not written until about the time of Christ, which would be almost two thousand years after Abraham’s time. Even the Church’s most noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, had to admit that “our Joseph Smith Book of Breathings” was written

“in the first century A.D.” (*The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, page 3). Is it any wonder that when Mark Hofmann approached Kenneth Rendell concerning some papyrus he could pawn off as that used by Joseph Smith, he asked for “something from the first- or second-century A.D.” (*Deseret News*, October 28, 1985)?

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 337-345, 349-350, we demonstrated photographically that when Joseph Smith prepared the facsimiles for the Book of Abraham, he made false and imaginative restorations from other documents to fill in portions that were missing on the original papyrus fragments. These falsifications remind me very much of the Spalding-Rigdon document which Mr. Hofmann sold. The reader will remember that the signatures of both Spalding and Rigdon were added to an original document originally dated a century earlier. In the case of Joseph Smith, he falsely added hieratic characters where hieroglyphic characters should be in Fac. No. 2. Some of these characters were inserted upside down and read in the opposite direction to the rest of the text.

When it comes to counterfeiting Mormon money, Mark Hofmann may have learned a great deal from Church history. Mr. Hofmann was undoubtedly familiar with the story of Joseph Smith’s Kirtland bank notes because he bought and sold them. William E. McLellin, who had served as an Apostle in the early Mormon Church, made this statement concerning the Kirtland Bank:

Soon, therefore, it is determined that a Kirtland Bank must be established, to hold their treasures; and to aid them to get more. So eager were they, and so sanguine of success, that they did not even wait to get a charter from the State, but seemed to think that everything must bow at their nod—thus **violating the laws of the land** in which they live, which in the end brought upon them swift destruction. (*Ensign of Liberty*, Kirtland, Ohio, March 1847, page 7)

Sidney Rigdon’s son claimed that his father opposed the idea of operating without a charter: “He said it **would not be legal** as they had no charter. He did not wish to have anything to do with it, but Joseph Smith thought differently and persuaded Father to sign bills as president and Joseph signed them as cashier” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Winter 1966, pages 27-28). The plates had already been made to print the “Bank” notes, but then, in an obvious attempt to get around the law, it was decided that the organization should be called an “Anti-Banking Co.” Max Parkin gives this interesting information:

To avoid wasting the money expended on the production of the bank plates the necessary prefix, “anti,” and suffix, “ing Company,” added to the name “Bank”—to read “Anti-Banking Company”—was stamped on the bills. This was more adaptable to the three dollar note than to the others which did not conveniently receive the alteration. (*Conflict at Kirtland*, page 214)

In the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 401, the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts made this statement about the alteration of the notes:

In issuing their notes the “Kirtland Safety Society” doubtless made a mistake in that they used the notes printed from the plates prepared for their anticipated bank issue, using a stamp to make the notes read—Anti-Bank-ing Co., instead of “Kirtland Safety Society Bank.” This to avoid the necessity of incurring the expense of making new plates; . . .

(I wonder if it is possible that this could have suggested to Mark Hofmann the idea of using a rubber stamp when he forged the Spanish Fork Co-op notes.)

Joseph Smith claimed that he received a revelation from God concerning the Kirtland Bank. Wilford Woodruff, who later became the fourth President of the Church, wrote the following in his diary under the date of January 6, 1837:

6th I visited the office of the Kirtland Safety Society & saw the first money that was issued . . .

I also he[a]rd President Joseph Smith jr. declare . . . in the Deposit Office that he had received that morning the Word of the Lord upon the subject of the Kirtland Safety Society. He was alone in a room by himself & he had not ownly the voice of the Spirit upon the Subject but even an audible voice. He did not tell us at that time what the LORD said upon the subject but remarked that if we would give heed to the Commandments the Lord had given this morning all would be well.

May the Lord bless Brother Joseph with all the Saints & support the above named institution & Protect it so that every weapen formed against it may be broaken & come to nought while the Kirtland Safety Society shall become the greatest of all institutions on EARTH. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, edited by Scott G. Kenney, 1983, vol. 1, page 120)

Mormon historian B. H. Roberts admitted that “The ‘Kirtland Safety Society’ enterprise **ended disastrously**” (*Comprehensive History*, vol. 1, pages 401-402). The Mormon writer John J. Stewart said that it “**became bankrupt**” (*Joseph Smith the Mormon*

Prophet, page 110). In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Gary Dean Guthrie stated:

The State legislature refused the Kirtland Safety Society its charter upon which the name of the bank was changed to Kirtland Anti-Banking Society. . . . Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were tried in court for violating the law, **were found guilty and fined \$1,000**. They appealed on the grounds that the institution was an association and not a bank; the plea was never ruled upon as the bank suspended payments and closed its doors. Other lawsuits followed. . . .

During the summer of 1837, Joseph spent much of his time away from Kirtland to avoid these lawsuits. . . .

The blame of the bank failure fell heavily on Joseph. He had issued a formal invitation to his followers to take stock in the venture and the institution had been organized **outside the law**. Heber C. Kimball later was to comment that at this moment, “there were not twenty persons on earth that would declare that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.” Six of the apostles came out in open rebellion. . . . Joseph first established the bank by revelation and then had to later admit that because of poor management and other internal and external conditions the project was a failure. (“Joseph Smith As An Administrator,” M. A. thesis, BYU, May 1969, pages 80-82, 86 and 88)

Like Mark Hofmann, Joseph Smith was not able to adequately deal with his debts. Finally, on May 7, 1842, the Mormon paper, *The Wasps*, announced that he was taking out bankruptcy:

Notice is hereby given, that **Joseph Smith, of Hancock county has filed his petition in this Court to be declared a Bankrupt** and to be discharged from his debts under the Act of Congress, . . .

In a book published in 1846, Joseph H. Jackson charged that Joseph Smith had asked him to stay in Nauvoo and “enter into the manufacture of bogus; . . .” Mr. Jackson claimed that he consented to help Smith in making bogus. He also claimed that ten of the twelve Apostles were involved in the counterfeiting operation (*The Adventures and Experience of Joseph H. Jackson*, Warsaw, Illinois, 1846, pages 10-12 and 15). Since Joseph H. Jackson was an adventurer and admitted that he deceived Joseph Smith to obtain his information, his story is somewhat suspect. Nevertheless, Jackson’s charges can not be completely dismissed. We know that he worked for Joseph Smith. Under the date of May 20, 1843, we find this statement in Joseph Smith’s *History*:

Mr. Joseph H. Jackson representing himself as being out of employment and destitute of funds, he desired I would employ him . . . I took compassion and employed him as a clerk to sell lands, so as to give him a chance in the world. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 400)

Just before Joseph Smith's death, the *Warsaw Signal* contained a number of articles stating that the Mormons were involved in passing or making counterfeit coin:

There is a species of counterfeit, extensively circulated in this community, called Nauvoo Bogus. . . . They are a pretty good imitation of the genuine coin . . . some of our business men have been imposed upon by them. It is said they are manufactured in the City of the Saints. (*Warsaw Signal*, April 24, 1844)

COUNTERFEITING, &c.—On a former occasion, we stated that a species of counterfeit money—called Nauvoo Bogus, was extensively circulated in this vicinity. We have since heard the charge distinctly made by one who has had an opportunity of knowing the facts, that Joe Smith, . . . is engaged in this nefarious business. . . . the fact is notorious that bogus is made in Nauvoo. Here then, we have a band of counterfeiters in our midst, who can defy the laws under the protection of a pretended prophet. (*Ibid.*, June 5, 1844)

After Joseph Smith's death, the non-Mormons continued to accuse the Mormon leaders of counterfeiting. On December 25, 1844, we find this statement in the *Warsaw Signal*: "The Latter-Brethren have lately carried on their Bogus operations extensively. Not less than a dozen farmers who have taken their pork to Nauvoo, have been paid in spurious coin, or counterfeit bills." On January 7, 1846, the *Warsaw Signal* contained the following:

During the last week, twelve bills of indictment, for counterfeiting Mexican dollars, and American half dollars and dimes, were found by the Grand Jury, and presented to the United States Circuit Court, in session in this city, against different persons in and about Nauvoo, embracing some of the "Holy Twelve," and other prominent Mormons, and other persons in league with them.

The United States Government has preserved some important records concerning the indictment of the Mormon leaders for counterfeiting. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 539, we have a photograph of a U.S. Government record which shows that Brigham Young and four of the other Mormon Apostles (Willard Richards, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde) were indicted for counterfeiting. Among the list of

others indicted we find the name "Joseph H. Jackson." This is very interesting, for Jackson, as I have already shown, admitted that he "consented" to help Joseph Smith in "the manufacture of bogus." Jackson also stated that "Barton and Eaton" were in on the bogus operation in Nauvoo. Among the list of those indicted we find the names "Augustus Barton" and "Gilbert Eaton." The name "Peter Hawes" also appears on the list. Maus J. Hansen shows that he was a member of the "Council of Fifty under Joseph Smith" (*Quest For Empire*, page 223). The "Manuscript History of Brigham Young" makes it very clear that Peter Haws was involved in the "bogus" business even after the Mormons left Nauvoo, for Brigham Young wrote the following under the date of May 12, 1846:

While I was standing with Prest. Kimball at his tent, an outcry was heard from Peter Haws' Camp; we repaired thither and found that Haws and Thomas Williams and two others had a quarrel about some property, etc. that **Haws had let Williams have some bogus money** on shares and Williams had not paid him his share of the profits. I reprov'd them for dealing in base coin and told Haws he could not govern himself, his family, or a company; and unless he repented and forsook such dishonesty, the hand of the Lord would be against him and all those who partook of such corruption. ("Manuscript History of Brigham Young," May 12, 1846, typed copy)

The fact that Brigham Young rebuked Peter Haws can hardly be taken very seriously, since Haws continued to serve in the "Council of Fifty in Colonial Utah, 1847-49" (*Quest For Empire*, page 225). When we find that both Peter Haws and Brigham Young were under indictment for counterfeiting at the time this occurred, it throws a new light on the whole incident.

Alvin Rust, the man Mark Hofmann tricked into investing in the McLellan collection, wrote the following concerning Peter Haws:

It has been discovered that in 1846 a Mormon named Peter Haws crossed the plains with the exiled Mormons and was the leader of a wagon company. Haws was also a private coiner and had been indicted in Nauvoo for counterfeiting U.S. coins. (It was noted that his counterfeits were of excellent quality.) While camped at Garden Grove, Iowa Territory, it was reported that Haws had his coining press in his wagon. To help pass the time, he was up to his old tricks and was again minting base-metal coins. On 12 May 1846 Brigham Young even came over to Haws' wagon and reprov'd him for this . . . Nevertheless, the Mormon leader left Haws in charge of his wagon company, and Haws came to the Great Salt Lake Valley. (*Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, pages 34-35)

Although Brigham Young denied that he was guilty of counterfeiting, he admitted in the *History of the Church* that he had tricked the U.S. Marshall when he tried to arrest him for being a bogus maker:

One-five p.m. Almon W. Babbitt came into the Temple and informed me that there were some federal officers from Springfield . . . in the city for the purpose of arresting some of the Twelve, especially Amasa Lyman and myself. . . .

William Miller **put on my cap** and Brother Kimball's cloak and went downstairs meeting the marshal and his assistants at the door, as he was about **getting into my carriage** the marshal arrested him, on a writ from the United States court, **charging him with counterfeiting** the coin of the United States. . . .

The marshal put up at Hamilton's Tavern, . . . William Backenstos was called in and he told them William Miller was **not Brigham Young**. . . .

Eight-twenty. I left the Temple **disguised** . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 7, pages 549-551)

In a discourse delivered July 23, 1871, Brigham Young said that this was "one of the best jokes ever perpetrated" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, pages 218-219). In the same discourse, Brigham Young acknowledged that he had instructed William Miller on how to "trick" the U.S. Marshall.

According to the United States Government records, the Mormon leaders were indicted for counterfeiting on December 18, 1845. In 1846 they fled from Nauvoo and headed west. While the anti-Mormons were demanding that the Mormons leave Illinois, the indictments for counterfeiting apparently speeded things up. The Mormon writer Kenneth W. Godfrey commented:

Warrants pending for the arrest of Brigham Young and other leaders on charges of counterfeiting were among the reasons for the early departure of the Saints from the "city of Joseph" in February rather than in the spring as originally proposed. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1968, page 215)

The Mormons continued west until they were completely outside the territorial limits of the United States.

In 1859 the Mormon people again found themselves in serious trouble because of the exposure of a counterfeiting operation. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts gives this information:

Two incidents happened in the troublesome fall of 1859 that threatened for a time to bring on a conflict between citizens of Utah and the army at Camp Floyd. One of these is known . . . as the Spencer-Pike affair; the other was a plot to arrest Brigham Young in connection with a case of alleged counterfeiting of government drafts. . . .

The facts in the counterfeiting case . . . in which it was sought to involve President Young, are as follows: a party of men in Camp Floyd, prominent among whom were M. Brewer, and J. M. Wallace, conspired to counterfeit United States quartermaster orders on St. Louis and New York. In pursuance of this purpose they **employed a young "Mormon"** engraver of Salt Lake City to duplicate the quartermaster's plate at Camp Floyd. This was skillfully accomplished and the counterfeit bills printed upon it. The forgery was soon discovered and the principal in the crime, Brewer, was arrested at Camp Floyd. He promptly turned state's evidence by confessing and threw responsibility for the crime upon the young "Mormon" engraver; and **implicated a person in Brigham Young's office** for having furnished the paper for the counterfeit notes. The engraver's tools and engraving paraphernalia were all seized by Mr. Dotson, the United States marshal, and the young engraver was arrested. Afterwards, when visiting the engraver's regular workshop, where **he had done work for Brigham Young on the "Deseret currency plates,"** these plates were also seized by Mr. Dotson and carried to Camp Floyd.

The confession and allegation of Brewer seemed to bring this crime so close to the premises at least of President Young that it was hoped at Camp Floyd that he could be implicated in it. . . . a plan for his arrest was arranged, . . . The plan was to issue a writ for the arrest of Brigham Young as well as the young "Mormon" engraver, and apprehending that there would be resistance to the arrest of the former, the army was to be ordered into Salt Lake City; Johnston's artillery was to make a breach in the wall surrounding the ex-governor's premises, then the troops would sally forth, seize Brigham Young by force and hurry him to Camp Floyd. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 4, pages 503, 505 and 506)

B. H. Roberts goes on to show that Governor Cumming opposed the idea of the army "creeping through walls" to arrest Brigham Young. While Young was not arrested, B. H. Roberts says "The young 'Mormon' engraver of the counterfeit plates of the

foregoing incident was put on trial, **found guilty, and sentenced to prison for two years**” (Ibid., page 509). The reader will notice that B. H. Roberts was careful not to identify the Mormon involved in the counterfeiting scheme. While he spoke of him four different times, in every cast he referred to him as a “young ‘Mormon’ engraver.” Historical research reveals that the man’s name was David McKenzie. According to Alvin Rust, McKenzie was involved in preparing some of the plates for the Deseret Currency:

On 21 January 1858 **Brigham Young directed David McKenzie**, his secretary, to engrave plates for the notes . . . However, when they realized that it would take too much time to engrave the plates, notes of a common type were printed at the office of the *Deseret News*. . . . On 9 October 1858 \$5 notes were engraved and issued . . . The scrip was designed by Henry Maiben, **engraved by David McKenzie**, and the printing done by Joseph Bull, . . . (*Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency*, pages 74-75 and 82)

The reader will remember that Mark Hofmann has been charged with counterfeiting Deseret Currency. It is also interesting to note that Mr. Hofmann claimed to discover a diary of the counterfeiter David McKenzie. When the Church published a list of 48 items that came through Hofmann, the McKenzie diary was mentioned first: “1. The **diary of David McKenzie**. The journal has few diary entries, many financial entries and some names and addresses. Small, red date book, leather appearing” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). Although a quotation from McKenzie’s diary in Alvin Rust’s book (page 85) speaks of the “Deseret Currency,” I do not know whether it contains anything that would relate to the counterfeiting operation.

Judge John Cradlebaugh, who served in Utah, made these statements in a speech delivered in the House of Representatives on February 7, 1863:

In the summer of 1858, David Machenzie was arrested, charged with engraving plates for counterfeiting Government drafts on the Treasury at St. Louis. The evidence showed that the engraving had been done in the upper part of the Deseret store, in Salt Lake City. This store is within the enclosure of Brigham Young’s premises, the same being walled in with a stone wall some twelve or fourteen feet in height. Judge Eckels, who issued the warrant, directed the marshal, Peter K. Dotson, to seize the plates, and any other matter that might be found in the room where the engraving had been done which would establish the offense. The marshal accordingly went to the room and seized the plate. He also found

another plate there, **belonging, as it since appears, to Brigham Young, and used for striking off the Deseret currency**; and, observing that the copper-plate upon which the counterfeit engraving had been made **had been cut off one side of Brigham’s Deseret currency plate**, he brought away with him the currency plate. After the trial Brigham refused to take them back, but brought his action against the marshal, P. K. Dotson, in the probate court. Probate courts throughout the Territory, held in violation of the organic act, are dignified into courts of coequal jurisdiction with the Federal courts. It is one of Brigham’s methods of destroying and nullifying the Federal courts. . . . Of course he obtained a judgment against Marshal Dotson for some \$2,600. . . . Dotson’s property is sold, and he is turned out of his house . . . Thus a good, efficient officer is ruined in Utah for having faithfully endeavored to prevent fraud upon the Government Treasury.

I have the plates here, [exhibiting them.] I have shown them to engravers in the city, and they tell me the original cost of making them could not be more than five or six hundred dollars, and say that they can be put in as good order as ever they were for twenty-five dollars. No stronger evidence could be adduced showing the absolute control of Brigham Young over the courts of Utah. (“Utah and the Mormons,” a Speech of Hon. J. Cradlebaugh, as printed in Appendix to the *Congressional Globe*, February 23, 1863, page 124)

Juanita Brooks said that David McKenzie

was engaged to engrave the plates for the Deseret currency, and while thus engaged he lived with the family of Brigham Young in the Beehive House. On February 28, he married Mary Ann Crowther, and four months later was involved in the counterfeiting scandal. . . .

McKenzie was convicted and sentenced to a two-year prison term, at the end of which he became disbursing clerk at the **tithing office**. . . . In 1868 McKenzie was made **private secretary of Brigham Young**; still later succeeded Horace K. Whitney in keeping the church books. (*On The Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 2, page 698, footnote 58)

Although the early Mormons always denied that they were involved in counterfeiting, there is so much evidence to the contrary that it cannot be easily dismissed (for more information see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 528-544). Mark Hofmann undoubtedly knew about this evidence, and it is possible that it influenced his decision to enter into counterfeiting Mormon money.

When it comes to the forgery of historical Church documents, Mark Hofmann could have read a great deal about Mormonism that might be used in an attempt to justify his actions. For instance, Mormon leaders claim that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient history of the Nephites written on gold plates. The internal evidence in the book itself, however, clearly reveals that it is a 19th century production. It appears to have material taken from the Westminster Confession, which was not adopted until 1729 (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 68-69), and also reflects the anti-Masonic controversy which was raging in Joseph Smith's time (Ibid., pages 69-72). The most devastating evidence against the Book of Mormon, however, is its use of material from the Bible. That Joseph Smith plagiarized from the King James Version of the Bible in creating the Book of Mormon is evident to those who have made a careful comparison of the two books. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 74-79, we have cited over 200 places where the Book of Mormon used quotations from the New Testament. Most of these quotations were supposed to have been recorded in the Book of Mormon between 600 B.C. and 33 A.D.—i.e., before the New Testament was even written!

Joseph Smith's successors also seemed to have little regard for truthful history. As I have pointed out before, the Mormon leaders actually forged the greatest portion (60%) of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* after his death. While it is true that they used carefully selected portions from Joseph Smith's diaries and letters written by him, other portions were taken from newspapers and diaries written by other people and some material was created specifically to fill in vacancies in the record. The portions taken from other authors were changed to the first person in an obvious attempt to mislead the reader into believing that they were written by Joseph Smith himself. For example, the newspaper, *The Wasp*, August 13, 1842, told of an attempt to arrest Joseph Smith as an accessory to the attempted murder of Governor Boggs:

... **Joseph Smith** was arrested upon a requisition of Gov. Carlin, ... in accordance with a process from Gov. Reynolds of Missouri, upon the affidavit of Ex-Governor Boggs, ... **Mr.** Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. ... these officers ... left **them** in care of the Marshal, without the original writ by which they were arrested, and by which only **they** could be retained, and returned back to Gov. Carlin for further instruction,—and **Messrs. Smith** and Rockwell went about **their** business. ...

As to **Mr. Smith**, **we** have yet to learn by what rule of right **he** was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated.

In the *History of the Church*, vol. 5, pages 86-87, the plagiarized material was disguised by putting it into the first person as though Joseph Smith had written it himself:

... **I** was arrested ... on a warrant issued by Governor Carlin, founded on a requisition from Governor Reynolds of Missouri, upon the affidavit of ex-Governor Boggs, ... **Brother** Rockwell was arrested at the same time as principal. ... these officers ... left **us** in the care of the marshal, without the original writ by which **we** were arrested, and by which only **we** could be retained, and returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and **myself** and Rockwell went about **our** business.

I have yet to learn by what rule of right **I** was arrested to be transported to Missouri for a trial of the kind stated.

For a more complete treatment of this subject see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 126-142; also our book, *Falsification of Joseph Smith's History*.

What Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders did when they fabricated Joseph Smith's *History* and claimed that it was written by Joseph Smith "**HIMSELF**" (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, title page), is exactly what happened in the production of the Salamander letter. In both cases other documents have been plagiarized to create what appears to be an original document written in the first person singular. While the *History of the Church* and the Salamander letter both contain a certain amount of material that is historically accurate, neither of them can be really depended upon because the authorship has been misrepresented. The *History of the Church*, of course, presents a pro-Mormon position, whereas the Salamander letter is anti-Mormon in content. In both cases, however, the same deceptive method has been used. I believe that the person who forged the Salamander letter knew about the falsification of Joseph Smith's *History*. There is evidence that he borrowed material from the Joseph Knight account of the discovery of the gold plates which was edited by Dean Jessee in *Brigham Young University Studies*. In another issue of *BYU Studies* (Summer 1971), Dean Jessee verified our contention that Joseph Smith did not finish his *History of the Church* and that it was completed after his death. He admitted, in fact, that over 60% of the *History* was compiled after Smith's death. The person who wrote the Salamander letter probably would have been familiar with this article. If not, he could have read Davis Bitton's article in

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Winter 1968, pages 30-32. Bitton, who was Assistant Church Historian, spoke of the many changes in the *History of the Church (DHC)* and then commented:

... for researchers in early Mormon history Rule Number One is “Do not rely on the DHC; never use a quotation from it without comparing the earlier versions.”

Although the idea for committing murder could have come from many different sources, it is interesting to note that a study of early Mormon Church history reveals that there was a belief that murder was sometimes an acceptable solution to a problem. In all fairness it should be stated that the Mormons were persecuted by their enemies, and this undoubtedly led them to the idea of taking vengeance into their own hands. Nevertheless, evidence shows that something grew out of this early climate which went far beyond the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer reported that “a secret organization was formed” among the Mormons at Far West, Missouri, in June 1838 which was known as the Danites. Although there has been an attempt to entirely disassociate Joseph Smith from the Danites, there is strong evidence to show that he was aware of what was going on (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 428-440). At any rate, the Mormon writer William E. Berrett admitted that “Such a band as the ‘Danites’ **did exist**, as historians affirm; . . . The organization had been for the purpose of **plundering and murdering** the enemies of the Saints” (*The Restored Church*, 1956, pages 197-198).

The activities of this band had a great deal to do with the Mormons being driven from Missouri. After they were expelled, many of them were filled with hatred and ideas of revenge. Joseph Smith felt that “Lieutenant Governor Boggs” was chiefly responsible for driving the Mormons out, and at one time he said that Boggs was worthy of death:

All earth and hell cannot deny that a baser knave, a greater traitor, and a more wholesale butcher, or murderer of mankind ever went untried, unpunished, and unhung—since hanging is the popular method of execution among the Gentiles in all countries professing Christianity, instead of **blood for blood, according to the law of heaven**. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 435)

On May 6, 1842, an attempt was made on the life of Lilburn W. Boggs. The Mormon writer John J. Stewart commented: “Unfortunately for Joseph, the

Mormons and mankind generally, Boggs recovered despite three bullet wounds in the head and neck” (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, 1966, page 171). On May 28, 1842, the Mormon newspaper, *The Wasp*, published a communication signed by “Vortex.” In this article we find the following: “Boggs is undoubtedly killed, according to report, but who did the noble deed remains to be found out.”

Anti-Mormon writers have always accused Orrin Porter Rockwell of shooting Boggs. Mormon writer Harold Schindler has done a great deal of research on this matter, and although he does not definitely state that Rockwell was guilty of the attempted assassination, he does bring out the fact that Rockwell was in the area and that he was using an assumed name:

Therefore, in February of 1842 when Orrin Porter Rockwell gathered up his family to visit Independence so that Luana . . . could be with her parents, Bennett, so he says, was not surprised at Joseph’s explanation that Rockwell had gone to “fulfill prophecy.” . . . Since Jackson County settlers still harbored a hatred for Mormons, Rockwell used an assumed name while in the area; he called himself Brown. (*Orrin Porter Rockwell; Man of God, Son of Thunder*, page 73)

On pages 75-76 of the same book, Mr. Schindler gave this information about the murder:

Outside the house a crowd had quickly gathered at first report of the murder attempt . . . one of the spectators discovered a gun. Sheriff Reynolds studied the firearm carefully, . . . a storekeeper named Uhlinger recognized the weapon as one stolen from his shop.

“I thought the niggers had taken it, but that hired man of Ward’s . . . he came in to look at it just before it turned up missing!” the storekeeper said.

Grateful for a genuine lead, Reynolds began looking for the hired hand, “to ask some questions,” but the man was nowhere to be found. It was not long before the sheriff determined that Mr. Brown, the suspect, was Orrin Porter Rockwell.

Book of Mormon witness John Whitmer felt that Joseph Smith had ordered the assassination of Boggs: “He hired a man by the name of Porter Orin Rockwell (who was one of the Gadianton band [i.e., the Danites] of whom I heretofore spoke) to go and murder a man by name of L. W. Boggs” (*John Whitmer’s History*, chapter 21). Joseph Smith was charged with being “an accessory before the fact” (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 86) to the attempted murder, but the state of Missouri was never able to bring him back to stand trial.

In a manuscript written in 1839, Reed Peck said that the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that he had a revelation in which the Apostle Peter told him that he had killed Judas:

He [Joseph Smith] talked of dissenters and cited us to the case of Judas, saying that Peter told him in a conversation a few days ago that himself hung Judas for betraying Christ . . . (*The Reed Peck Manuscript*, page 13)

Although this doctrine was kept secret at first, when the Mormons were settled in Utah, they began to teach it openly. On December 13, 1857, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, made this statement in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City:

Judas lost the saving principle, and they took him and **killed him**. It is said in the Bible that his bowels gushed out; but they **actually kicked him** until his bowels came out. . . . Judas was like salt that had lost its saving principles—good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. . . . It is so with you, ye Elders of Israel, when you forfeit your covenants. . . . I know the day is right at hand when men will forfeit their Priesthood and turn against us and against the covenants they have made, and they **will be destroyed as Judas was**. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, pages 125-126)

Joseph Smith's brother, William, gave this testimony in court: "I left Nauvoo in 1845 because my life was in danger if I remained there, because of my objections and protests against the doctrine of **blood atonement** and other new doctrines that were brought into the church" (*Temple Lot Case*, page 98). In the *Warsaw Signal*, October 29, 1845, William Smith warned that Brigham Young was teaching blood atonement—i.e., the doctrine that a man might be killed to save his soul. At first Brigham Young denied that such a doctrine was taught, but by 1857 he was boldly proclaiming the blood atonement doctrine. In one sermon Brigham Young, the second President of the Church, made these astounding remarks:

There are sins that men commit for which they **cannot receive forgiveness** . . . and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their **blood spilt upon the ground**, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an **offering for their sins**; and the smoking incense **would atone**, for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about **cutting people off from the earth**, that you consider

it is strong doctrine, but it is **to save them**, not to destroy them. . . .

And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the **only condition** upon which they can obtain forgiveness, **would beg of their brethren to shed their blood**, . . . I will say further; **I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins**.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, **yet men can commit sins which it can never remit**. . . . There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but **they must be atoned for by the blood of the man**. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pages 53-54)

On another occasion President Brigham Young went so far as to claim that his "blood atonement" doctrine fulfilled Jesus' command to "love thy neighbor as thyself":

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be **glad to have his blood shed**. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. **Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise**, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? **Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?**

I could refer you to **plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins**. . . .

This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is **necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it**. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is **the way to love mankind**. (*Deseret News*, February 18, 1857)

Since Brigham Young's "blood atonement" sermons and those of other Church leaders were published in the Church's own newspaper, *Deseret News*, and were later reprinted by the Mormons in England in the *Journal of Discourses*, there can be no question regarding the accuracy of the printed reports. In chapters 25, 28, 33 and 36 of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we presented a great deal of evidence

showing that “blood atonement” was both taught and practiced.

There appears to be some evidence to show that Mark Hofmann was familiar with the doctrine of “blood atonement.” As I pointed out in another chapter, the *Salt Lake Tribune* for February 6, 1986, claimed that “Mr. Lilywhite said Mr. Hofmann said the commander [Jonathan Dunham] was later found dead with his throat slashed.” Those who enforced the “blood atonement” doctrine often cut the throat of the intended victim. If Dunham refused to rescue Joseph Smith from the Carthage jail, as Hofmann and others have claimed, he would have been a good candidate for “blood atonement.” After the bombings there was a rumor, apparently circulated by some of Mr. Hofmann’s friends, that among the Bullock collection Hofmann found a document which was reported to be Brigham Young’s list of people who were to be assassinated. While I do not believe that he really found such a document, if Mr. Hofmann made this claim, it would tend to show that he was interested in the doctrine of “blood atonement.”

During the 1970s and 1980s there have been a number of murders committed by Mormon Fundamentalists—i.e., people who believe in the early teachings of the Mormon Church but are no longer in the Church itself. Brigham Young’s doctrine of “blood atonement” played an important role in the murders committed by Ervil Lebaron and his followers, and also in the case of the Lafferty brothers who cut the throats of their brother’s wife and her 15-month-old daughter (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1985). If Mark Hofmann is indeed guilty of murder, I doubt very much that he did it because he believed in the “blood atonement” doctrine—i.e., believed he was saving the souls of Christensen or Sheets by shedding their blood. On the other hand, the knowledge that the early leaders of his Church (whom he had been taught to revere from his youth) taught such an outlandish doctrine could have affected his thinking with regard to murder.

EFFECT ON CHURCH

Mr. Hofmann must have believed that his “discoveries” would tend to liberalize the Mormon Church as scholars and Church leaders came to accept them, and there is little doubt that this has turned out to be the case. Some Mormon scholars, in fact, have confessed that the Salamander letter served as the catalyst that led them to deeper studies regarding the connection between Mormonism and magic. Now that the documents have been exposed as forgeries,

historians may have suffered some loss of credibility with the average member of the Church. This would probably tend to greatly strengthen the orthodox position in the Church if it were not for another factor—i.e., the loss of credibility that the Mormon leaders have suffered. It is possible, in fact, that the exposure of Hofmann’s documents as forgeries could do more harm to the Church in the long run than if the documents were proven authentic. While it is true that both Mormon and non-Mormon historians were fooled (and I must admit that I believed in the Anthon transcript and the Joseph Smith III Blessing for some time), as a general rule historians do not claim to be inspired by God. The Mormon leaders, on the other hand, claim special guidance from the Lord. According to Ezra Taft Benson, the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church, “The Prophet Will Never Lead the Church Astray” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets,” an address given at BYU, February 26, 1980; printed in *Following the Brethren*, page 5). President Benson claims that the leaders of the Church have special discernment which is far superior to “earthly knowledge”:

FIFTH: *The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Any Matter at Any Time.*

Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. . . . We haven’t yet had a prophet who earned a doctorate degree in any subject, but as someone said, “A prophet may not have his PhD but he certainly has his LDS.” We encourage earthly knowledge in many areas, but remember if there is ever a conflict between earthly knowledge and the words of the prophet, you stand with the prophet and you’ll be blessed and time will vindicate you. (Ibid., page 6)

On page 10 of his address, President Benson said: “NINTH: *The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.*”

As I think of President Benson’s statements concerning the special powers of a prophet, I cannot help but remember the photograph of his predecessor, Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the Church, which appeared in the Church Section of the *Deseret News* on May 3, 1980. President Kimball is flanked by Mark Hofmann, President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities seem to be able to detect

anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript. As I pointed out earlier, although President Kimball was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13), he was unable to translate the characters which appear on the Anthon transcript. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the Church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing affect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land” (Acts 5:3)?

As President Kimball got older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the Church. Hinckley, who stood with President Kimball in the 1980 photograph, was deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the Church made with Hofmann. In a paper prepared for Sunstone Theological Symposium, John Heinerman and Anson Shupe wrote the following:

The LDS *Church News* pointed out that “The Church is mentioned most often as victim in the 28-count complaint against Hofmann” with “the majority of the counts deal[ing] with historical documents of interest to the Church and involving at least a half million dollars and a number of victims” . . .

What’s so incredible about these kinds of deception is that the principal victims involved occupy an unusually high ecclesiastical status within the Mormon Church and are designated “as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church” (McConkie, 1966). . . . the Lord told Joseph Smith while he was a

prisoner in Liberty Jail in 1839 that “the Holy Ghost shall be thy *constant* companion” (D&C 121:46). Elsewhere He promised that those who “have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide” would not be deceived (D&C 45:57) and admonished the leading Elders of His Church to always “conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit” (D&C 46:2). If such scriptural promises are legitimate, one is led to speculate why such men as Hinckley, Oaks, and Pinnock became such easy marks for the apparent fraud and deceit worked upon them by Mark Hofmann.

One possible explanation was offered by Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin: “Naive, overly-motivated and highly secretive buyers are vulnerable targets for expert exploiters” . . . A second explanation came from an older Relief Society sister, one Zella J. Hill, residing in the Eighth Ward in Salt Lake City: “When I heard and kept learning how Mr. Hofmann took them with his forgeries, I’m inclined to think more and more that they’re not as inspired as they make out to be . . . He [President Hinckley] should have had more sense in knowing just what kind of man he was dealing with” . . . The comment offered by Sister Zella J. Hill may reflect the unexpressed opinions of a good segment of Mormon membership who wondered after and were puzzled by the deceptions Hofmann was able to commit against several Church hierarchy: “If they had the wool pulled over their eyes once in something like this [forged documents], then it makes you wonder what other kinds of mistakes they might make later on in something else far more serious than this” . . . If nothing else, the victimization of certain Church leaders by Hofmann’s apparent fraud and deceit, has served to weaken the absolute trust and confidence which many devout Mormons have heretofore given them. As to what degree their trust and confidence has eroded, only time will tell. (“Mark Hofmann and the Mormon Manuscript Bombings: Fraud and Deceit in a Religious Context,” pages 5, 7-9)

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the Church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises a question as to their testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old? They have seen and inspected Mark Hofmann’s documents, but they have never seen the

gold plates the Book of Mormon was translated from. While it could be possible that Joseph Smith really had some kind of metal plates, how would the present leaders of the Mormon Church know if they were genuine or fabricated? At one time even the Book of Mormon witness John Whitmer, who claimed to see the plates and signed the statement printed in the Book of Mormon, acknowledged that he did not know whether the Book of Mormon was really a translation of the plates. In his book, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, page 131, Mormon scholar Richard Lloyd Anderson gives this information about John Whitmer:

Answering in the presence of his anti-Mormon friends, the Book of Mormon witness made two revealing statements. First, he admitted, "I now say, I handled those plates; there were fine engravings on both sides. I handled them." When Turley next asked bluntly why **Whitmer now doubted the work**, the witness indicated his inability to translate the characters on the plates: "**I cannot read it, and I do not know whether it is true or not.**"

It is interesting to note that John Whitmer and other witnesses to the Book of Mormon were deceived for a time by a forger who claimed he was Joseph Smith's true successor. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard give this information concerning this deceiver:

A more successful leader was James J. Strang of Wisconsin, who had joined the Church only four months before the death of the Prophet. In August 1844 he presented a letter that, he claimed, had been written by Joseph Smith, appointing Strang as the Prophet's successor. The Twelve labeled it a forgery and excommunicated him, but the charismatic Strang gathered many believers . . . in 1856 he was murdered by one of his own disaffected followers. (*The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, page 240)

Lawrence Foster informs us that "Dale L. Morgan points out a number of factors which suggest a forgery. First, the letter is hand printed. No other extant letter ever written or dictated by Joseph Smith was hand printed. Second, the signature of the letter, written by the same hand as the text of the letter, bears not the slightest resemblance to Joseph Smith's distinctive signature. Finally, the content of the letter itself is extremely uncharacteristic of Joseph Smith's writing style, but it is strikingly similar to a beautiful passage in Strang's own diary for March 20, 1833. For these and a number of other complex reasons, Morgan concludes that the letter was probably a forgery by Strang. I have carefully examined the original 'letter of appointment'

and fully concur with Morgan's judgments" (*Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*, by Lawrence Foster, page 325).

On pages 190-191 of the same book, Foster gives this information:

Strang argued with considerable eloquence that the letter, in conjunction with an angelic ordination that he had received, showed him to be Joseph Smith's true successor. To buttress these claims, Strang began to deliver revelations in Smith's "Thus saith the Lord" style. . . . In the presence of four witnesses, in the autumn of 1845 Strang dug up some brass plates near Voree, the inscriptions on which he then "translated." Later he would "translate" a brilliant elaboration and extension of Mosaic Law which he called the *Book of the Law of the Lord*.

James J. Strang, like Joseph Smith, claimed to translate the plates with the Urim and Thummim. He had witnesses who claimed they saw the plates, and their testimony is recorded in almost the same way that the testimony of the eleven witnesses is recorded in the Book of Mormon. Although Brigham Young claimed that Strang was a very wicked man, some of the Book of Mormon witnesses were so credulous that they were influenced by Strang's claims. On January 20th, 1848, Strang wrote the following:

. . . early in 1846 the tract reprint of the first number of the *Voree Herald*, containing the evidence of my calling and authority, strayed into upper Missouri. Immediately I received a letter from **Hiram Page, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon**, and a neighbor and friend to the Whitmer's who lived near him, and that they rejoiced with exceeding joy that **God had raised up one to stand in place of Joseph**, . . . He goes on to say that **all the witnesses of the Book of Mormon living in that region received the news with gladness**, and finally that they held a council in which David [Whitmer] and John Whitmer and this Hiram Page were the principle actors; and being at a loss what they ought to do about coming to Voree, sent up to me **as a prophet of God to tell them what to do**. . . . I received another letter . . . in which, among other things they invite me to come to their residence in Missouri and receive from them, David and John Whitmer, church records, and manuscript revelations, which they had kept in their possession from the time that they were active members of the church. These documents they speak of as great importance to the church, and offer them to me **as the true shepherd who has a right to them**, . . . (*Gospel Herald*, January 20, 1848)

In a letter to Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, dated December 2, 1846, William E. McLellin stated: “I was visited by James J. Strang . . . He told me that **all the witnesses to the book of Mormon yet alive were with him, except Oliver**” (*The Ensign of Liberty*, Kirtland, Ohio, April 1847, pages 17-19). Mr. Strang was undoubtedly telling the truth about the Book of Mormon witnesses. John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses, wrote the following in his history of the church—later, however, it was crossed out:

God knowing all things prepared a man whom he visited by an angel of God and showed him where there were some ancient record hid, and also put in his heart to desire of Smith to grant him power to establish a stake . . . whose name is James J. Strang. Now first Smith was unfavorably disposed to grant him this request but being troubled in spirit and knowing from the things that were staring him in his face that his days must soon be closed therefore he enquired of the Lord and behold the Lord said [three words indecipherable] James J. Strang a Prophet Seer & Revelator to my church, for this stake. . . . the Lord’s anointed fell by the brutal hand of man, & they are gone the way of all the earth and **Strang Reigns in the place of Smith** the author and proprietor of the Book of Mormon. (*John Whitmer’s History*, page 23)

Martin Harris, one of the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon, joined the Strangite movement and even went on a mission to England for them. The Mormon Church’s own publication *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* had some very sharp words to say about Martin Harris when it was discovered that he was coming to England to preach Strangite doctrine:

One of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the devil a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with the rage and madness of a demon. **One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing.** He soon became partially deranged or shattered, as many believed, flying from one thing to another, as if reason and common sense were thrown off their balance. In one of his fits of monomania, he went and joined the “Shakers” or followers of Anne Lee. . . . but since Strang has made his entry into the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock too, Martin leaves the “Shakers,” **whom he knows to be right**, and has known it for many years, as he said and **joins Strang** in gathering out the tares of the field. We understand that he is appointed a mission to this country, but we do not feel to warn the Saints

against him, for his own unbridled tongue will soon show out specimens of folly enough to give any person a true index to the character of the man; but if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said of him, they may turn to the 178th page of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and the **person there called a “wicked man” is no other than Martin Harris**, . . . (*Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, vol. 8, November 15, 1846, pages 124-128)

Although the present leaders of the Mormon Church would have us believe that the witnesses to the Book of Mormon were all very stable men, a careful examination of the evidence reveals that this was not the case (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 50-63). They were not only misled by Strang but by others as well, and some of them gave false revelations in the name of the Lord. As the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* indicated, Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, at one time accepted the Shakers’ *Sacred Roll and Book* as a divine revelation. This revealing statement appeared on page 173 of *The Braden and Kelly Debate*: “Harris declared repeatedly that **he had as much evidence for a Shaker book he had as for the Book of Mormon.**” In a thesis written at Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, “Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young’s brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization” wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching; Martin Harris is a **firm believer in Shakerism**, says **his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon.** (“Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon,” 1955, page 52)

It is very difficult to seriously consider the testimony of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon when we find that they followed a number of deceivers and people who gave false revelations. Furthermore, the fact that the present leaders of the Mormon Church could not detect a forgery of the characters on Hofmann’s Anthon transcript certainly casts doubt upon their testimony to the gold plates—plates which they have never actually seen themselves. When it comes down to it, the Book of Mormon reminds me a great deal of Hofmann’s documents. It shows signs of plagiarism and has absolutely no provenance. No one ever saw it before it showed up in Joseph Smith’s hands, and it was never quoted in any ancient record. The Angel Moroni, who was supposed to have revealed the gold

plates to Joseph Smith, seems as illusive as Allen Lee Bullock—the man who was supposed to give the Joseph Smith III Blessing to Mark Hofmann.

With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Moreover, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the Church contain revelations from the Lord Himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.

As I have pointed out earlier, the 1838 letter of Joseph Smith to his brother, Hyrum, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. According to a revelation given by Joseph Smith in November 1831, the Lord challenged the early Mormons to try to duplicate one of Joseph Smith’s revelations:

Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you:

Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true;

But if he cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 67, verses 6-8)

After this revelation was given, Joseph Smith boasted:

. . . William E. M’Lellin, as the wisest man, in his own estimation, having more learning than sense, endeavored to write a commandment like unto one of the least of the Lord’s, but failed; it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord. The Elders and all present that witnessed this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ, renewed their faith in the fulness of the Gospel, and in the truth of the commandments and revelations which the Lord had given to the Church through my instrumentality; and the Elders signified a willingness to bear testimony of their truth to all the world. (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 226)

It now appears that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

The Mormon leaders teach that there has been “a restoration of the gospel” through Joseph Smith the Prophet. Smith restored the Book of Mormon and a great deal of other ancient Scripture. All of these purported Scriptures have no provenance—i.e., there is nothing but the manuscripts written on what was modern paper during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 375-376, we wrote the following:

The Apostle Pratt’s statement that there is “more than one thousand times” the amount of evidence to prove the Book of Mormon than to prove the Bible is certainly a misrepresentation. We have already shown that the only evidence for the Book of Mormon is the testimony of the witnesses and that this testimony cannot be relied upon.

As far as historical and manuscript evidence is concerned, Joseph Smith’s scriptures have absolutely no foundation. The “records of the Nephites,” for instance, were never cited by any ancient writer, nor are there any known manuscripts or even fragments of manuscripts in existence older than the ones dictated by Joseph Smith in the late 1820’s. Joseph Smith’s Book of Moses is likewise without documentary support. The only handwritten manuscripts for the Book of Moses are those dictated by Joseph Smith in the early 1830’s. Since Joseph Smith’s revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants* do not purport to be translations of ancient records, we would not expect to find any ancient manuscript evidence concerning them. There is one revelation, however, which purports to be a translation of a “record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.” This revelation is found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* as Section 7. There is no documentary support for this revelation. The Book of Abraham purports to be a translation of an ancient Egyptian papyrus. We have already shown, however, that the original papyrus is

in reality the Egyptian Book of Breathings and has nothing to do with Abraham or his religion. Therefore, we have no evidence for the Book of Abraham prior to the handwritten manuscripts dictated by Joseph Smith in the 1830's. It would appear, then, that there is no documentary evidence for any of Joseph Smith's works that dates back prior to the late 1820's.

When we turn to the Bible, however, we find a great deal of evidence—some of which dates back more than 2,000 years—showing that the Bible was known and used in early times. While this in itself does not prove that the Bible is divinely inspired, it does give a person a basis for faith.

Mark Hofmann seems to have effected his own "restoration" of religious documents from the past. While he has not pretended to find the signatures of Abraham, Moses and Aaron, he has "discovered" Mormon material which was supposed to have been written as far back as the 1820's. Mr. Hofmann restored important letters and revelations from Joseph Smith as well as material from other prominent Mormons. Hofmann's "restoration" was even more convincing than Joseph Smith's because he not only gave us the text of these significant documents, but he claimed to have the very original copies on paper dating back to the period in which they were supposed to have been written.

The exposure of Mr. Hofmann's scheme to undermine the Mormon Church does not really help the Church. On the contrary, it shows how gullible we

all can be and that even the Prophet of the Mormon Church can be deceived. Once the fallibility of the present Prophet, Seer and Revelator is perceived, one begins to wonder about Joseph Smith himself. When the searchlight is focused upon him, we see that he looks remarkably like Mark Hofmann.

The action of the Church leaders in buying up and suppressing Mark Hofmann's documents raises another important question: if they were willing to pay thousands of dollars to buy forgeries which tended to discredit Joseph Smith, how many authentic documents have they bought up and locked away in the Church Archives and the First Presidency's vault? The fact that the General Authorities of the Church believed in and bought Mr. Hofmann's forgeries reveals a great deal about their own thinking concerning the original Prophet. They must have known from other things they have read that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in money-digging and magic or they would not have been so easily persuaded to buy Hofmann's documents. The impression one gets is that the Mormon leaders know that Joseph Smith was not really like the image the Church has presented to the people, but that they must maintain that image at all costs—even if it means they have to buy up and suppress documents.

For those who are interested in knowing more about Mormon history and doctrine I recommend our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A MORE ON THE SALAMANDER LETTER

On November 19, 1985, Brent Metcalfe, who worked as a historical researcher for Mark Hofmann, appeared on a television show broadcast by KUED. Mr. Metcalfe claimed he had new and important evidence which helped verify the Salamander letter. This was an inscription found in an 1830 printing of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Although the inscription is neither signed nor dated, Mr. Metcalfe claimed that Dean Jessee's preliminary analysis of it demonstrated that it is in the same handwriting that appears in the Salamander letter. There is a signature at the front of the book, but it is not that of Martin Harris. The signature it bears is that of Nathan Harris. Martin Harris' father was named Nathan and Martin's brother Emer also had a son by that name. The book has a date of "1833" written at the front and the words "Kirtland, Ohio." Both Martin Harris' father and his nephew were living during the year 1833. The inscription attributed to Martin Harris reads as follows: "If this book should wander and you this book should find please to kindly remember that what you hold is mine."

It has been claimed that Mormon-owned Deseret Book has had the book since the early 1970's and that Mark Hofmann could not possibly have had access to it until after the Salamander letter was discovered. In November 1985 Sandra and I had access to a good xerox copy of the inscription for a few minutes and agreed that the handwriting looked remarkably similar to that found in the Salamander letter. A photograph

of this inscription has now been published by Dean Jessee in *BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 428. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986, I raised these questions concerning this purported inscription of Martin Harris:

To begin with, if the inscription was really written by Martin Harris, why didn't he sign his name to it? It would be important, also, to know if Martin ever had the book in his possession. The inscription by the unknown hand says, "this book . . . is mine." It is claimed that the book actually came down through Emer Harris' descendants. . . .

However this may be, if the handwriting in the book is verified to be the same as that found in the Salamander Letter, investigators will have to take a very close look at the book itself to see if there are any signs of foul play. It is known that Mark Hofmann obtained this book from Deseret Book before the bombings. On KUED, Brent Metcalfe said that "Mark had, in fact, purchased the book from Deseret Book who had it as early as 1971 . . ." He also said that "Mark Hofmann was, in fact, involved in the sale of it . . ." One person told us that Hofmann bought the book from Deseret Book in September 1985 and resold it to the Church Historical Department in October 1985. The reader will remember that September was the very month that Hofmann bought the papyrus from Mr. Rendell and broke it up for the purpose of deception. . . . I feel that this whole transaction is very suspicious. If I were a detective, I would want to take a close look at the book to see if a page has been removed or substituted at the back of the book. . . . The forger, of course, would not be able to add the signature of Martin Harris after the poem because it would give the whole scheme away. It would, however, at least give the impression that handwriting that looked like that in the Salamander

letter had been found in a book which had a pedigree which could be traced to Harris' family. I do not, of course, know that this is what happened, but I feel that in view of what Mark Hofmann did to the papyrus, we must take a hard look at everything that passed through his hands.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 6, the "Nathan Harris Book [of] Common Prayer" is listed as a forgery. According to that document, Mark Hofmann sold this book to the Mormon Church on "October 3, 1985." At the preliminary hearing, Curt Bench, of Deseret Book, told some circumstances surrounding the purchase of the book that sound very suspicious. He claimed that when he first showed the *Book of Common Prayer* to Mark Hofmann, Mr. Hofmann "offered to pay \$50 for the book." Later, however, Hofmann indicated "that in going through the book he had found some Martin Harris handwriting in it." He then told Mr. Bench "he had been able to sell it for \$2,000, and would offer us a thousand for it instead of the \$50." Bench went on to testify that Hofmann "felt it would be a fair thing to let us know that he had sold it for more. . . . and in good conscience would of course give us more money for it on that basis."

Since Mr. Hofmann was supposed to have made the discovery of the Martin Harris writing in the book, I can see no reason why he felt obligated to give half of the money to Deseret Book. Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin speak of Hofmann as having "a growing reputation as a shrewd bargainer of perhaps questionable scruples" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 54). This story hardly fits that image and also seems inconsistent with Hofmann's conduct with regard to the Salamander letter. There is no record of Mr. Hofmann sharing half (\$20,000) with the person he supposedly bought the letter from. Lyn Jacobs said that Hofmann claimed he obtained it from William Thoman. Mark Hofmann not only refused to share any of the profit with Mr. Thoman, but he also neglected to even pay back the \$60 he owed him. Instead he shared the profit with Lyn Jacobs. It would appear to me that Mark Hofmann was trying to impress Curt Bench with his honesty so that Bench would not become suspicious of the inscription. In any case, when Mr. Bench was asked what he knew about the writing in the back of the book when Deseret Book owned it, he could not remember exactly what was there: "I believe that I remember writing in the back, but I didn't pay much attention because there's nothing striking about it. I couldn't say absolutely what was there." Investigators found a woman by the name of Francis Magee who owned the book before Deseret Book obtained it. She testified as follows:

Q—. . . Now these two pages. Was the writing that appears on those two pages in the book when you were given it by your mother-in-law?

A—No.

Q—That writing was not there?

A—No.

Q—How long did you have the book?

A—From 1936 to 1973.

Although I do not think that this testimony by itself provides absolute proof that the Martin Harris inscription is a forgery, there is other evidence which makes the inscription highly questionable. George Throckmorton examined the ink in the purported Martin Harris inscription under ultraviolet light and found it "had a very distinctive purple color, which was different from any of the other ink that I've seen at that time and any of the other ink I found in the book itself . . ." Mr. Throckmorton examined the marks caused by water on the page which has the inscription and also "certain spots or marks that can be made by ink or other items . . . when they're left in contact with each other through the process of osmosis they actually will be incorporated on both pages." He found the water stains "were not consistent with the pages surrounding it." He went on to testify: ". . . this staining was not consistent with what should have been found. Not only on this page but also on the page immediately preceding it. . . . it gave the appearance that either this page had been inserted or it had been removed at one time and later reinserted. I could not reach a definitive conclusion on that, but it's not consistent with the way it should have been." Throckmorton charged that the book "has been changed or altered somehow. I'm not certain the exact technique that was used, but . . . it is incongruous within itself . . . it's not consistent within itself."

In the January 1986 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* (pages 16-19), I wrote the following:

There is something else that I feel I must relate which casts a very bad light on the new discovery. That is that both Mark Hofmann and Brent Metcalfe previously claimed that there was a Book of Mormon inscribed with the longest known sample of Martin Harris' handwriting and also bearing his signature underneath it. Why, I ask, would they use an unsigned poem if an inscription bearing Harris' signature had been located?

The inscription was originally mentioned by Mark Hofmann himself months before the Salamander Letter was supposed to have been discovered. The inscription was reported to have been found in an

early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Hofmann mentioned this matter to a scholar on May 8, 1983. This fact was recorded on a piece of paper that very day, and this piece of paper is still in existence. The remarkable thing about the conversation is that Mark Hofmann mentioned the contents of the inscription as containing a statement that Martin Harris had printed the Book of Mormon with his own money. This is a very important parallel to the Salamander Letter which has Harris writing about “the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money—”

On December 10, 1983, which was after the discovery of the Salamander Letter, Mark Hofmann spoke to the same man about the inscription and the important parallel to the text of the Salamander Letter. In addition to this information being recorded in a contemporary note, I distinctly remember that it was relayed to me. From that time I looked forward to seeing the purported Martin Harris inscription.

In November 1984, after Brent Metcalfe had worked for Steven Christensen as a historical researcher who was attempting to validate the Salamander letter, he came to my house and tried to convince me that my criticism of the Salamander Letter was of no value because he had in his possession a photocopy of Martin Harris’ inscription in the early edition of the Book of Mormon printed in England. Mr. Metcalfe claimed that he had personally compared this with the Salamander Letter and found the handwriting to be identical. In the light of this evidence, he felt that I was foolish to continue criticizing the letter.

When the Mormon History Association met in May 1985, I was expecting Dean Jessee to produce this inscription as his main piece of evidence. Instead, however, he showed slides of samples of Martin Harris’ signature. Although he had one document containing four words and a signature supposed to have been written by Martin Harris, he did not use the longest inscription purported to be in Martin Harris’ handwriting. I was disturbed that this inscription was missing and asked Brent Metcalfe about it. His reply was something to the effect that Jessee had not received it in time to include it in his study. I assumed, therefore, that it was going to be used later. After some time had passed, I asked Mr. Metcalfe again why Dean Jessee was still not referring to this inscription. He replied that Jessee felt that it was unwise to use a photocopy. He wanted to see the original book to be certain that it was not a forgery. Metcalfe said he had the information telling of the book’s location at his home somewhere and was trying to locate it.

On August 24, 1985, I directly asked Mark Hofmann concerning the inscription. He replied that he had never heard of it. I could not imagine that Hofmann would forget the very best evidence for the authenticity of the Salamander letter. In any case, the scholar Mr. Hofmann had spoken to on at least two occasions concerning the inscription was present during the conversation. Hofmann evidently remembered that he had told him the story, and his memory started to improve. He said that a man by the name of Jerry Kelly might be able to help me locate the book. Hofmann then asked me how I had learned about the inscription. I told him that Brent Metcalfe had told me he had a photocopy. For just a moment, Hofmann seemed to be angry. He regained his composure, however, and said that Mr. Metcalfe always shared with him but had not told him about the photocopy. I replied that Metcalfe was very reluctant to share anything with me, and yet he had told me about it. Later Metcalfe told me that Hofmann talked to him about his mentioning the photocopy to me. He did not reveal what Hofmann had said.

After the bombings (November 13, 1985), Brent Metcalfe came to our home again and tried to convince me of the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. I reminded him of the conversation we had had before about the Martin Harris inscription in the Book of Mormon. To my surprise (Sandra was also present during the conversation), Mr. Metcalfe completely denied that he had ever told me that he had a photocopy of it or had ever seen the inscription. He said that he was still looking for the notes which told where the original book was located. I was absolutely astounded at his answer. My first conversation with him concerning this subject is indelibly written on my mind. Mr. Metcalfe did, in fact, tell me that he had a photocopy and that he had personally compared it with the Salamander Letter and found that the handwriting was identical. He even spoke to me concerning the identical formation of one of the letters found in both documents. Furthermore, I asked him at that time if I could obtain a copy of his photocopy. His reply was that that would not be possible. His response on Nov. 13, 1985, was also contrary to what he told me in our third conversation on the subject. This was that Dean Jessee had said the photocopy could not be used for comparison. They would need to obtain the original book. I really do not know what the truth is about this matter. I feel, however, that there are three possible explanations as to why the purported inscription has not been brought to light.

One, that it is a forgery that may not pass the critical examination of experts. Perhaps the proper ink was not used or the signature was not just right. It could even be possible that the inscription did not

really appear in a book. All one would have to do is obtain a photocopy of the front portion of an early English printing of the Book of Mormon and then add an inscription on the photocopy. If the photocopy were then recopied, it (the second copy) would give the impression that the inscription was in the original book. If this were the case, no original book could be produced. This might explain why Mark Hofmann was upset that Brent Metcalfe had told me about the photocopy and why he had a talk with Metcalfe about the matter. Hofmann would have known that I would be pressuring him and the researchers to produce the original book so that the inscription could be verified. If no such book existed, it would put Hofmann in an embarrassing position. On the other hand, if the inscription does exist in a book and is a forgery which could be detected, it might destroy the Salamander Letter. The reason for this is that it was supposed to be in existence months prior to the discovery of the Salamander Letter, and there is no way that the forger of the inscription could have known what Harris' handwriting would have looked like. (The reader will remember that Mr. Metcalfe said the handwriting was identical.) It is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann claimed that when he was on his "mission to Bristol, England, I bought several early copies of the Book of Mormon in old bookstores" (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16).

Two, it is possible, of course, that the inscription is really in a book and that it is a genuine Harris inscription. It could, in fact, have been used as a pattern to forge the Salamander Letter. If this were the case, the reason for suppressing the inscription would be that the larger the sample of real Martin Harris handwriting available to handwriting experts, the more likely they would be to detect the forgery. . . .

Even though Brent Metcalfe is very intelligent and knows a great deal about Mormon documents, he is not a handwriting expert. Mark Hofmann, therefore, could have shown him a photocopy of such an inscription without fear of detection. Turning the inscription over to a handwriting expert, however, would be an entirely different matter.

Three, it is possible that no such inscription ever existed in a Book of Mormon and that Mr. Hofmann never had a photocopy. This explanation would not only cast doubt upon the honesty of both Metcalfe and Hofmann, but it would also present a serious problem to those who believe in the authenticity of the Salamander Letter. If the inscription does not really exist, then it is evident that Mark Hofmann was daydreaming about a Martin Harris inscription months before the Salamander letter was even discovered. Strange as it may seem, this imaginary

inscription contained the same information about Harris publishing the Book of Mormon with his own money that was discovered later in the Salamander Letter. The serious implications of this matter cannot be ignored. If the inscription does not really exist, then one has to seriously consider the possibility that Mr. Hofmann himself could have created the text of the Salamander letter. . . .

Whatever the case may be, it is apparent that what should be the best evidence for the Salamander Letter (if it does, in fact, exist) is being covered up. Instead of bringing forth the signed inscription which also contains an important parallel to the Salamander Letter, Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann have put forth a purported inscription which has neither a signature nor a date. Brent Metcalfe was the only full-time historical researcher who worked for Steven Christensen in authenticating the Salamander Letter. He later worked for Mark Hofmann. Mr. Metcalfe claims that somewhere in his material he has the information concerning the location of the Book of Mormon which has Harris' signed inscription in it. To me it seems incredible that a historical researcher would not spend the time to locate the most important evidence. I feel that both Brent Metcalfe and Mark Hofmann owe us an explanation. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986, pages 16-19)

As I have shown in the first chapter of this book, the lack of provenance, or pedigree, for the Salamander letter has always bothered me. That fact that I made an issue of this matter caused Mark Hofmann some concern. He discussed this matter with Sandra on August 23, 1984, but he still did not reveal a source for the letter. Brent Metcalfe informed me that at one time Hofmann told him he was planning to come to my house and reveal what he knew about the letter's pedigree. This visit, of course, never took place.

The reader will remember that it was originally claimed that Lyn Jacobs bought the letter from a collector in New York. At the preliminary hearing, Jacobs testified that he had "fabricated" this story and that it was Mark Hofmann who obtained the letter from a dentist by the name of William Thoman in Cortland, N.Y. Mr. Jacobs admitted that he had never had any contact with Thoman:

Q—. . . [had] you been to Mr. Thoman's place of business?

A—I had never met the man.

Q—. . . any contact at all with him over the phone or any other way?

A—Never.

Hofmann, as I have shown, could not have bought the letter from William Thoman in late 1983 as Jacobs maintained because he owed Dr. Thoman \$60. Thoman claimed, in fact, that he did not deal with Hofmann after 1982. At the preliminary hearing, Jacobs showed a little uncertainty over whether he had actually given Thoman's name to Hofmann: "That was one name, I believe. . . . I'm having a hard time remembering exactly how many names I gave him, but it seems to me that was one [of] them."

Some scholars have tried to construct a pedigree for the Salamander letter which extends back to a collector by the name of Royden Lounsbery who lived in Ithaca, New York. According to this theory, the letter passed from the Lounsbery estate to a collector by the name of Elwyn Doubleday. Mormon scholar Dean Jessee seemed to buy this theory:

The Harris letter was obtained in 1983 by Lyn Jacobs, a Salt Lake City manuscript collector. Prior to that the letter had been in the possession of Elwyn Doubleday, a dealer in rare postal memorabilia, at Alton Bay, New Hampshire. According to Doubleday, the Harris letter was very probably a part of a large collection of New York handstamped letters he obtained in 1982. (*BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 404)

One of the most important links in Jessee's chain broke when Jacobs admitted he did NOT buy the letter, and the other link now appears to be very doubtful. In an article published in the *Maine Antique Digest*, April 1986, page 10-A, we find this information:

Almost all of the Lounsbery estate material bore small penciled codes on the envelopes, consisting of Lounsbery's initials and a number denoting what he had paid for the item.

In January, 1983, Elwyn Doubleday sold a large lot of this material to Dr. William Thoman. . . .

Elwyn Doubleday says, "I'm 90 percent sure it [the Salamander letter] was in the batch I sold Thoman. Mark Hofmann called me in 1984 and said it had Lounsbery's penciled code on the cover. That inscription has since been erased. . . .

"Hofmann's two associates, Rick Grunder and Lynn Jacobs, have both indicated to me that they felt the letter came from the Lounsbery estate, as have all L.D.S. church historians I've talked to. In the spring of 1985, the church sent out three historians to look at my inventory. They seemed certain I was the source of the letter. They were trying to develop a pedigree for it.

"In the middle of 1985, all hell broke loose. Hofmann held a symposium [the Sunstone Theological Symposium?] in Salt Lake and stated that the letter had come from me, through the Lounsbery estate. Then I got a letter from a law firm in Boise, Idaho, Hanson and Hanson, saying they were interested in any Mormon material I might have and could they visit me while they were back East to take in the B.Y.U.-B.C. . . . football game.

"Three men showed up here that Saturday and looked at what I had in stock. . . . I had a 1949 Brooklyn Dodgers autographed baseball on my desk and one of the men was openly very interested in it. I finally gave it to him.

"When the F.B.I. showed up here after the October murder in Salt Lake City, they asked me if I had given that baseball to one of the Hanson group. I said yes. They said that he wasn't a Hanson, that was Mark Hofmann in disguise, and one of the other men was his friend, Shannon Flynn."

If Mark Hofmann called Mr. Doubleday and told him that the Salamander letter once "had Lounsbery's penciled code on the cover," it must have been an afterthought. At the Sunstone Symposium, August 24, 1985, the theory of the Lounsbery markings was brought up by Marvin Hill. We discussed the matter with Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs and they showed no knowledge whatever of the markings.

At one point Elwyn Doubleday appeared on a Salt Lake City television station and unreservedly stated that he had sold the Salamander letter for 20 or 25 dollars. Although I feel that Mr. Doubleday now believes that he sold the letter, when Wesley P. Walters asked him that same question back in 1985, Doubleday had no recollection of the matter. His memory seems to have gotten better as the letter became more widely known. In his interview in *Sunstone*, Lyn Jacobs admitted it would be difficult to even trace the Salamander letter to Mr. Doubleday:

SUNSTONE: If necessary, could you trace back the path the letter traveled before you found it?

JACOBS: Not effectively, no. The only time the origin of these letters becomes important is if they contain something valuable—and by then it's almost too late. . . . As troubling as that may seem to some people, that's simply the nature of the cover business.

A TV report following the bombings broadcast Elwin Doubleday saying he had owned the Martin Harris letter at one time. . . . No photograph or record

was made of it, however, and so Doubleday can never be completely sure he had it. (*Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 16)

The original argument for the pedigree on the Salamander letter which historians latched onto was that it came from Lounsbury to Doubleday to Thoman to Jacobs. When Jacobs admitted that he “fabricated” the story that he obtained it, the pedigree was changed from Lounsbury to Doubleday to Thoman to Hofmann. Even this is not acceptable, however, because Thoman said he never sold Mark Hofmann anything after 1982, and he did not obtain the Lounsbury material until “January, 1983” (*Maine Antique Digest*, April 1986, page 10-A). All the evidence now points to the unescapable conclusion that the Salamander letter has no provenance because it is a forgery.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1986, page 7, I told of a report which I had received concerning “a gettogether which occurred late one night after a meeting of the Sunstone Symposium, [at which] Hofmann and Jacobs talked freely about the sale of both the 1825 letter and the Salamander letter. The letter attributed to Joseph Smith was sold to President Hinckley for a large sum of money. At that time Hinckley was supposed to have said that it would never see the light of day again. Later the Salamander letter was offered to Hinckley for \$100,000 which was to be paid for in one hundred dollar bills. Hinckley rejected the offer. He said that word had leaked out about the 1825 letter and that the General Authorities had decided against continuing to buy up the documents.”

A scholar who was actually present when these statements were made has contacted me. He claims that while there was a meeting late one night which he attended, the majority of the information was derived from a dinner held at the Sunstone Symposium. Mark Hofmann was not present at the table, but Lyn Jacobs gave out the information he had learned from Hofmann. Jacobs also told of his attempt to sell President Hinckley the Salamander letter. The scholar who was present claims that the statement that “the Salamander letter was offered to Hinckley for \$100,000 which was to be paid for in one hundred dollar bills” contains an error. While the amount is correct, the statement should read “unmarked bills” instead of “one hundred dollar bills.” He felt that Jacobs implied that this strange request was for income tax purposes. In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Lyn Jacobs did not mention asking \$100,000 cash, but he did say that he was willing to receive a gold coin the Church owned which was worth “60,000 to over 100,000 dollars”:

Q—Did you and Mr. Hofmann have a discussion as to what to do with the document?

A—We did.

Q—What did you decide upon?

A—We had decided to offer it to the LDS Church. . . .

Q—Who was going to make the offer?

A—I was going to make it.

Q—Why?

A—Mark had asked me to take full responsibility for the letter at that time because he did not want the publicity that . . . would surround it. . . .

Q—So Mark was the one who acquired the letter; now he wanted you to take responsibility for it?

A—That is correct. Based on his understanding of my partial ownership of it.

Q—Now, that responsibility includes what?

A—Okay, I was—

Q—Merchandising the item?

A—. . . I didn’t really know what to do with it exactly and I was going under his instructions. However, basically, my part in it was to present the letter and he turned the letter over to me and said, “It is now 100% yours to do with as you wish.” And at that point I said, “Okay. That’s fine. Well, now, tell me what you think I should do.” And so I was to present it and I was also [to] represent it as the full owner since he had given that to me and had turned it over to me as the full owner.

Q—Did you enter into a contract at that time?

A—We had a verbal contract.

Q—Did you discuss the value of the letter and what it would be sold for?

A—We had some estimations that we had discussed. We did not know how much it would sell for.

Q—What are the estimations?

A—Oh, monetary value, anywhere between 20 and 60 thousand.

Q—He bought it for around \$25 and you were going to ask 25- to 60,000 dollars?

A—That is correct. Based on its content.

Q—So the content was pretty important?

A—And its historical importance. Yes.

. . . .
Q—What arrangements were made as far as splitting the proceeds, if there were a sale?

A—At that time, we didn’t discuss that in detail. He said it would be a smaller portion than, of course, he would receive for it because it was, he had the major portion of the ownership.

. . . .

Q—Did he tell you where to try to sell it?

A—Well, he suggested that the First Presidency of the LDS Church would be the first place and I agreed because I really had no other alternatives in mind since I don't know the market for covers, basically.

Q—Who did you go to first?

A—I . . . went directly to President Hinckley. No, that's not true. I showed it to Donald Schmidt and Homer Durham at the Church Historian's Office first.

.....

Q—What did you tell Mr. Hinckley about the document?

A—I told him basically that it had been located in New England.

.....

Q—. . . at that time, were you representing that you were the one who found the document and bought it or were you representing that it was Mark Hofmann that found _____?

A—I was representing that I owned it at that time.

.....

Q—Did you show it to him?

A—I did and he read it.

Q—What else did you tell Mr. Hinckley?

A—. . . he had suggested to me that he was interested, and he said, "Well, what shall we do about it?" or something to that effect. And I said, "This is what I would like."

Q—What did you tell him you would like for the document?

A—I said, "I think that something within reason would be perhaps one of the gold coins that was minted early in the state of Utah."

Q—Do you know the value of that, monetary wise?

A—It runs anywhere from perhaps 60,000 to over 100,000 dollars.

Q—So you're starting off pretty good.

A—. . . Why not? I was shooting in the dark anyway.

Q—What was his reaction?

A—He sat there for a second and thought it was a little high and I probably did too.

Q—Did you make a counter offer?

A—. . . I suggested, "Well, why don't we go with one of the Book of Commandments . . ."

.....

Q—And what was his response to that?

A—He said that he wasn't really sure, at that point, whether he really and honestly thought that it would be useful to purchase the document at that point. . . .

Q—Did that terminate your discussion?

A—Basically. . . . I did mention to him, I said, "Well, perhaps Brent Ashworth would be interested since he has purchased some of these sorts of things in the last little while." And I did mention to President Hinckley that perhaps Brent would be willing to donate it or something to the Church and President Hinckley said, "Well, that's a possibility." And that basically ended our conversation.

One of the most mysterious things about the Salamander letter is its relationship to the Oliver Cowdery history. On April 6, 1830, the very day the Mormon Church was organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave a revelation in which he was commanded to see that a history of the Church was kept: "Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ (*Doctrine and Covenants* 21:1).

Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery was appointed to keep this history. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the Church, claimed that the Historian's Office had preserved this important history:

Oliver Cowdery was the first one appointed to assist Joseph in transcribing and keeping a history of the Church; John Whitmer took his place, when Oliver was given something else to do. **We have on file in the Historian's Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery**, the first historian, or recorder of the Church. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 201)

In 1961 we tried to get the Church to make Cowdery's history and other documents available. We were informed in a letter by the Assistant Church Historian, however that Joseph Fielding Smith was "not interested in the project you have in mind." In our book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry* (published twenty-two years after our request was turned down), we reported that the Cowdery history could provide important information on the relationship of Mormonism and Magic:

We have been told that there is a very important document being suppressed which may relate to the involvement of the early Mormon leaders in magic. This is the history of the Church written by Oliver Cowdery. . . .

We understand that a number of documents which were originally stored in the Church Historian's Office were later moved to the vault of the First Presidency. This was undoubtedly done to keep them out of the hands of the public. The Mormon leaders were especially concerned about this matter when Dr. Leonard J. Arrington became Church Historian. In

any case, we understand that the Cowdery history of the Church . . . is now located in the First Presidency's vault. At one time an inventory was made of what was contained in the vault. When the Cowdery history was opened, it was discovered that it contained **magic characters!** . . . Since Cowdery's history is supposed to go back to the time Joseph Smith found the plates, it may contain many things that would be embarrassing to the Church. (*Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, pages 43 and 46)

We heard nothing more of any importance concerning the Cowdery history until May 15, 1985, when we read this startling headline in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Researcher Says LDS History Disputes Golden Plates Story." In the article we find the following information:

A little-known history written by an important early Mormon leader contains an account of Joseph Smith's brother Alvin finding the gold plates, rather than the Mormon prophet himself, according to a research historian.

An LDS spokesman will neither confirm nor deny the contents of the history. . . .

Brent Metcalfe, who worked on authenticating an earlier Mormon letter, said officials of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have the history, written by Oliver Cowdery, who at one time was second in importance only to Joseph Smith. . . .

Mr. Metcalfe quoted the document as saying: "A taunting Salamander appears to Alvin and prevents him and his companions from digging up the gold plates." . . .

Traditional accounts of the founding or "restoring" of the LDS Church tell of heavenly visitations from angels, rather than salamanders. A cornerstone of Mormonism is the belief that Joseph Smith, not his older brother Alvin, found the gold plates. . . .

LDS spokesman Jerry Cahill said the LDS Historical Department does not have the Cowdery history. He said he would not ask members of the church's ruling First Presidency if the history is locked up in a special presidency's vault.

When asked about references to a Cowdery history in a book written by former President Smith, Mr. Cahill said he assumes the church has the history but it is no longer in the church's Historical Department.

"I don't intend to respond to every report or rumor of documents in the First Presidency's vault," said Mr. Cahill. "I have no idea if the history is there, nor do I intend to ask. I can't have my life ordered about by rumors. Where does it end?" . . .

Mr. Cahill said he has no way of "confirming or denying rumors," and he will "not pursue the matter" of the Cowdery history.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, June 1985, page 3, we commented:

In not making the Cowdery history available the Mormon Church finds itself in a cover-up situation. According to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, God Himself instructed Joseph Smith that "there shall be a record kept among you; . . ." It hardly makes any sense for the Mormon leaders to say that God commanded the history to be kept and then lock it up in a vault so that no one can read it. We have always suspected that this history provides no support for Joseph Smith's First Vision of 1820, and it has recently been reported that it does not support the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood by Peter, James and John.

In any case, the cover-up situation the Mormon Church finds itself in is reminiscent of the Watergate scandal. . . .

The "Salamandergate" cover-up even has its own "Deep Throat"—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon's secrets and leaked them to the press. Only a very limited number of people could have had access to the material in the vault of the First Presidency. It is reported that Brent Metcalfe will not name his source for fear that he will get the individual into trouble with the Church.

Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985, John Dart reported that the individual who had seen the Cowdery history allowed himself to be interviewed:

Now an allegation is being made that the church possesses a 150-year-old handwritten history that claims that it was the church prophet's older brother, Alvin, who actually found the golden plates. . . .

Church officials here have been vague in their response to questions about whether they have the history, . . . A highly reliable source told the *Times* in an interview here, however, that he has viewed it in the church's headquarters.

The source, who insisted on anonymity in order to preserve his standing in the church, said the Cowdery history and the role it gives Alvin Smith lend further credibility to the documents disclosed earlier, which portray Joseph Smith's involvement in occult methods to find hidden treasures without any references to religious events so familiar to present-day Mormons. . . .

Church Spokesman Jerry Cahill . . . said, “I presume (they are) in the possession of the First Presidency” because they are not in the history department archives. . . . A First Presidency staff member had no comment. . . .

The source interviewed by *The Times* described the Cowdery history as a book bound partly in leather, with marbled cardboard covers measuring about 8 inches by 10 inches in width and height and between half an inch and three-quarters of an inch thick. The pages are lined, he said.

The source said he decided to be interviewed about the history because the Cowdery documents provide corroboration for the salamander references in the Harris letter, which some Mormons are claiming is a forgery.

“I don’t remember the exact wording, but it said that Alvin located the buried gold with his seer stone,” he said. “I remember clearly that it was not a private venture. Alvin had other people with him, including Joseph.

“There was no mention of a dream beforehand,” he said. The salamander appeared on three occasions, once to Alvin and twice to Joseph, he added. . . .

“Conspiracy may be a bad word to use,” said the source who claims to have seen the Cowdery book, “but there must have been some sort of agreement that Joseph is the new seer now that Alvin is gone. Certainly the family and Oliver Cowdery knew. I can’t imagine that any more knew, because it’s an important aspect of the founding of the Church and it hasn’t come down in other histories that we know of.” . . . Mormon historian Ronald Walker of Salt Lake City said in an interview, . . . “What we need is to get the church to release it, if the church has it.” (*Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985)

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for August 1985, we suggested that it was possible that Mark Hofmann himself might be the mysterious “Deep Throat”:

As far as we know, Brent Metcalfe and John Dart are the only ones who know who the individual is who saw the Cowdery history. Dart’s article makes it clear that we are dealing with a man, and *The Universe* for May 16, 1985, informs us that he is one of Brent Metcalfe’s friends. . . . Brent Metcalfe was at one time a security guard for the Mormon Church and had a number of friends in the Church Office Building. Besides these contacts, it is reported that Metcalfe is well acquainted with Mark Hofmann. . . . There is evidence that Mark Hofmann has had special access to the First Presidency’s vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press*

reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’” Through his discoveries and knowledge of documents, Mr. Hofmann has worked himself into the innermost circle of Mormon historians. He says that “The real reward in the whole business is being able to see things that no one else knows about. It gives me a kick to know that this is original stuff, that no one else on earth has pieced this together or knows what this says. So there’s the pleasure. It’s like being a detective” (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 17).

On a number of occasions when people have asked me what documents the Church is suppressing, I have indicated that the Cowdery history is a very important item which should be examined. Although I do not have a specific recollection of the incident, one scholar claims that at one time Mark Hofmann told him that he was going to have access to the First Presidency’s vault and he wanted to know what to look for. According to this scholar, he asked me what items would be important, and I replied that the Cowdery history would be one item he should try to get access to. This information was then relayed to Mr. Hofmann.

It is interesting to note that the *Los Angeles Times* says that the anonymous individual decided “to be interviewed about the history because the Cowdery documents provide corroboration for the salamander references in the Harris letter, . . .” If Mark Hofmann is the mysterious “Deep Throat,” it would make sense that he would try to stifle criticism of the Salamander letter by telling of its relationship to the Cowdery history. One interesting parallel between the Salamander letter and the account given by “Deep Throat” of the discovery of the gold plates in the Cowdery history is that the word “plates” is missing in both. The Salamander letter says that the “old spirit” told Joseph Smith to “dig up the gold.” The anonymous source claimed that the Cowdery history “said that Alvin located the buried gold.”

There are now at least two different theories with regard to the Cowdery history. One is that it actually mentions salamanders appearing to the Smith family and that the individual who forged the Salamander letter had access to this information and incorporated it into the letter. Since hardly anyone but the top leaders of the Mormon Church could have known about the

contents of the Cowdery history, the mention of a salamander in the Harris letter would tend to convince them of the letter's authenticity. The second theory is that the Cowdery history does not really mention salamanders at all but that the contents would still be so devastating to the Church that it cannot be released. If Mark Hofmann is the "Deep Throat," he could have capitalized on this situation by falsely claiming that the Cowdery history mentioned salamanders. This, of course, would bring forth a great deal of support for the Salamander letter from scholars, and Hofmann could have rested in the fact that the Mormon leaders would not dare bring forth the Cowdery history to refute the charge because its presence could do irreparable damage to the Church.

Whatever the case may be, Church spokesman Jerry Cahill finally admitted that the Church does, in fact, have the Cowdery history. In an Associated Press story, Michael White reported:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that **Cowdery's history had been in the church's possession since around 1900** and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency.

But Cahill said he did not know whether it contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out.

"Frankly, I don't intend to raise the question. **Obviously, it's in the possession of the church**, but what shelf it is on I don't know," he said.

He would not speculate on whether the First Presidency would make the history available for study. (*The Oregonian*, May 21, 1985)

If the forger of the Salamander letter did not get the idea of including a salamander from the Cowdery history, there are other writings that could have suggested this idea. For instance, in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1985, page 7, I wrote the following:

After reading the letter attributed to Martin Harris, I became very interested in the reason why it was a "salamander" that was transformed into a "spirit." I found that salamanders are connected to magic and money-digging. The word *salamander* is defined in one dictionary as "a spirit supposed to live in fire; an elemental spirit in Paracelsus' theory of elementals." (For more information on this subject see *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 13.) I spent a great deal of time trying to find the word "salamander" in literature connected with Mormonism. I was not

successful, however, until I examined an unpublished manuscript by A. C. Lambert which is found in the Western Americana Department of the University of Utah Library. In this work of over 400 pages, Dr. Lambert claimed that people in Joseph Smith's time were aware of the four elemental spirits. He then stated that " 'salamanders' were to be placated and made helpful or were to be defeated and put under control" (page 76). If this statement had appeared in some other work, I might have considered it as evidence for the Salamander letter. As it is, however, it makes me even more suspicious of the letter's authenticity. This manuscript happens to be written concerning Martin Harris and is entitled, "A Study That Gives Some Special Attention to Martin Harris." It is the very type of manuscript that someone making up a letter concerning Harris would want to read for background material.

I have since been told that Mark Hofmann did quite a bit of research in manuscripts at the University of Utah Library. Since Lambert did a great deal of research on Martin Harris and the Anthon transcript, his writings would have been of interest to Mr. Hofmann.

Another possible explanation for the appearance of a white salamander in the Martin Harris letter might be that the forger read E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Golden Flower Pot," which was reprinted by Dover Publications in 1967 in the book, *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*. This is the story about "the Student Anselmus" who worked for "Archivarius Lindhorst." In this tale a rope magically turns into a "white serpent" and attacks Anselmus (page 12). This is similar to the portion of the Salamander letter which tells of a "white salamander" that transforms itself into a spirit and strikes Joseph Smith three times. The Salamander letter speaks of "the old spirit." The tale of Hoffmann refers to the "old earth-spirit" (page 29). Archivarius Lindhorst is also referred to as "the Old One" (*Ibid.*). As it turns out, the Archivarius was originally "a Salamander" in the "Fairylend Atlantis" (page 45). As punishment for his folly in Atlantis, the Salamander was turned into a man. Anselmus fell in love with the Archivarius' daughter who was a "green snake." On page 57 of *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, Anselmus commented: "But of course you do not believe in the Salamander, or the green snake." The whole story is filled with magic, and at one point Anselmus tells a witch that "the Salamander will catch you, you vile beet" (*Ibid.*, page 58)!

Since E.T.A. Hoffmann originally wrote this tale in German in the early 19th century, some people have

suggested that Joseph Smith may have heard about it. If there is a connection between the Salamander letter and the tale of Hoffmann, it would seem more likely that it came through the paperback edition of *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, which was printed in 1967.

Although I do not know whether Mark Hofmann traces his roots from E.T.A. Hoffmann (Mark Hofmann only has one *f* in his name), the name Hoffmann on the cover probably would have caught his attention.

While a salamander is not mentioned in any early history of Mormonism, there seems to be some basis for the story that some type of a transformation occurred at the Hill Cumorah and that Joseph Smith was struck by the spirit or angel. I have already mentioned the fact that E. D. Howe said Joseph Smith “saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit and gave him a tremendous blow” (*Mormonism Unveiled*, page 276). This seems to be Howe’s paraphrase of an affidavit given by Willard Chase. Chase claimed that Joseph Smith’s father told him the story. Chase said that the creature which transformed itself looked “something like a toad” (*Ibid.*, page 242). Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn has noted that a toad is also mentioned in an 1884 interview with Benjamin Saunders. In a typed copy of this interview, we find the following:

I was acquainted with the old man Smith and all the boys and girls. . . . They were good workers by days work . . . I heard Joe tell my Mother and Sister how he procured the plates. He said he was directed by an angel where it was He went in the night to get the plates. When he took the plates there was something down near the box that looked some like a toad that rose up into a man which forbid him to take the plates. (Interview with Benjamin Saunders, RLDS Research Library, typed copy)

Joseph Smith’s mother did not speak of the toad, but she does relate that when Joseph tried to take the gold plates from the box, “he was hurled back upon the ground with great violence” (*Joseph Smith’s History by His Mother*, photomechanical reprint of the original 1853 edition, page 86).

One thing that is interesting to note concerning the Salamander affair is the reaction of Mormon apologists and the way some of them tried to make the appearance of a salamander an acceptable part of the “gospel.” Instead of simply admitting that the Martin Harris letter contained some devastating material which put the Church in a very poor light, there was an attempt to smooth over the whole matter. In a memorandum, dated October 2, 1985, and distributed to men in important positions in the Church Educational System, we find the following:

As we begin teaching the history of the Church and the *Doctrine and Covenants* this year, questions may arise in the classroom regarding recent press reports about two old letters [i.e., the Salamander letter and the 1825 Joseph Smith letter]. . . . We urge you to read these materials as soon as possible, and where appropriate provide copies of these materials to the full-time seminary and institute of religion teachers under your charge. These items are not to be distributed to students, but are for the benefit of teachers as they are called upon to answer the questions of students. It is not intended that this information be taught in the classroom. We do not believe that many seminary students are intensely interested in this subject. Thus, we would suggest that teachers not discuss the issue unless there is an honest and sincere inquiry.

While the memorandum indicates that the information concerning the letters is not to be “taught in the classroom,” it turns right around and states:

Some of the media stories have implied that these recent discoveries will challenge and undermine the faith of the Latter-day Saints. This review on the other hand will show that a correct understanding of the context of these letters **will not undermine faith, but rather strengthen it.**

Before the Mormon scholar Rhett S. James became persuaded the Salamander letter was not authentic, he made the astounding claim that the portion of the Harris letter concerning the salamander transforming itself into an “old spirit” could be reconciled with Joseph Smith’s story of the visit of the Angel Moroni:

The so-called “Martin Harris letter” is **no repudiation of Joseph Smith**, but rather probably is a **further witness** of the Prophet’s own account of the discovery of the golden plates.

This is the feeling of historian Rhett S. James of Logan, Utah. . . .

James who received a bachelors degree in history from Washington State University, said it is the salamander imagery that intrigues him. “If you look the word up in the Oxford Dictionary, it has many uses and meanings not known in the modern world, not just the amphibian we think of today.”

According to James, the salamander’s somewhat magical connotation began in 16th century Germany, when people noticed that salamanders, which hid inside old logs, ran out of them when the logs were put on the fire.

“By the time of Martin Harris, the word *salamander* also meant *angel*. It also referred to brave soldiers who would run into the heat of battle,” James said. “The bravest soldiers in the French Revolution were known as salamanders.”

In regards to the reference purported in the letter that the “old spirit” prevented him from obtaining the plates, James said. Joseph Smith’s own account was that the family was very poor, and he originally looked on the plates as possible monetary gain. But when he reached for them, the angel Moroni chastened him for that thought. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, September 9, 1984)

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), an organization devoted to presenting a defense of Mormon claims, published a great deal of foolishness on the subject of the Salamander letter. In a sheet entitled, “Moses, Moroni, and the Salamander,” we find the following:

Martin Harris’ letter . . . has dismayed some people. Harris talks of a “white salamander” which was “transfigured” into “the spirit” otherwise known to us as the Angel Moroni. We may never know whether this description was an embellishment on the part of Harris, or an allegory employed by Joseph Smith, or whether Moroni somehow chose to appear to Joseph out of, or in the form of, a salamander. But since Phelps joined the Church after reading Harris’ letter, he must not have found the allusion to a salamander very disconcerting. In fact, as new research is showing, the salamander has been thought for millennia to have supernatural and extraordinary powers. . . . Moreover, salamanders were associated with the voice of God and with the Holy Ghost! From Midrash Ex. Rabbah XV.28 on Exodus 12, we find that the rabbis of the 9th Century A.D. and before believed that “God had to show Moses four things with his finger because he was puzzled by them.” One of these things God showed Moses on Mt. Sinai was the salamander: . . . Not all salamanders were good, however. The poisonous ones are “spectacularly colored” with bright spots on a dark background. . . . They were linked with evil spirits. But the non-poisonous good ones were white or grey-brown.

Obviously, much has changed culturally since 1830. Some of us may wince at the suggestion that an angel of God should be associated with, or described as, a salamander. But to people then, no image or description would better fit the appearance of a brilliant white spiritual being, once a valiant soldier,

now dwelling in a blazing pillar of light, shockingly pure and glorious, speaking with the voice of God while flying through the midst of Heaven, than the salamander! Moroni should be flattered. . . .

Still, it was predictable that people would not understand this. The Lord apparently knew this would happen. In 1829, God commanded Harris not to try to describe things which he had not personally witnessed: . . . Harris seems to have overstepped his commission here when he wrote to Phelps in 1830.

In 1985 the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) published a 28-page preliminary report entitled, “Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel with a Salamander?” In this report we find the following:

Martin Harris’ . . . talk of a “spirit” that “transfigured himself” from a “white salamander” has dismayed some people. They feel that any involvement of a salamander in divine matters is at least unseemly, smacks of occultism rather than divine revelation, and is surely without precedent. . . . in Rosicrucian and alchemical thought, the salamander, a “fiery man,” lived in ethereal fire surrounding a glorious throne, could father gods or demigods, and was able to appear as a flaming giant (in robes and armor, no less).

Renaissance metallurgist and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini’s father showed him in an unforgettable manner “a salamander” in an intense furnace in their home.

As a symbol of fire the salamander was considered one of the four fundamental constituent elements of nature (*materia prima*), used by alchemists in attempts to make gold . . . the complex of meanings and connotations surrounding the salamander make it a remarkably appropriate cognitive and spiritual summary of Moroni the Angel. The reader can draw many parallels between the foregoing materials and the descriptions of the Angel Moroni. . . . As a messenger from God, Moroni could be said also to dwell in fire around His throne. This point alone might have readily spawned a connection between Moroni and the salamander. Moroni’s association with gold (the plates) is obvious and may also be relevant here. (pages 1, 5, 7-8)

In a paper written for Sunstone Theological Symposium, Reston, Virginia, May 18, 1985, Glenn Willett Clark argued that the Angel Moroni could be identified as a white salamander:

A salamander is, quite simply, a being that can reputedly endure fire. . . .

But, you may say: Is not the salamander a mere amphibian, cousin to a newt, slimy and lizard-like, offensive, if innocuous, and not at all the subject of scripture? . . . was it not a brazen serpent, finely wrought in brass, that Moses lifted up to heal the Children of Israel? (Numbers 21:8) . . . This “fiery serpent” was the first such salamander in the scriptures . . .

Those faithful and courageous young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, could endure the fire—they were salamanders. The eternal spirit who came to sustain them could endure the fire—he was a salamander. . . . Plainly, the least interesting sort of sal[a]mander (having no relation to the core image and the eternal message) is a small amphibian, invariably dark, that inhabits hidden and rotten places. I trust we have it in mind to join the one species of salamander—but not the other. . . . It is our hope, of course, that, when we “grow up,” we may, salamander-like, live in eternal flame. . . .

The “white salamander” Joseph Smith saw in 1823 was named Moroni. No two words then in the English language could better have conveyed a more readily comprehensible report than those words likely did—words used in Martin Harris’ now-famous letter of October 23, 1830, . . . (“ ‘My Son, The Salamander,’ as Mrs. Mormon might have said!” pages 1, 3-4, 11-12)

In the Church Section of the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, June 2, 1985, the following was printed:

The recently discovered Martin Harris letter published in the *Church News* April 28 has shed new light on an old controversy. The letter adds evidence to support Harris’ account of his interview with Prof. Charles Anthon, according to researchers at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). . . .

Researchers at the foundation say that a little-noticed paragraph toward the end of the letter includes an unusual term—*short hand Egyptian*—to describe the characters copied from the Book of Mormon. . . .

John W. Welch, president of the foundation, said the phrase “short hand Egyptian” is a scholarly term that Harris probably would not have learned on his own.

“The phrase almost certainly came from Anthon,” declared Welch. “It is a very precise term that was used by scholars in the 1820s and would have been known to just a few students of ancient languages. While Anthon was part of that scholarly community,

it is highly unlikely that the phrase was part of Harris’ vocabulary.”

The Foundation For Ancient Research and Mormon Studies reported that it had found “further evidence in favor of the authenticity of the [Salamander] letter” in the portion of the letter which mentioned *short hand Egyptian* (*Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel With a Salamander?* page 1, footnote 1). Actually, the appearance of the words “short hand Egyptian” in the Salamander letter did not help establish its authenticity. On the contrary, it only demonstrates that the forger of the letter plagiarized these words from a letter by W. W. Phelps which was published in *Mormonism Unveiled*, page 273.

At any rate, even Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to equate the white salamander with the Angel Moroni:

Another source of differences in the accounts of different witnesses is the different meanings that different persons attach to words. We have a vivid illustration of this in the recent media excitement about the word “salamander” in a letter Martin Harris is supposed to have sent to W. W. Phelps over 150 years ago. All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter used the word “salamander” in the modern sense of a “tailed amphibian.”

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. That meaning, . . . is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” Modern and ancient literature contain many examples of this usage. For examples see the research notes by F.A.R.M.S., circulated at this symposium.

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . Since the letter only purports to be Martin Harris’ interpretation of what he had heard about Joseph’s experience, the use of the words *white salamander* and *old spirit* seem understandable.

In view of all this, and as a matter of intellectual evaluation, why all the excitement in the media, and why the apparent hand-wringing among those who profess friendship or membership in the Church? . . .

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil-speaking of the Lord’s anointed is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a

person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. It does not matter that the criticism is true. . . .

The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord's anointed, or of Church leaders, local or general. . . .

Our individual, personal testimonies are based on the witness of the Spirit, not on any combination or accumulation of historical facts. If we are so grounded, no alteration of historical facts can shake our testimonies. ("1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium," Brigham Young University, August 16, 1985, pages 22-26)

Ironically, just two months after Apostle Oaks gave this controversial speech he found himself being criticized because of his role in the Mark Hofmann affair. In any case, the fact that Mormon apologists would try so desperately to make the Church look good that they completely ignored the obvious implications of the letter makes one wonder just how far they would go in their defense of the Church. Now that the salamander crisis has passed, it is doubtful that faithful Mormons will continue to speak of the Angel Moroni as a salamander or extol the virtues of salamanders. The Martin Harris letter will fade out of view, and unless the Cowdery history is found to contain salamanders, the "white salamander" will gradually cease to be a topic of conversation. Nevertheless, the problem concerning the relationship of Joseph Smith to magic and money-digging will remain. A number of the Mormon Church's most prominent scholars have stated that even without the Salamander letter or the 1825 Joseph Smith letter, the Church must face up to Joseph Smith's involvement in the occult. In the October 2, 1985, memorandum sent to leaders in the Church Educational System, we find these comments:

Even if the letters were to be unauthentic, such issues as Joseph Smith's involvement in treasure-seeking and folk magic remain. Ample evidence exists for both of these, even without the letters. The publicity surrounding the letters served only to heighten the general public's awareness of these two issues. . . .

Precisely what his "foolish errors" and "weaknesses" were Joseph [Smith] did not relate. To some extent they may have included treasure-hunting with his seerstone, an activity we know he participated in during the 1820s. We also know that he was involved in what we call today "folk magic," . . . As honest educators, we can acknowledge that Joseph Smith was engaged as a young man in unprofitable

treasure-hunting episodes during the 1820s. . . . Joseph discovered a chocolate-colored, egg-shaped stone while digging a well on a neighbor's farm. Joseph soon learned that he could discern wondrous things with this stone, and it became his "seer stone." He carried it with him the rest of his life and used it for various revelatory purposes, including, according to some accounts, the translation of the Book of Mormon. Until Joseph learned to channel his seeric gifts, however, he also believed that he could use the stone to locate buried treasure.

On January 16, 1986, the *Provo Herald* reported the following:

"In order to understand Mormonism, one should realize that its beginnings were rooted in magic and the occult," Dr. Michael Quinn, professor of history at Brigham Young University told a packed audience at the Algie Ballif Forum . . .

Joseph Smith Sr. believed in the link between religion and witchcraft, and brought his children up in these beliefs. Joseph Sr. was a "rod man," that is, he used a hazel wand in hunting for treasure. . . .

Astrology—another form of occultism—was also accepted and relied upon by the Smith family, and by most Mormons up to and during Brigham Young's time. Seer stones, as well as divining rods, were acceptable tools of folk magic during Joseph's time.

Professor Ronald W. Walker, of Brigham Young University, made these revealing comments:

The question before scholars is no longer if Joseph and his family participated in the cunning arts, but the degree and meaning of their activity. . . . the question of whether the Smith family participated in money digging does not rely on the recently found letters. The weight of evidence, *with* or *without* them, falls on the affirmative side of the question. For instance, we have the Hurlbut-Howe affidavits, which since 1834 have asserted that the Smiths were involved with money digging. The same story also emerges from other eyewitnesses, including the less negatively biased interviews gathered by RLDS churchman William H. Kelly. Nor are these collections our only affidavits. The anti-Mormon and non-Mormon witnesses represent too many viewpoints and their accounts were given in too many circumstances to be dismissed merely as trumped-up misrepresentations designed to discredit Joseph Smith and Mormonism. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, pages 463-464)

Professor Marvin Hill, also of Brigham Young University, agreed with Ronald Walker about the relationship of Mormonism and magic:

... it is the argument of this paper that in large part the question of the 1825 and 1830 letters' authenticity is not crucial since there is enough evidence from other sources that the issue of the relationship between Mormonism and magic is still with us. For one thing, the evidence that Joseph Smith was tried in court as a money digger in 1826 is considerable, and, for another, there are several Mormon sources which establish an integral relationship between the folklore of magic and some traditional accounts of Mormon origins. . . .

That the Chase account appears in a collection of testimonials published by an anti-Mormon while the Knight narrative comes from a faithful Latter-day Saint . . . suggests that the anti-Mormon material cannot be lightly dismissed because of its origin. The anti-Mormon statements have to be checked against what is admitted by the Mormons themselves. . . .

In the light of the accumulating evidence of a strong influence of magic upon the early Mormons, it is vitally important that serious historians should not overreact. (Ibid., pages 474, 479 and 483)

Earlier in this book, I mentioned that investigators are not sure why Mr. Hofmann would want to kill J. Gary Sheets. Detective Jim Bell felt that it might be a diversionary technique so that the investigation would be directed toward the financial problems that Christensen and Sheets had with CFS Financial Corporation. Another matter with regard to Sheets that should be considered is the problem concerning a book about the Salamander letter which never materialized. Before Mark Hofmann sold the Salamander letter to Christensen, he was very concerned about its contents and how it should be presented to the world. After Christensen bought it, Hofmann apparently decided he wanted it back. The *Deseret News* for December 8, 1985, claimed:

Joe Robertson, Christensen's close friend, Sheets' son-in-law and a CFS employee, told the *Deseret News* that . . . Christensen told him he was approached by Hofmann, who asked to repurchase the Harris letter at nearly twice the \$40,000 Christensen had paid. "Steve wrestled with selling it back to Mark or giving it to the church." Christensen told another friend that he donated the letter last April after learning that the church would like to have it.

While Steven Christensen had the Salamander letter, he and his business partner, J. Gary Sheets, planned to publish a book about it. This undoubtedly

made Mr. Hofmann very happy. One of Hofmann's best friends, Brent Metcalfe, was appointed to do research for this important book. The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, told of the forthcoming book:

"The letter, if it is proved genuine, will be released when a book on the origins of Mormonism is released early next year," Christensen said. Christensen, a Salt Lake businessman, is a bishop in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . .

"Already, thousands of man-hours have gone into research for the book," Christensen said. "The letter has been a catalyst to dig into events leading to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the LDS Church . . ."

Authors of the book are Dr. Ronald W. Walker, Dr. Dean C. Jessee and Brent Metcalfe. Walker and Jessee, associate professors at Brigham Young University, are widely published specialists on Mormon history.

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin give this information in *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, pages 55-56:

Together with his financial consulting partner, J. Gary Sheets, Christensen decided to fund a study of the letter. They chose not to finance the project through their business, Consolidated Financial Services, but through a separate entity, J. Gary Sheets & Associates. About 70 percent of the research funding came through this company and 30 percent from Christensen personally. . . . They felt such a book on Mormon origins would sell well and return a profit on their investment. . . . Word of the document and the project had, by this time, reached authorities of the Mormon church. They were not pleased with the possibilities. During the church's general conference of April 1985, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie proclaimed that no member of the church should be involved in writing an article or publishing a book that would challenge the faith of another member. Two days after McConkie's address, the book project was cancelled. (Others close to the project say differences among Walker, Jessee and Metcalfe on interpretation of the letter were also at issue.)

Since both Christensen and Sheets were serving as bishops in the Church it is understandable why the project was aborted. Linda Sillitoe said that "Sheets scrapped the Harris letter project," and that "The research was discontinued, Metcalfe was removed from the payroll and was asked to return the computer and printer Christensen bought to write the book" (*Deseret News*, December 8, 1985).

Before working for Christensen and Sheets, Brent Metcalfe had had a shattering experience. He had returned from his mission as a strong defender of the Mormon faith. The Church hired Metcalfe as a security guard and he spent much of his spare time studying Mormon history in the Church Archives. As he continued to study, his views became more liberal and he was forced to resign his position. When he was hired by Steven Christensen, Mr. Metcalfe was elated. As he did research on magic and money-digging, however, his testimony concerning the divine authenticity of the Church seems to have become weaker. J. Gary Sheets may have been speaking of Metcalfe when he said:

“One young man lost his testimony. Steve and I said if this book we were writing had an impact that people who weren’t strong in the faith might lose their testimony, it was best not to be involved in this.” (*Deseret News*, October 17, 1985)

Brent Metcalfe was apparently very disturbed when he learned of his dismissal. Although Christensen did not change the decision with regard to the book, he decided to keep Metcalfe on the payroll for some time. At the preliminary hearing, J. Gary Sheets testified that he “was upset” when he learned that Mr. Metcalfe was still being paid. He went on to say: “. . . when we decided not to write the book, I think Metcalfe was upset, and I think that because he was upset, I think Steve just kept him on that long.” The fact that Sheets stopped the project must have been rather disturbing to Mark Hofmann. In addition, one of his closest friends, Brent Metcalfe, found himself entirely removed from a project which had meant a great deal to him. Hofmann, of course, later hired Metcalfe as a research historian. While most people were not aware that Mr. Sheets scrapped the project, Mark Hofmann undoubtedly learned all about it from Brent Metcalfe. Hofmann was probably upset at both Christensen and Sheets for stopping the salamander book. One scholar informed me that before the Salamander letter was sold to Christensen and Sheets, he spent a number of hours with Mark Hofmann discussing just how the letter could be released to the public and how it should be presented so that it would not be too offensive to orthodox Mormons. Mr. Hofmann probably had a deep psychological attachment to the Harris letter. It is interesting to note that at one time he even used the alias of “Harris.” Jack Smith testified that when the plate for the Oath of a Freeman was ordered, it was under the name “Mike Harris.” In any case, the fact

that Sheets and Christensen would cancel a book which would have greatly helped the image of the Salamander letter could have been a real blow to Mark Hofmann’s ego. Whether this played a part in the violence that followed is only a matter of speculation.

When I first began to have doubts about the Salamander letter and Hofmann’s other documents, I realized the devastating affect it could have on both Mormon scholars and critics of the Church if Mark Hofmann was allowed to continue in his pernicious activities. The battle has been very difficult, to say the least. When I published my first attack on the Salamander letter in March 1984, I thought that other researchers would see the problem and join me in pressing for an investigation of its origin. Such was not the case, however, and the publication of *The Money-Digging Letters* in August 1984 did little to help the situation. Although I had noted that there were similarities between the Salamander letter and the Joseph Knight account of the discovery of the gold plates in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, in *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 6, I demonstrated that these parallels are very important:

Knight’s account was published by Dean Jessee in *BYU Studies*, Autumn 1976, pages 29-39. According to Jessee, it was not written for at least three years after the “Harris” letter was supposed to have been penned. In examining the complete transcript of the letter, we see more striking parallels to this document. For instance, the Knight account quotes Joseph Smith as saying that in the Urim and Thummim he “**can see any thing**” (p. 33). The Salamander letter likewise says that Joseph “**can see anything**” in his “stone.” The Knight account says that after Smith found the “Book” (the gold plates), he “**laid [it] Down**” to “**Cover the place over**” (p. 31). The wording in the letter is similar: “I lay it **down** to **cover over** the hole.” We have already pointed out in the *Messenger* that both accounts use the identical words, “**Joseph says when can I have it.**” In both accounts the plates are taken away from Smith because he laid them down. The Salamander letter and the Knight account also agree that Joseph was commanded to bring his brother Alvin when he returned for the plates. The Knight account says that “his oldest Brother Died” before it was time to come again for the plates. In the “Harris” letter, Joseph says, “my brother is dead.” In both stories Joseph goes back to the place where the plates were deposited. The Knight account says that he was told that he “**Could not have it.**” The Salamander letter likewise says he “**cannot have it.**” In both cases Joseph does not know who to bring with him to obtain the plates. The Knight version says

that “he **looked** in his glass and found it was Emma Hale.” The Salamander letter also identified Emma as the person he sees in the stone: “the spirit says I tricked you again look to the stone Joseph looked & sees his wife.” Both accounts go on to tell of Smith putting the sacred instrument into a hat to translate the Book of Mormon. . . .

Another thing we noticed in the Knight account that could have had an influence on the Salamander letter is the use of the words “says he” and “says I.” On page 37, as published in *BYU Studies*, we find the following: “Says he,...Says he,...Says I,...Says I,...Says he.” In the “Harris” letter we read: “...says he...says he...says I...says I...”

The reader will remember that I was also suspicious of Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell because of the lack of errors in it. Although I could find no hard evidence against it, I felt that it was produced by the same mind that wrote the Salamander letter. Both letters, of course, link Joseph Smith to the occult. It seemed unlikely to me that the only letter that Joseph Smith wrote in the 1820s which is known to have survived would link him to magic. Even more remarkable, however, is the claim that right after this the only letter in the actual handwriting of Martin Harris was discovered and it also ties Joseph Smith to magic. Like the Salamander letter, the 1825 letter is devoid of any mention of God, angels or religion. The absence of religion in the 1825 letter, of course, is not really a major concern because the letter is written before the discovery of the gold plates and the organization of the Church.

In any case, if a person puts both the letters together, they combine to present a devastating argument against the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In fact, they tend to give strong support to an idea we suggested in *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, page 40:

Joseph Smith himself seems to have been convinced that there were guardians over the treasures. . . . a person cannot help but wonder if Joseph Smith transformed the guardian of the treasure into the angel who gave him the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated.

In 1831 the *Palmyra Reflector* printed a series of articles which told that Joseph Smith’s father believed “in the existence of hidden treasures” and that he accepted the “popular belief that these treasures were held in charge by some evil spirit . . .” The 1825 letter, attributed to Joseph Smith, likewise says that, “the treasure must be guarded by some clever spirit . . .” The Harris letter makes it very plain that the

“old spirit” who guards the gold plates of the Book of Mormon is a devious spirit, for it quotes him as making this statement to Joseph Smith: “. . . I tricked you again.” The 1830 letter seems to go to great lengths to show that the “old spirit” connected with the Book of Mormon is one of the spirits connected with buried treasures. It says that “Joseph often sees Spirits here with great kettles of coin money . . .” The letter goes on to say that “Joseph made no attempt on their money.” The letter even says that the spirits let Harris “count their money.”

I have often wondered what the Mormon Church would do if a signed confession by Joseph Smith were found in which he repudiated Mormonism. While the 1825 letter is not quite that sensational, it certainly casts grave doubt upon the authenticity of the Book of Mormon story in that it absolutely ties Joseph Smith to divination and clever spirits at the very time he was supposed to be having dealings with the Angel Moroni. It lacks only one thing, however, and this is that it fails to link magic and money-digging directly to the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The Salamander letter picks up the story at this very point and completes the shocking picture. While it would be better to have the Salamander letter in the handwriting of Joseph Smith himself, a second letter by Smith would probably be just too unbelievable. The Salamander letter does the next best thing, however; it has one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon quoting Joseph Smith’s own words and brings a clever spirit into the story of the Book of Mormon. Since David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, the two other main witnesses to the Book of Mormon, have written a number of things in their own handwriting, a forger would be inclined to choose Martin Harris as the author. There is scarcely nothing to compare his handwriting with and no way that the spelling or style can be checked.

While I have always believed in miracles, I felt that the appearance of these two letters at almost the same time was just too good to be true.

By January 1985, I had heard that the physical tests conducted on the Salamander letter pointed to its authenticity. In response to this I wrote the following:

As I pointed out at the beginning of this article, some of the tests which the experts have completed on the Salamander letter seem to indicate that it is genuine. My study of the text, however, has led me to have serious doubts about its authenticity. In view of the tests, I have to ask myself whether I am being unscientific. Can the case I have built against the document possibly outweigh [*sic*] the findings of the

experts? Everyone would probably agree that if the letter mentioned Joseph Smith watching television before he was visited by the spirit, it could not be accepted as authentic no matter what the scientific tests revealed. The evidence furnished by the text of the letter would override all physical tests. With the Salamander letter, however, I must admit that I do not have anything which is that convincing. My doubts are based solely on circumstantial evidence. As I investigated the matter, the evidence seemed to grow, and I found it increasingly difficult to believe in the document's authenticity. I originally entered into the research with a strong desire to prove that the letter came from the pen of Martin Harris. Unfortunately, however, the inconsistencies seemed to swallow up all my enthusiasm. Some of the evidence against the letter seemed to be similar to that which led me to the conclusion that a large portion of the *History of the Church* was not actually authored by Joseph Smith as the Church had always claimed. . . .

At any rate, I now find myself wondering how much I can rely on the scientific tests which are available. I am convinced that the average person could not come up with a forgery that would stand up against these tests. On the other hand, I wonder how difficult it would be for someone who is seriously involved with old documents to create a forgery that would pass the tests. In *The Money-Digging Letters*, I questioned whether handwriting analysis is an exact science and pointed out important cases where the experts have differed. . . .

If I were certain that the tests could not be thwarted by an expert forger, I would feel compelled to accept the document as authentic. As it is, however, the circumstantial evidence makes it very difficult for me to accept the letter as having come from the pen of Martin Harris. (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, January 1985, page 12)

When Sandra and I attended the meetings of the Mormon History Association in May 1985, I was shocked to find that all four of the speakers who addressed the issue supported the Salamander letter and the great majority of those who attended the meeting seemed to completely agree with their research. I tried to pass out literature containing the opposite viewpoint, but very few people seemed to be interested. Dean Jessee, whose paper dealt specifically with the letter, entirely ignored the evidence of plagiarism and the other arguments I had presented. The *Mormon History Association Newsletter* for July 1985, however, did note Professor Jessee's failure to mention the research I had worked so hard to compile:

. . . the literary style of the letter, is a more controversial matter, since there is a drastic difference

in this regard between the 1830 letter and other documents accepted as being the product of Harris' mind. While it was not mentioned by Jessee, these differences had already caused opponent of Mormonism Jerald Tanner to question whether the letter was authentic . . . Dean Jessee's . . . conclusion was that the 1830 letter is the "real" Martin Harris, as opposed to the "polished" Martin Harris of other documents prepared for public consumption.

Jessee closed by noting that the authenticity of documents is most often challenged when the subject at issue is controversial, with people on one side or another tending to find support for their own positions. (*Mormon History Association Newsletter*, July 1985, page 4)

The same newsletter contained these comments by two different scholars who had studied the Salamander letter:

. . . if currently available evidence were placed before a jury of historians, I believe that they would have little difficulty finding the Martin Harris letter to be genuine—and this "beyond a reasonable doubt." While future evidence might modify this judgment, Utahns who are currently arguing the case of fraud have produced little to support their view besides wishful thinking and an understandable but misplaced religious fervor. (*Ibid.*, page 7)

The post-MHA conference preoccupation with elemental salamanders, clever spirits, scrying seers, and enchanted treasures has regrettably engendered several ill-considered public denials of the historicity of the 1830 Harris and 1825 Smith letters. . . . Careful consideration has led me to conclude that if aspersions are to be cast on the authenticity of these documents, it must be on grounds other than those presently advanced. (*Ibid.*, pages 7-8)

The Mormon scholar Stanley B. Kimball was the only writer in that issue of the MHA Newsletter to express any concern about the authenticity of the letter. Professor Kimball complained about the "arbitrary elimination of a question-and-answer period" at the meeting of the MHA where the Salamander letter was discussed, and then stated: "Jerald Tanner may be closer to the truth with his doubts about the authenticity of the document" (*Ibid.*, page 6).

As I noted in the first chapter of this book, the Salamander letter was published in the Church Section of the *Deseret News* on April 28, 1985. The title on one of the articles about the letter read: "1830 Harris letter authenticated." In another article published in the Church Section, these comments appeared:

A letter written early in Church history by Martin Harris and sent to William W. Phelps is almost certainly authentic and has been donated to the Church. . . .

According to Jessee, handwriting analysis “shows that the writer of the 1830 letter is the same person who wrote the authentic Harris signatures. On the basis of the paper, ink and handwriting tests, the Harris letter appears authentic.”

By June 1985, I found myself feeling almost entirely alone. The results of physical tests had been released which indicated that the Salamander letter was authentic. Moreover, the Mormon History Association and almost all the top Mormon scholars endorsed the letter, and even the Mormon Church itself had published it and indicated that it had been “authenticated.” Besides all this, strong psychological pressures were being exerted by both Mormons and anti-Mormons to bring Sandra and I into conformity with the experts. We were told that when the research on the letter came out we would really have egg on our faces. The newspapers were also carrying stories concerning how the Oliver Cowdery history might provide support for the Salamander letter. At various times we had heard rumors such as: that Hofmann would name the dealer from whom the letter was obtained; that the letter was actually mentioned in a newspaper published by W. W. Phelps or that the letter had been directly traced to the Phelps family. While none of these stories proved to be true, they certainly had an affect on us at the time. At one point I was told by a noted scholar that if I continued in the foolish course of questioning the letter, I would completely lose my credibility with both Mormon and non-Mormon scholars. With all this pressure on me it was very difficult to go on with the work.

As I was contemplating what to do, I remembered that after the Piltdown man was discovered, Henry Fairfield Osborn had serious reservations about the matter and stated:

Doubts which have been entertained from the first by many anatomists as to the association of the Piltdown jaw with the Piltdown skull appear to be **entirely confirmed** by the recent exhaustive comparative study made by Gerrit S. Miller, Jr., of the United States National Museum. He has shown that those portions of the Piltdown jaw preserved, including the upper eye-tooth or canine, are generically identical with those of an adult chimpanzee. . . .

This conclusion, which has been accepted by several eminent comparative anatomists, has two very interesting results; first, it **deprives the Piltdown specimen of its jaw and compels us to refer the skull to the genus Homo** rather than to the supposed more ancient genus Eoanthropos; second, it demonstrates the presence of anthropoid apes in Europe during the Glacial Epoch. . . . (*Men of the Old Stone Age*, New York, 1916, page 512)

Other scientists, however, proclaimed that Piltdown man was genuine and under the pressure Dr. Osborn yielded to their opinion:

The author not only recants his former doubts as to the association of the jaw with the skull, but expresses his admiration of the great achievement of his life-long friend, Arthur Smith Woodward, in making the original discovery and in finally **establishing beyond question the authenticity of the Dawn Man of Piltdown**. (*Man Rises to Parnassus*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1928, page 72)

C. Loring Brace and M. F. Ashley Montagu give this information:

With the prestige and authority of such eminent scientists standing behind the discoveries, it never occurred to anyone—even the most critical scientists—that the finds might be forgeries and that they might not be genuinely ancient. . . .

Apparently **the desire to believe in Piltdown was great enough to overcome any doubts**. Among other things, it demonstrated to the satisfaction of the English that humanity had its origins on British soil; . . . (*Man's Evolution*, pages 167-168)

In his book, *The Problem of Man's Antiquity*, page 149, Dr. Kenneth Oakley pointed out that in 1935 scientists had listed the Piltdown cranium as being “c. 500,000 years” old. By 1949 the age had dropped to “c. 50,000 years.” Then in 1953-54 the age declined to “Perhaps two or three thousand years old.” Finally, in 1959 scientists disclosed that the skull was only “A few centuries old.” Careful examination revealed that a human cranium had been combined with the jaw of an ape. The teeth had been filed flat to look more like human teeth. The application of an iron salt and bichromate had given a fossilized appearance to what was at one time called “the world’s most famous fossil of early man.”

After thinking of Professor Osborn’s experience, I made my decision: I decided it would be wrong for me

to yield to pressure or have such a “desire to believe” that I let it override the research I had worked so hard to compile. I did not want to find myself making the same mistake that Osborn did. Consequently, the June 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* contained an article entitled, “Editors Divided.” For the first time Sandra and I took opposing viewpoints: “Unfortunately, the editors of the *Messenger* find themselves divided over how to deal with the Salamander letter. We feel that it is best, therefore, to give our readers both viewpoints.” In my portion of the article, I wrote the following:

... I still find myself with some serious doubts. ... I cannot help wondering if this is not just too good to be true. The Salamander letter fits perfectly into my case against the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, but I have to ask myself this question: if the Mormons brought out a letter which was supposed to have been written in 1830 which said that Joseph Smith saw both The Father and the Son in 1820, and this letter had strong parallels to sources printed at a later date and also contained elements which seemed foreign to the purported author, would I keep silent about the matter? The answer, of course, is no. I would proclaim these findings to the world.

At that point in time, Sandra felt that the physical evidence that had been marshalled in support of the letter was “impressive” and she didn’t see how the letter could pass all the tests unless it was authentic. Nevertheless, she noted that “there are impressive parallels between the Martin Harris letter and different printed versions. These can be viewed either as proofs of plagiarism or authenticity. I, too, am bothered by the lack of information on the history of the letter and the lack of specific information on the tests given the letter. (Ibid., page 14)

After the bombings, a reporter for a Salt Lake City TV station commented to me that during the past few years Mr. Hofmann had made a far greater contribution to Mormon history than Sandra or I had. I replied that if his documents were genuine, this would certainly be the case. I noted, however, that I did not believe in the authenticity of his documents. The next day the same reporter said that either my reputation or Dean Jessee’s was now at stake. I did not look at the matter in quite the same light. If I had been wrong in condemning the documents, I still think that many people would have realized that I was trying to do the best I could with the facts I possessed at the time. Naturally, I would have been very embarrassed about the matter and would have felt obligated to offer a public apology to both

Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs. As it turns out, of course, the documents have been shown to be spurious. This, however, does not mean that Dean Jessee has lost his reputation. On the contrary, Professor Jessee still remains an expert on the identification of handwriting from 19th century Mormonism. I have a great deal of respect for his judgment concerning handwriting. I feel, in fact, that he did an excellent job in his comparison of the handwriting of Solomon Spalding with that of the unidentified scribe in the Book of Mormon manuscript. I learned a great deal from the work he did on the subject. In the case of the Salamander letter, it is obvious that it is a superb forgery. The signature appears to be consistent with other examples of Harris’ signature as both Dean Jessee and Kenneth Rendell have stated. If anyone should lose their reputation, it should be the person or persons who forged it.

APPENDIX B

BOREN’S WHITE FROG

In the *Messenger* for June 1985, we reported that we had learned that someone had “been making up material and attributing it to Joseph Smith. Since such an individual has the ability to create the text of a document like the Salamander letter, we are making a very serious investigation into this matter. We hope to have more to report on this in the next issue of the *Messenger*.”

The following is a summary of the investigation I conducted (for a more detailed study see my booklet, *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*). On October 6, 1984, a man by the name of Kerry Ross Boren wrote a letter to Dean Jessee, the noted Mormon scholar who was making a critical examination of the Harris letter to determine whether it was authentic. In this letter, Mr. Boren offered important new information which could help Professor Jessee verify the Salamander letter:

I am an inmate at Utah State Prison, . . . My purpose in contacting you at the present time is due to the recent publicity pertaining to the letter of Martin Harris. . . . Joseph Smith was my second great grandfather and I have access to, and have had the privilege of, examining some papers and personal effects of Joseph Smith which have never before been seen or published. . . . One of the important things that the information clarifies are the facts behind the Martin Harris letter. . . . I have an expanded version of the “white salamander” story from Joseph’s own account.

Dean Jessee visited Mr. Boren at the prison and also sent him nine different letters. By January 9, 1985, Mr. Jessee seemed to be rather enthusiastic about the matter:

In reading over the material you have sent I see its importance more than ever for a proper understanding of the Harris letter . . . the most harmful thing we can do right now is to remain silent if there is information available that will put Joseph Smith in a better light. . . . there will be all kinds of questions asked, and much criticism brought against the Church. The best ammunition for facing this issue comes from the material you have presented. (Letter dated January 9, 1985)

Even though Dean Jessee seemed to be impressed with the copies of the documents Mr. Boren provided, he did note that “some of the phrasing and usage of words is foreign to Joseph Smith’s literary style. There are also a few contradictions of fact. . . . Being able to see the actual handwriting of the documents would possibly provide answers to these questions” (Ibid.). Mr. Boren only provided his own handwritten copies of the material, and when Jessee asked for xerox copies, Boren replied that he could not “gain access to the original materials until such time as I am released from this place, and therefore can only provide copies of the information . . .” (Letter dated March 17, 1985).

On May 23, 1985, Mr. Boren wrote a letter to us in which he made some incredible claims: “I have access to many unpublished records which Joseph Smith had put away before his death in the safe-keeping of my third great-grandfather, Isaac Morley. Through these, I have access to information concerning Joseph Smith which is available no place else, including some of the papyri, translations of portions of the plates, letters, personal history, genealogy, etc.” While I had serious doubts about these claims, I was very interested in any material relating to the forgery of Mormon documents. At that time I was unaware that Mr. Boren claimed to have material similar to the Salamander letter. In any case, I provided a researcher with the information I had about Kerry Ross Boren, and he was able to obtain copies of documents Boren had previously given to Dean Jessee.

One of the documents which Boren provided was his handwritten copy of an account of Joseph Smith’s early visions, which was supposed to have been authored by Smith himself! The account of the First Vision in this document is similar to Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision (see

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? pages 145-146). It goes on, however, to say that the Lord revealed “a curious stone” to Joseph Smith which he was to use to find the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The Lord also told him that when he arrived at the place where the records were buried he would be given “a sign” of a “lowly frog but not just a frog but a **white frog** . . .” On the appointed day, Joseph Smith went to the hill and “saw **a frog of the purest white** I had ever seen proceed forth out of a hole in the ground at the bottom of a large stone . . .” Joseph removed the stone and saw “a large room or cavern” which contained “plates of gold” and other “ancient items of curious workmanship . . .” Before he could go into the cavern, however, Joseph “again saw the large white frog and immediately above it in the air a shaft of brilliant light descending [and] an angel appeared in the midst . . . and then said unto me behold my name is Nephi . . .”

Mr. Boren also provided a copy of a letter which was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith to Isaac Morley in 1835. In this letter Joseph Smith detailed some of his early money-digging experiences. In another manuscript which is eight pages long, Mr. Boren gives a summary of a document written by Joseph Smith. This is also filled with material concerning Joseph Smith’s money-digging.

Mr. Boren provided other documents and a list of 52 different items he has had access to. He claims that in the collection he has seen the “Mummy” of Pharaoh Necho, three rolls of papyrus, thirteen separate pieces of papyri, a revelation on polygamy that is “more lengthy and detailed” than the one published by the Church, a large stack of “correspondence between early Church figures, including many by and to the Prophet,” a translation of the lost “Book of Lehi” and other lost books, a translation of the Book of Abraham which contains “much not found in the present published version,” and what appears to be original manuscripts of “Newton and also da Vinci.”

Although I was only able to examine copies of a small portion of this purported collection, it did not take me long to conclude that it was spurious. I could plainly see how material was plagiarized from different portions of published material and combined to give some very unique interpretations. Michael Marquardt also examined the purported documents and reached the same conclusion. A week after we published the booklet, *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*, Dean Jessee apparently wrote a letter to Mr. Boren and informed him that he did not believe his claims. In a letter dated August 1, 1985, Mr. Boren responded:

I am in receipt of your letter of July 17 in which you question my credibility. . . . were Joseph Smith in this institution at this time, he would not be believed nor would he be supported by the Church which he founded. . . . I have no doubt that he would be rejected. And so, I feel that I am in the best of company.

In all fairness to Mr. Boren, I should say that I do not know for certain that he made up the documents. He claims that Joseph Smith gave them to his “third great-grandfather, Isaac Morley” for safekeeping and that they have passed down to one of his relatives who has them stored in the basement of a house in California. Although it seems very unlikely, Mr. Boren could have made his copies from material in someone else’s possession. In any case, there is not the slightest chance that the documents could be genuine. They bear all the earmarks of fabrication.

On June 18, 1985, Sandra and I had a personal interview with Kerry Ross Boren at the Utah State Prison. While much of his story is very difficult to believe, some of his statements seem to have some basis in fact. One of his claims is that he was a ghost writer for the historical part of Robert Redford’s book, *The Outlaw Trail*, which was published in 1979. While it does not prove his assertion, I found him mentioned at least fifteen times in Redford’s book. In the Forward, Robert Redford gives “special thanks” to “Kerry Boren,” and on page 24 he refers to “Kerry Boren, our historian.” I have found that Mr. Boren has coauthored a book entitled, *Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines*, and has also written a number of articles for magazines. On page 173 of her book, *Butch Cassidy My Brother*, Lulu Parker Bentenson refers to “Kerry Ross Boren, a recognized authority on outlaw history, National Center for Outlaw and Lawman History, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.” While some historians do not have much respect for Mr. Boren’s work, it must be conceded that he has a great deal of ability as a writer.

Mr. Boren’s contention that the material he has copied helps clarify “the facts behind the Martin Harris letter” must be completely rejected. As I have already pointed out, the material Boren has presented bears unmistakable evidence of falsification. Furthermore, he has not produced any real evidence that the original manuscripts even exist. While Kerry Ross Boren sets his material forward with the claim that it supports the Salamander letter, it could raise the question of whether Boren himself had the ability to produce such a document. In his letter of January 9, 1985, Dean Jessee mentioned an important similarity between the Salamander letter and Boren’s material: “. . . the

reference to Harris’s having a dream and waking with a coin in his hand, and upon seeing the cavern, throwing the coin back (which is also mentioned in the Harris letter), is very important right now for my work on the Harris letter.” The reference which Professor Jessee speaks of reads as follows in the Harris letter:

I later dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are grieved so I through back the dollar.

The statement in the Salamander letter seems incomplete. It does not tell how Harris threw the coin back. It would be very difficult to throw the coin back into the dream or into the spirit world. Mr. Boren’s material seems to provide a logical answer to this question. In Boren’s summary (“not a verbatim account”) of a manuscript written by Joseph Smith, we find the following:

Martin Harris and Joseph Knight, Sr. came down from Manchester together soon after the treasure was discovered. Harris had had a dream about the Treasure and had awakened with a silver coin in his hand. Taking this to be a sign, he went forthwith to Colesville. . . .

Harris had expressed to Knight that he thought Joseph Smith was a fake, and had stolen the treasure from them . . . but when they confronted Joseph, he related Harris’ dream in detail without being prompted.

Harris would not be content until he had seen the Treasure for himself, to be content that Joseph had not removed any of it. After much persuasion, Joseph agreed to take Harris as far as the place where the buckets of silver coins were located . . . Upon seeing the place, Harris was content and tossed the coin back into the lot, swearing an oath that he would never reveal anything which he had seen.

The parallels between the two accounts are too strong to be ignored. If it could be established that Boren’s material was in existence before the Salamander letter was discovered in late 1983, it would seem to show that it (the Salamander letter) is a condensed version of the material Boren provided us with. The other explanation, of course, is that the Salamander letter provided structural material for someone with a vivid imagination. In this case it would not reflect on the Harris letter. Mr. Boren insists that his material is genuine and predates the discovery of the Salamander letter.

While I have not yet found any compelling evidence that Mr. Boren’s material does predate the

discovery of the Salamander letter, there are some stories in a book he coauthored with Gale R. Rhoades which sound like the account of Harris throwing the coin back. According to Boren and Rhoades, Joe Walker told of going into a sacred mine with Butch Cassidy. He claimed he found a rock that “shinned like almost solid gold.” Cassidy, however, “told me anyone who took any part of that gold would have the curse of God placed upon him . . .

I slipped a small piece of that gold in my pocket but when we stepped outside, Butch drew his gun and told me to put it back. . . . I went back and put that piece of rock—about the size of my hand—on top of one of those leather bags, . . . (*Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines*, page 355)

The account of Cassidy chastising Walker for taking the sacred gold sounds similar to Joseph Smith rebuking Harris in the Salamander letter for taking the spirit’s coin. On page 378 of the same book, we read of a man named Joseph R. Sharp who went to the mine and tried to remove the gold. As he “prepared to climb from the mine,” he was met by two Indians—apparently “apparitions delegated to watch over the sacred Ute gold.” One of them “spoke with a voice of authority; calm, yet loud and in perfect English, saying: ‘Put the gold back, Leave here and never return or you will surely die.’”

As quickly as the Indians had appeared, they disappeared, and with no apparent means of departure; vanished, as it were, into thin air! Mr. Sharp was taken aback by this weird display and he tossed the gold back into the mine. . . . (*Footprints in the Wilderness*, page 378)

The reader will notice that Mr. Sharp “tossed the gold back into the mine.” In the Salamander letter, Martin Harris throws “back the dollar.” While my copy of the book was not printed until 1984, I have located a copy printed in 1980 which contains the same stories. This would be at least three years before the Salamander letter was discovered.

As I have already pointed out, the Salamander letter contains some striking parallels to *Mormonism Unveiled* (published in 1834) and a manuscript written by Joseph Knight (first published in *BYU Studies*, Autumn 1976). When I examined the Boren manuscript, which contains the report concerning Martin Harris’ dream, I found parallels to both of these publications! Furthermore, in a note to Dean Jessee, Mr. Boren specifically mentions the “Willard Chase affidavit” which was published in *Mormonism Unveiled* and contains important parallels to the Salamander letter.

The parallels between Boren’s manuscript and the Joseph Knight account are so strong that they cannot be explained away as mere coincidence. Some of the parallels are even to footnotes which Dean Jessee has provided to go along with Joseph Knight’s account. One of the more interesting parallels (which is also similar to the Salamander letter) is found on pages 5 and 6 of Boren’s manuscript:

. . . the angel instructed him that he could remove the plates one year from that date, if he would obey certain commandments and follow certain instructions. He would be required to bring someone with him. Someone who would be able to remove the plates.

When Joseph inquired as to whom that person would be, the angel told him only to look to the stone for instruction. Upon doing so, he saw Emma Hale, . . .

The reader will notice how similar this is to Joseph Knight’s account:

. . . and the personage appeared and told him he Could not have it now. But the 22nd Day of September nex he mite have the Book if he Brot with him the right person. Joseph says, “who is the right Person?” The answer was you will know. Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1976, page 31)

Perhaps it is only a strange coincidence that both the Salamander letter and the Boren material have parallels to Joseph Knight’s account and *Mormonism Unveiled*, but the parallels do raise the question as to whether Mr. Boren or someone who has seen his material could have written the Salamander letter.

As I have pointed out before, one thing that should be of great concern to scholars is the fact that there seems to be an obvious attempt in the Boren material to duplicate the spelling errors of Joseph Smith. This, of course, shows that there has been a very serious study of the writings of Joseph Smith with intent to deceive.

Earlier in this book I suggested the possibility that a master forger could have been responsible for the Hofmann documents produced before late 1983. After that time the beautiful handwritten documents seem to almost disappear and printed forgeries and crude productions like the Spalding-Rigdon document and the Betsy Ross letter take their place. Since Boren has been incarcerated since August 1983, he could fit into such a theory. It is true that August 1983 is about three months before Hofmann was supposed to have told Lyn Jacobs about the Salamander letter. On the other hand, we will probably never know exactly when it was forged. It could have been produced any time

between 1976 (when the Joseph Knight account was first published) and November 1983. In any case, if investigators found any well-written documents in the process of being created in Hofmann's home or car, it would certainly tend to rule out Boren as the master forger. Perhaps Hofmann's trial will throw some light on the subject.

The *Deseret News* reported the following on November 8, 1985:

The *Deseret News* has also identified a third person currently under investigation who may have valuable information about what police believe is a scheme to forge documents relating to early Mormon church history.

Kerry Ross Boren, an inmate at the Utah State Prison serving time for murder . . . has claimed on numerous occasions to possess never-before-seen historic documents relating to the Mormon church. Scholars have dismissed his documents as blatant forgeries.

In a letter to "The Salt Lake City Messenger," an anti-Mormon publication, Boren states, "I am an inmate at the Utah State Prison. . . . Joseph Smith was my second-great-grandfather and I have access to, and have had the privilege of examining, some papers and personal effects of Joseph Smith . . . I have an expanded version of the "White Salamander" story from Joseph's own account.

Jerald Tanner, publisher of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, dismissed Boren's materials as nothing more than plagiarisms. . . .

Police now want to look at the documents and to question Boren, who some say was the "imaginative mind" behind the Martin Harris letter. Many investigators have been convinced for some time that the controversial letter is a forgery, and Boren's claims have solidified suspicions that forgery may be a motivating factor behind the murders.

"We believe he can provide some valuable information about this case, the motivating factors that may have led to the bombings," said one official. "It's obvious he has a creative mind, and he may have been the impetus for these hundreds of documents that Hofmann claims to have found."

Police emphasize Boren is in no way connected to the bombings. . . .

The following day (November 9) the *Deseret News* printed the following information about Mr. Boren:

Convicted killer and one-time Utah history buff Kerry Ross Boren was questioned by police Friday about his associations with principals in the recent Salt Lake bombings, he had little to offer investigators, police report.

"He said he had never met (Mark W.) Hofmann or any of the other players," said Salt Lake Police Chief E. L. Willoughby. "We are verifying his story, but there is nothing he could add to what we know, nothing more he could really give investigators." . . .

Police questioned Boren in connection with statements published in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, an anti-Mormon publication, that described a number of documents Boren claimed to have in his possession, including a historical account similar to the one described in the Martin Harris letter . . .

Boren claims to have access to what he called "the Joseph Smith papers," a collection of documents . . .

Jerald Tanner, who has never accepted the [Salamander] letter as authentic, wrote in his monthly newsletter that he believed Boren was perhaps the creative imagination behind the Martin Harris letter.

Police wondered if Boren might have been the impetus for a large-scale document fraud involving others.

Boren said those conclusions were "pure nonsense. People have drawn conclusions that are totally paranoid."

Police wanted to know of any association between Hofmann and Boren either before Boren's 1983 imprisonment for murder or following his claims about historical documents while in prison.

According to one official, Boren told investigators, "I don't know this Hofmann. I don't know (documents researcher Brent) Metcalfe. And I've never talked to Tanner about this. I do a lot of reading on Mormonism, but I don't know these guys."

In an interview with the *Deseret News*, Boren said he did meet with Tanner and with an LDS historian regarding the "Joseph Smith papers" he claims to have started researching 20 years ago. He said the papers were brought to Utah by "his third grandfather" Isaac Morley, whose daughter Lucy, Boren said, was a polygamous wife to Smith. Recently, the papers have been in the care of family members who do not want them released, Boren said.

Like Tanner, the historian concluded that Boren's claims were fraudulent.

Boren said the police had interviewed him as an expert on document collecting, not because he was associated with the bombings. . . .

Boren said he has refused to cooperate with police concerning the "Joseph Smith papers" and their whereabouts. "The papers are not connected to their case. I don't owe any explanations to anybody."

The article which appeared in the *Deseret News* on November 8, 1985, said that “Kerry Ross Boren . . . was an associate of Hofmann and others before his imprisonment.” In the same article the following appeared: “Police emphasize Boren is in no way connected to the bombings, only that he is an associate of Hofmann and other document collectors and historians associated with Hofmann.” While it is possible that the police have something they are not telling us about, I have never found any evidence to prove that Kerry Ross Boren was an associate of Mark Hofmann. In a letter dated June 15, 1985, Boren stated: “I have had no connection whatever with Mark Hofmann, although I am aware of who he is; additionally, I do not know Lyn Jacobs nor have I ever heard of the latter. . . . my contact with persons involved in all of this recent ‘discovery’ is limited; . . .” When we talked to Hofmann on August 24, 1985, he brought up the subject of Mr. Boren. He said that he felt that he should tell us that he had known of Boren before we published *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*. He did not say that he knew him personally, but only that he had been called in to look at some forged Butch Cassidy material. When I asked him if it was a good forgery, he replied that it was a very poor job. It is interesting to note that a photograph of a portion of an important letter Boren discovered relating to Butch Cassidy was published in the *Westerner*, May–June 1973. One thing that is a little suspicious about the letter is that Boren chose to suppress the names of both the writer and the recipient (see pages 41 and 62). At the time I wrote the booklet on Boren, I commented: “As far as I know, Mr. Boren has never been charged with forgery, and he has not offered to sell me any old documents.” Although I still am not aware of any criminal charges being pressed against Boren for forgery, one of his former associates told me that Boren had sold him what purported to be an ancient map. He discovered, however, that it was a forgery. He felt that he could have filed charges against Mr. Boren, but instead he decided to talk to him in the presence of his lawyer. He claimed that Boren admitted that the map was spurious and said that there was someone else involved in the forgery. This man claimed that he lost about \$5,000 on the transaction.

Mr. Boren claims that he is “not an expert in document authentication.” He maintains, however, that “as a genealogist and researcher I have spent most of my life working with such items and am fully capable of recognizing them as being of the period and scope in question” (Letter dated June 15, 1985). Mr. Boren was apparently at home with old letters and journals. In his manuscript, “The High Uintas,” he spoke of the

“Kerry Ross Boren Collection” of documents, which contains letters going back to the 1830s. Mr. Boren even claimed to have the only authenticated Jesse James letter. When I asked Hofmann about Boren’s claim concerning this letter, he said that there were a number of original letters by Jesse James and the last one sold for over \$20,000. Although I cannot remember it, Mr. Hofmann gave the exact figure the letter sold for. This made me wonder if Hofmann might have been involved in selling outlaw material.

While I am very suspicious of Kerry Ross Boren’s relationship to old Mormon documents, I cannot prove that he has the ability necessary to do the handwriting. All of the material I have seen which has come from Mr. Boren is hand printed or else typewritten. As I have stated before, I cannot even prove that Hofmann and Boren were acquainted. There is a possibility, however, that they could have met at the library at Utah State University when Hofmann was attending there. According to the Spring 1975 issue of the *Newsletter of the National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History*, Mr. Boren was “association president.” On page 4 we read that this center “was officially inaugurated on June 10, 1974, with ceremonies on the campus of Utah State University, Logan. Utah State University’s Merrill Library will house the National Center for Outlaw and Lawman History, where all acquired materials will be housed and displayed . . .” Although Mr. Boren was no longer president, the newsletter states that the organization was still functioning out of Utah State University in January 1980—the year Mr. Hofmann found the Anthon transcript. Some time during that year there was a problem, and by October 1980 the newsletter reported that the organization was looking for a new home. Although A. J. Simmonds does not recall seeing Mark Hofmann and Kerry Ross Boren together, he saw both of them in the library on various occasions. Because both Hofmann and Boren did research with regard to genealogy and Mormon history they also could have met at the Genealogical library or in the Church Historical Department.

One of the items which Kerry Ross Boren sent to Dean Jessee is a purported “copy of the Joseph Smith letter to Isaac Morley dated Kirtland, Ohio, December 1st, 1835.” It goes into Joseph Smith’s involvement in money-digging and magic and is an obvious fake. Boren, of course, claimed that Morley was his “third great-grandfather.” It is interesting to note that in his suit against Mark Hofmann for selling him forgeries, Brent Ashworth lists a letter dated March 6, 1833. This letter also mentions Isaac Morley:

March 6th 1833
Dear Wife

Brother Williams has this day received word from Brother Morely that we should commit the cross plow unto the hands of the poor you will therefor please to trust it to Brother Williams by his hand I send this I subscribe myself your Husband

Joseph Smith

Emma Smith

Mr. Boren claims that he had access to a journal of Joseph Smith which had an entry that is obviously related to the Hofmann letter. I quote the following from Boren's typescript:

March 6th (1833). . . . Brother Williams has this day brought word fro[m] Brother Morely that the Farm is progresing and that if we are to fulfill the needs of the poor we should commit the cross plow into his hands as soon as possible. . . . I sent by the hand of Brother Williams to my Wife Emma that she should deliver up to him the cross plow and deliver it to Brother Morely directly. . . .

If it could be established that Mr. Boren made this typescript prior to the time that Mr. Hofmann "discovered" the letter, it would go a long way toward proving that the Hofmann letter is a forgery which is related to the Boren item. As it is, however, there is no way to prove that the typescript dates back prior to the time Mr. Boren went to prison, and it is certainly possible that Boren could have seen a photograph of this letter in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* and created his so-called Joseph Smith journal entry from it.

Isaac Morley was a prominent Mormon and it would not have been out of character for Joseph Smith to mention him in a letter. Nevertheless, if the Hofmann letter is a forgery as Ashworth has charged, it is very interesting that it would mention Kerry Ross Boren's "third great-grandfather."

Although I cannot prove any relationship between Hofmann and Boren at the present time, there are many parallels between the two men:

1—Both Mark Hofmann and Kerry Ross Boren have been accused of murder.

2—Both men have had in their possession many Mormon documents or copies of documents which are obviously forgeries.

3—Hofmann and Boren both claim they had access to a large and controversial collection

containing original Joseph Smith material. In Hofmann's case it is known as the McLellin collection. Boren says the collection he had access to came from Isaac Morley.

4—Neither Hofmann nor Boren were able to produce any part of their purported collection for the police.

5—Both of these collections were supposed to contain some of the Joseph Smith's Papyri.

6—Both have produced documents purporting to contain characters copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon.

7—Hofmann and Boren have both claimed to have previously unknown manuscript copies of revelations of Joseph Smith.

8—Both claimed they have seen the missing Book of Lehi in California.

9—Hofmann and Boren both claimed to have access to many original letters of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders.

10—Both had documents containing a great deal of material on Joseph Smith's involvement in magic and money-digging.

11—Hofmann and Boren both had a document concerning a "white" amphibian appearing to Joseph Smith.

12—Both claimed to have documents about secret Mormon temple rituals.

13—Hofmann and Boren both had documents which plagiarized from *Mormonism Unveiled* and the Joseph Knight account of the discovery of the gold plates.

14—Both had a questionable letter mentioning Isaac Morley.

15—Both Hofmann and Boren had documents mentioning someone throwing back a coin or a piece of gold to the guardians of the treasure.

This list of parallels could probably be expanded. While most of the parallels could be explained away as only Mr. Boren's attempt to capitalize on Mr. Hofmann's growing reputation, some of them are a little more difficult to explain in this manner. At the present time I do not claim to have any final answer to the problem, but I do feel that the matter should be pursued. If anyone has any information on this subject I would appreciate knowing about it.

I may never know whether Mark Hofmann or Kerry Ross Boren was the first to pretend to have access to a very special collection of Mormon documents, but their claims remind me of a story that appeared in *The Sunstone Review*, Nov.–Dec. 1983. I quote the following from that article:

It was too good to be true. When Brigham Young University Archives learned Diana Hanson claimed to have a collection of ten letters from Brigham Young and Joseph Smith dated 1825 to 1843, and eleven volumes of Emma Smith's diaries, archivists and historians were beside themselves. It could turn out to be "one of the great finds of 20th century Mormonism," said Chad Flake, curator of the Special Collections Library at BYU.

An agreement was signed which would pay Hanson \$20,000 down for the collection two Salt Lake City appraisers say could value \$500,000 to \$5 million.

Hanson never received any money. BYU never received the momentous materials. The reason is they never existed.

Hanson purported to have the materials at her home in Bozeman, Montana. However she consistently hedged when it came to actually showing them to anyone. Then, when she returned from two weeks at National Guard camp, Hanson claimed all the items had been stolen during her absence.

All was not lost, however. Hanson said the journals of the prophet's wife, Emma Hale Smith, were in storage at her sister's home . . . However, though Hanson claimed the boxes were sent from her former home in Hawaii in 1982, they were not to be found.

Because of the value of their contents the FBI was called in . . . When FBI agents confronted Hanson about her story, she admitted there were no letters, there were no boxes, there had been no burglary, and though the diaries were by a woman named Smith "There's no reason to believe in any way it's related to Emma Hale Smith or her descendants," reports the *Billings Gazette* October 20, 1983.

"I made up the list from my own imagination," acknowledged Hanson during FBI interrogation. "I'm sorry this happened. I got caught up in a story which I was unable to stop." . . .

Hanson pleaded guilty October 18, 1983, to a misdemeanor charge of filing a false report and was given a six month sentence, a \$75.00 fine and is receiving court-ordered counseling.

APPENDIX C

A STRANGE OFFER

One of the real mysteries of the Hofmann affair is his dealings with Brent Ashworth. I have already mentioned how Hofmann sold the Jonathan Dunham letter to Dr. Richard Marks for \$20,000 when he could have sold it to Ashworth for \$30,000. Hofmann

then bought the letter back through Deseret Book for \$110,000 and resold it to Ashworth for \$60,000. In his testimony, Brent Ashworth told of some incredible offers Hofmann made to him. The reader may remember that Hofmann traded the letter by Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, to Mr. Ashworth for items Ashworth valued "at around \$33,000." Ashworth claimed that Mark Hofmann later offered to buy the letter back for almost a quarter of a million dollars:

. . . He said that he was representing an out of state buyer who was offering \$120,000 for Lucy Mack Smith's letter. I was kind of astounded at the amount. . . . and then at the end of our discussion . . . he said . . . I've really got to have that letter. The man I represent really wants to have it. Would you take twice that for it? And I told him, . . . "Well, now, that one has got me thinking. I'm going to have to get back with you on that. Your talking near a quarter of a million dollars."

Ashworth claimed that Hofmann later "called me up, I believe it was in August, and he said, 'Brent I've firmed this up. . . . my man is willing to pay a **quarter of a million dollars** for [the] Lucy Mack Smith letter. He'll send you 10% down—[a] \$25,000 check and pay the rest within a short period thereafter.' I believe he said 10 days." Still later Hofmann called again and presented an offer of almost half a million dollars for eight items from Ashworth's collection. Ashworth testified that Hofmann told him:

. . . "my man would like to buy the important items from your collection," and he listed the eight items . . . A few days later he called me and indicated that it [would] be, as I recall, somewhere around \$450,000. . . . he told me the gentleman would send me [a] \$50,000 check and the rest . . . in a short period of time . . .

Why Mark Hofmann would offer to buy back the forgeries for such an unbelievable price is only a matter of speculation. One theory is that Mr. Hofmann feared Brent Ashworth might show the documents to document dealer Kenneth Rendell and that he would recognize that they were forgeries. Since the transaction never went through, it could also be possible that Hofmann was only trying to set Ashworth up for an even bigger deal. If he could convince Mr. Ashworth that the documents he had sold him had greatly increased in value, Ashworth might be interested in investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in an item like the Oath of a Freeman.

APPENDIX D

THREE OR FOUR BOMBS?

Less than an hour and a half after Mark Hofmann's car was destroyed by a bomb, another explosion was reported:

. . . as police were sifting through the charred remains of Hofmann's vehicle, an explosion was reported in the Holladay area on Walker Lane, about one mile from where Kathleen Webb Sheets was killed Tuesday.

Residents told Salt Lake County deputy sheriffs they heard a loud explosion about 4 p.m. Though teams of deputies combed the area, no evidence was found of a bomb.

Jon Larson, a Walker Lane resident said he has lived in the area for 20 years, "and I've never heard an explosion like that before."

The blast rattled his kitchen windows, and sounded similar to fireworks. Neighbors congregated along the street, and dogs started to bark. (*Deseret News*, October 17, 1985)

Although we did not know it at the time, this explosion occurred in the area of Hugh Pinnock's home. (Pinnock, of course, is the Church leader who was upset at Hofmann for not repaying the loan he had helped him obtain.) The man who reported the explosion, Jon Larson, lived less than a block from Pinnock. The *Deseret News*, November 30, 1985, printed this statement:

Shortly after Hofmann was injured . . . a boom shook windows on Walker Lane near Pinnock's home. Although people in the area were convinced the sound was an explosion, investigators have said they have found no evidence of one.

I do not know whether police realized at the time that the explosion was in the area where Pinnock lived or whether they searched his home and garage for evidence of damage. In any case, they were unable to determine the cause of what Jon Larson described as the worst explosion he had heard since he moved into the area 20 years before. At the preliminary hearing, Detective Jim Bell testified that "The Sheriffs office sent approximately 15 cars, maybe 20, up to that address on Walker Lane." Whether or not a fourth bomb actually exploded in the area where Pinnock lives, he has been considered a "possible target" of the bomber by some people (see *Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 43).

There has also been a great deal of speculation with regard to the question of who was to be the target of the third bomb. The potential victim may have had the letter *a* in his or her last name. The *Deseret News* for November 11, 1985, reported:

A witness who saw a package burning in Hofmann's blasted car told police a block letter "A" was visible on the package, presumably in a last name, according to a police official. As described by the witness, it resembled writing on the paper police recovered after the packages exploded in the other incidents.

At first it was suggested that someone who worked in the McCune Mansion might be the target. The *Deseret News* for October 17, 1985, reported that just before Hofmann was injured by the bomb, he had come out of "the McCune Center." The article also stated:

Detectives learned upon questioning witnesses . . . that Hofmann was seen carrying a briefcase or package into the building. Another witness said he returned to his car with the item. Police now speculate that the package he carried may have been a bomb, and that when he placed the bomb into his car, it detonated, . . .

According to Detective Jim Bell's testimony at the preliminary hearing, Bell asked Hofmann "if he had been to the McCune Mansion, and he said he had not." Bradley Robert Christensen's testimony supported Hofmann's story. When Christensen (who was near the scene of the bombing) was asked if Hofmann came from the McCune Mansion, he replied that "he didn't come from that direction." Lyn Jacobs, on the other hand, claimed that he talked to Mark Hofmann in November and "Mark said that he was coming from the McCune Mansion . . . and that, despite what we've heard, that his hands were empty, . . ." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 21, 1985). Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin claim that "Workmen on the roof of the McCune Mansion . . . later reported seeing Hofmann leave the mansion and return to his car. No one in the mansion, however, has yet verified seeing Hofmann in the building" (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 53). While the testimony appears to be contradictory, if it could be established that Hofmann really did carry a bomb into the McCune Mansion, it would make me suspect that the target might have been a member of the Deseret Foundation. This foundation was mentioned in the *Deseret News* on November 17, 1985:

During the time Christensen was Sheets' right hand man at Coordinated Financial Services, he employed [Andrew] Ehat as a researcher through the Deseret Foundation, . . .

I have not been able to learn much about the Deseret Foundation. According to the Articles of Incorporation, it is a "non-profit corporation" set up for "charitable, educational and scientific purposes." It was founded

January 18, 1974, by J. Gary Sheets [whose wife was later killed in the bombings], Robert Raybould and C. Dean Larsen. Although I do not know when Steven Christensen became involved in the organization, a report dated January 14, 1983, shows that “Steve Christensen” was a trustee in the organization at that time. While I do not know if it means anything, reports submitted to the State of Utah for 1984-85 show that three members of the Board of Trustees (Steven A. Apple, C. Dean Larsen and Wayne A. Jenson) had offices at “200 North Main” in Salt Lake City. This is the address for the McCune Mansion. If it could be established that Mr. Hofmann was in the mansion just before the bomb went off, it could raise the question of whether Hofmann had some secret dealings with the Deseret Foundation. A receipt from Waldenbook found at the scene of the explosion, however, might make a person wonder whether Mark Hofmann would have had time to have visited the McCune Mansion and make it to his car. On May 7, 1986, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, reported:

Mr. Ashworth also testified he regularly met with Mr. Hofmann in the Crossroads Mall near Waldenbooks on Wednesday afternoons. On Oct. 16, the day Mr. Hofmann was critically injured when a bomb exploded in his car, Mr. Ashworth said he had altered his schedule and was not in Salt Lake City. However, a receipt found in Mr. Hofmann’s car indicates he was at Waldenbooks about 11 minutes before the explosion.

Investigators have named Mr. Ashworth as a possible intended victim of that third bomb.

As the article in the *Tribune* indicated, Mr. Ashworth testified that he usually met with Hofmann in “the open area just around from the Walden Bookstore in the Cross Roads Mall” on Wednesdays at “2 or 2:30 [p.m.]” It would appear that Hofmann was waiting for Ashworth that day and finally left the bookstore about 2:30 p.m. Firefighters were called to the scene of the explosion at 2:40 p.m. Mr. Ashworth testified that Hofmann called him that day on the telephone but his wife answered the call. Whether Hofmann was planning on killing Mr. Ashworth is just a matter of speculation. It could be that investigators will clarify this matter at the trial. We do know that Brent Ashworth had had a strained relationship with Mark Hofmann since the time he had accused Mr. Hofmann of lying to him concerning the sale of the Dunham letter. One thing that could relate to the matter is that document

dealer Kenneth Rendell had told Mark Hofmann that he was planning to come to Utah to visit collectors. Brent Ashworth would undoubtedly have been one of the collectors Mr. Rendell would have called on. Ashworth testified that Kenneth Rendell was “an old friend of mine and I’d known Ken for 15 years or more.” Mr. Rendell maintains that if Ashworth had shown him the documents Hofmann sold to him, he would have certainly uncovered the forgery scam. It seems logical to believe that Mark Hofmann would have been concerned about Kenneth Rendell examining Brent Ashworth’s documents. David Hewett points out that Rendell’s life may also have been in danger:

Sometime in early October, Ken Rendell was getting ready for a later mid-October visit to the West. He planned to stop in Utah and visit a couple of customers, Brent Ashworth and Mark Hofmann. . . .

On October 10, a strange series of events happened in Newton, Massachusetts, where Ken Rendell has his documents office. Someone began calling the office wanting the home address of Rendell. Rendell had recently gotten married and was, in fact, out of town on his honeymoon. The caller said he had a present for Rendell and wanted his home address so it could be delivered. The office refused the request.

After thinking the matter over, they called the police. There was some worry someone might be planning a burglary of Rendell’s house. Once the events of October 15 and 16 occurred in Salt Lake, another possible explanation for the calls arose. (*Maine Antique Digest*, July 1986, page 7-C)

APPENDIX E

MARK HOFMANN IS “DEEP THROAT”

In Appendix A I stated that I was suspicious that Mark Hofmann may have been the “Deep Throat” source who told the *Los Angeles Times* about the Oliver Cowdery history. Just as we were preparing to go to press, Dawn Tracy published an article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* which tends to show that Hofmann was indeed the secret source:

Accused murderer Mark Hofmann has told several associates he was shown a secret history written by a close colleague of Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith that challenged official accounts of how the church began.

That is the claim of Brent Metcalfe, a former confidant of Mr. Hofmann. . . . Metcalfe says Mr. Hofmann confided that he had examined a secret history Mr. Hofmann assumed was written by Oliver Cowdery, scribe to Smith for most of the Book of Mormon. Mr. Metcalfe said Mr. Hofmann claimed that the history had Alvin, rather than Joseph Smith, finding the golden plates.

Thursday, Mormon Church officials issued a press release saying they have concluded there is no substance to “widely circulated rumors that the church owns a very early history of the church written by Oliver Cowdery.” . . .

Ron Barney, a worker in the Church History Department, said morale in his department has been low because high church officials have delayed so long in allowing their own workers to examine the documents.

While the announcement is an attempt to squelch rumors about documents locked up in several church vaults, speculation continues about what those vaults contain, and if the documents contain references to folk magic or to Alvin playing a role in the founding of the Mormon Church. Brigham Young University historian Michael Quinn, for instance, cites one

historical reference that suggests the church may own a secret history written by the church founder himself.

For the Cowdery history, Mr. Metcalfe said he arranged an interview between Mr. Hofmann and *Los Angeles Times* writer John Dart in June of 1985 to discuss the secret documents, with the stipulation that Mr. Hofmann’s identity remain anonymous. . . .

Mr. Metcalfe said that Mr. Hofmann claimed President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency was present at a meeting in which Mr. Gibbons showed him a secret history. LDS Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Mr. Hofmann couldn’t have been shown any documents because it would have been against church policy. . . .

BYU historian Quinn said there is one historical reference to Smith writing a history church members haven’t so far seen. In an entry of the First Presidency Office journal dated Feb. 22, 1893, then-church President Wilford Woodruff refers to a history written by Smith in which the church founder describes finding a seerstone. Dr. Quinn said he knows of no history presently published or known about in manuscript form containing such an account. . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 17, 1986)

APPENDIX F

HOFMANN CONFESSES

On the morning of January 23, 1987, word began to circulate in Salt Lake City that a major development had occurred in the Mark Hofmann case. That evening the *Deseret News* reported the following:

A grim-faced Hofmann entered the courtroom about 11 a.m. Friday and with little fanfare entered guilty pleas to two counts of second-degree murder in the slayings of Steven F. Christensen and Kathleen Webb Sheets. Hofmann had been charged with first-degree murder, which carries a possible death sentence, but in the plea agreement prosecutors agreed to allow Hofmann to plead guilty to lesser charges.

He also pleaded guilty to one count of communications fraud and one count of theft by deception involving the Martin Harris letter, better known as the White Salamander letter, and

the William McLellin collection, a collection of documents Hofmann sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars but in actuality never possessed.

Tension and emotion flooded the courtroom as Hofmann stood to answer each of the judge’s questions.

“Did you intentionally and knowingly cause the death of Steve Christensen?” questioned Rigrup.

“Yes,” replied Hofmann in a soft, quiet voice.

“Did you intentionally and knowing[ly] cause the death of Kathleen Sheets?” the judge intoned.

“Yes,” the defendant replied.

“Do you desire to enter these guilty pleas because you are in fact guilty?” the judge asked.

“Yes,” Hofmann replied.

Hofmann made similar admissions of guilt involving the documents transactions. (*Deseret News*, January 23, 1987)

Judge Rigtrup sentenced Mark Hofmann to one prison term of 5 years to life and three other prison terms of 1-to-15 years for his role in the bombing deaths of two people and the forgeries and frauds that led to those murders” (Ibid.). The judge pointed out the “indiscriminate nature” of the murders. (Mrs. Sheets was killed instead of her husband and a woman in the Judge Building almost picked up the “booby-trapped shrapnel bomb” which killed Steven Christensen.) Rigtrup then said to Mr. Hofmann: “. . . I will recommend that you spend the rest of your natural life at the Utah State Prison” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 24, 1987). After the hearing Mark Hofmann was handcuffed and transported to prison.

In making a plea bargain agreement Mr. Hofmann escaped the possibility of the death penalty and was assured that the federal government would drop its charge of possession of an unregistered machine gun. In addition, New York authorities promised that they would not charge him with selling a forged copy of the Oath of a Freeman in their state.

Mark Hofmann had kept absolutely silent concerning the crimes up to the time the plea bargain was being worked out. Jan Thompson reported that at that time he opened up and confessed how he had committed the crimes:

An interview with Mark W. Hofmann was the strangest and most fascinating experience Robert Stott has had as a criminal prosecutor. . . .

“It was chilling to have Hofmann look me in the eye and say he killed Steve Christensen and Kathleen Sheets,” Stott said in a *Deseret News* interview Saturday.

As Hofmann disclosed the details of how he made and delivered the bombs and how he manufactured the salamander letter and persuaded buyers to invest in the so-called McLellan Collection, Stott compared the information with the state’s evidence. Hofmann’s version of his crime matched the theories and evidence of prosecutors.

“It was disconcerting to realize that this man I was sitting across from had committed these terrible crimes in such a unique fashion. He was brilliant in forging documents and in manufacturing the bombs.”

Hofmann enjoyed sharing the details of his fraud scheme, Stott said.

“When he talks, he doesn’t act like a madman or say nasty things, so it’s easy to forget that he’s a violent killer and to treat him as a next-door neighbor. I had to remind myself that, foremost, Hofmann is a killer, and secondly, he is a swindler and a cheat.

“That’s what makes him so dangerous. When he’s triggered, he can be devastating.”

Hofmann showed little emotion during the interview. (*Deseret News*, January 25, 1987)

As part of the plea bargain agreement Mr. Hofmann agreed to meet with investigators and reveal the details concerning how he forged the other documents. The prosecutors maintain that they will make this material available to the public.

As Sandra and I sit back and reflect about the Salamandergate scandal, we just feel fortunate to be alive. Brent Ashworth, the Mormon bishop who claimed Mark Hofmann sold him \$225,100 worth of forged documents, has been quoted as making this comment about Hofmann:

“When I called him a liar or if I questioned one of the documents, he’d lose his temper. Nothing else seemed to make him mad.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 25, 1987)

As I related in the first part of this book, Utah Lighthouse Ministry had printed a great deal of material which questioned both Mark Hofmann’s documents and his honesty. Beginning as early as 1984, we suggested that the Salamander letter might be “a forgery” and noted that if this were the case, “it needs to be exposed” (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984). By August 1984 we had printed the first part of the booklet, *The Money-Digging Letters*, in which Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries were questioned and his document dealings condemned. Sandra distributed copies of this material at the Sunstone Theological Symposium. Mr. Hofmann attended this symposium and was grieved when he learned that his integrity was being questioned. The day following the publication of this material (August 23, 1984) Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the Mormon Church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of him. Mr. Hofmann seemed to be almost at the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him.

We, of course, knew that it was risky business to publicly question any forger, but we had no idea he was so devious that he would plant a bomb that killed Kathleen Sheets merely as a diversion to cover up his involvement in the murder of Steven Christensen. In retrospect, it appears that we were very fortunate that Mr. Hofmann arrived at our house armed only with arguments as to why we should trust his documents rather than a pipe bomb surrounded with nails. It may very well be that the thing that saved our lives was simply that few people believed what we were publishing. Mr. Hofmann apparently felt that Christensen, who was a Mormon bishop with a great deal of influence, could destroy his Mormon

document empire, and therefore he found it necessary to eliminate him. While we have always thought there was a possibility of being assassinated by someone opposed to our work, we never even considered that a well-mannered man like Mark Hofmann, who professed to be friendly to our work, would turn out to be a cold-blooded killer who would stop at nothing to shut the mouth of his opponents. We just thank God that he was not triggered by the exposés we published concerning his document deals.

Recently it has been noted that Mark Hofmann was able to fool almost everyone with his dual life. Even his best friends now feel that they were used to further his selfish desire for wealth and fame. While Mr. Hofmann was once honored by Mormon and non-Mormon historians, he is now considered a villain—perhaps one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. On February 11, 1987, the *New York Times* published an article by Robert Lindsey which contained the following:

According to criminal investigators here and court documents, the 32-year-old Mr. Hofmann fooled not only senior members of the Mormon hierarchy but also scores of document collectors around the country and virtually all of the nation's top forgery experts.

"Mark Hofmann was unquestionably the most skilled forger this country has ever seen," said Charles Hamilton, a New York document dealer who is widely regarded as the nation's preeminent detector of forged documents. . . .

Mr. Hamilton said Mr. Hofmann "perpetrated by far the largest monetary frauds through forgery that this country has ever had," adding, "He fooled me—he fooled everybody." . . .

Among those fooled by Mr. Hofmann's documents were hundreds of specialists in Mormon history. . . .

Investigators have said that Mr. Hofmann was as successful in selling forged documents in New York as he was in Utah. They say he may have collected more than \$2 million selling rare documents purportedly written or signed by such literary and historical figures as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Jack London and Jim Bridger. . . .

After examining the white salamander letter, experts working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation said they could find no evidence that it was forged, a conclusion also made by Kenneth W. Rendell, a Newton, Mass., document dealer who is often ranked with Mr. Hamilton among the nation's leading detectors of forged documents. . . .

Concluding his assessment of Mr. Hofmann, Mr. Hamilton said: "In a way, two murders are pedestrian crimes. But to fool me, to fool Ken Rendell, to fool the whole world, requires not only forgery but a packaging of himself. He packaged himself as a bespectacled, sweet, unobtrusive, hard working, highly intelligent scholar dedicated to the uncovering of history. Now we know he's more than he appeared to be."

Mark Hofmann's admission of guilt will undoubtedly have a far-reaching effect on Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Many people have tenaciously held to the theory that the Salamander letter is authentic and that Hofmann was being framed on the murders. Some people apparently felt that we had gone off the deep end or had sold out to the Mormon Church. Although our reasons for believing Hofmann was probably guilty were clearly laid out in this book, only a limited number of people were interested in reading it. When the story broke concerning Mr. Hofmann's plea bargain, however, the situation was entirely reversed. A local radio station asked us to come on the air and discuss the situation, and we were able to publish a large advertisement for the book in both of the newspapers in Salt Lake City. After that we were flooded with orders for *Tracking the White Salamander*.

On pages 104-108 of this book, I discussed some important information regarding the possibility that Mark Hofmann was planning to forge (or had forged) the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. Hofmann had told me of a copy of the 116 pages—i.e., the book of Lehi—which was in Bakersfield, California. He also told the Mormon bishop Brent Ashworth concerning this manuscript. According to Mr. Ashworth, Hofmann originally represented to him that the manuscript was genuine but later said it was a forgery. It is interesting to note that Ashworth realized that even if the manuscript were a 19th century forgery, as Hofmann maintained, it would be a unique forgery which would be of some value. He offered Mr. Hofmann \$10,000 for the forged manuscript. Although Hofmann showed him evidence that he had traveled to Bakersfield, he never produced it. He did, however, give Ashworth some handwritten notes he claimed were copied from the book of Lehi. When investigators searched Mark Hofmann's home after the bombings, they also found notes purportedly taken from the 116 missing pages. The reader will find a photocopy of one page of Mark Hofmann's notes on the next page. According to Hofmann the "BOOK OF LEHI" began as follows:

This record I Lehi make upon plates of gold, & I make it with my own hand, it being a history of my life and of the workings of God.

I suspect that after Mark Hofmann prepared these notes, he was planning to forge a very sophisticated version of the 116 missing pages of the Book of Mormon in the handwriting of Martin Harris. Such a forgery could probably be sold to the Mormon Church for millions of dollars. At the present time I have no evidence to show that the plan was actually carried out, but I will be looking for any evidence that points in that direction.

Squire [Ezra] Pierce BOM Mts. ①

60 1/2 pp. 7 3/4 x 12 1/2 inches. 31 Sheets (both sides) 29 lines/p.

p. 1 - "The BOOK OF LEHI" "This record I Lehi make upon plates of gold, & I make it with my own hand, it being a history of my life and of the workings of God."

2 - "judgment may at any time befall the jews."

4 - "he [God] should cease to be found certain treasures in the hole of the earth, and out of the earth shall the righteous prosper . . . Location a secret."

5+6 - Salt mine (also gold, silver, and jewels). (also Iron, p. 26)

p. 11 - Prophecy of "a new land" [public discourse]

12 - Prophecy of wars (Machinery of war also p. 16) Forts

Burning of towns (p. 17-18)

earthquakes (p. 17) France - only a "handful" survive.

21+22+23 "And now it came to pass that when Lehi had finished these sayings . . . but there was one among them . . . But the king was moved with wrath and caused that Alma should be cast out from among them . . ."

[Compare Wright BOM p. 123 par. 2. Underlined]

Confessions of a White Salamander

**An Analysis of Mark Hofmann's Disclosures
Concerning How He Forged Mormon Documents
and Murdered Two People**

By Jerald Tanner

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1. A Deadly Salamander

Then the madness of desperation caught the Salamander; and he ran through the garden, dashing forth fire and flames; and wasted it in his wild fury, till its fairest flowers and blossoms hung down, blackened and scathed; and their lamentation filled the air. The indignant Prince of the Spirits, in his wrath, laid hold of the Salamander, and said: 'Your fire has burnt out, your flames are extinguished, your rays darkened: sink down to the Spirits of the Earth; let them mock and jeer you, and keep you captive...' (The Best Tales of Hoffmann, page 46)

In the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, I related the remarkable story of how a returned Mormon missionary named Mark Hofmann became involved in forgery and eventually planted bombs which killed two people. Mr. Hofmann fooled the top leaders of the Mormon Church, noted document experts, historians, the FBI and even prominent polygraph examiners. While Mr. Hofmann was once honored by Mormon and non-Mormon scholars, he is now considered a villain—perhaps one of the greatest con men of the 20th century. On February 11, 1987, the *New York Times* published an article by Robert Lindsey which contained the following:

According to criminal investigators here and court documents, the 32-year-old Mr. Hofmann fooled not only senior members of the Mormon hierarchy but also scores of document collectors around the country and virtually all of the nation's top forgery experts.

"Mark Hofmann was unquestionably the most skilled forger this country has ever seen," said Charles Hamilton, a New York document dealer who is widely regarded as the nation's preeminent detector of forged documents. . . .

Mr. Hamilton said Mr. Hofmann "perpetrated by far the largest monetary frauds through forgery that this country has ever had," adding, "He fooled me—he fooled everybody." . . .

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The reason I have chosen the title, *Confessions of a White Salamander*, for this book is that Mark Hofmann bears remarkable parallels to the salamander mentioned in his most controversial forgery—the White Salamander letter. In that letter a "white salamander" transfigured "himself" into a "spirit," took the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith off guard and struck him "3 times." Mark Hofmann, who appeared to be a harmless and well-mannered member of the Mormon Church, also transformed himself into a very aggressive individual when he built three bombs which killed two prominent members of the church. (The third bomb exploded in Hofmann's own car and seriously injured him.) In the Salamander letter the white salamander, in the form of the "old spirit," told Joseph Smith to "dig up the gold"—i. e. the gold plates which were translated into the Book of Mormon. When Smith tried to obtain it, however, the old spirit "held the treasure & would not let me have it . . ." This reminds one of Mark Hofmann's so-called McLellin collection, a very valuable and controversial collection,

which he dangled before Mormon officials but would not let them actually obtain it. (While the spirit in the Salamander letter eventually allowed Joseph Smith to have the gold plates, Mark Hofmann never let the Mormons obtain the McLellin collection. The reason, of course, was that he never had such a collection.) In the Salamander letter the white salamander took delight in tricking Joseph Smith: “. . . the spirit says I tricked you again . . .” From his own confession, it appears that Mark Hofmann also derived pleasure in tricking the Mormon prophets.

In identifying Mark Hofmann as the “white salamander,” I am only suggesting that at a certain period in his life he acted like the salamander he mentioned in his forgery. I do not mean to imply that he will always behave that way. One scholar has suggested that because of the hideous crimes Hofmann has committed he should never be referred to as “Mr. Hofmann.” Although I certainly cannot defend his actions, I feel that we should remember that he is still a human being who desperately needs God in his life. If the Lord could change a man like Paul, He certainly could work in Mark Hofmann’s life.

In Appendix F of *Tracking the White Salamander*, which was added to the book in early 1987, I told how Mark Hofmann finally broke his silence, entered into a plea agreement and was sent to the Utah State Prison. One of the conditions of this agreement was that he would meet with attorneys from the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office and give them details concerning his crimes. On July 31, 1987, the transcript of the interviews with Hofmann was released and we photographically reproduced it in three volumes under the title, *Hofmann’s Confession*. Although the publication of the entire transcript is of interest to those who want to make a detailed study of Hofmann’s crimes, I felt that the average person would have a hard time going through almost 600 pages of material. In this book I have extracted the important portions of Mark Hofmann’s testimony and have added commentary which throws additional light on the subject.

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, September 1987, we published the following concerning the transcripts:

There has been quite a bit of criticism with regard to Mark Hofmann’s confession, and many people wonder if he has told us the truth. One defect . . . is that it does not tell us enough about the murders. While we wish that Mr. Hofmann had revealed more, we can understand his reluctance. Talking about forgery is entirely different than talking about

murder. Very few people would want to have their confession to such gruesome crimes published to the world. In a normal case a murderer is not required to make a public confession of the details of the crime. At one time we were doing research with regard to a man who had committed murder and had entered into a plea bargain agreement. We discovered that there was no public record available detailing the crime. Mr. Hofmann, as we have shown in the March 1987 issue of the *Messenger*, did go into court and admitted he had committed the murders. Fortunately, the news media were present to record his confession of guilt. In addition, we have a few statements by Hofmann himself in the transcripts and the prosecutors’ summary of what went on at earlier meetings. While we would really like to have hundreds of pages of testimony on the bombings, we do feel fortunate to have what we do.

There is another defect in the transcripts that does disturb us. We had told prosecutors that in order to really convince the public that Mark Hofmann was acting alone in the forgeries, they needed to have him write out a sample of all the different styles of writing found in the forgeries. His known handwriting does not appear to be very good. If he could not match the quality found in the forgeries, we would know that he was not the master forger and that there was a co-conspirator or co-conspirators, which, of course, could even raise questions concerning the murders. It has been claimed that Mark Hofmann did write some samples for investigators and that these samples did satisfy them that he was, in fact, the only one involved in the forgeries which have been charged. Unfortunately, however, these samples were not published with the transcripts, and, strange as it may seem, it was claimed that Hofmann’s attorney had possession of them. We feel that prosecutors need to publish handwritten samples so that people can make their own decision. Although we have no reason to distrust Hofmann’s attorney, it would be better if new samples were taken in the presence of witnesses so that we would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had come from Hofmann’s own hand. Furthermore, they should be submitted to noted handwriting experts to verify that all the forgeries were written by Hofmann himself. Until this is done, we can not be absolutely certain that there were no co-conspirators.

Other than this problem and the lack of material on the murders, we are very impressed with the transcripts. In our wildest imagination we could never have dreamed that Mark Hofmann would make such a detailed confession. For instance, he certainly did not have to tell his true feelings concerning Mormonism, yet he has freely admitted his complete unbelief in the

system. From our own investigation into Hofmann's activities we know that many of the facts he relates are true. In almost every respect he has vindicated the work which we have done on his forgeries during the last three and a half years. Even though we knew that we had good solid evidence, we felt that it was rather daring to publish the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, before the case came to trial. If Mr. Hofmann had stone-walled and refused to confess his guilt, we would have had a difficult time convincing some people that the theories published in that book were correct. As it is, however, Mr. Hofmann has confirmed our research. He not only admits that our theory concerning the origin of the Salamander letter is correct, but also that we gave correct sources for the Joseph Smith III Blessing and the Lucy Smith letter. Furthermore, although he refused to discuss the 1873 Martin Harris letter because it was not on the list of items he was charged with forging, the statements he made concerning Walter Conrad, the man who was supposed to receive Harris' letter, definitely show that the letter is a forgery—something we have tried to prove since 1984.

We at Utah Lighthouse Ministry began our investigation of Mark Hofmann's documents nineteen months before local and federal investigators began working on the Salt Lake bombings' case. In this inquiry we obtained information from Washington, D.C. and ten different states. We even interviewed a convicted murderer at the Utah State Prison. We will probably never know exactly what role our material on Hofmann's forgeries played in the investigation made by the authorities. One investigator, however, did acknowledge to us that he was asked to test some of our theories. The Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office contacted us not long after Mark Hofmann became the chief suspect in the murders and wanted to know what material we had to establish forgery. After that we had many conversations with investigators. Our printed material was carefully examined by the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office, and we spent two full days answering questions concerning it and the contacts we had with Hofmann and his associates. We were strongly encouraged to keep in touch with the County Attorney's Office and give the prosecutors any new ideas or information that came to mind. One of the investigators felt that I should give testimony at Hofmann's trial. He believed that this would give historical perspective to the case they were trying to build against the documents. Although this investigator seemed to be rather excited about the idea, we seriously doubt that the County Attorney's Office would have wanted to

put a witness on the stand who was so deeply involved in controversy over the truthfulness of Mormonism. In any case, it would have been interesting to demonstrate how closely our evidence, derived from historical investigation, dovetailed with the hard evidence which document experts obtained from physical testing. Before Hofmann was questioned at the Utah State Prison, we were asked by a detective to prepare a list of questions which we felt investigators should ask him. As it turned out, however, the detectives were not allowed to question Hofmann. The questions were all asked by the prosecutors from the County Attorney's Office. Since Mr. Hofmann would not allow a detective to join in the questioning concerning the murders, the County Attorney's Office terminated the interviews.

In the pages which follow I will be quoting from my book *Tracking the White Salamander* with regard to a number of subjects. To save space I will usually refer to it simply as *Tracking*.

THE MURDERS

The Salt Lake County Attorney's Office terminated the discussions with Mark Hofmann when Mr. Hofmann refused to talk if Detective Jim Bell was going to be present. Hofmann's reluctance to talk to Detective Bell could have stemmed from the fact that he had a very unpleasant encounter with Bell after he was injured by the third bomb. The *Deseret News* for April 17, 1986, revealed:

Bell then asked him if he had set the bombs. "He said he didn't do it," Bell said. The detective then told Hofmann he was fairly confident he (Hofmann) had set the bombs because they had found Hofmann's green jacket.

"That set off the medical alarms," said Bell, and he was ordered by hospital personnel to leave the trauma care unit where Hofmann was being cared for.

It is also possible that Mr. Hofmann believed that Detective Bell had such a vast knowledge of the bombings that he would not feel comfortable with him in the room. In any case, the prosecutor's summary of the confession Hofmann gave them before the plea bargain was finalized substantiates in almost every instance the testimony given at Mr. Hofmann's preliminary hearing which is presented in chapter 2 of *Tracking*. In that chapter it was demonstrated that Hofmann was in a desperate financial condition just before the murders (see pages 19-23) and that Steven

Christensen, one of Hofmann's victims, had come to feel that Hofmann was a "crook" and was threatening him with jail and excommunication from the Mormon Church. This, of course, would have completely ruined his Mormon document business (pages 23-24). On pages 26-28 of *Tracking*, the evidence clearly shows that Mark Hofmann used the alias "Mike Hansen" when ordering material used in his forgery operation. One "Mike Hansen" receipt even had Mark Hofmann's fingerprint on it. This same alias was found on receipts from Radio Shack for parts used to make the bombs. Detective Bell claimed that there were "a total of three" items seized from Hofmann's home that had the "Mike Hansen" alias on them. One receipt dated back to "1982." Although I did not feel free to reveal it before the trial, I was aware that Allen Roberts (the co-author of a forthcoming book on Hofmann) had discovered that Mark Hofmann had also used the "Mike Hansen" alias at the University of Utah Library two or three years earlier. In his confession, Hofmann admits that he had used the alias at the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, Utah State University and the Mormon Church Archives. He said that he also used it at engraving companies and in purchasing parts for the bombs. On page 27 of *Tracking*, I stated that Mark Hofmann used the name "Bill Edwards" to buy additional bomb parts in Logan, Utah, and that a scholar had seen him in Logan the very day he purchased the parts. The last part of this statement cannot be confirmed. It was actually on October 16, the day after the first two bombs exploded, that Hofmann was in Logan. In his confession, however, Mark Hofmann admitted he did, in fact, purchase the bomb parts in Logan under the alias "Bill Edwards."

In *Tracking*, page 25, I quoted Detective Jim Bell as saying Mark Hofmann told him that he had been driving in Emigration Canyon on October 16 and that investigators at one time felt Hofmann had actually assembled his bombs in that canyon. In his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he made the first two bombs at his home and that he assembled the third bomb in Logan Canyon. On page 25 *Tracking*, I related that Mark Hofmann and Shannon Flynn had picked up a book entitled *Anarchists' Cookbook* at a local bookstore shortly before the bombings. This book told how to make bombs. In his confession, Mr. Hofmann admits that he looked through it but claims that he used other books to create the bombs he used on October 15th and 16th, 1985.

In *Tracking*, page 28, I told of the evidence showing that Hofmann wore his "Kelly green high school letter

jacket" when he went up to Steven Christensen's office to plant the bomb, and on the same page related that Bruce Passey identified Hofmann as the man who rode in the elevator with him and that Passey had noticed that Hofmann was carrying a package addressed to "Steve Christensen." Hofmann confirms all this in his confession. Another important witness for the prosecution at the preliminary hearing was Aaron Teplick (*Tracking*, page 29) who identified Mr. Hofmann's gold Toyota "wonder wagon" as driving slowly by the Sheets' residence late at night before the bombings. In his confession, Hofmann admitted that Teplick was a good witness, although he disagreed with him regarding the time of night he was there.

At this point the reader will find the prosecutor's summary of what they learned about the bombings from Mark Hofmann himself before the plea agreement was finalized:

The following information concerning the bombings of October 15 and 16 of 1985 and the forged "Salamander Letter" was obtained from Mark Hofmann in interviews conducted by prosecutors on January 7, 8, and 22, 1987, at the residence of Ronald Yengich in Salt Lake City, Utah. Those present were Mark Hofmann; Ronald Yengich, Hofmann's Attorney; and Deputy Salt Lake County Attorneys Robert Stott and David Biggs. During the interviews the prosecutors took notes of Mr. Hofmann's statements.

Mark Hofmann gave the following background information: When he was about 12 years old, he received the scar under his right chin as a result of a chemical experiment. He and a cousin, Mike, had placed wood alcohol in a closed beaker. It exploded, causing a burn on his chin, which required a skin graft.

Around the same time there was an incident in which he and a friend, Brian, made a black powder incendiary device which was put into a sterno can. A fuse of black powder was placed in the can and he gave it to Brian to explode at the school yard near his home on Connor Street. Brian took the cap off to ignite it but it didn't explode. Obviously, said Hofmann, it didn't explode because it wasn't under pressure before it was ignited.

Hofmann said he was extremely knowledgeable in the manufacture of black gunpowder. He had been making black gunpowder since he had been in elementary school. He had obtained the formula and percentage make-up of black gunpowder in the *World Book Encyclopedia*. He and Mike made black powder out of sulfur, saltpeter and charcoal. The saltpeter was some type of potassium nitrate. He never owned a chemistry set although his older sister had one. He liked to use more sophisticated, detailed equipment

which he purchased at Mill Creek Pharmacy. He bought the brand name "Perfect Chemicals." Another incident occurred with another friend, Ted. They made black powder, went over to a park and detonated it. He remembered when he and Mike made a sort of cannon out of pipe along with a kind of an extension cord ignition system. They shot rocks out of this pipe and knocked leaves off the trees. He blew up a bottle with dry ice. He enjoyed firecrackers and cherry bombs. He thought that they were fun, and he even purchased cherry bombs, one for a dollar each. He said that he knew that was expensive but he enjoyed it.

A few months before the October bombings, Hofmann asked Shannon Flynn, a friend, to obtain some blasting caps for him. Hofmann wanted to make a bomb out of nitrate fertilizer and diesel oil. He needed the blasting caps as a concussion device to detonate the mixture. Flynn gave him two fuse blasting caps which he had obtained from a source in Richfield, Utah. Hofmann threw them away sometime before October, 1985, because he knew that people might be checking or searching his home and he didn't want the caps lying around.

Hofmann didn't remember for sure, but thought that he might have purchased some books on bombs at a gun show that he and Flynn had attended. The idea for the nails packed around the Christensen bomb came from one of the books. Its purpose was to increase the possibility of death. He did remember thumbing through the "Anarchist Cook Book," which was purchased by Shannon Flynn. He said his bombs of October were very simple compared to those in the "Anarchist Cook Book."

Mark Hofmann then related the following information about the bombings of October 15 and 16, 1985: He knew he was going to make two bombs to kill two people, but at first he wasn't sure who the victims would be. He thought of several scenarios for the bombings. First he thought that one of the bombs would kill either Thomas Wilding or Brent Ashworth and the second bomb would kill himself. Then he thought that possibly the bombs should be for Steve Christensen and Thomas Wilding, and finally he thought about killing Thomas Wilding and Brent Ashworth with the two bombs. Hofmann stated that it wasn't until the morning of the 15th of October when he made the bombs that he settled on the actual targets.

On October 5th he made two trips to the Radio Shack at the Cottonwood Mall. On the first trip, he purchased a mercury switch and a D size battery pack. He went to the Radio Shack at 30th East and 33rd South to look at the mercury switches there, since he was intending to make two bombs. He turned the

mercury switch back and forth and saw that it was defective. The mercury stayed connected to the prong, and thus, the switch would not be suitable for his purpose because the bomb would have been detonated immediately upon connection of the mercury switch. He returned to the Radio Shack at the Cottonwood Mall and purchased another mercury switch, C size battery packs, and a circuit tester. With each visit to Radio Shack, he used the name Mike Hansen. Hofmann thought that he had used the alias "Mike Hansen" as early as 1978. At first it was a game, his way of playing detective. He used the alias in 1979 at the University of Utah Special Collections Library. He also used it at the LDS Church Archives, the Utah State University Archives Special Collections, and the New York Public Library. He bought a tire from David Early Tire using the alias Mike Hansen. His only explanation was that he must have felt like being secretive that day. He used the alias in Denver and in Kansas City. In Utah he used it at DeBouzek, Utah Engraving, Salt Lake Stamp, and at BYU. Hofmann said that the police searches of my home weren't very good, they left the plates. The plates he made reference to were for the counterfeit Deseret Currency, postmarks, and other items which he would not detail. They were located in a sack in the workroom closet on a shelf. The police failed to seize the items and he later destroyed them when he was released on bail.

On the same date, October 5, 1985, he purchased the Estes Rocket Igniters and batteries from Hammonds on 7200 South. He also bought tannic acid at Hammonds, but refused to explain why. On this same day, Hofmann also purchased the pipe used in the bombs from Holiday Hardware and Lumber Store located across the street from Cottonwood Mall. He requested 2 pieces of one inch diameter pipe in twelve inch lengths. The pipes were cut and threaded for him at the store. Like all of his purchases on this date he paid cash. He also bought at the Holiday Lumber Yard a pair of leather gloves, a pair of painting gloves (rubber), and a magic marker to address the packages the bombs were to be placed into.

The end pipe caps, nails, and gunpowder were purchased at Allied located at 6200 South State on the same day. He knew that he shouldn't purchase them all at the same time so he first bought two cans of Hercules Bulls-eye gunpowder. He carried the powder to his car, the Toyota MR2, and then returned to the store and purchased the end pipes and nails. He used different cashiers at Allied's; one for the gunpowder and another for the end pipes and cement nails (the nails were wrapped around the Christensen bomb). He made his final purchase

of the day at Mail Box U.S.A. on 3300 South, Salt Lake City. He bought tape and two 12x12x6 inch boxes that would house the bombs.

After purchasing the bomb components, Hofmann returned home and placed the materials on a blanket in his downstairs den. This was the same room in which he performed his forgery work. The door was locked and no one was allowed into that room. However one night, just before he prepared the bombs, Shannon Flynn wanted to inspect the house because he wanted to purchase it. Hofmann threw the blanket over the parts; Flynn walked into the room, walked around, and walked out.

On October 10, 1985, Hofmann went to an area off of I-80 near Grantsville to test fire the bomb components. This is when he received a speeding ticket in his MR2. He wasn't able to perform the test because there was too much snow and mud. The next day, October 11, he returned to test once more. Into a 1/2 inch pipe, which he found in his garage, he placed gunpowder and a rocket igniter. He connected the wire of the rocket igniter to a 50 foot extension cord, walked back to a small gully, and connected the extension cord to a battery pack. The bomb exploded. He then knew if he were to make a bomb of twice that size he would be able to kill someone with it. He threw the extension cord into a salt water drying pool. At first he thought it might still be out there, but on second thought, he didn't know if there would be much left because of the coercive nature of the salt. At this particular time when he was testing in the desert on October 11, 1985, he felt that it was still going to be Thomas Wilding. Hofmann said he wanted to kill him.

On the evening hours of October 14, Hofmann and Shannon Flynn went to Max Anderson's home to talk about polygamy. Afterwards he dropped Shannon Flynn off at his home at Quailbrook Condominiums. When he got home Doralee, his wife, was still up. It was approximately 11:30 p. m. He visited with his wife for a little while and then she went to bed. He went into his downstairs room and constructed the bombs. He drilled the holes into the pipes in the garage and carefully picked up all of the filings from the garage. It didn't take long, probably 2 hours or less to construct the two bombs. Several times Hofmann stated that the bombs were simple devices. They were not as complex as the ones depicted in the "Anarchist Cook Book." Hofmann made a safety device for each bomb. He said he wouldn't have carried the bombs without it. He made small holes in the boxes with an ice pick. He threaded the wires from the pipe bombs through the holes and taped them separately onto the outside of the box. When he delivered the bombs, he took the tape off the wires and connected them.

Then, if the packages were tipped, the mercury in the switch would complete the circuit and the bombs would explode. He said that at the preliminary hearing he examined some of the remnants of the boxes that had been introduced into evidence and found one of these small holes.

He finished the assembling of the bomb packages by writing the names Steve Christensen and Gary Sheets on the packages. He didn't know Sheets address so he looked it up in the phone directory. He underlined Sheets' address in the directory with the same magic marker that he used to write the names on the boxes. When he was released from jail on bail, he destroyed the directory. The bombs were finished by 2:00 a.m. the morning of October 15, 1985. He said he constructed the bombs at night because that was when he did his best work, his forgeries.

Hofmann stated that it was while constructing the bombs that he finally decided for whom the bombs were intended. He said he wasn't rational at the time, but decided that Steve Christensen would have to be killed so that the McLellan transaction would not take place. He believed Steve Christensen was an honorable man, but close-mouthed. From some cryptic remarks that Steve had made, Hofmann knew that CFS and Gary Sheets were in trouble. CFS was going under and Sheets might be liable for some legal troubles. Hofmann said Gary Sheets was probably correct when he told the police he didn't remember meeting Mark Hofmann because he, Hofmann, hadn't remembered meeting Sheets. The meeting was not very memorable for either. The second bomb, with the name Gary Sheets on it, was simply a diversion so that everyone would believe the bombings were the result of CFS business problems.

Hofmann said the thing that attracted him to bombs as a means of killing was that he didn't have to be there at the time of the killings. He didn't think he could pull the trigger on someone if he faced them, but he could do it if he didn't have to be around. He said he only filled the Sheets pipe bomb half full of powder, and he didn't think the rocket igniter would work because it was three-fourths chipped away. He said that it didn't matter to him if the Sheets' bomb went off or not because its purpose was to establish a diversion. For this purpose, the death of someone was not necessary. He realized, of course, that a bomb left at the residence could kill or severely injure someone, but it didn't really matter to him.

Upon completion of the bomb and packages Hofmann cleared up the area and put the following left-over items into two bags: a full can of Bulls-eye powder, battery packs, the old blanket he used as his work area, the "marks-a-lot" pen he used to address the packages, the drill bits used to make holes in the

pipe, his soldering iron, solder, rags used to wipe off the grease from the threaded ends of the pipes, tape, and unused rocket igniters. Later that morning these two bags and their contents were dropped off by Hofmann into a dumpster at an apartment complex near 2100 East and 3300 South. The other was dumped into a dumpster at the apartments where Shannon Flynn lived, the Quailbrook Apartments.

Sometime after 2:45 a.m., Hofmann placed the two bombs and two bags into his van and left for the Sheets' residence. Hofmann thought that Aaron Teplick was a good witness at the preliminary hearing but that he was wrong about the time Hofmann drove by the Sheets' home. According to Hofmann, the time was 3:00 a.m. rather than midnight. After driving by the Sheets' home, he went back up, parked, walked to the garage, and placed the bomb package upright in front of the garage door closest to the front door. He then connected the two wires which had been taped to the box. The bomb would now go off if the package was tipped. He had tested the mercury switch with the light tester and knew that if the box was tipped at a 90 degree angle or knocked over, it would explode. He placed the bomb about five feet from the garage door thinking that a car leaving the area would hit it. He couldn't understand why a car hadn't hit the package and detonated it before Kathryn Sheets later found it.

Hofmann returned to his house around 3:30 a.m. While he was still downstairs his daughter awoke. His wife, who was upstairs, asked him to take care of the little girl, which he did until she went back to sleep awhile later.

Sometime between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. that morning he went to the Judge Building to deliver the second bomb. He parked the van in front of the building on the south side of 3rd South. He first went into the building and up the sixth floor without the bomb package to see the "lay of the land." He returned to the building with the bomb. He got into the elevator with Hal Passey and Hal's father. He said a fourth person, a rather attractive woman, was also in the elevator. He pressed the button for the fifth floor. By the time the elevator arrived at that floor, all the others [*sic*] passengers had exited on lower floors. He then pressed the sixth floor button and left the elevator on that floor. He walked directly to Steve Christensen's office and placed the bomb package inside the door jam. He fastened the wires together and returned to the street level by way of the elevator. He didn't see anyone on the sixth floor and didn't think anyone saw him there.

To eliminate fingerprints, he wore gloves while delivering both bombs. In front of the Judge Building he took off the gloves and threw them into a trash

can. He did this he said to test fate. To explain why the gloves were not found by the police when they searched that trash can later, he thought that maybe a bag lady or two bums he had seen in the area had picked them up.

That morning as he delivered each of the bombs he wore tan pants, a stripped shirt, black shoes, a green high school jacket with tan sleeves, glasses, and gloves. He had not shaved, but wore no mustache. He said he wore his jacket and used the name Mike Hansen to leave little clues. He was kind of hoping to get caught and thought if they could catch him, they should.

From the Judge Building, Hofmann returned to his house as the clock was chiming 7:00 a.m. Around 8:30 a.m. he called the Sheets' home number, but no one answered. He said if someone answered he would have disguised his voice and told them that there was a bomb in their driveway and not to touch it. He said he was already regretting the Christensen bomb and was considering calling Christensen. He called Christensen's office. The answering machine responded and Hofmann hung up without leaving a message.

Hofmann speculated that his wife, Doralee, had passed the polygraph test as to his alibi because when she had awakened at 3:00 and 7:00 a.m., he was home. Also, his young son had told her that his dad had been downstairs all the time. He said she had no idea that he had left the house that night.

Hofmann said that he was very good at masking his emotions. As an example, he said that in the afternoon of the 15th he went to Dallin Oaks' office to see if the McLellin transaction was to proceed. He said that even though Oaks talked and observed him, he fooled Oaks, and Oaks never suspected he was involved in the bombings. He also spoke with Hugh Pinnock in the basement parking lot and fooled him too.

Hofmann said the third bomb, the one on October 16, 1985, that exploded in his car, was a suicide attempt. He said he was distraught over the killings the day before. He thought that he deserved death, and it would be the best thing for his family. He also admitted that he had placed a number of inconsequential papers in the car so that people would think that the McLellin Collection, which did not exist, was blown up in the explosion and fire.

On the 16th of October, Hofmann went to Logan to purchase the bomb parts for the third bomb. Hofmann used the name Bill Edwards at Radio Shack in Logan. Hofmann bought several items, but the only ones that he could specifically remember were the battery pack and the wires. The batteries came from K-Mart. The rocket engine igniter and

gloves had already been purchased. He bought a three-inch elbow to confuse the people from whom he was purchasing the pipe so that they wouldn't get suspicious about someone buying two end caps and a length of pipe. Hofmann then went up into Logan Canyon and prepared the bomb. He wanted a quick and clean death, so he made the pipe sixteen inches long. It was substantially larger than the ones that killed Kathryn Sheets and Steve Christensen. He then drove down to Salt Lake, parked in his normal spot across from the Deseret Gym, and walked in to get a drink of water to bolster his courage. He went back to the car. The bomb was in a paper sack on the passenger seat. He put it on the driver's seat, touched the two wires together, and the bomb exploded.

Mark Hofmann began the interview regarding the "Salamander Letter" by stating that it was a forgery. To write it he researched the matter thoroughly and relied extensively upon *Mormonism Unveiled* [sic] and the Joseph Knight affidavit. Hofmann had read books on magic at the University of Utah Library and had also had discussions with Brent Metcalfe about magic. He composed the letter in about two hours when he was visiting the Church Historical Library. He called Lynn Jacobs in Boston and read the draft to him. He stole the paper from the *Niles Register*, a series of books printed in the 1830's, located at the University of Utah Special Collection Library. The handwriting style of the letter was copied basically from the available Martin Harris signature, the samples of letters and styles from that era, and the common style and standards that were employed at that time. He attempted to keep the handwriting of the letter consistent with the handwriting of the known Martin Harris signature. Hofmann researched the mail schedules from and to Palmyra and the surrounding areas and knew what post office date and mark to affix. He knew that prior to 1829 the Palmyra postmark was black and afterwards it was red. The beginning of the letter, "I received your letter today and hasten to respond" was from words he had seen in actual letters from that era and place; therefore he was sure the time sequence was proper.

Hofmann said he created what he believed actual history to be. He believed Joseph Smith was involved in magic. The early writings of Joseph Smith didn't characterize his experience as a first vision but as a dream. Hofmann was aware that salamanders or toads are commonly associated with magic literature. He said his salamander letter was a magic forgery.

Mark Hofmann said that paper from the *Niles Register* at the University of Utah was also used for the Josiah Stowell 1830 [sic] letter, the Lucy Mack Smith letter and other forgeries. The postmark on the Lucy Mack Smith letter was from a plate he created

himself from a photograph of an original postmark, probably one from Courtland Covers. He did most of the printing himself from plates he made. He did his own photography, chemical work, etching, and printing. He said that people would be surprised at how much he did to insure that the Oath of a Freeman would pass the forensic tests, but that he got lazy and he had the Oath plate made professionally. Hofmann said that he obviously should have made the Oath plate himself.

The poem appearing in the *Book of Common Prayer*, supposedly written in Martin Harris' handwriting, was another Mark Hofmann creation. It was a forgery. The Josiah Stowell letter was forged before the Salamander Letter. As far as Hofmann knew, there was and is no Oliver Cowdery History. He told Brent Metcalfe that it existed because it excited Brent. The Bible in which he claimed the Anthon Transcript was found was purchased by Hofmann while he was in Bristol, England on his mission. He bought it from an upstairs book store located near the 49th Street Stairs. At one time he told his wife that the Anthon Transcript was a fake, but because it so greatly affected her, he later told her he was only joking and that it was genuine. Although she probably felt or suspected that many of his items were forgeries, she still thought that the Oath of a Freeman and the Salamander Letter were authentic.

Hofmann said that many years ago he had sold a forged Daniel Boone letter to Kenneth Rendell. He also had sold over \$500,000.00 worth of forgeries to Charles Hamilton whom he said never suspected a thing. Hofmann had prior experience with forensic scientist [sic] and knew that he could get his forgeries past the scrutiny of any expert or test available. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages SS-1 through SS-14)

In the interviews after the plea agreement was completed, Mark Hofmann did make some comments concerning the murders:

Q. Was there any connection in your mind between the vote by the American Antiquarian Society on October 15, 1985, and the bombs going off on October 15, 1985?

A. Was there any connection?

Q. Yes.

A. Yes. The connection was the money factor. I was obviously very desperate for money at this point and so that is the connection. . . .

Q. . . . Hypothetically if the American Antiquarian Society had been able to and did vote to purchase your Oath on October 15, 1985, for about a million dollars, what would that have done to the financial hole that you dug yourself into by that time?

A. It would have relieved me from it. Hence, I guess you want me to say the bombings would not have taken place.

Q. I don't want you to say that unless it is true.

A. I'll say it since it's true.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 279-280)

A. . . . This all took place shortly before the bombings and I wasn't thinking very clearly at the time. (*Ibid.*, page 332)

A. I hope you are not going to leave me without going into my rationalization further because I can do a lot better job as far as how I rationalized myself.

Q. If you have something more to add, whatever.

A. No. We'll talk about it later. A lot of it deals with my rationalization for the homicides which we'll get into. (*Ibid.*, page 411)

Q. Now at that time you had bought some bomb parts?

A. Let's see, when did I buy the bomb parts? I don't remember the exact—

MR. BIGGS: On the 7th, or 5th?

A. Yes, well again this gets into rationalization for the bombs. All along, of course, until the evening that I made them, I didn't really think that I would end up using them. At least to take a life.

MR. BIGGS: Why is that?

A. My rationalization was that I would prepare myself or have that at my disposal but that things would work out. Now, remember, I think we went in to this before, that my thinking was at that time that my life would be taken. In other words, that it would be a suicide attempt. Although, like I say, it was half a joke. Well, joke is not a good word, but it was more thinking that I have the parts, more of a way out, than actually saying to myself when I purchased the parts, this is what I'm going to use them for, these are the people I'm going to take out. None of that was in my mind at that time. As far as the idea of Mrs. Sheets, it hadn't even entered my mind yet. Who was going to be taken out with me was up in the air, if anyone was to be.

MR. STOTT: So were you casing Brent's place out with the idea of him being a victim?

A. Not at all. Although again, I know that is what he thinks. I had nothing to case out. I knew where his house was, I knew where his porch was or where I would leave it if I was going to leave it there. I don't know if you're satisfied or not. There wasn't any reason to case out his joint. (*Ibid.*, pages 424-425)

According to an article by Dawn Tracy, Mark Hofmann may have been thinking of murder at least five months prior to the killings:

And a longtime boyhood friend has told *The Tribune* that Hofmann discussed ways of killing people with him five months before the bombing deaths . . .

The friend said the two talked about circumstances that would induce someone to kill. . . . Hofmann and his friend then discussed different ways of killing; using a shotgun because Hofmann believed it would be impossible to trace, or planting bombs, according to the friend. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, March 21, 1987)

It now appears that anyone who posed a threat to Mr. Hofmann's Mormon document empire may have been in danger of being put to death. Since we had been publishing material which was very critical of Hofmann's "discoveries" for nineteen months prior to the bombings and publicly calling for people to tell us anything they might know about his dealings, we feel very fortunate to be alive. We had two face to face confrontations with Mr. Hofmann regarding his documents. The first was on August 22, 1984, when he came to our home and talked with Sandra. He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was shocked that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of his documents. Mr. Hofmann appeared to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him.

In the year that followed we continued to publish material that was critical of Hofmann's discoveries, and finally on August 24, 1985, we confronted him at the Sunstone Symposium. At that time we questioned him closely with regard to the origin of the Salamander letter. Unfortunately, his answers did not seem to square with the facts we already knew and it must have become obvious to him that we did not believe what he was saying. At one point, he had a very sad and worried expression on his face. He seemed deeply troubled. It was almost as if he were trying to say, "Please believe what I am telling you." Although Mr. Hofmann did not outwardly show any hostility, this was a very tense and unpleasant experience for all of us. We knew, of course, that whenever someone attempts to uncover fraud there is some danger of retaliation, but we never thought of Mark Hofmann as being a violent man. After the murders we felt very thankful that Mr. Hofmann was not triggered by the exposes we published concerning his document deals. We were

very fortunate that Mr. Hofmann arrived at our house armed only with arguments as to why we should trust his documents rather than a pipe bomb surrounded with nails. While we have always thought there was a possibility of being assassinated by someone opposed

to our work, we never even considered that a well-mannered man like Mark Hofmann, who professed to be friendly to our work, would turn out to be a cold-blooded killer who would stop at nothing to shut the mouths of his opponents.

2. The Salamander Letter

The so-called “Martin Harris letter” [the Salamander letter] is no repudiation of Joseph Smith, but rather probably is a further witness of the Prophet’s own account of the discovery of the gold plates. (Deseret News, Church Section, September 9, 1984)

I remember sitting in a sacrament meeting several days after Mark Hofmann had confessed . . . I felt an overwhelming emotional and spiritual relief. . . . that white salamander that had bedeviled me for so long at last was exorcised. I felt spiritual channels once hindered and partly clogged renew themselves. (Professor Ronald W. Walker, Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987)

One of the most interesting parts of Mark Hofmann’s confession relates to his forgery of the Salamander letter. In *Tracking the White Salamander*, pages 4 and 6, I wrote the following:

In the years that followed our first meeting Mr. Hofmann would occasionally visit our bookstore and tell of the remarkable discoveries that he was making. In the latter part of November 1983 I first heard that Mark Hofmann had a letter which was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. It was dated October 23, 1830, and was addressed to W. W. Phelps. When I learned of the contents of the letter, I realized that it could deal a devastating blow to the Mormon Church. Sandra and I had previously written a book entitled, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*. In this book we presented strong evidence that Joseph Smith was involved in money-digging and magic. Martin Harris’ letter seemed to provide new and exciting evidence which supported our thesis. This letter is known as the Salamander letter because Martin Harris was supposed to have written that Joseph Smith claimed when he went to get the gold plates for the Book of Mormon, a “white salamander” in the bottom of the hole “transfigured himself” into a “spirit” and “struck me 3 times.”

Fortunately, I was able to obtain some revealing extracts from the letter and was preparing to print them in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. I was very excited that we at Utah Lighthouse Ministry would be the first to break this important story to the world. While in the midst of compiling evidence to support the authenticity of the Salamander letter, I made a discovery that shook me to the very core. I found that the account of the transformation of the white salamander into the spirit was remarkably similar to a statement E. D. Howe published in *Mormonism Unveiled*. This book, written four years after the date which appears in the Harris letter, told of a toad

“which immediately transformed itself into a spirit” and struck Joseph Smith. Even more disconcerting, however, was the fact that other remarkable parallels to the Salamander letter were found just two or three pages from the account of the transformation of the toad into a spirit (see *Mormonism Unveiled*, pages 273, 275 and 276).

Some years before I had encountered similar evidence of plagiarism in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. The Mormon Church leaders had always proclaimed that this *History* was actually written by Joseph Smith himself. My research, however, led me to the conclusion that the largest portion of it had been compiled after his death. I found that later Mormon historians had taken portions of newspapers and diaries written by other people and changed them to the first person so that readers would believe that they were authored by Joseph Smith himself. In agreement with my conclusions, Mormon scholars later admitted that over 60% of the *History* was compiled after Smith’s death (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 127-135)

In any case, parallels I had discovered between the Salamander letter and *Mormonism Unveiled* reminded me very much of the work I had done on Joseph Smith’s *History*. Although what I discovered about the Salamander letter was not conclusive proof that it was a forgery, it was certainly suspicious. It seemed, in fact, to throw a real monkey wrench into all my plans concerning the publication of the letter. Since I knew that it was very unlikely that anyone else would spot these parallels and realize their significance, there was some temptation to keep the matter to myself. I knew, however, that God knew what I had seen, and I began to feel that He had shown me these unpleasant facts to warn me against endorsing the letter. Furthermore, I knew that I would never be satisfied if my case against Mormonism was based on fraudulent material. It was clear, therefore, that there was only one course of action

which I could follow—i.e., print the whole truth in the *Messenger*. In the March 1984 issue, therefore, we raised the question of forgery by printing the title, “Is It Authentic?” Under this title we wrote:

“At the outset we should state that we have some reservations concerning the authenticity of the letter, and at the present time we are not prepared to say that it was actually penned by Martin Harris. . . . We will give the reasons for our skepticism as we proceed with this article.”

On August 25, 1984, John Dart wrote the following in the *Los Angeles Times*: “The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence for authenticity.” The *Deseret News* for September 1, 1984, reported:

. . . outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the *Deseret News*.

Jerald Tanner . . . says similarities between it and other documents make its veracity doubtful.

In his confession Mark Hofmann finally admitted that the theory that we had proposed in the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for the origin of the Salamander letter was indeed correct. As I have already indicated, we had suggested that Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* could have been used and that the toad mentioned there was transformed into a salamander. Mr. Hofmann not only confirmed this charge but went on to acknowledge that he had a photographic reprint of Howe’s book which was obtained from us:

Q. And then the language about “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole and struck me three times”?

A. Yes, there’s a reference in Howe to Joseph Smith being struck. Also I believe there are a couple other sources to that effect. People who claimed that Joseph Smith had said that, that he was bodily prevented from receiving the plates.

Q. Now the white salamander, you were going to explain that?

A. I was only going to say that the idea for the White Salamander derived from the toad in A. D. Howe’s book. Salamander, from my reading of folk magic, seemed more appropriate than a toad.

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Q. What was your significance [*sic*] of what the significance the white salamander had?

A. I don’t believe I saw a reference to a white salamander, only a salamander, but I decided to spice it up.

Q. What was the salamander supposed to mean? Why did you choose that over the toad?

A. At the time I chose it only because it was commonly used in folk magic. I didn’t realize until later all the implications other people would associate with it as far as being able to dwell in fire. I wasn’t smart enough at the time to understand all that, but it just happened to be important, or at least some people thought it was important, the same way some people thought various things with the Anthon Transcript or other forgeries were important when no importance were placed in it by me. People read into it what they want or get out of it what they want. I know that really turned on Brent Metcalf for example, and some of the other researchers.

Q. But you were aware that the salamander had some significance in folk magic?

A. Yes, that’s right.

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Q. You mentioned Hale. [*sic*] Is that *Mormonism Unveiled* by a D. Hale [E. D. Howe]?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have a copy of that of your own?

A. I had a Xerox copy published by the Tanners.

Q. Is that similar to the one I have?

A. Yes.

Q. Could you find specifically any of the items in there that would have been used by you as a source for any of these items?

A. I probably could but probably not very rapidly. If you want me to take a copy of that and bring it back with some underlining or whatever, I will.

Q. Okay, I can let you have this. Let me just ask you. Well, I’ll tell you what—

A. If you point it out I can probably identify that’s what I used or not. I believe there is a couple of references to the toad.

A. Yes, Willard Chase’s testimony was the primary reference to the toad which the author of the book later used.

Q. There is two places in there in reference to the toad.

A. Yes.

Q. In fact, it says on page 276, “which immediately transformed itself into a spirit.”

A. Yes. I thought the word, not wanting to sound like I was plagiarizing from a book, I used the word *transfigured* rather than *transformed*.

Q. “And gave him a tremendous blow.”

A. Yes.

Q. You made three blows out of it, struck him twice or three times I think, rather than gave a tremendous blow?

A. Again, I didn’t want to sound like I was copying it word for word.

Q. Now another one here, on page 274, he quotes, supposedly a letter from Howe, excuse me from Phillips [W. W. Phelps] to Howe.

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Are you familiar with that letter?

A. Yes, this letter I believe had the source for the, yes, the shorthand Egyptian. The idea being that if Phillips [*sic*], who was the recipient of the forged Martin Harris letter, Salamander Letter, in speaking of Martin Harris's episode with the Anthon Transcript. If he described the handwriting in shorthand Egyptian that he would have acquired that knowledge from the forged letter or in other words, it was a validation for the letter. This would have been, this letter of Phillips to Howe would have been approximately three months after he had received the forged letter, the Martin letter.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 440, 441, 444-446)

Mark Hofmann does not remember a specific source for the salamander—only that he learned about it when reading something with regard to magic. At first I felt that he may have found it in the A. C. Lambert papers at the University of Utah Library. On pages 456-457 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann testified that he “had access” to the Lambert collection but “it wasn't around this [time].” He remembered using Lambert's papers for his work on the Anthon transcript, but could not recall using them for the Salamander letter. Since Mr. Hofmann claimed that he did research in both “pro and anti-Mormon” books in writing the Salamander letter (page 433), I now feel that it is very likely that he obtained our book, *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, which was published the same year that he penned the Salamander letter. On page 23 we quoted the following from the book *Crystal-Gazing*, by Theodore Besterman:

Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose.

Since this unusual quotation links salamanders to seer stones, it could very well be the reference that spawned the salamander in the White Salamander letter. In *Tracking*, pages 165-166, I also suggested that Mark Hofmann could have read E. T. A. Hoffmann's story “The Golden Flower Pot,” which was reprinted in the book, *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*. This story has some interesting parallels to the Salamander letter.

In any case, it is interesting to note that on August 16, 1985, the Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to ease the fears of Mormon educators with regard to the Salamander letter by claiming that the words “white salamander” could be reconciled with Joseph Smith's statement about the appearance of the Angel Moroni:

Another source of differences in the accounts of different witnesses is the different meanings that different persons attach to words. We have a vivid illustration of this in the recent media excitement about the word “salamander” in a letter Martin Harris is supposed to have sent to W. W. Phelps over 150 years ago. All of the scores of media stories on that subject apparently assume that the author of that letter used the word “salamander” in the modern sense of a “tailed amphibian.”

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning in this context in the 1820s. . . . That meaning . . . is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire.” . . .

A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni: . . . the use of the words *white salamander* and *old spirit* seem understandable.

In view of all this, and as a matter of intellectual evaluation, why all the excitement in the media, and why the apparent hand-wringing among those who profess friendship or membership in the Church? (“1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” pages 22-23)

Dallin Oaks' conjecture concerning the real meaning of the word “salamander” certainly shows the lengths Mormon apologists will go to try and explain away anything that challenges Mormonism. Oaks would have us believe that the news media suppressed the true meaning of the word. Actually, the news media were claiming that the context of the letter showed that the “salamander” mentioned there referred to one of the “elemental spirits” of magic. The confession of Mark Hofmann makes it clear that Oaks was way off base and that the news media were right all along. The reader will remember that when he was speaking of the word “salamander,” Hofmann said:

At the time I chose it only because it was commonly used in folk magic. I didn't realize until later all the implications other people would associate with it as far as being able to dwell in fire. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 441)

However this may be, in the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we mentioned a parallel between the Salamander letter and Joseph Knight's account of the discovery of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. In later issues we pointed out many significant parallels between the two documents. Since the Joseph Knight account was locked up in the LDS Historical department and was not published until 1976, we felt that this provided strong evidence that the Salamander letter was a modern forgery. If we could have believed that the forgery had been done many years ago, then we would not have been so suspicious of Mark Hofmann. As it was, however, the evidence seemed to point toward Mark Hofmann. We reasoned that if he was not guilty of the forgery, he probably knew who the person was who had done it. In *Tracking*, page 7, I listed seven parallels to the Joseph Knight account, and on pages 171-172, I quoted the following from *The Money-Digging Letters*, published in 1984:

Knight's account was published by Dean Jessee in *BYU Studies*, Autumn 1976, pages 29-39. According to Jessee, it was not written for at least three years after the "Harris" letter was supposed to have been penned. In examining the complete transcript of the letter, we see more striking parallels to this document. For instance, the Knight account quotes Joseph Smith as saying that in the Urim and Thummim he "can see any thing" (page 33). The Salamander letter likewise says that Joseph "can see anything" in his "stone." The Knight account says that after Smith found the "Book" (the gold plates), he "laid [it] Down" to "Cover the place over" (page 31). The wording in the letter is similar: "I lay it down to cover over the hole." We have already pointed out in the *Messenger* that both accounts use the identical words, "Joseph says when can I have it." In both accounts the plates are taken away from Smith because he laid them down. The Salamander letter and the Knight account also agree that Joseph was commanded to bring his brother Alvin when he returned for the plates. The Knight account says that "his oldest Brother Died" before it was time to come again for the plates. In the "Harris" letter, Joseph says, "my brother is dead." In both stories Joseph goes back to the place where the plates were deposited. The Knight account says that he was told that he "Could not have it." The Salamander letter likewise says he "cannot have it." In both cases Joseph does not know who to bring with him to obtain the plates. The Knight version says that "he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale." The Salamander letter also identified Emma as the person he sees in the stone: "the spirit says I tricked you again look to the stone Joseph looked & sees his wife." Both accounts go on to tell of Smith putting the sacred instrument into a hat to translate the Book of Mormon. . . .

Another thing we noticed in the Knight account that could have had an influence on the Salamander letter is the use of the words "says he" and "says I." On page 37, as published in *BYU Studies*, we find the following: "Says he,... Says he,... Says I.... Says I.... Says he." In the "Harris" letter we read: "...says he... says he... says I... says I..."

Prosecutors questioned Mark Hofmann concerning the Joseph Knight account and he confirmed that he used it for structural material in the Salamander letter:

Q. Now on another occasion you told us that you also were familiar with Joseph Knight's recollection of early Mormon history?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that another one that you would have read in preparation for this?

A. Yes.

Q. Where would you have got if [*sic*] from?

A. It would have been from the actual handwritten account, a Xerox which I had.

Q. And you obtained that from the archives?

A. Yes. I believe the original is in the archives of the Church.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 447-448)

On pages 508-509, Mark Hofmann testified as follows:

A. Oh, I read through Joseph Knight's account and had a couple other comments to make about that. These are parallels between his account and the Salamander Letter. Joseph Knight describes how Joseph Smith set the plates down and discovered they had been taken away from him on his first attempt to obtain them. He also describes, Joseph Knight also describes how Joseph Smith discovered who to bring in obtaining the plates by looking at the glass or at the stone, as I call it, or as it is called in the Salamander Letter. And also Joseph Knight and the Salamander Letter both describe Joseph Smith's translation process in that he had a stone, the seer's stone in his hand and the words or letters appeared.

Q. Are you telling us then that you were aware of that Joseph Knight letter and used some of that information in composing the information in the Salamander Letter?

A. That's correct.

Another item I listed as having parallels to the Salamander letter was an interview with Martin Harris published in *Tiffany's Monthly* in 1859 (see *Tracking*, pages 6-7). On page 467 of his confession, Mark Hofmann said that he was aware of this interview and might have used it.

In the *Messenger* for March 1984 we noted that the Salamander letter seemed to suggest that Joseph Smith talked of bringing his dead brother's remains to the Hill Cumorah so that the spirit would give him the gold plates. We pointed out that this could be related to a rumor that "Alvin's body had been disinterred":

On September 29, 1824, just one week after Joseph Smith was supposed to have been visited by the Angel at the Hill Cumorah, his father printed the following in the *Wayne Sentinel*, the local newspaper:

"WHEREAS reports have been industriously put in circulation that my son Alvin had been removed from the place of his interment and dissected, . . . for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of such reports, I, with some of my neighbors, this morning [Sept. 25] repaired to the grave, and removing the earth, found the body which had not been disturbed" (*Wayne Sentinel*, September 29, 1824).

(*Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984, pages 3-4)

In his confession, pages 441-442, Mark Hofmann gave this testimony:

Q. What about [the part of the letter which says], "shall I bring what remains," talking about Alvin?

A. Part of that was from my own imagination and part was from a story that—Well, actually a couple different stories that I tied together. One being that an advertisement which Joseph Smith, Jr. placed in the *Wayne Centinell* [*sic*] asking people who initiated rumors to the effect that Alvin's body had been desecrate[d] would cease and desist. Did I say that right? And there was also a story that Alvin, or rumor, that Alvin was involved, was the magician of the family before his death.

In *Tracking*, page 66, I reported concerning evidence that a number of Mark Hofmann's documents—including the Salamander letter—had been cut from larger sheets of paper:

George Throckmorton testified that some of the Hofmann documents seemed to have been cut with scissors or a razor blade. According to Mr. Throckmorton, this problem was detected in the following way: "By placing the paper on a flat surface, and by putting a straight edge of some type on top of that and examining it under a microscope, you can see how close the edge of the paper would correspond

with the straight edge. It would also be possible to detect, many times, individual scissor marks or razor blade cuts or things similar to this." . . . With regard to the Salamander letter, Throckmorton commented: "This document had been cut."

In his confession, page 243, Mark Hofmann explained that "End pages or the blank pages at the beginning and ends of the books were used for the so-called Salamander Letter, the 1829 letter of Lucy Mack Smith and the Josiah Stool 1825 letter of Joseph Smith." In relating the details of how he forged the Salamander letter, Hofmann revealed that he was trying to disguise the fact that he was using a sheet of paper from a book by drawing lines on it so that it would appear to be machine lined paper:

Q. Where did you get the paper for this document?

A. I believe it came from the—It certainly came from a book at the University of Utah Library, I believe from the *Niles Register*.

Q. What about the lines on the paper?

A. I forged those with a pen.

Q. You drew them?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it with the same kind of ink as you used to write with or something different?

A. Yes, I believe so, although it would have been much watered down.

Q. Why did you put the lines on it? Any particular reason?

A. To make it appear to be writing paper rather than an end sheet. This was around the time period that lined paper started to be used fairly commonly.

Q. Do you remember cutting the paper?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that when you took it out of the document or out of the book or after?

A. It would have been after the lines were drawn on it.

Q. Why did you cut it?

A. Well, the sides of it I would have cut because if it would not have been cut you would have been able to see on the sides of the paper, ink from the drawing of the lines which would not have appeared on a genuine ruled sheet. I remember that I would have cut the sides but I don't remember if I cut the top. Well, I'm sure I would have cut the top and the bottom also.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 457-460)

Mark Hofmann claimed that the wax seal which he added to the Salamander letter came from “a genuine folded letter” (page 461).

Document experts testified that the Salamander letter had “surface cracking of the ink” (see *Tracking*, page 93) which indicated that the ink had been artificially aged. Mr. Hofmann confessed that the ink was probably aged with ammonia:

Q. Do you remember what kind of ink pen you used?

A. Steel pen.

Q. What about the aging process?

A. Probably would have been ammonia.

Q. Do you remember anything particular about this document that would have been different than the aging process of any other document?

A. It is somewhat mildewed. I would have used bread mold in places to cause the spotting. For example, looking at the address leaf side around the bottom left hand corner area—

.....

Q. Anything else you remember doing as far as the creation process goes?

A. I should point out that the handwriting I adopted from the formation of the letters in the signature. It was a fairly common type of a writing style at the time period.

Q. I’ll go in to the handwriting in just a minute. What about the stamp?

A. The stamp would have been made by myself, I believe.

Q. When you say you believe, you don’t have an independent memory?

A. I’m certain it would have been made by myself. I’m just trying to think of how I would have made this one.

Q. How did you make it?

A. It was some sort of a plate. It was, I’m quite certain it was a copper plate. The postmark itself would have been photographed off of a genuine folded cover.

Q. You made the plate?

A. Yes, I made the plate.

Q. And you made the plate in your house?

A. Yes.

Q. From what materials?

A. It would have been made in my garage, actually. Another piece of copper plate, some photoresist in an aerosol and developer. Ferric chloride solution to etch the plate.

Q. You made your own negative?

A. Let’s see, what was the date? This was in ‘84.

Q. You sold it January 6 of ‘84.

A. Yes, I believe I made my own negative.

.....

A. Just to protect myself, let me tell you another possibility for how I would have made the postmark.

Q. We don’t want you to protect yourself, we just want you to tell us what happened.

A. That’s what I’m saying. I am not positively sure how I made that plate. The other possibility would have been that I had the artwork from the original postmark, from the original folded cover. That I photocopied that onto a piece of plastic for a transparency. That I used a positive rather than a negative photoresist which would have made the letters or the, what appears to be the impression of the postmark, sunk within the plate rather than sticking up from it, and then I would have used a piece of silly putty that I would have smashed in to that plate after it was developed and etched. And then put the silly putty onto a piece of glass in which I rolled the ink, and then presses that into the paper, on to the paper.

Q. So you made your own stamp?

A. Yes, it would have been my own stamp made that way.

Q. You did it both ways is what you’re saying?

A. Yes. And what I’m saying is I can’t remember exactly how I made this. It would have been one of those two techniques which were the only two techniques I used to make postmarks.

Q. Also in your—Do you remember getting any letters with Palmyra postmarks that you would have used is the sample for this one?

A. Yes.

Q. Where would you have got them from?

A. Probably would have come from Courtney Covers.

Q. Let’s talk about the handwriting. How did you make a determination of what style you were going to use?

A. The signature of Martin Harris was in a style, early 19th Century style that I had seen other writers use.

Q. At that time, before you wrote it, did you try to obtain samples of Martin Harris’ handwriting?

A. I obtained signatures, I believe three signatures of Martin Harris was all that I could find.

Q. Do you know where those, do you remember where they came from?

A. I’m certain they came from the Church Historian’s Office.

(*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 462-465, 467-468)

Mark Hofmann also gave these interesting details about the Salamander letter:

Q. Let’s go on to the Salamander Letter. Of course, that was sold January 6th, 1984. Can you tell us just when the idea started to come in your mind and how it was that idea came and what your intentions were?

A. I can't remember the details as far as how it all came into my mind except in generalities. I knew that Martin Harris' handwriting was very illusive. In fact, that only signatures were known. I knew that he was fairly superstitious in his beliefs, meaning that he believed in both magic and legends.

Q. Do you remember where you got those ideas from?

A. It would have been from my reading about him.

Q. Anything special or just general memory?

A. I believe the stories about his superstitiousness mostly came from anti-Mormon sources that were printed early in the history of the Church. Such statements as that he had stood up on a bar, I believe, in a tavern or something and said that Christ was to return within a matter of months or something to that effect, and also talking about various supernatural occurrences. Possibly from Howe's book, but I can't remember the exact sources for all of that. A lot of the research I did for the letter was from various history books, Church books, both pro and anti-Mormon.

Q. Let me ask you this: Did you have an idea in mind what you wanted to do, then do research or did you do research to come up with the idea?

A. No, I came up with the idea first. Most of the research I did was with his interviews and writings to try to come up with a speaking or writing style which he might have used by comparing various interviews done by different people and various publications in which he supposedly wrote. I was trying to come up with parallels between them which would indicate what was his style and what was the different interviewers' or reporters' style. As I remember, there were several newspaper interviews which I looked at. Most of this research was done in the Church Historian's Office.

Q. How long did you do your investigation?

A. This brings up another point I should have brought out earlier, and that is that a lot of the investigation that I did was not exclusively for one project or, in other words, I sometimes researched several possibilities at the same time. Some of my research for some of the forgeries was done just exclusively for that forgery, where I devoted my full effort and attention into gathering information on that subject as rapidly as possible and then committing the forgery within days. I believe with this item I had the idea in mind, and it was rather stewing in any [sic] head for quite a while before I actually sat down and decided to write it. Therefore, as far as how long it took me, probably off and on for a number of months in between when I first thought of the idea and when I actually did the forgery. As far as when I actually decided to sit down and write it and do it, it would have just been within a day or two. Very rapidly.

Q. Are you saying though that to get the contents and writing down, you would write a sentence or phrase down, maybe in your own handwriting and get it worked out before you actually sat down and wrote it in Harris's handwriting?

A. Yes, I would have done that. I would have composed it before sitting down and trying to imitate his handwriting or what I supposed his handwriting m[a]y look like. But that would have all been within a day or two. In other words, I may have done the research over quite a long period of time but when I finally decided to sit down and write it I would have composed it and forged it all within a day or two. It wouldn't have been over any extended length of time as far as a week or so. It wouldn't have been that long. I would guess that I would have composed it and then forged it within the same day or maybe two days, like I say.

(Hofmann's Confession, pages 432-436)

The reader may remember that a few months before the bombings a story was put forth that the Mormon Church had a secret document known as the Oliver Cowdery history which supported the Salamander letter. We became suspicious that the mysterious source of this report might be Hofmann himself. In the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we suggested that Hofmann might be the "Deep Throat" who leaked the information. In *Tracking*, page 164, I noted:

One interesting parallel between the Salamander letter and the account given by "Deep Throat" of the discovery of the gold plates in the Cowdery history is that the word "plates" is missing in both. The Salamander letter says that the "old spirit" told Joseph Smith to "dig up the gold." The anonymous source claimed that the Cowdery history "said that Alvin located the buried gold."

In his testimony, Mark Hofmann frankly admitted that he "was the deep throat . . . described in the media" who pretended to have access to the secret Oliver Cowdery history. Hofmann was questioned as follows concerning the Cowdery history:

Q. Was it during this time that you were talking to him [Brent Metcalfe] about Alvin or would that have been a little later?

A. It would have been a little later that I introduced the story of, let's see, that I introduced the story as far as Alvin preceding Joseph Smith and the alleged reference in the First Presidency's vault of a history of Alvin [i. e., the Oliver Cowdery history]. That would have been later.

Q. How much later, do you remember?

A. Probably a few months later after Steve Christensen purchased this letter.

Q. Is there anything to that story?

A. No.

Q. Is that all a creation of yours?

A. That's pure creation.

Q. And besides telling Metcalf you told some other people, didn't you?

A. I believe I told, well I know I told it to, let's see, Lynn Jacobs. I may have told Shannon Flynn but I can't remember having told anyone else.

Q. How about a reporter, *L. A. Times*?

A. Oh, of course, yes.

Q. Who would that be?

A. Yes, I was the deep throat or however I was described in the media. That would have been—

MR. RICH: That was John P.

MR. STOTT: Was it Dart?

A. Yes, I think it would have been John Dart is his name. Do you want me to go in to that now? As long as we are talking about it I may as well.

Dart was contacted by Metcalf and told that an inside source named Limy had access to some materials in the First Presidency's vault and was willing to make a statement concerning Alvin's involvement in this early Church record in first having contact with the Angel Moroni or whoever. And thwarted because of his death from obtaining the plates and then Joseph took over, type of deal.

Dart flew into Salt Lake. Metcalf and he, myself had lunch one afternoon at—, I can't think of the name of the restaurant. At the sandwich shop of some sort, hamburger place. We then went to a park where we sat down at a table, picnic table, and I told him this fabrication. It is purely made up. It's not based on anything I saw in the First Presidency's office or elsewhere.

Q. My next question would be, had you ever seen anything or ever been invited in to the First Presidency's vault?

A. No. I saw some materials from the First Presidency's vault but I've never set foot in to the vault.

Q. Some things were brought out and showed to you?

A. Right.

Q. The Oliver Cowdery [history] was made up by you?

A. Right.

Q. Never saw it in the First Presidency's vault or anywhere?

A. Right.

Q. How did you come up with the story?

A. There was a footnote in a book, I believe by Joseph Fielding Smith, where he discussed something

about that history and said that it was in the possession of the Church. That has been interpreted by people to mean that there's some other history. I can't remember all the details but that was the original, that was the source of the idea.

Q. Why did you make the story up?

A. For a couple of reasons. First of all, I remember distinctly when I did make it up we were eating at Wendy's. Indigestion, perhaps. And I first talked about it actually out of amusement. It wasn't anything I had previously thought of, I just kind of evolved into it, to keep them interested. One thing about Metcalf is he's always interested in these little hidden rumors or truths or whatever. And I noticed I could throw out a little thing to wet his appetite and he would always be after me for more and more information. So I would just make it up as we went along.

Q. Why did you go to John Dart and why did you not go to a reporter and publish it?

A. I didn't. My intention wasn't to have that happen but Metcalf, although I swore him to secrecy at the time, somehow word of this Oliver Cowdery history got out and he brought John Dart into it or whatever. Let's see, I said there were a couple reasons for the story. The other, obviously, would have been that part of the Oliver Cowdery History was there was a white salamander as far as Alvin's involvement and that would have validated the history presented in the forged Salamander Letter.

Q. Again made up by you?

A. Again made up by me. One forged idea to validate another forged idea.

Q. Not only then the whole thing was made up but you were aware by people recounting this story it was causing, I suppose, some considerable embarrassment to the LDS authorities?

A. Yes.

Q. But you went along with it to the point of giving an interview. What were your feelings during this time? Why were you doing that?

A. As far as my feelings, there was actually a mixture of emotions. One of which was amusement for the whole idea. As far as the embarrassment to the Church, it is true that it was embarrassing but I was also interested to see how the Church would react to the situation. As far as giving the interview, I ended up consenting but I did it reluctantly feeling that once the story got out I was kind of, just like a lot of these other frauds, it was almost like I ended up getting dragged along with my own creation to past where I wanted to. I don't know how to best describe that, but a lot of these events were rather an evolution rather than plotting in advance how I would respond to a situation. I just, it kind of just evolved in to that. There wasn't a lot of times, there wasn't a lot of—Like I remember, for example, we

were he [*sic*] eating at Wendy's. The idea wasn't to get this public, just to get Metcalf interested or wet his appetite or get him excited about it or whatever.

Q. Lunch conversation?

A. Right. And it kind of evolved. The idea at that time wasn't how I can use this to leak this to the press and use this to validate the Salamander Letter or anything like that. That wasn't my initial thought. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 451-456)

In *Tracking*, pages 13-14, I printed some very revealing testimony by Mark Hofmann's friend, Lyn Jacobs, and then commented: "It is now evident that both Lyn Jacobs and Mark Hofmann conspired to hide the truth concerning the origin of the Salamander letter. If Jacobs had knowledge that the letter was forged, he would be as guilty as Hofmann of 'THEFT BY DECEPTION.' Investigators have apparently not found any hard evidence to that effect. Otherwise, they would have filed charges against him." In his testimony, Mark Hofmann tells how he worked with Lyn Jacobs to create a false story concerning the origin of the Salamander letter and their attempt to sell it to the Mormon Church:

Q. Do you remember when you actually made it? What month? You sold it January 6th. In relationship to when you sold it when did you actually manufacture the document?

A. If you can find out Lynn Jacob's travel arrangements, he came to Salt Lake City in either December or January. Well it would have been in December, I believe he came here for Christmas. It would have been the day before he arrived that I actually forged it as far as writing it out and aging it or whatever was taking place the day before he arrived in Salt Lake.

Q. But you talked to Lynn about it beforehand?

A. Yes, I had talked to him about it before it was written or forged.

Q. Tell us the chronology of events in talking with Lynn about it.

A. I believe that part of it—I can't remember. I think that just a couple days before he arrived in Salt Lake I read him familiar parts of it necessarily which would have been there, my composition of it before I had actually written it in Martin Harris' handwriting. Before that, perhaps a week or two before I told him about it.

Q. Did you tell him why you wanted him to offer it as his document?

A. As I remember, it was actually his idea or his suggestion, although I probably anticipated doing it beforehand. He felt like he could obtain more from

the Church. That is at this time we were thinking of offering it to the Mormon Church, than I would be able to.

Q. Had he had any dealings with the Mormon Church?

A. Yes. He was always rather proud of the fact that he could obtain quite a bit in his dealing with Don Schmidt.

Q. Wasn't his dealings mainly with the archivist?

A. Yes.

Q. Your dealings had actually been with some of the general authorities?

A. Right.

Q. Why did he believe he could get more than you then?

A. My feeling was in offering it to the general authorities if I were to do it it would appear to be almost a blackmail type of attempt just because of the content of the letter and potential embarrassment to the Church, that I wanted to stay away from. He didn't have any of those feelings as far as if he offended them.

Q. Was there any concern on your part that this was maybe one too many documents for you to discover and let somebody else take the credit?

A. Yes. That was also in my mind. Yes, I remember also thinking of that fact.

Q. Did you tell Lynn at that time where you found the document?

A. I don't believe that I was specific other than a cover dealer or direct source.

Q. Where did your story come up that he used that he was the one that actually went to the place and actually looked in drawers and actually bought it himself? Is that a story you two came up with? Was it your idea? His idea? How did that come up?

A. The idea was that he actually bought it from a dealer. It's hard to say as far as how we actually came up with that idea but that was the original idea. Since he was going to be offering it as his own document he had to be the one to have made the discovery or whatever.

Q. Your agreement was it was yours but he was going to pose as if he were the finder-owner?

A. That's correct. And I think my involvement is we told other people was that the source where he obtained it was mine. That he had made an agreement with me in looking for these documents while he was back east, that since it was my idea and my source that we would share 50/50 the, any profits that we made. And I think that's what we told other people.

Q. Let's leave Lynn aside just one second and get back to your motivations. What was the purpose for coming up with the Salamander Letter?

A. Money. It's a controversial type document, therefore it would be valuable and it was also, again somewhat of an experiment to see the Church's reaction as far as, that always interested me.

Q. Reaction in what way?

A. As far as how they would handle it, if they would purchase it, if they would trust him enough, Lynn enough to keep his mouth shut. To enter into some sort of agreement to keep it confidential. If they would pay his exorbitant price he was demanding for it. Their reaction as far as what the contents were, any comments that might be made concerning it.

Q. Do you consider this to be your most extreme document as far as controversy, as far as the contents?

A. In ways. In ways I considered the Josiah Stool Letter to be more controversial since it was actually in Joseph Smith's handwriting rather than a second hand account. The Blessing document, doctrinally was also controversial but this is a—it's obviously a controversial document, more so with the media's help.

Q. Did you see yourself moving toward the creation of more controversial documents, more involved in the folk magic? Was it a conscious effort on your part?

A. No, never. Well, it was just like with the creation of the Anthon Transcript. After that I told myself, now I can't forge any more Mormon documents because I don't want to be suspicious. After creating the Josiah Stool Letter I told myself the same thing, no more magic type documents.

.....
Q. When Lynn came in December was your idea at that time to sell it to the Church?

A. Yes.

Q. When you created the document was it your idea to sell it to the Church?

A. Yes.

Q. Lynn went ahead and tried to sell it first?

A. That's right. What do you mean he tried? Yes, under my direction.

Q. And you had a price determined?

A. Lynn's price was higher than I thought appropriate but he was determined to get as much out of it as he thought he could.

Q. How was it he went right to Hinkley? He hadn't dealt with Hinkley before, had he?

A. No.

.....
Q. Did it surprise you when Lynn came back and said Hinkley wouldn't buy it?

A. No, not given the price that Lynn was asking for it.

Q. Now with the Stool Letter, you were aware that he bought the Stool Letter and it pretty well had been publicized?

A. That's right.

Q. Now, were you at all surprised that he refused to buy the Salamander Letter which was a very similar type document?

A. No. Like I say, a lot of it was almost like an experiment, in my mind as far as what his reaction would be. Lynn doesn't come across as being a faithful Mormon like I do.

Q. You did?

A. Or at least like I pretended to. I didn't think that President Hinkley would trust his silence or that he would appreciate Lynn's manner, or boastfulness or whatever. Although I speculate, well, you probably don't want speculation since there is no backing for it so I won't speculate.

Q. Well, if it is germane to the topic go ahead, as long as you preface it by speculation.

A. I speculate if I would have been the one to offer it that it would have had the same fate as the Stool Letter [i. e., be suppressed by the Mormon Church].

Q. Would you have asked the same thing or different?

A. I wouldn't have asked for nearly the price. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 469-477)

Mark Hofmann goes on to allege something that has never been revealed before—i. e., that after Lyn Jacobs' offer was refused, Hofmann himself talked with the church about a secret deal in which Lyn Jacobs could be sworn to secrecy so that the Salamander letter could be suppressed:

Q. Lynn comes back, it's not sold. What do you do?

A. I went to, let's see, I'm trying to think of if before Lynn went to Hinkley if he went to Don Schmidt with it or went to him just afterwards. But I believe it was the next day Don Schmidt knew about it from Lynn or the next day with Lynn's meeting with President Hinkley and that morning I believe I told Don Schmidt that I could obtain complete control over it and would be willing to sell it to the Church for a price. I can't remember, I would get 10 or 15 thousand dollars. Don Schmidt told me that he would check with his superiors.

That same afternoon, in a meeting with Don Schmidt again, he told me that he had talked with G. Homer Durham and I believe higher up, and that they would make that purchase. I told Don Schmidt that I believed that it could be handled confidentially and that Lynn could be sworn to secrecy. I told him that in the morning. Later, it would have been in a day or two, whenever, we had made contact with Steve Christensen and he had agreed to buy it and if, if we wanted to sell it—Let's see, I'm trying to get the sequence right, chronology. I believe it was

actually before. I believe it was with the statement that if the Church would prefer we could see that it was sold to a faithful member of the Church. If they didn't want—which I spoke very frankly with Don Schmidt about this but I didn't talk to anyone higher up than Don Schmidt. That if the Church was afraid of the publicity of the document now that Lynn knew about it and possibly others, that we could arrange to have it sold to a faithful member who we thought would keep it quiet or handle it the way the Church thought would be appropriate but yet not having the Church officially making decisions.

Q. Did he get back to you, Schmidt?

A. After originally it was agreed the Church would make the purchase for the money that I asked, I can't remember the exact sum. But then later, I mean it was a day or two later, in talking with his superiors he told me that they thought it would, it might be more appropriate to have that happen to it as far as a faithful member making the purchase. I told him that I would keep him posted as far as the negotiation with this faithful member.

Q. No names given?

A. I think at that time the name of Steve Christensen might have even been given, although it wasn't that next day I talked to him.

Q. That name came from you?

A. Yes, I believe so, although, it's hard for me to say because I am told that sometime during this period Steve Christensen had already been in contact with the Church so I'm only giving my side, how I know it from my own experience.

.....

A. My first contact with the Don Schmidt, I believe it was the day after Lynn made contact with President Hinkley and I believe that same day the decision was given, later that afternoon, that he would make the purchase.

MR. STOTT: What I'm getting at, from the time that you first contacted Lynn to this point, who all knew about it? Lynn, you, perhaps Hinkley and perhaps Schmidt?

A. Earl Olsen, G. Homer Durham.
(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 477-480)

In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Lynn Jacobs said that he asked Gordon B. Hinckley to give him a gold coin valued at "60,000 to over 100,000 dollars" in exchange for the letter (see *Tracking*, page 162). When President Hinckley would not agree to that, he suggested a trade for a *Book of Commandments*. This offer was also turned down. Besides the high price which Jacobs asked, the fact that word concerning the 1825 Joseph Smith letter had leaked out may have discouraged Hinckley from trying to suppress

the letter. He undoubtedly reasoned that if the church did purchase the Salamander letter, there would be no way to be certain that Jacobs would not talk about it or retain a photograph. An unsuccessful attempt to suppress the letter, of course, would be more damaging to the church than for the church to buy the letter and publish it to the world. Church leaders apparently did not feel that they could "trust his silence," and it was decided that Steven Christensen, who had a reputation of being friendly to the church leaders, should buy the letter for \$40,000. In 1985 Christensen donated the letter to the Mormon Church.

If the church leaders had actually bought the letter to suppress it, they could have found themselves in a very compromising situation. While Mark Hofmann has testified that he originally created the Salamander letter to sell to the church, before Jacobs was sent to talk to President Hinckley, Hofmann had considered breaking the news about the letter in a major newspaper like the *New York Times*. During this time of uncertainty, Mr. Hofmann allowed H. Michael Marquardt to make a partial typescript of the Salamander letter. Hofmann testified as follows:

Q. Now anyone else? Had you told anyone else? Had Lynn told anyone else? Your friends, acquaintances?

A. Sometime during this time period—No, during that time period no one.

Q. When was it you told Michael Marquardt?

A. That would have been after. Let's see, I was going to say I thought that was after Steve Christensen made the purchase but I'm not sure if that was really true or not. See, I wasn't keeping this confidential since I knew Lynn was going about it, I figured it would get around and everything. There's a chance I told Marquardt before Steve Christensen purchased it.

Q. Did there come a time you actually gave him a transcript of it?

A. Yes, he made a transcript of it but I can't remember the date when that would have been.

Q. Why were you doing this? You knew Marquardt was going to go public?

A. Yes, I think at the time I told him to keep it quiet for the time being and I believe he agreed to that until it became public.

Q. Was your agreement with Steve Christensen and semi with the Church, something to the effect that, you know, it was going to be, the contents or even the idea that there was a letter would remain private with them?

A. Yes.

Q. But nevertheless you were still talking to people like Marquardt about the letter?

A. I can't remember when I talked to Marquardt so it's hard for me to say if I talked to him after agreeing to not talk about it, or not. Although I'm sure that date could be had as far as when I talked to Marquardt. He keeps good records, as we know.

Q. There came a time when—Did you learn that there was some interest by other people in this?

A. Let's see. Now I think about it I think I did talk to Marquardt before it was offered to the Church or to Steve Christensen. I believe that I, because I know that I talked to Ashworth before it was offered to Christensen and I believe I also talked to Marquardt before I talked to Christensen. I believe, but I can't say for certain.

.....
MR. STOTT: Did you want to make a statement, Mark, before we proceed?

A. Yes. Before we ended last times meeting we were talking about what I told Steve Christensen concerning who had seen or had access or copies or whatever of the Salamander Letter. I'm quite certain now, thinking about it, that Mike Marquardt had made a partial transcript of the Salamander Letter before it was shown or purchased by, shown to or purchased by Steve Christensen. I covered myself in that regard by telling him that people had seen it although I did not mention Mike Marquardt's name, but that Xeroxes of it were available and that full transcripts were not available.

Q. How did Marquardt obtain a copy of the transcript?

A. The original by probably a Xerox of the Salamander Letter he saw at my house and wrote down a few lines of its content.

Q. In other words, you gave him the transcript through you?

A. He made the transcript through me, that's right.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 480-481, 487-488)

Mr. Marquardt allowed us to obtain a copy of his extracts from the Salamander letter, and it was these excerpts which were printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*. The portions of the letter which Marquardt copied were, in fact, what led us to believe that the letter might be a forgery. As strange as it may seem, our publication of portions of the Salamander letter in March 1984 almost caused a serious altercation with Steven Christensen in federal court (see *Tracking*, page 16). Mr. Christensen was very upset that we had cited anything from the letter and apparently felt that we had obtained the extracts in an improper way. He, therefore, determined to testify against us in the Ehat suit—the case which we finally won after it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In reality, Steven Christensen did not have any copyrightable interest in the Salamander letter. Furthermore, as we have shown, the extracts

we published were obtained by Michael Marquardt directly from Mark Hofmann before Mr. Christensen purchased the letter. The extracts we printed certainly were not stolen. Although Christensen appeared in court ready to testify against us, the Judge felt this type of testimony was irrelevant to the case at hand and Christensen was unable to testify.

Steven Christensen seems to have been thoroughly converted to the Salamander letter. Instead of listening to the message of caution which we printed in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, he wanted to fight us in court. He continued to believe in Mark Hofmann and his stories concerning the discovery of important Mormon documents for more than a year. Although he seems to have eventually come to the conclusion that Hofmann was involved in illegal activities, by this time it was too late. It was Christensen's continued involvement with Hofmann which finally led to his untimely death.

Mark Hofmann believed that the Salamander letter would pass any test document experts could subject it to. Hofmann probably felt that favorable comments by document experts would outweigh any criticism that we made of the document. In his confession, pages 490, 493-495, Mr. Hofmann maintained that he encouraged Kenneth Rendell to give the document a very rigorous examination:

Q. How did Rendell get involved? Is this a name you gave to Steve?

A. Yes, he was a name I mentioned. I considered him and I still do, one of the best handwriting or autograph experts.

Q. Did you know in advance what Rendell would do to go about attempting to authenticate it?

A. I had a pretty good idea what he would do or what was possible to do. I told him to use every means possible to authenticate it, some of which tests he did not think were necessary but I told him that in my opinion he did not understand, Rendell did not understand the controversial nature of the document and we would be willing to spend thousand of dollars in the authentication process.

Q. Why were you some concerned? Why were you almost helping to get it authenticated? Was it something you wanted it to prove was authentic or something you wanted to prove to yourself that you could be [beat?] the authenticators?

A. Well, before this time I had already felt confident I could be [beat?] the authenticator as far as whatever tests would be done. I knew it was of a controversial nature and would be questioned and I wanted to put down as much of that as possible. In other words, to make it appear like the people questioning it were questioning it not for rational reasons but because they didn't want to believe it.

Q. Was there anything in the testing procedure that was a surprise to you or that you had not anticipated?

MR. YENGICH: That's a good question.

A. Only what was performed by the County Attorney's Office concerning ink cracking.

Q. Were you aware basically through forensic tests or through document analysis, basically they cannot prove a document is real or authentic. All that he can basically say is we can find no evidence that it is a fake?

A. Yes.

Q. Yet it seemed that you were able to use that and turn it around as if the people that authenticated the document. Was that something deliberate on your part to change peoples perceptions kind of, of what forensic people can do?

A. That's what authentication is, is not being able to find out that its not authentic.

Q. It seemed so many people, once it came back from the authentication process say this proves it's authentic because they have now proved it's authentic. In reality what they said was we can't prove it's not authentic.

What I'm saying is it seems a lot of people don't understand that, who should understand that and I'm just wondering if you helped to convey that impression?

A. I might have, I don't know. I think to the same extent as far as the ink cracking testing or whatever, that also does not prove conclusively that a document

is a forgery any more than the negative tests would prove that it is authentic, but we can get in to that some other time.

In *Tracking the White Salamander* I suggested that Mark Hofmann seemed to have been planting forged Martin Harris signatures with the hope that they would be used in authenticating his more controversial documents—i. e., the Salamander letter and the 116 missing pages of the Book of Mormon which he was probably planning to forge. On pages 156-157 of *Tracking*, I showed that he had forged an inscription which was claimed to be in the handwriting of Martin Harris in a *Book of Common Prayer*. Document experts charged that this inscription was a forgery. In his confession, page 501, Mark Hofmann confirmed that the inscription attributed to Harris was a forgery:

A. My intention on that was both to provide further samples of Martin Harris' handwriting and also to find a book with Martin Harris' handwriting in it. We talked about that before as far as the one page, the inscription on one page was forged . . . the page in Martin Harris' handwriting.

In *Tracking*, pages 157-159, I discussed another Martin Harris inscription in an early Book of Mormon which both Mark Hofmann and Brent Metcalfe talked about. In his confession, page 499, Mr. Hofmann said that "the Book of Mormon inscription was rumor that I had heard from other sources, not that I had made up."



3. FOOLING THE CHURCH AND THE EXPERTS

I think the best measure of Mark Hofmann's success is the variety and kinds of people whom he fooled. . . . hard headed businessmen were fooled by Mark Hofmann. Collectors . . . were fooled by Mark Hofmann. Professional authenticators, people who had their names on [the] line were fooled and deceived by Mark Hofmann. Newspaper reporters . . . were fooled by Mark Hofmann. Church leaders, who supposedly have some special insight were fooled by Mark Hofmann. (Deputy Salt Lake County Attorney Robert L. Stott, Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987)

In *Tracking*, page 18, I showed that Mark Hofmann began collecting coins when he “was a kid” and how he branched out into collecting old Mormon money and “memorabilia” when he was “about 12.” In his confession, pages 407-410, Mr. Hofmann reveals that he fooled the U. S. Treasury with a coin he altered when he was only 15 years old:

A. Now just a second. I want to clarify all of this, how all of this fraud and stuff took place, if I can. My view is, when I forged a document and sold it, were that I was not cheating that person that I was selling it to because the document would never be detected as being a fraud. Obviously, if I would have known they would some day be detected, I wouldn't have done it.

Q. Are you saying they could probably get as much as you were getting and you didn't feel badly?

A. I didn't feel like I was cheating them. I'm tell[ing] you how I rationalized it. Also, when I took money such as from Rust or Pinock, it wasn't with the intention to never pay it back. It was always my intention that I would make good on it. My idea, at this time, was that I would be able to making [*sic*] good on it through the Oath of a Freeman.

In fact, in your closing arguments in the preliminary hearing, one of the last things you said hit it right on the nail, and that is that a conman perpetually procrastinates. Or in other words, his intention, or at least my intention, wasn't to defraud them of their money. It was more to use their money when I needed it and then pay them back with interest to make it worth their while, which is something that for years has taken place in my transactions with Al Rust, for example. Of course, those aren't charge related.

Q. Were you ever to the point, and I get this from a story in your early childhood, and I don't know

if it is true or not, about you and the coin and you change the dates and you send it back supposedly it comes back as an authentic coin?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that real or a Hofmann rumor?

A. This is a true incident.

Q. And I'm wondering

A. A coin dealer—I'll describe it to you. This is when I first became interested in electroplating and the idea was to electroplate a mint mark on a coin to make it more valuable to a collector. The mint mark being an initial for where the coin was struck. What I did was I masked the coin photographically to leave only the part of the metal on the coin where the mint mark was going to be. For example, the letter D. Then I electroplated on that coin the bare spot on the metal, a D, and built it up to a certain height of a mint mark and I had a coin dealer that—this was a particularly valuable coin incidentally, that couldn't believe that I could own such a valuable coin in my youth. I think I was only 15 years old. The coin being worth thousands of dollars even back in those days. Anyway a coin dealer sent it in to have it examined and it ended up going to the Treasury Department where it was pronounced genuine. And my feeling was that if the Treasury Department or I should say my rationalization was that if the Treasury Department pronounces it genuine that it is genuine by definition[.]

MR. STOTT: That's what I wanted to ask you. Is that the same kind of rationalization you used on these documents?

A. Yes. I never would have done them, obviously, if I thought they could be detected. I thought I was clever enough to avoid that, which obviously I wasn't.

Q. If the expert says they're a real document then the people who bought them really aren't hurt?

A. Yes, that's right. And that's also when I lost respect for forensic examination, I guess.

Q. Early on?

A. In my youth when I saw that, when I made up a process by which I could fool the Treasury Department.

On page 177 of his confession, Mark Hofmann made this comment in reference to making notary seals: “I had that perfected before I went on my mission. I had reproduced notary seals before.” On page 134, Mr. Hofmann claimed that he came up with his forgeries “when I needed the money. Like I say, this was money oriented.”

In *Tracking*, page 141, I speculated that Mark Hofmann probably became disenchanted with the Mormon Church from his study of Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. In his confession, page 112, Hofmann revealed that he lost faith in the church at an early age:

A. Well, previous to this I had lost faith in the Mormon Church.

Q. Do you want to tell us when or was it a gradual thing?

A. Right around the age of 14. . . .

On pages 425-426, Mr. Hofmann made these comments:

Q. Let’s back off that a minute and get back to the documents. Was there any concern on your hand that . . . these people who perhaps had given you money were now investing sentiment and emotion and belief in these documents but it was based on a false premise. Did that enter your mind? Did that cause you any concern?

A. No, that didn’t cause concern in my mind as far as my feelings were it’s not so much what is genuine and what isn’t as what people believe is genuine.

My example would be the Mormon Church, which may be a bad example since I’m sure you’re both believers in it. I don’t believe in the religion as far as that Joseph Smith had the first vision or received the plates from the Angel Moroni or whatever. It doesn’t detract from the social good that the Mormon Church can do. To me it is unimportant if Joseph Smith had that vision or not as long as people believe it. The important thing is that people believe it.

On pages 6-7, Mark Hofmann told of buying two “anti-Mormon” books while serving on his mission in England. Although Mr. Hofmann came back from his mission and married in the Mormon temple he seems to have had absolutely no faith in the church’s claims.

After we discovered the parallels between the Salamander letter and the book, *Mormonism Unveiled*,

we began to wonder if there might be some sort of plan or even conspiracy to control the direction of Mormon history through forgery. In an article published in the *New York Times*, February 16, 1986, Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

Court documents indicate that some prosecutors in the Salt Lake County Attorney’s office believe Mr. Hofmann’s goal was not only to obtain money from the church through the sale of the documents but also to establish enough credibility that he could shape the world’s perception of Mormonism.

This view is shared by a man here who was the first to suggest that Mr. Hofmann was forging his documents. He is Jerald Tanner, a former Mormon who heads the Utah Lighthouse Ministry, which for decades has been challenging the truth of much of Mormon doctrine.

In an interview, Mr. Tanner said he decided . . . that the Hofmann documents might be forgeries, even though some of them . . . supported his own iconoclastic views of Mormonism. . . .

Mr. Tanner said it appeared that Mr. Hofmann’s growing credibility as a source of documents was putting him in a position where the documents he presented were considered unassailable. If that continued, Mr. Tanner said, Mr. Hofmann “could control the direction of Mormon history.”

In the transcripts, Mark Hofmann commented concerning the charge that he was trying to rewrite Mormon history:

A. I won’t go so far as to say I wanted to change Mormon history. Let me take that back. Maybe I did. I believed that the documents that I created could have been a part of Mormon history. I’m speaking specifically, for example, of the magic-related items. The 1825 Stool letter, the so-called Salamander Letter. In effect, I guess, the questions I asked myself in deciding on a forgery one of the questions was, what could have been? I had a concept of Church history and I followed that concept. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 113)

On page 130, Mark Hofmann admitted: “. . . my version of the history is not sympathetic with the teachings of the Church.” Mr. Hofmann also stated:

A. . . . a lot of people, just from what I read in the paper or whatever about me. The idea is that free money wasn’t the primary consideration, it was more changing the history of the Church or rewriting the history of the Church, how I thought it should be or whatever, which really wasn’t ever the primary consideration. It is true that I wrote the documents according to how I felt the actual events took place.

In other words, I believe that Joseph Smith was involved with folk magic, but the idea there was more to keep it in harmony with what I thought potentially genuine, discoverable type documents may say. In other words, to make it fit the history as accurately as possible so that I wouldn't be found out or whatever. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 426-427)

In his youth Mark Hofmann would have been taught that the Mormon Church leaders were led by revelation and had the gift of discernment to detect deceivers. The prophet Joseph Smith, in fact, claimed that he received a revelation from God Himself warning him that his enemies were falsifying an important religious document (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 10). Hofmann, however, seems to have finally come to the conclusion that the Mormon Church was not led by revelation and that he could even deceive the “living prophets” and the top Mormon scholars as easily as he did the U.S. Treasury. On page 99 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and didn't believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense as to what “my feelings or thoughts were.” On page 112 he claimed that he “wasn't fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery.”

ANTHON TRANSCRIPT

Although Hofmann claimed his main motive for most of the forgeries was “money,” when he decided to palm off his first major forgery on the church (the Anthon transcript), he was more concerned about the “fame involved” (page 96). The Anthon transcript is supposed to contain Joseph Smith's own copy of the characters found on the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Hofmann was later to admit that the paper was in reality “an end page out of a book in the [LDS] Institute Library at Utah State” (page 54). The ink was “oxidized, changed brown with hydrogen peroxide” (page 58).

In *Tracking*, page 75, I suggested that Mark Hofmann probably read Charles Anthon's letter concerning the transcript in *Mormonism Unveiled* and that this may have “provided the creative impulse” for the Anthon transcript. Mr. Hofmann says that the Anthon letter did give birth to the idea of making the forgery but says that it was probably a reprint of the letter in B. H. Roberts' history which he first saw:

MR. STOTT: Let's go to the Anthon Transcript. Can you tell us when it was and how it was that you came up with this idea?

A. I can tell you when it was. It was just days before the discovery was announced. How it was in some book, probably B. H. Roberts. I read a description of the transcript which Charles Anthon gave which does not match obviously the known character page, which the RLDS Church has, and I found that to be a pretty neat discovery.

Q. What was your thinking from there?

A. Well, I probably can't be lucky enough to find it so why can't I make it.

Q. Did you have enough confidence in yourself at that time to think you could make that big of a document, that important of one?

A. I thought that from what reading I had done as far as document authentication, that using the proper ink and oxidizing it the same way time would, that it could be pulled off.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, page 35)

At Hofmann's preliminary hearing, document experts claimed that heat had been used in creating the Anthon transcript. William Flynn noted: “What was unusual about the heating pattern on the document was that . . . it was not uniform throughout the document, but there was an area that was more highly scorched . . .” George Throckmorton seemed to feel that a common household iron could have been used on the transcript (*Tracking*, page 78). In his confession, pages 60-61, Mark Hofmann confirms that he did use an iron:

Q. You're talking about after you applied the ink?

A. Yes. In fact, I can tell you it was heated before it was dried because of the nature of the—Yes, this would have been after the ink because I was aging it. You can see how the paper around this dark spot in the bottom half kind of wrinkled as it was being ironed. That would be evidence the paper was not dry when it was ironed.

Q. Why did you do both the hydrogen peroxide and the heat?

A. Well, I was trying to make it look old. The hydrogen peroxide made the ink look old. The heat made the paper look old.

Q. But the paper was already old.

A. Yes, but it made it look like it had seen some use. It was ragged, it was well aged. It is true that it was genuine paper from that period but I thought it would be more convincing rather than being pure white to show that it had the high acid content and the problem I thought was also I wanted it to have high acid content so it would stain the page in the Bible.

Mark Hofmann originally maintained that he found the Anthon transcript folded up in a very old Bible

which he obtained from “a gentleman in Salt Lake City, Utah.” Before the bombings we had criticized Mr. Hofmann for not revealing the source of the Bible. The reason he would not reveal it now becomes very clear: the Bible actually came from England:

MR. STOTT: . . . We are talking, of course, about the Cambridge Bible. Can you tell us, Mark, where you first saw this, when it was and under what circumstances?

A. Yes, I acquired it in Bristol, England on my mission. It’s dated 1668.

(*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 3-4)

This Bible was missing the book of Amos, but it had been written out by hand and inserted into the center of the Bible. At the end of the insert the name “Samuel Smith” appeared. This is the name of at least two of Joseph Smith’s ancestors. The fact that Samuel Smith’s signature appeared in the Bible had been used to help substantiate Mark Hofmann’s story. Document expert William Flynn, however, said that the handwriting found in the book of Amos did not match the signature and there was evidence that another name originally appeared in this location. Flynn believed that this name “had been bleached out and the name Samuel Smith written on top,” (*Tracking*, page 78). In his confession, Mark Hofmann confirmed that he added the name:

Q. Can you tell us any other things that you did to the Bible as far as additions, deletions, changes?

A. I believe there’s only one other thing I did and that is in rather the middle of the Bible there’s some handwriting of the Book of Amos which is handwritten and bound in.

Q. Now, was the writing on the insert, was the writing there?

A. The writing was there except—

Q. The Book of Amos?

A. Except for the name Samuel Smith at the conclusion of that writing.

Q. Was there anything before you put Samuel Smith there?

A. Yes, I believe that I may have made a previous attempt. There was nothing there, no, before I got it. I think I may have attempted to write a name there that I wasn’t satisfied with so I bleached it out and wrote in another one.

Q. Do you remember what you used?

A. Under ultraviolet light would indicate that. The other name would have also been Samuel Smith.

Q. When you say bleached, just common bleach? Anything special?

A. It was probably a combination of a dilute Clorox bleach followed by a solution of sodium bicarbonate, followed by hydrogen peroxide.

The “Anthon transcript” had been folded up and a “glue-like substance” held it in the Bible. The fact that the transcript had left a brown stain in the Bible was considered as evidence that it had been in the same place for a long period of time. Document examiner William Flynn, however, was not impressed with the staining. He made this observation:

If the document had been in intimate contact with the pages of this Bible over a prolonged period of time, I would have expected the characters themselves which were made of the iron gallotannic ink to transfer onto the pages themselves. The highly acidic ink would have burned the pages in the form of the letters themselves—the characters which comprise the ink. In fact that did not happen. There is a uniform browning across the page rather than the ink itself, the characters of the ink, burning the pages in the shapes of the . . . letters and the characters on the page.

On pages 32-33 of his confession, Mark Hofmann revealed the method he used to brown the leaves of the Bible:

Q. Anything else we should know about that?

A. Well, yes. I can tell you about the Book of Proverbs where the page was added. I believe I folded the transcript up. I knew about the width of it when I placed it in there. When it laid down. I then used a piece of aluminum foil which I folded to be about approximately the right size, several layers, put it on there and heated it up with an iron, placed on it to make it look like the acid from the paper had browned the leaves of the Bible.

Q. Will you describe a little more. You’ve got the aluminum foil next to the paper?

A. The aluminum foil placed on it.

Q. On what?

A. In other words, it’s a piece of metal the right size placed on the book, heated with an iron.

Q. We are not talking about the Anthon Transcript itself, we are talking about just aluminum on the page of the Bible?

A. That’s right

Q. That’s how you made it brown?

A. Yes.

Q. And you heated it up with what?

A. Probably had another piece of foil on the back of it so it wouldn’t bleed through as much is [*sic*] it did on some of those other pages, and then I heated up with the iron, the family iron like you iron clothes with.

Q. And that’s what made the brown mark?

A. That’s what made the brown mark.

One thing that really bothered Sandra and I about the Anthon transcript was a statement Mark Hofmann made about the “glue-like substance” in *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 16:

But in the case of the Anthon transcript, they haven't done everything I thought they were going to do. For example, there's a black glue-like substance which held it in the Bible. They still don't know what that substance is. I know that laboratory identification could be made on that. Perhaps someday the Church will do it.

We could not understand what Mr. Hofmann's fascination with the contents of the “glue-like substance” would be unless he had spent a lot of time creating it and was disappointed that the church never bothered to check it out. In his confession, Mr. Hofmann gave this information concerning how he manufactured the substance:

A. I glued it in. . . . You will probably want to know what the glue was.

MR. YENGICH: I'm sure they shall. Why don't you tell them?

A. It was some charcoal ground up with a wheat paste which I found was not terribly sticky, and so, believe it or not, I added a couple drops of Elmer's Glue to it.

. . . .

MR. YENGICH: With the little orange cap on it?

A. Yes, just regular Elmer's Glue.

MR. YENGICH: That a student might use?

A. You don't have a spectroscopic report on that glue, I presume?

. . . .

Q. Where did you get the idea for this charcoal and wheat paste?

A. I thought to myself, I need to glue this in here, what looks like old glue. . . . I was in a hurry, I wanted to get this thing done that day.

MR. BIGGS: Why?

A. I don't know. It's just, I'm always rather impatient. . . . what I did was I lit a book match, let it burn down, broke off the tip of it and ground up the match. That was my charcoal and mortar and pestle. Scraped it off on a piece of paper where I added some salt and flour paste.

MR. STOTT: Just salt and flour basically was the paste?

A. Yes. I believe it was wholewheat flour with salt and water. I mixed it around with, probably used a toothpick or something, found that it wasn't particularly sticky and added a couple drops of glue to it, of Elmer's Glue. I then folded the document up. That is, of course after it was all aged like I liked it and everything.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 88-91)

On page 132, Mark Hofmann said that the Anthon transcript was actually “a crude forgery and shouldn't have fooled the people that it did, in my opinion.” Nevertheless on pages 124-125, Mr. Hofmann made these comments:

A. I hoped the Church would carry on some tests because I felt confident it would pass. In fact, that was part of the arrangement I had with them when I left the document in their possession before actually selling it to them. As far as I know, all they did was to deacidify it and, actually I'm not even sure. I think they said they had deacidified it and I know they mended the creased tear.

Q. Anything about their taking infrared photographs?

A. Yes, I knew that also. Don Schmidt took the document to BYU, I believe is where they had the photolab or whatever, took ultraviolet and infrared photographs of it which, I guess can be somewhat related to authenticating it.

Q. You were disappointed in the meager attempts they made?

A. I thought they would put it through more strenuous testing than they did. As far as being disappointed, I don't know. Well, perhaps in a way I was disappointed because I wanted, in a way, to fool the experts.

As it turned out, neither the “living prophets” nor the church's most noted scholars were able to detect the diabolical scheme. In fact, Mr. Hofmann was honored for making the “discovery,” and the church's *Deseret News*, May 3, 1980, printed a photograph of Hofmann standing with Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church. Also present were President N. Eldon Tanner, President Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. Neither President Kimball nor any of the other General Authorities were able to detect anything wrong with either “Brother Hofmann” or the Anthon transcript. President Kimball, in fact, is shown making an examination of the transcript with a magnifying glass. In his confession, page 112, Hofmann said that he had “a combination of emotions. There was, of course, a little bit of fear involved since, of course, it was a forged document. There was some excitement involved, a feeling of duping them, I guess.” The Church's most noted apologist, Dr. Hugh Nibley, examined the transcript and claimed that it contained Egyptian characters. He, in fact, triumphantly announced: “Of course it's translatable” (*The Herald, Provo, Utah*, May 1, 1980). According to the testimony of Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, the church gave Mr. Hofmann \$20,000 worth of trade items for the transcript.

After the Anthon incident, Mark Hofmann deceived church officials time after time with his phony documents and stories. Just after the bombings, President Gordon B. Hinckley acknowledged that the church had acquired “40-some” documents which came from Hofmann. Later it was admitted that in addition to these documents, Hofmann had given the church about 345 court records. Most of these were “returned to the Circuit Court clerk in Hancock County, Ill.” (*Deseret News*, April 12, 1986). There seems to have been a question as to whether these documents had been obtained illegally (see *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 12, 1986).

The reader will remember that in the Salt Lake County prosecutors’ summary of their first discussions with Mark Hofmann:

Hofmann said . . . he went to Dallin Oaks’ office to see if the McLellin transaction was to proceed. He said that even though Oaks talked and observed him, he fooled Oaks, and Oaks never suspected he was involved in the bombings. He also spoke with Hugh Pinnock in the [church’s] basement parking lot and fooled him too. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page SS-11)

As Mark Hofmann first began developing his nefarious plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, he noticed a weakness in them that he was able to exploit. This was that they were trying to hide the true history of the church from their people. He knew that church leaders were suppressing many early documents because they did not want members of the church to learn of their contents for fear that they would lose faith in Mormonism. Because of this Hofmann reasoned that there would be a market for controversial documents which the church leaders would buy up to suppress. In his confession, page 150, he noted that he felt “a controversial” document “always brings better money.” Hofmann, therefore, perceived church leaders as easy marks for a blackmail type of operation. His plan was to create embarrassing documents and offer them to the church with the pretext that this would keep them from falling into the hands of the “enemy.” The enemy, of course, would be those who would publish the contents of the documents to the world—i.e., Saints Alive, Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Christian Research Institute, etc. His *modus operandi* was to profess great loyalty for the church leaders while he was in reality stabbing them in the back. He gave this testimony concerning his contact with President Gordon B. Hinckley:

Q. What was your purpose for giving it [the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young] to the President?

A. Probably the greatest purpose in my mind was to demonstrate to him my concern for the Church, or in other words, possibly, a potentially embarrassing document would not fall into hands that might use it against the Church. And to prepare him for future dealings as far as if my true interest and intent was for the welfare of the Church.

Q. Was that something you were using to further your own purposes?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. Purposes of continuing to deal in similar types of forged documents?

A. Yes. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 315-316)

The more we learn about the scope of Hofmann’s subtle plan to deceive the Mormon leaders, the more obvious it becomes that the church is not led by revelation. He, in fact, had church officials so hoodwinked that they allowed him special access to documents that are ordinarily hard to get access to. As early as September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript Hofmann has “enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency’s vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that ‘I am not a historian. I’m not going to write an expose of Mormonism.’” In his confession Hofmann reveals how Earl Olsen granted him the privilege of looking at a document he seems to have used in writing the Joseph Smith III Blessing. Hofmann claims that Olsen “was saying about how I had done so much for the Church, referring to the Anthon Transcript, that ordinarily he wouldn’t do it but he did (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 141). Mr. Hofmann also confirmed in his testimony that he even “saw some materials from the First Presidency’s vault . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 453). Hofmann seems to have used his special privileges with regard to church documents to create new forgeries to palm off on unsuspecting church leaders. It would be hard to conceive of a more pernicious scheme.

As I have already shown, Mark Hofmann admitted that he used the church’s own facilities for research on the Salamander letter: “As I remember, there were several newspaper interviews which I looked at. Most of this research was done in the Church Historian’s Office” (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 434). Hofmann also confessed that he used a microfilm “at the archives of the Church on the second floor of the LDS library” (page 373) to learn how to simulate the handwriting of Egbert B. Grandin so that he could forge the Grandin contract. Furthermore, he used the “Genealogical

Library of the Church” (page 374) to obtain access to another contract which he used for structural material in the Grandin contract. On pages 382-383, Hofmann told how the former Church Archivist cooperated with him in providing material which he later used in creating the Grandin contract:

A. Where did I obtain a [*sic*] that?

Q. Yes?

A. From the Church Historian’s Office. I remember there was a couple [of] articles in that that I fained interest in which I asked Don Schmidt to Xerox for me and went with him into the back room there where they have their Xerox machine and he copied it off for me and handed me the copies and those Xeroxes are what I used to compose the artwork with, taking the context of the ad from another printer’s ad.

Mr. Hofmann claimed that after he obtained the raw material for the Grandin contract at the Church Office Building, he forged the document and brought it back. He even met with President Gordon B. Hinckley concerning the contract:

A. Oh, yes. In fact, I remember that I did show it to President Hinkley and I obtained a check for it.

Q. How much? If you don’t remember—

A. 15 thousand, was it?

(*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 386)

At the preliminary hearing former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt was asked how much the Church paid for the Grandin contract. He replied: “I recall it [was] \$25,000.” Mr. Schmidt also testified that President Hinckley was involved “very early” in the negotiations for the Grandin contract and that he was “sure” that Hinckley personally examined the document (see *Tracking*, pages 98-99).

HOFMANN’S SECRETS

In *Tracking*, page 66, I pointed out that while document experts felt the ink had been artificially aged in Hofmann’s documents, they believed that in most cases the paper was actually genuine paper of the period from which the documents were supposed to have come. On page 67, I suggested that Mr. Hofmann would have had access to many old collections from which he could have obtained the paper. As I have already shown, Hofmann has confessed that he cut out blank pages from books to obtain most of his paper. In his confession he mentions the publication *Nile’s National Register* at the University of Utah as being a source for a number of the documents.

On page 66 of *Tracking*, I wrote the following:

Before the bombings, one of Mark Hofmann’s associates did his best to try to convince Sandra and I that it would be impossible to apply ink to ancient paper without the ink feathering in such a way that the forgery would be detected. Charles Hamilton speaks of this problem in his book *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, page 206: “The feathering of ink is one of the most obvious marks of a modern fake on old chain-lined paper.” Mr. Hamilton informs us, however, that it is possible to size the old paper so that the modern ink would not feather.

In his testimony, page 152, Mr. Hofmann revealed that he did treat the paper “to keep the ink from feathering. The sizing I assumed would have been a lacquer spray which would have been soaked off later by acetone. The laquer would have dissolved in the acetone.”

Document experts felt that Mark Hofmann made his own ink (iron gallotannic ink) for his forgeries and it was suggested that he may have obtained his recipe from the book *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, a book by Charles Hamilton which investigators found in Mr. Hofmann’s home (see *Tracking*, page 63). Hofmann, however, claimed that he obtained his information from another book which he stole:

A. . . . As far as the ink, I got the recipe from a book that I stole from Utah State University Library. I believe the book was called *Making Ink*, or some name like that. It was, it’s a translation from a German edition. It’s by some German guy.

MR. STOTT: From the library or the bookstore?

A. It’s from the library. I removed the metal tag from the back of the spine so I could walk through their detectors with it and walked out of the library with it.

. . . .

Q. Tell us about that book. Did it have a whole bunch of recipes?

A. Yes, it did.

Q. Did it give you the properties of ink?

A. Didn’t give you really the properties, gave different recipes for different inks as well as the iron gall ink. It gave recipes for, well, for example in the 19th Century there was a blue ink commonly used, made out of Persian blue that was made water soluble by soaking in oxalic acid. There was a recipe for early stamping inks, not printing inks, however. There were recipes for different types of colored ink, both before and after the coal tar inks.

Q. More than one iron gall?

A. I’m certain so.

(*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 21-22)

On page 418, Mark Hofmann commented:

Most forgeries can be fairly easily detected from the ink. I'm one of the few forgers, I believe, at least up to that time, that used an iron gall.

Even though Mr. Hofmann felt that he was safe in using iron gallotannic ink in his forgeries, it was the ink that eventually tripped him up. When the document experts were examining Mark Hofmann's documents and comparing them with authentic documents they noticed "a microscopic cracking on the surface of the ink" (*Tracking*, page 61). This cracking effect, which George Throckmorton describes as having the appearance of the "skin of an alligator," appeared only on Hofmann's documents. Forensic examiners wondered what caused the flaky looking ink on the these documents. William Flynn testified that he found that he could "artificially age" iron gallotannic ink with either "sodium hydroxide" or "ammonium hydroxide, dilute ammonium Hydroxide is household ammonia" (*Tracking*, page 63). He felt that sodium hydroxide was especially effective and that it "will immediately take the iron gallotannic inks and turn them a deep rust color on the paper. It won't crack the inks, however." In his testimony, Mark Hofmann acknowledged that he artificially aged the ink on his documents with either ammonia or hydrogen peroxide and that at one time he may have used "a combination of ammonia and hydrogen peroxide" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 292). He claimed that the hydrogen peroxide was just "a common 3% solution you buy at a store for medical purposes."

At any rate, William Flynn was puzzled by the fact that the ink he made did not crack as it had in the Hofmann documents when he artificially aged it. He claims that it "was not until I began adding some of the additives that were typically added to the inks of that time period, in particular, the sugars and the gums" that he obtained the same results (*Tracking*, page 63). He said that "gum arabic" was "commonly added to the ink to give it body, as a viscosity adjuster to adjust the thickness of the ink, and also as a preservative. It slowed down the oxidation of the ink on the paper. When I mixed the iron gallotannic inks and added either the sugars or the gum arabic and then artificially aged them with sodium hydroxide, I got exactly the same . . . phenomenon that I described in the examination of the questioned documents. The ink both artificially aged and cracked."

It is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann mentions the use of "gum arabic" in his confession, page 155. Speaking of his method of making ink, he revealed: ". . . I would have made it the same way.

Boiled water, dissolved tannic acid and some other water. I probably would have dissolved the gum arabic and the ferric sulfate and then would have mixed them together." It appears, then, that it was Hofmann's use of "gum arabic" that provided the most convincing evidence that his documents were forgeries. Hofmann claims that he was aware of the problem but didn't know how to solve it:

A. . . . You will be interested to know that I also, even before the preliminary hearing, spoke to Ron [his lawyer] about my fears as far as the cracking was concerned.

Q. Oh, really? You had seen that cracking before yourself?

A. Yes, although I didn't know the cause of it until the preliminary hearing as far as the gum arabic and undoubtedly when somebody reads this transcript they'll keep gum arabic out of the formula. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 263)

In his testimony, pages 307, 363-367, Mr. Hofmann told of an electrical device he rigged up to create ozone for aging the ink on documents. He admitted that he used it to age the ink on the Oath of a Freeman, but when he was asked if he used it on other documents, he responded: "Not that I am charged with" (*Ibid.*, page 366). Mr. Hofmann also testified that he used "a red fungus" to create foxing (discoloration) on documents (see *Ibid.*, page 283). Hofmann even related this interesting story:

A. Yes, there was other techniques in aging of the paper. I believe that there is a, what appears to be a bookworm's hole through the document. When it is folded it goes through two pages.

Q. How did you accomplish that?

A. That's a strange story. We had some bags of wheat down in our basement which were in a type of paper bags which we found little bugs had eaten through and I took, I thought that was interested [*sic*] so I took what looked like a little fly and put it in a notebook and came by a couple days later and it ate through a few pages. So I thought it was rather convincing, so I believe that that document has bookworm holes in it.

. . . .
MR. BIGGS: It was an interesting story.

MR. YENGICH: Is that true? You did do that? It's not a story in the Grimms Fairytale I take it?

. . . .
MR. BIGGS: What document has bookworm holes in it?

A. Tell me if you ever find a document with bookworm holes in it. I'll be interested to see. Its probably a printed document, as I remember. I believe it would have been a printed document. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 305-306)

In creating his 19th century documents, Mr. Hofmann tried to be careful that the spelling matched that which was used at the time: “For one thing if I was concerned enough about the spelling I would use the dictionary, the 19th Century dictionary to verify the appropriate way they had spelling in those days” (page 70).

In *Tracking*, pages 70-71, I wrote the following:

One thing that is extremely interesting to note is that the major handwritten forgeries seem to have almost ceased with the appearance of the Salamander letter in late 1983. From that time, Hofmann seems to have produced mostly printed forgeries. In fact, instead of forging Jack London’s name and a short inscription in a first edition of *Call of the Wild*, Hofmann ordered a metal plate to do the job! If Mark Hofmann was the master forger who created the earlier documents, it seems very strange that he would have to resort to such an inferior process to reproduce Jack London’s writings. This leads me to question the idea that Mark Hofmann was the master forger who did the handwriting on the earlier documents. . . . It would almost be possible to believe that the “master forger” died in late 1983 if it were not for the fact that an inscription purporting to be in the handwriting of Martin Harris was added into the Nathan Harris *Book of Common Prayer* just about a month before the bombings. . . .

As I have already stated, it could be argued that Hofmann himself was the “master forger” and that he was totally responsible for all the forgeries. He certainly seems to have had the same formula for the ink during the period when he produced the Jim Bridger notes as he had earlier—the ink cracked in the same way as on the Salamander letter and the 1825 letter. It appears also that the documents were aged in the same way. One could probably argue that Hofmann just became lazy and no longer desired to exercise his calligraphic skills. At the present time, however, I find this explanation a little difficult to accept. It seems to me that the time and money he spent getting the Jack London inscription onto a metal plate and the work of actually printing it in the book would far exceed that required to just write the inscription with a pen. I must admit, of course, that anything is possible in this bizarre case, and I do not pretend to have all the answers. Perhaps the truth about this matter will come out when the case goes to trial.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann claimed that he himself was the “master forger” and that no one else was involved:

It’s hard for a lot of people to accept, I’m sure, that my closest friends and even my wife did not know the extent of my fraudulent dealings. But those people do not know my personality. In other words, I have always been fairly introverted. I have never had really close friends that I’ve shared information with. Even in my earlier dealings with coins and other antiques. I obviously did concerning my fraudulent coin activities but generally I didn’t brag about such things and didn’t talk about such things. (page 421)

One thing that has troubled many of us concerning the claim that Mark Hofmann did all the forgeries is that his handwriting appears to be rather poor. In his confession, Hofmann gives the following information about his handwriting:

Q. The handwriting [on the back of the Anthon transcript], did you have to practice that much or were you already practiced with Joseph Smith’s handwriting?

A. It didn’t take much practice, I don’t think. In fact, the whole transcript was written, probably that section composed and written on both sides, the paper aged the way it is and the ink all in one day. As far as my previous experience with Joseph Smith, I had previously made attempts to imitate his handwriting.

.
Q. Besides Joseph Smith, had you, during this time or prior to it, copied other people’s handwriting?

A. To some limited extent, I have.

Q. Did you take any classes during this time, any handwriting or calligraphy classes?

A. No. Now, I later took a class. . . . when I lived in Sandy, a lady in our ward was teaching it, which didn’t really contribute at all to my forging skills. . . .

Q. Is this skill in copying handwriting, is that something that you had to work at or is that something that came easy to you? Can you explain it?

A. Although I really don’t consider myself an artistic person, I think I have the ability to look at handwriting and copy it. I don’t think it is any certain talent or other people, I think can do the same thing. Although I haven’t conducted any surveys on the matter. Probably to some extent it is a talent only insofar as I have developed it through practice, but I wouldn’t say that I was born or had a natural talent for copying handwriting.

(*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 72-73)

A. . . . I knew that it [the Dunham letter] is an important document and is bound to be looked at. I felt like it would fool the experts in the Church, specifically Dean Jesse. My best forgery attempts are obviously in national-type material rather than church material, for that reason. (Ibid., page 394)

MR. HOFMANN: . . . Let's see, we also spoke of a calligraphy class I was involved in with my wife. That didn't have anything to do with these forgeries. I took it just because my wife was taking it and didn't learn any 19th Century handwriting or anything useful to these forgery skills. In fact, it took place, or I took the class after most of these forgeries we're talking about, I had already done.

MR. STOTT: Can I ask a question concerning that?

A. Yes.

Q. Even though you have something else to say. Almost everything that we've found, and almost without exception, most people felt that you could not duplicate other peoples' handwriting because all they ever saw of you was your printing, which was in a very sloppy hand. Was this part of your deception?

A. No, because I had that handwriting even before I decided to go into forgery. That was just my normal handwriting.

Q. Did you develop the skill of replicating other peoples' handwriting or was it natural or what?

A. Both. I don't think it is very hard to, if you practice you can do anything. I normally print because my cursive is even less legible than my printing. As I remember, I haven't used cursive since elementary school. In other words, any of my handwriting you will see since probably third grade is all in printing. (Ibid., pages 429-430)

As I indicated earlier, prosecutors claim that Mark Hofmann wrote out samples of the handwriting found in some of the forgeries when he was questioned at the Utah State Prison. These samples probably could have settled the question of whether there were co-conspirators. Unfortunately, however, this material was turned over to Hofmann's attorneys (Ron Yengich and Brad Rich) and was apparently not available for publication. The transcript (page 363) reveals that these attorneys were allowed control over items written or drawn by Mr. Hofmann:

A. . . . Shall I draw you a diagram?

Q. Yes, and Mr. Rich can keep it since they've been keeping everything else.

In *Tracking*, pages 175-181, I showed that a man by the name of Kerry Ross Boren had some false copies of documents which resembled in content Hofmann's

forgeries. One of his purported documents told of "a frog of the purest white" that appeared to Joseph Smith. Although there are many interesting parallels between Kerry Ross Boren and Mark Hofmann, I was never able to prove a connection between the two men. On page 180 of *Tracking*, I gave this information:

When we talked to Hofmann on August 24, 1985, he brought up the subject of Mr. Boren. He said that he felt that he should tell us that he had known of Boren before we published *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*. He did not say that he knew him personally, but only that he had been called in to look at some forged Butch Cassidy material. When I asked him if it was a good forgery, he replied that it was a very poor job. It is interesting to note that a photograph of a portion of an important letter Boren discovered relating to Butch Cassidy was published in the *Westerner*, May-June 1973. One thing that is a little suspicious about the letter is that Boren chose to suppress the names of both the writer and the recipient (see pages 41 and 62).

Brent Ashworth has added some interesting information with regard to the forged Cassidy material Hofmann had told me about. He claims that Hofmann himself sold him the Butch Cassidy material. It was actually photographs of Butch Cassidy and his friends which were signed by Matt Warner. Mr. Ashworth subsequently learned that the photographs were forgeries and confronted Mark Hofmann about the matter. Hofmann claimed that he had obtained these forgeries from another man who lived in Salt Lake City and agreed to give Ashworth his money back. Although Hofmann did not link Boren to the pictures in the conversation with Ashworth, he did tell him that Boren was making up Mormon documents and that they must be on guard against his spurious work. Kerry Ross Boren seems to have had a real interest in pictures of both Butch Cassidy and Matt Warner (see photographs in *Footprints in the Wilderness—A History of the Lost Rhoades Mines, and Newsletter of the National Association and Center for Outlaw and Lawman History*, vol. 1 no. 1).

In any case, in his conversation with me Mark Hofmann seemed to be implying that Boren was the one who created the bogus Cassidy material. Hofmann, of course, conveniently neglected to mention to me that he had sold the spurious photographs. In his confession (page 405), Mr. Hofmann said, "Personally I haven't known of another forger. But in dealing with documents, I have purchased documents which I felt were forged." On page 404, he testified:

MR. STOTT: You intimidated one of them was a forgery. Do you want to tell us which one?

A. One of them may have been a forgery.

Q. Do you want to tell us which ones they may have been?

A. No. Probably not at this time. I didn't say I forged it. I mean, I've handled documents before that were forged that I did not forge.

Q. But you passed along?

A. Yes.

Q. Without telling someone they were forged?

A. Not in the Mormon field. But this one was big.

Even though there are many strange parallels between Boren and Hofmann, I have still not found any real evidence linking them together, and the fact that some of Boren's material and ideas have remarkable parallels to the Hofmann documents might only indicate that Boren was copying Hofmann's ideas. Ironically, both Hofmann and Boren were charged with murder, entered into plea bargain agreements and ended up at the Utah State Prison.

On the question of co-conspirators, this interesting exchange occurred in Hofmann's confession, page 294, concerning a book at the University of Utah Library:

Q. Called the Statutes at Large Passed in Parliament in Ireland dated in the area of 1786. The reason I show you this is there are many areas throughout the book where letters and words have been carved out from the typing. Did you ever do that?

A. I remember the book because of the end sheet paper but I do not remember, I cannot imagine why I would have done that. For a couple of reasons. I did not actually cut out of books. I cut out of Xeroxes which I made of books and I can't think of the any [*sic*] item I would have cut those out to use it for.

MR. RICH: That means there is another forger out there.

A. I don't believe I did that.

Concerning the forgery of printed documents, Mark Hofmann said that he made his own ink:

A. The printing ink. Made with lamp black, linseed oil that was heavily boiled, bees wax and that's all, probably.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 216-217)

Strange as it may seem, on pages 217 and 222 of the transcripts, Mr. Hofmann claimed that he did not use a printing press for his forgeries:

Q. What did you do after you prepared the printers ink?

A. I rolled it on the plates and put the paper on top and packed it with several other sheets of paper or heavy paper. Put another piece of metal on top and used a C-clamp to apply the pressure.

.....

Q. And none of these Deseret Currency sets where [were?] done with a printing press?

A. That's correct. I could easily show you how they were done if I had those simple materials that I described. Namely a fairly thick piece of sheetmetal, copper, the plates, paper and some sort of backing of either a thin cardboard or paper.

Although detectives found the negatives for Hofmann's printing of the Deseret Currency (a rare form of currency used in Brigham Young's time), they never did find any metal plates. Hofmann explained that investigators had overlooked the plates when they searched his house and that he later destroyed the plates and other incriminating material:

A. The plates were on the top shelf in the closet of my downstairs office until I destroyed them after returning home from the hospital after the bombings.

Q. How did you destroy them?

A. They were burned in my fireplace. The metal burns a bright white, incidentally, but I knew that it was flammable, the wood backing and also the metal and that was their fate.

Q. Did anybody in your family know you did that?

A. They knew I had a fire but not I was burning plates in that fire.

.....

Q. Was this when you were still in the wheelchair?

A. Yes and no. I was able to jump around somewhat on one leg before I really went on crutches. But it was in that time period where I would have been out of my wheelchair, when I went downstairs. . . . I went in the room, in my office and whatever incriminating evidence that wasn't already taken I put in a bag and probably that same night is when I built a fire.

Q. That was my next question. Was there anything other than the plates that you destroyed that night in the fire?

A. Yes. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 212-214)

In *Tracking*, page 138, I stated: "Besides the many questionable documents I have mentioned in this chapter, detectives are looking into printed forgeries

of old books. Investigators have apparently found a forged copy of *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide*, by William Clayton. In most cases it would not be worth the expense and time to reprint rare books on old paper. With the *Emigrants' Guide*, however, we have an entirely different situation. It has only 24 pages and is worth thousands of dollars. Any small item which has a high monetary value would be worth counterfeiting with printing plates.”

Although Mark Hofmann was not charged with forging the *Emigrants' Guide*, in his confessions, pages 245-246, he admitted that he ordered printing plates for that publication:

A. I have independent recollection of using a check when I ordered some plates from Kansas City . . .

Q. That would have been the Kansas City would have been the *Immigrants' Guide*, would it not?

A. That's right. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 245-246)

Investigators have charged that Hofmann forged pages to replace pages that were missing in old books. In the case of the “Emma Smith Hymnal,” the addition of one forged page increased the value by thousands of dollars (see *Tracking*, pages 117-118). In his testimony, page 229, Mark Hofmann admitted he had tipped in—i. e., added in by pasting—“possibly hundreds” of pages into books: “. . . what I am describing is my usual technique in typing [tipping] pages in. . . I've done it a lot . . . I don't remember specifically doing this work as opposed to the dozens or possibly hundreds of other pages that I've typed [*sic*] in.” It could be that some of the pages Hofmann added in were genuine pages from other old books, but since we know that he did printing forgeries on old paper, every book that he worked on should be looked at with suspicion. While Mr. Hofmann's printed forgeries could cause a great monetary loss to those who obtained them, they do not really affect our understanding of Mormon history. It is obvious that they would have to be exact reproductions of original editions. If the contents varied in any way, it would give the whole scheme away.

As Mark Hofmann's reputation as a reliable document dealer grew, people came to accept his amazing finds without question. In his confession, pages 417-418, Mr. Hofmann testified:

MR. STOTT: Were you aware of the LDS Church subjecting any of these to any scientific evaluation other than the Anthon Transcript?

A. Meaning a forensic examination?

Q. Right.

A. Not that I can remember. And even the Anthon Transcript, I believe they ended up not doing anything, or much on.

Q. Were you surprised at that?

A. At first I was. Particularly with the Anthon Transcript but then I got used to them not doing it and even if they would have done it my feeling was it would have passed a forensic test. In other words, I believe the blue ink I would have used for the lines would have been a Persian blue similar to what was used in the 19th Century. The ink, I thought would pass, the paper, the handwriting. Of course, handwriting examination is always subjective but I thought that it would pass.

Q. How about the other dealers you dealt with? Were you surprised none of them basically had these documents forensically examined?

A. Autograph dealers rarely do. In fact, I can think of documents that have sold for 10s of thousands of dollars that haven't been examined by autograph dealers as far as forensic tests. . . . Forgeries are often detected by the handwriting on the document. That I knew would be closely examined. I took great pains to imitate the handwriting. I'm speaking now of national type documents that, for example,—Well I won't use any examples because you will have to wait until Ron is here.

Mark Hofmann boasted that he even sold the noted document dealer Kenneth Rendell “a cut signature of Daniel Boone which was not authentic” (page 491). Charles Hamilton, a noted document dealer who wrote the book, *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*, became one of Mark Hofmann's victims. Hofmann even used Hamilton to authenticate some of his forgeries:

A. No. I had used Charles Hamilton before in authenticating documents.

Q. On any of the ones we've talked about?

MR. BIGGS: On documents that you've produced is what you're saying?

A. Correct. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 60)

The reader may remember that in the prosecutors' summary of interviews with Hofmann before the plea bargain was finalized, the following statement appears: “He also had sold over \$500,000.00 worth of forgeries to Charles Hamilton whom he said never suspected a thing” (page SS-14).

The following exchange appears on page 284 of Mark Hofmann's confession:

A. I don't believe I've even talked about what I did to age the Joseph Smith, 3rd document. Only the Anthon Transcript.

MR. BIGGS: All right. Anything else?

A. Yes, but you want this off the record.

MR. BIGGS: Off the record.

DISCUSSION HELD OFF THE RECORD

MR. RICH: We've just had an off the record discussion about the detailed techniques of forgery that probably would serve no public benefit and would allow potential forgers significant resources toward their trade.

A. And if I write a book you will learn a lot more.



4. BLACKMAIL-LIKE DOCUMENTS

On February 16th 1981 I first showed a xerox of the Blessing to the LDS Archivist, Don Schmidt . . . I was also willing to promise not to breathe a word of its existence to anyone—Don being the first person I had contacted. Since I had previously made several trades with Don in this same price range which were completed immediately, . . . (not wanting to come across like I was trying to blackmail the Church) I fully expected to relinquish ownership immediately. (Mark Hofmann, Sunstone Review, August 1982, page 1)

While Mark Hofmann seems to have possessed some documents which were somewhat embarrassing to the Mormon Church between 1978 and 1980, as far as we know his first major attempt to create a blackmail-like document, which the Mormon leaders might want to buy up to suppress, occurred in 1981 when he forged the Joseph Smith III Blessing document. The church's newspaper, *Deseret News* for March 19, 1981, reported:

A handwritten document thought to be a father's blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr., first president and prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to his son Joseph Smith III, has been acquired by the Church Historical Department.

The document, which includes the possibility of Joseph Smith III succeeding his father as prophet and church leader, was presented Thursday to authorities of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in exchange for another valuable church document. . . .

[Earl E.] Olson and other LDS officials said they are convinced the blessing is authentic. Handwriting and the paper were examined and compared with other documents. . . .

The blessing document, dated Jan. 17, 1844, is thought to have been written by Thomas Bullock, one of several men who served as clerk to Joseph Smith Jr. . . .

Church officials obtained the document from Mark William Hofmann, a collector of historical documents and antiques. He said he received it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. Church officials declined to say how much was paid for the document . . .

The document outlines a blessing given by Joseph Smith Jr. to his son, then age 11, and includes the possibility of the son succeeding his father "to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: A Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church."

The Utah Mormon Church had always claimed that Brigham Young was the true successor of Joseph Smith. The Reorganized LDS Church, on the other hand, maintained that Joseph Smith had appointed his son, Joseph Smith III, as his successor. Joseph Smith III rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and became the leader of the RLDS Church. Mark Hofmann's discovery of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document appeared to sew up the case for the RLDS Church. The blessing seemed to provide devastating evidence against the Utah Mormon Church; therefore, officials from the church tried to downplay its importance.

In his blackmail-like attempt to sell the document to the Mormon Church, Mark Hofmann seems to have made a mistake in not going directly to the top leadership of the church. Instead, he approached Church Archivist Donald Schmidt. Since Schmidt did not immediately jump at the opportunity of buying the document, Mr. Hofmann turned to the RLDS Church. Officials of that church were very interested in obtaining the blessing and entered into an agreement with Hofmann. When Mormon leaders became aware of the importance of the document, they decided that the church must obtain it. By this time, however, it was too late to attempt to suppress it. Officials from the RLDS Church already knew of its contents and it is doubtful that they would have kept silent about the matter. Instead of selling the document to the RLDS Church, as he had agreed to do, Mr. Hofmann turned it over to the Mormon Church. This caused the Reorganized Church Historian, Richard Howard, to accuse Hofmann of "duplicitous negotiating" and to consider "the possibility of legal action in response to Hofmann's breach of contract (His written, self-

imposed deadline of March 8, extended verbally to March 17, had been violated by his March 6 sale of the document to the LDS Church)” (Statement of Richard Howard, published in *Sunstone Review*, August 1982, page 7). In an attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement, the Mormon Church turned over the blessing document to the Reorganized Church in exchange for a *Book of Commandments*. According to the testimony of former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, Mark Hofmann came out very well on the deal. Schmidt claimed that Hofmann received material from the archives which was valued “in the neighborhood of \$20,000.”

In his confession, Mark Hofmann made these comments about the Joseph Smith III Blessing:

Q. Let’s talk about the Joseph Smith 3rd Blessing. Again, can you kind of tell us how it started and where you got the idea, what led up to it?

A. This, in my opinion, is a better forgery than the Anthon Transcript. At least the Bullock writing is. The Joseph Smith is probably not as good. As far as where I got the idea, it’s pretty common knowledge in the Church, RLDS Church, that there’s been a debate going on as far as whether or not such a blessing was ever given. Because of that controversy I figured such a blessing would be worth a lot of money to certain people so this was, although again as far as motivation, it is true that partially it had to do with my rewriting of Mormon history. It was mostly money oriented, mostly money motivated, I would say.

.....
Q. So your intent was originally to go to the LDS Church rather than the RLDS Church?

A. That’s right.

Q. And also besides the money, what fascinated you about this particular aspect of the history, of finding this particular document or producing this particular document?

A. Well, for one thing it has a controversial nature which always brings better money. Is that what you mean? What you want to know is all of my motivation or what I was thinking?

Q. Yes.

A. I believe my main motivation was money. My other would have been that it would be controversial so I could get the money. I thought that the Church would make a quick and secret purchase of it. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 133 and 150)

On page 148, Mark Hofmann admitted that certain wording he used regarding Joseph Smith III “may have been to make the document seem more embarrassing to the LDS Church . . .”

When Mr. Hofmann was asked where he obtained the paper on which he forged the blessing, he replied: “It would have been an end sheet out of a book, most likely from the University of Utah but I can’t remember the specific book it came out of.” Hofmann went on to state that the paper he used for the blessing was actually made around 1880 (about 36 years after the blessing was supposed to have been given), but he felt that document examiners could not detect this since he made sure “it didn’t have wood pulp” in it (page 152). On pages 161-162, Mr. Hofmann gave this information on how he aged the ink:

A. It would have been aged probably on a metal screen such as you would find on storm doors with suction pulling down from the front of the document in to the back through an arrangement I had worked up with an old vacuum cleaner and then it would have been either sprayed or painted with hydrogen peroxide, I believe. The purpose of the sucking is to bring the characteristic aging or brown of the ink through to the back side. Then again, I’m just guessing how I did this because I can’t say for sure.

I believe afterwards I would have, after the front of it was aged I would have added the words on the back and by reversing the document on a screen I would have aged the ink on the other side also with hydrogen peroxide. I shouldn’t say aged, I should say oxidized the ink.

This document was examined by document experts hired by the RLDS Church and pronounced authentic. After the murders it was reexamined by forensic experts who had learned of the cracked ink and pronounced a forgery. William Flynn testified that although he could not condemn the document on the basis of the handwriting, he did note that the indentation of paragraphs did not match that found on authentic Bullock documents. On page 159 of his confession, Mr. Hofmann admitted that Mr. Flynn was correct about the indentation: “I believe that, for example, the indentations on the paragraph should have been greater.”

As to the sources used in creating the document, Mr. Hofmann acknowledged that he found the testimony of a man by the name of “Whitehead” very helpful. This testimony is found in a book we photographically reprinted many years ago entitled, *The Temple Lot Case*. Investigators found a Xerox copy from our printing in Hofmann’s home and questioned him about it:

Q. You had a copy in your stuff? Do you remember how you obtained that copy?

A. . . . I know it would have either come from the Church or from the University of Utah. . . . Did you look at either of those places?

Q. This is a copy of the Tanners.

A. This is from the Tanners?

Q. Yes. Do you know where you got it specifically?

A. Is this the actual transcript that I got?

Q. No, it is a copy of yours.

A. This is from the book by the Tanners then?

Q. Appears to be because there is the Tanners' and it matches.

A. I don't remember that I had purchased it from the Tanners so I presume that I got it from the University Library, made a copy. It may be that I had made that purchase from the Tanners but I don't remember it.

Q. Would that have been something on open stack or something you would have had to specifically order?

A. Probably something I would have had to order. Let's see, I'm thinking, I believe that's true with both the Church and the University of Utah library. I probably would have had to order it. So you can check to see if I ordered it and if I didn't, then I purchased the copy from the Tanners.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 136-137)

In *Tracking*, page 82, I wrote the following about the blessing:

As to the actual composition of the text of the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Joseph Smith's revelations found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* could have provided structural material. For instance, the wording in Joseph Smith's revelation of January 19, 1841, resembles some of the wording found in the blessing given to his son. In the *Doctrine and Covenants* 124:57 and 59 we read: ". . . this anointing have I put upon his head, that his blessing shall also be put upon the head of his posterity after him. . . . let . . . his seed after him have place in that house, from generation to generation, . . ." In the blessing to Joseph Smith III we find this: ". . . the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation."

In his confession, page 144, Mark Hofmann said that he did use the *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 124, but was not sure exactly which portions: "A couple of the phrases are similar to Section 124. I adopted them from Section 124 of the LDS *Doctrine & Covenants*."

In *Tracking*, pages 82-83, I suggested that there was another blessing that could have influenced the wording in Hofmann's forgery:

One document which was undoubtedly used to write the blessing was mentioned as early as 1976 by the Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn. In *BYU Studies*, Winter 1976, page 225, Dr. Quinn wrote concerning a "patriarchal blessing given to Joseph Smith III by his grandfather, which stated in part: 'You shall have power to carry out all that your Father left undone when you become of age.'" In footnote 104, on the same page, Dr. Quinn gives his source as: "Blessing of Joseph Smith III, given by Joseph Smith, Sr., in Kirtland, written by Lucy Mack Smith from memory in 1845, Church Archives; *Saints' Herald* . . . 65 (28 July 1909): 702."

Fortunately, I obtained photocopies of this document and was able to compare it with the Hofmann document. The Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing says that Joseph Smith III "shall live long upon the Earth." The Hofmann document promises, that "his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, . . ." The blessing written in 1845 informs the boy what he will do "after you are grown." The purported 1844 blessing uses the words, "When he is grown, . . ." The Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing says to young Joseph: "You shall be a help to your brothers." The Hofmann document claims that "he shall be a strength to his brethren, . . ." The 1845 document contains these words: "**And a comfort to your Mother.**" The 1844 blessing is almost identical: ". . . **and a comfort to his mother.**"

At first Mark Hofmann felt that he did not have access to the blessing of Joseph Smith, Sr., until "after I made this forgery" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 140). On the next page, Mr. Hofmann related that he did "remember discussing it with Michael Marquardt about the Blessing. He was interested in the wording of it. Was trying to find out relationships between Section 124 and the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the Blessing, as I remember." After he was shown some of the parallels between the two blessings, Mr. Hofmann said: "I would suspect that I did indeed see the Joseph Smith, Sr. Blessing before making the forgery, so that takes back everything I've said for the last 15 minutes" (page 149). In a later interview, Mark Hofmann was rather certain that he did, in fact, use the Joseph Smith, Sr., blessing document to create his forgery:

Q. Did you acquire possession of this blessing by the grandfather before you forged the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing and did you use it in your preparation and as a source?

A. Yes. I believe I did. I believe I had, before forging the document I obtained a Xerox of it. Certainly I used the contents of it where it parallels the document I forged I believe after forging the document I saw the original copy of this document rather than just a Xerox at the Church Archives.

In *Tracking*, page 84, I gave this information concerning the Joseph Smith III Blessing:

. . . it was reported that the Blessing document came from a descendant of Thomas Bullock and that Mr. Hofmann was only playing the role of dealer in the transaction. The Church's own newspaper reported that Hofmann claimed "he received it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock" (*Deseret News*, March 19, 1981). I naturally assumed that the Church leaders had checked out Hofmann's story and knew all about this descendant of Thomas Bullock. . . . Unfortunately, it now appears that Church officials did not do their homework. There was no serious attempt to check out the story that the Blessing document actually came from a descendant of Bullock, and the Reorganized Church Historian who was interested in the source of the Blessing was discouraged from checking it out.

I first became concerned about the authenticity of the Joseph Smith III Blessing after I began to have misgivings about the Salamander letter. I wanted to talk to the descendant of Thomas Bullock who was supposed to have originally had the document. I felt that if I could trace the document back beyond Mark Hofmann to the Bullock family, I would be sure of its authenticity. I soon found, however, that it was virtually impossible to learn the name of the descendant of Thomas Bullock. I became very suspicious and on August 22, 1984, I published the following:

"In his public statement about the Joseph Smith III Blessing document Hofmann has said he acquired it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. An official from the Reorganized Church [RLDS Church Historian Richard P. Howard] told us that when he asked Hofmann the specific source of this document, he would not reveal it. The same man [Howard] asked us the question, 'would you want to buy a used car from someone who wouldn't tell you who the last owner was?' At any rate, he was given a name by the Mormon Church historians, but never followed up on the matter because he was told it could prove embarrassing for the Mormon Church. The reason why it would prove embarrassing was not explained" (*The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 8-9).

As I indicated earlier in this book, on August 23, 1984, Mark Hofmann came to our home and talked to Sandra for a long time about the questions I had raised in *The Money-Digging Letters*. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the

member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young's finances that would be embarrassing to the Church.

At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt testified that Hofmann had indeed given the church "a notarized" statement signed "by an Allen Bullock" stating that Hofmann had obtained the Blessing Document from him. Hofmann also informed Schmidt that "his full name was Allen Lee Bullock" and that he was born in "1918." When Schmidt was asked if he had any personal contact with Allen Lee Bullock, he replied: "I did not." He also testified that no one in his department had any contact with him and that the provenance of the document had never been checked out.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann testified that he had found a notary who did not require identification and that he himself had forged the affidavit:

Q. Was it signed in front of him?

A. Yes, I signed it right there.

Q. You signed it?

A. I signed Alan Bullock's name.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, page 170)

At the time I wrote *Tracking*, I felt that the name "Allen Lee Bullock" was only a figment of Mark Hofmann's imagination. I have since been informed that investigators found the name Allen Lee Bullock in a list of descendants of Thomas Bullock. Mr. Bullock was contacted by detectives. He claimed that he did not sign the affidavit, had never had possession of the Blessing document and had not even met Mark Hofmann. I suspect that Hofmann must have told church officials that he might be able to obtain the embarrassing records concerning Brigham Young for the church from Allen Lee Bullock if they did not bother Mr. Bullock. The reason that church officials asked RLDS Church Historian Richard Howard not to contact Bullock must have been that they wanted to keep these records suppressed from the public. If church leaders had not continued to suppress the name Allen Lee Bullock, we would have been able to contact him a year before the bombings and discover that the affidavit attributed to him was a forgery. This, of course, would have been the type of hard evidence we were looking for which could have led to Hofmann's arrest and conviction for forgery. If this had occurred,

there would have been no McLellin deception, Hugh Pinnock would not have helped Hofmann obtain the loan for \$185,000 and Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets would probably be alive today. This whole series of tragic events seems to destroy the claim that the Mormon Church is led by revelation. It appears, in fact, that church leaders are more concerned about protecting the image of the church than they are about being forthright with their people.

SMITH'S 1825 LETTER

In a speech given at the Brigham Young University Symposium, "Church History and Recent Forgeries," the Mormon Apostle Dallin H. Oaks tried very hard to make it appear that the church was not trying to suppress documents:

What interested me most was the fact that these forgeries and their associated lies grew out of their author's deliberate attempt to rewrite the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that so many persons and organizations seized on this episode to attempt to discredit the Church and its leaders. . . .

In the course of this episode, we have seen some of the most sustained and intense LDS Church-bashing since the turn of the century. In a circumstance where The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could not say much without interfering with the pending criminal investigation and prosecution, the Church and its leaders have been easy marks for assertions and innuendo ranging from charges of complicity in murder to repeated recitals that the Church routinely acquires and **suppresses church history documents in order to deceive its members and the public.** . . . a February 11, 1987, *New York Times* feature states: "According to investigators, the church leaders purchased from Mr. Hofmann and then hid in a vault a number of 19th-century letters and other documents that cast doubt on the church's official version of its history." This kind of character assassination attributed to anonymous "investigators" has been all-too-common throughout the media coverage of this whole event. . . .

Also conveniently omitted from mention in most of the repetitious media recitals of church suppression of documents is the fact that the most prominent Hofmann documents used to attack the origins of the Church—including Martin Harris' so-called Salamander letter, Joseph Smith's treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel, and the Joseph Smith III blessing—were all made public by the Church many months before the bombings triggered the intense public interest in this subject . . .

In his interviews with the prosecutors, Hofmann has recited the contents of conversations he said he had with President Hinckley. . . . I urge everyone to be thoughtful about who they will believe on conflicts of this nature, General Authorities whose statements about this whole episode have been confirmed by all subsequent investigations, or Mark Hofmann, who is renown for his record of deceit and his efforts to discredit the Church and its leaders. ("Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents," Brigham Young University, August 6, 1987, typed copy distributed to the news media, pages 1, 2, 4, 5 and 18)

Although Apostle Oaks would lead one to believe that the Mormon Church did not try to suppress Joseph Smith's 1825 "treasure-hunting letter to Josiah Stowel," a document which was actually forged by Mark Hofmann, all the evidence points in the other direction. Mark Hofmann's testimony with regard to this letter seems to fit very well with evidence from other sources:

A. . . . This whole document is a forgery.

Q. What is behind the idea of the Josiah Stool forgery? How did it come up in your mind?

A. From the *History of the Church*, Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, I think that it is commonly known that Joseph Smith was employed by Josiah Stool. Also that Josiah Stool was a fairly superstitious individual and believed in such things as money digging. Also that Josiah Stool hired Joseph Smith for his abilities as a seer. And the document is obviously historically important and controversial, both of which means that it is worth a lot of money.

Q. Was your purpose, when you made it up, to go right to the LDS Church or was it to go to the highest buyer?

A. It was to go to the LDS Church. There was no competition since there wasn't any, it wasn't going to the highest bidder since there was no bidding taking place.

Q. Why was it going straight to the LDS Church?

A. I thought they would pay a considerable amount of money for it.

Q. Do you remember using any sources, particular sources? You talked generally it is well known [*sic*]. Did you use any particular historical sources to generate some of the ideas of contents?

A. When I was talking before, I was referring to Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* as far as his employment of Josiah Stool. As far as the wording or whatnot, it was basically my own imagination again . . .

. . . .

Q. Did you do anything to the actual markings on the paper to try to give some authenticity to it?

A. Yes, I, it appears as though as I was writing it I smeared some of the lettering.

Q. Why did you do that?

A. It's not an uncommon thing for someone in Joseph Smith, Junior's station in life to do, and something that occurs on some of his other letters.

Q. The stamp, is that another plate that you made?

A. Yes.

Q. And would that have originated from a real letter at the time?

A. Yes.

Q. Would that be another one you might have got from some of those same sources you talked about?

A. Yes.

Q. The postage, is that again something you designated?

A. Yes.

Q. And it came from your study of—

A. 12 and a half cents, yes from my study of postal history, postal rates.

Q. The wax?

A. Probably from another genuine document.

.....

Q. Do you remember where the paper [came] from?

A. There's a chance it came from the Niles Register.

.....

MR. STOTT: Finally, can you tell us when you finished the letter what you did with it?

MR. YENGICH: That's two finalies but go ahead.

A. Yes, I sold it to the Mormon Church.

Q. To whom specifically?

A. President Hinkley.

Q. How did that go about?

A. I believe he was Elder Hinkley then.

Q. Why didn't you go through Schmidt or the Historical Department?

A. I may have shown it originally to Elder Durham I believe and he and I took it to President Hinkley's office.

Q. Why would it have gone to Durham rather than Schmidt? Your other contact seems to have been with Schmidt.

A. Only because of its controversial nature.

Q. You had met Durham earlier for some other transactions?

A. Yes.

Q. Durham took you to President Hinkley?

A. Yes.

.....

MR. BIGGS: What did President Hinkley tell you relative to this document?

A. He told me that for the time being, or in other words, without giving a date as far as how long this would be in effect, that the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency and Elder Durham would be the only ones to know about this document.

Q. Did he tell you anyone else would ever know about this document?

A. I guess I should include his secretary. Oh—

Q. Well, go ahead.

A. Francis Gibbons.

Q. Did he say no one would ever know about this document other than those people?

A. No.

Q. Did he ask you some other questions about who else knew about the document?

A. Yes.

Q. And did he ask you, does your wife know about the document?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you say?

A. No.

Q. Did he ask you, did he say who else knows about it?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you say?

A. I told him that no one else within the Church knew about it. I left open the possibility that someone out of the Church. Obviously, I claimed to have acquired it from someone outside of the Church.

Q. Did he ask you who else outside of the Church might have had it?

A. Not at that time.

Q. Did he at a later time?

A. At a later time we discussed—, At a later time he asked me if Charles Hamilton was the source and I did not confirm or deny that possibility.

Q. Which is something that you did a lot, right?

A. That's right

Q. Why did you do that?

A. He had heard rumors.

Q. No, no. Why did you not confirm nor deny when you were asked that question? What was your reason?

A. I tried to never confirm or deny a source, especially if the source wasn't real.

Q. You did it so they would continue to go down the path?

A. Yes, that's right.

.....

MR. STOTT: Okay. Mark, that was your meeting. Did you have a subsequent meeting?

A. I believe I had a total of three meetings concerning this document with President Hinkley. The last meeting when he gave me the check and made the purchase.

.....

Q. Did you tell President Hinkley where the letter came from, the document?

A. No, I did not, other than an eastern source. Source on the east coast. Although I did, lets see, I did tell him that the document had been authenticated by Charles Hamilton.

Q. You told him that?

A. Yes, and he obtained a document signed by Charles Hamilton confirming its authenticity.

Q. Did he obtain that himself or did he obtain that through you?

A. He obtained that through me.

.....

MR. STOTT: How did you come to settle on a price?

A. I named a price and told him that I believed it was fair, and that that is what I would accept.

Q. Was that the \$15,000?

A. Yes, I believe that was the amount.

Q. And that's what he paid you?

A. Yes.

Q. By check?

A. Yes.

Q. On a church account?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know what he did? Did you just leave him the letter? Do you know what he did with it?

A. I left it with him and he told me at a later time that he handed it to Francis Gibbons with instructions to put it in the vault.

MR. YENGICH: Did you keep a xeroxed copy?

A. Yes I did, although I told him that I didn't.

MR. STOTT: Rumors started circulating around that time about the letter. How did those rumors come up?

A. Part of them came from me and part of them I believe came through Francis Gibbons but I never know [*sic*] for sure how some of the information originated. I believed at the time that Francis Gibbons had told Dean Jesse something concerning the document.

Q. Who did you tell and what did you tell, basically?

A. I mentioned the document to Lynn Jacobs, Brent Metcalf and Dean Jesse.

Q. Was this something that you were not supposed to talk about once you sold it to Hinkley? Was it an agreement you weren't going to talk to anybody else or did you feel free to go ahead and talk about it?

A. Yes, that was the agreement that I would not talk about it.

Q. But you went ahead anyway?

A. Yes.

.....

Q. Dean Jesse obtained a copy of that later on. Do you know where he got the copy?

A. Yes. I believe that he obtained a copy from me of the document but I believe that he had a type script beforehand of what the document said.

Q. Do you know where he got that from?

A. I believed that he got it from Francis Gibbons or from someone who Francis Gibbons had shown it to. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 346-349, 352-359)

When it came down to the specifics as to where he got certain parts of the 1825 letter, Mr. Hofmann's memory was a little fuzzy. He stated, however, that he had read "magic books" and "in the composition process it was, of course, a lot of it was subconscious as far as what I previously read" (page 369).

That President Hinckley bought the letter so that it could be suppressed is obvious to anyone who really investigates the matter. The letter was purchased "on or about January 11, 1983" (*The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 5), but Church leaders never admitted that they had it until May 7, 1985! In 1984 we obtained a typescript of the letter and published it in *The Money Digging Letters*. On page 3 we stated that we would "withhold judgment concerning its authenticity until we obtain more information concerning it." One would think that after we printed the contents of the letter, the Mormon Church would admit that it had the letter. Instead, however, the church decided to "stonewall." At about the time we printed the letter, we had a discussion with one of the top historians in the church. He lamented that the church had allowed itself to become involved in a cover-up situation with regard to the 1825 letter.

In *Tracking*, pages 89-90, I quoted rather extensively from the *Salt Lake Tribune* concerning the suppression of the 1825 letter. I will briefly summarize the matter here: in 1985 *Tribune* reporter Dawn Tracy learned that the Mormon Church was hiding the letter and confronted church spokesman Jerry Cahill. Mr. Cahill denied the accusation:

"The church doesn't have the letter," said Mr. Cahill. "It's not in the church archives or the First Presidency's vault." . . . He said that none of the confidential documents is the 1825 letter. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

When Dawn Tracy received more information about the letter, she approached Cahill a second time about the matter. Again, Cahill strongly affirmed that the church did not have possession of the letter. On May 6, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a letter George Smith wrote to the editor. In this letter he revealed that "some scholars have reported seeing it at the church offices, . . . A number of scholars have photocopies of the letter, . . ." These photocopies may very well have

come from the copy which Mark Hofmann admits that he retained when he turned the letter over to Hinckley. When it became apparent to church leaders that the letter was going to be published in a major newspaper without their consent, they decided to back down and admit its existence. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, admitted in a letter to the editor of the *Tribune* that his earlier statement was incorrect:

... staff writer Dawn Tracy correctly quoted my statement to her that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints doesn't have a letter purportedly written in 1825 by Joseph Smith . . . either in the church archives or in the First Presidency's vault.

My statement, however, was in error. . . . The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency's archives . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

It is very obvious from all this that the Mormon leaders were caught in a very embarrassing cover-up with regard to the letter and that they only published it because their own scholars were preparing to release it to the press. *Time* magazine for May 20, 1985, reported that "The church offered no explanation for withholding news of the earliest extant document written by Smith . . ." John Dart commented: "As it became clear during this week that photocopies of the letter would soon be circulated by sources outside the official church, Cahill announced that the church would discuss the contents and release a photocopy of the letter" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1985). It seems obvious that if the letter had upheld the image of Joseph Smith that church leaders wish to portray to the public, it would have been published immediately in the *Deseret News* with a large headline announcing its discovery. When Mark Hofmann "discovered" Joseph Smith's mother's 1829 letter, Mormon officials proclaimed it to be "the earliest known dated document" relating to the church, and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith's work. Since the letter to Stowell was supposed to have been written by the Prophet himself some four years earlier, we would expect it to receive even greater publicity. Instead, the Mormon leaders buried it and engaged in a cover-up. In the *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1985, Dawn Tracy revealed that even top Mormon historians, including the Church Archivist, were kept in the dark concerning the purchase of the 1825 letter: "Don Schmidt, retired LDS Church archivist, said members of the First Presidency didn't tell him or church historians about the 1825 letter. Nor did they ask him or anyone in his department to authenticate the letter."

While Apostle Oaks is correct in stating that the letter was released before the bombings, he "conveniently omitted" (to use his own words) the fact that the letter was suppressed for 28 months and was only released after the press had been furnished with a copy! Mark Hofmann, on the other hand, has admitted that he sold the letter to President Hinckley as part of a blackmail-like scheme and that he broke his agreement with Hinckley by talking about it and by circulating a photocopy. Dallin Oaks asks if we are going to believe Mark Hofmann, "who is renown for his record of deceit" or the "General Authorities" of the church. Although I do not feel that we can put unconditional trust in Hofmann's confession, in this particular case all the evidence seems to show that he is being forthright about the matter. It appears, in fact, that Apostle Oaks is trying to cover up what really happened with his smooth talk.

One of the documents which the Mormon Church obtained that has still not been released is the Thomas Bullock letter. I have mentioned before that Mark Hofmann personally delivered this letter to President Gordon B. Hinckley under the pretense that he was concerned about the church and did not want this embarrassing letter to "fall into hands that might use it against the Church." Mark Hofmann also gave this testimony about the letter:

MR. STOTT: I want to go back on that Brigham Young Letter, . . . apparently its dated January 27, 1865, from supposedly Thomas Bullock to Brigham Young. Are you familiar with that?

A. Yes, I forged it, in fact.

Q. When did you forge it? Do you remember generally?

A. It would have been just after the forgery of the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing, probably just days afterwards.

.....

Q. Do you remember where you got the paper?

A. Yes, I believe that it is a piece of paper that was pilfered from the Utah State Archives.

Q. From a book?

A. From a ledger book, yes.

.....

Q. Did you use the same kinds of inks you've talked about, the same process to date, to age it?

A. Yes. I believe it was probably hydrogen peroxide that was used. . . . looks like I tried to make it look like it was in a flood or some such thing.

Q. Why did you create that document, and what did you do with it?

A. I created it to give validity to the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing since it deals with the blessing. What I did with it, I gave it to President Hinckley.

Q. Did you give it to him before or after the transaction with the Joseph Smith, 3rd Blessing?

A. It would have been afterwards, probably, I believe, guess, a week afterwards maybe. Maybe two weeks. I don't know, maybe even less.

Q. What were the circumstances of your giving it to him?

A. I made an appointment with him privately. I went in to his office and layed it on his desk. He expressed an interest in it and I left it there.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 309-311)

From what we can learn concerning this letter, Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of being the type of person who would destroy a document authored by Joseph Smith himself to protect his own position of leadership in the Mormon Church. The church kept this document locked safely away in a vault until prosecutors demanded access to the Hofmann documents. It has been suppressed for six years. Dallin Oaks tries to make it appear that the investigation into the murders and forgeries prevented the Mormon Church from speaking about the Hofmann documents it had obtained:

During this same month of January, 1986, the Church turned all of its Hofmann-acquired documents over to the prosecutors, at their request. As a result the Church could not make its Hofmann documents public to answer those innuendoes of suppression without seeming to try to influence or impede the criminal investigation. ("Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents," pages 3-4)

I seriously doubt that the release of the contents of the documents which were taken by the prosecution could have affected justice in the Hofmann case, and it seems unreasonable to believe that the church would not retain photocopies of the items. Even if this were the case, this does not explain why church leaders suppressed the Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young for four and a half years before the bombings. Apostle Oaks boasts that "On April 11, 1986, after months of searching in its records and collections, the Church published a complete list of the 48 documents and the groups of court records then known to have been acquired from Mark Hofmann" (*Ibid.*, page 4). I suspect that the only reason church leaders published a list of documents was that they feared that the facts about these documents were about to be revealed at Hofmann's preliminary hearing. Notice that the date given by Apostle Oaks was "April 11, 1986."

This was just a few days before the preliminary hearing began, but six months had elapsed since the bombings. Furthermore, the published description of the documents (see *Deseret News*, April 12, 1986) was obviously prepared by someone who was trying to prevent the controversial nature of the documents from becoming known. The description of the Bullock letter appears as item no. 48 and merely reveals that it is "concerning Bullock's work in the Historical Department." This innocuous statement concerning the letter veils the fact that Bullock and Young were supposed to have been fighting over the possession of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document and that Bullock did not trust Young's honesty. Apostle Oaks says that the "list spoke for itself." In reality, the descriptions published with the list tend to lull the reader to sleep rather than reveal the true nature of the documents.

MCLELLIN COLLECTION

In my book, *Tracking the White Salamander*, I devoted an entire chapter to the McLellin collection—a group of documents Mark Hofmann maintained were embarrassing to the Mormon Church. I stated that, "All the evidence, therefore, points to the inescapable conclusion that the McLellin collection was only a figment of Mark Hofmann's imagination." Mr. Hofmann himself has now admitted that he never had such a collection. When he was specifically asked if he had attempted to find the McLellin collection, Mark Hofmann replied: "No" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 521). As early as October 25, 1985, the *Chicago Tribune* referred to the McLellin transaction as an attempt to blackmail the Mormon Church:

SALT LAKE CITY—After questioning a leading authority on rare documents, police here are piecing together a theory that the wave of bombings that hit this city last week was part of a daring scheme to conceal an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.

The scenario revolves around a plan to threaten the church leadership with a collection of artifacts deliberately concocted to appear particularly damaging to the credibility of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith.

After the Salamander letter was published in its entirety by the Mormon Church, the news media widely disseminated the story that Joseph Smith was involved in the occult. This publicity disturbed Mormon leaders. Apostle Oaks was very upset about the matter and on August 16, 1985, he accused the news

media of “having a field day.” Since church leaders were very embarrassed by the publicity concerning the Salamander letter, this set up the climate for one of Hofmann’s greatest deceptions—his claim to have the so-called McLellin collection. Hofmann capitalized on the Mormon officials’ fear that the embarrassing documents in the McLellin collection would fall into the hands of the enemies of the church. In his confession, Mark Hofmann testified as follows:

MR. STOTT: Let’s go on the McClellin Collection because some of that goes back pretty far, we’ll talk a little bit about that, okay?

A. Okay.

Q. I would like to do that just part of it, not up to the murders but early on when did you developed an idea concerning the McClellin Collection.

A. When did I develop it?

Q. Yes, the idea.

A. Probably around 1982 or ‘83-type of thing, I would guess.

Q. Why were you doing this? What was in back of your mind? Was some scheme starting to form?

A. Not at that time. It was just like all the other stories I told people just to make them think I was the great document sleuth or whatever, that I had located some other important documents. Also, the idea would have been in locating some known, lost documents, it would have given credibility to me as a document finder as far as many of these documents were known to have been missing or lost or whatever. But where other forgeries, without any basis in Church history, as far as any in written basis in Church history, no basis.

Q. Did you ever attempt to find a so-called McClellin Collection?

A. No.

Q. Did you ever go out and do some research or visit anybody?

A. No/ Dawn Tracy did.

Q. For example, were you aware and we are talking about before 1985 of the Hugh Nibley Story with the McClellin Collection, for example?

A. Yes, I heard that. I can’t remember exactly when. I heard both that he had discovered its location and there were also rumors to the effect that the second facsimile to the Book of Abraham was in those documents.

Q. When it was all said and done what did you purport the McClellin Collection to contain?

A. I told different people different things. I told people it contained the second facsimile to the Book of Abraham and also some other information. I told them it contained affidavits from a number of Church leaders and other individuals in the Church such

as Emma Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith himself, I believe. I believe I said it contained an affidavit of some sort from his father, Joseph Smith, Sr. I described it as containing a number of diaries or journals.

Q. Before you approached Al Rust was the story you were giving out, were you emphasizing the controversial nature of the material—

A. Yes, with Al Rust I believe.

Q. I know you did with Al, but with other people during that time?

A. Yes. Most historians would feel like any historical Church matter from that early time period would have been controversial in nature. In other words, varied somewhat from the official, or history which has evolved.

Q. So you went to Al Rust in April of ‘85 and you get \$150,000. What did you need that much money for in April of 1985?

A. You tell me from my bank records. Where did the money go?

Q. The money was given to you in a cashier’s check and you and Rust got on a plane and it never went in to your account?

A. That’s right. It went into various sources, do you want me to name the sources where, as I remember?

Q. Yes if—

MR. YENGICH: No.

A. The money went to various sources. That trip we went to a New York book fair. It purchased a number of books. Let’s see, that wouldn’t have been nearly \$150,000, obviously.

Q. So you bought books at a book fair?

A. I remember I owed Lynn Jacobs some money and I remember purchasing some books for him at the fair also.

Q. And when you got home, Mr. Rust was, after a period of time somewhat concerned about his purchase?

A. Yes.

Q. And you showed him three receipts?

A. Yes.

Q. That you had mailed something from New York?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you actually mail something from New York?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. What was that?

A. They would have been the books I purchased in New York.

Q. What did you tell Mr. Rust that you mailed from New York?

A. In fact, I still have those receipts incidentally. I told him it was the McClellin Collection.

.....
 Q. There came a time, and we are talking March of '85, and your deal was to bring it back and sell it from his office and yet this went on until October. Why was it you were able to put him off? Was this frustrating to you? Was it your plan to put him off that long or what was going on?

A. No, my plan wasn't to put him off that long but it just worked that way, just kept on going. That it, I believe that initially was the idea that the Oath of a Freeman would provide the funds but then when that didn't happen, I approached the Church, with President Hinkley specifically, with the fact that the McClellin Collection, I wanted the Church to obtain it or at least to prevent some people from obtaining it who might use it in a negative sort of fashion against the Church.

[Q.] Let me ask, you this: You say you approached President Hinkley directly. Is this before you were introduced to Pinock by Christensen?

A. Yes.

Q. When would this have—

MR. BIGGS: Let's give you some surroundings. You got the money from First Interstate the last week of June of '85 and that was the time President Hinkley was in East Germany.

A. I remember. My intention was, I tried to get Carden to put up the funds for the McClellin Collection but before talking to him I had talked to President Hinkley and gotten his support as far as we need to make the purchase.

MR. STOTT: Do you remember when you first talked to President Hinkley about this?

A. President Hinkley, I told him that a person in Salt Lake had gone in with me on it, had put up the money for it. That I was anticipating being able to come up with the money from another source, which didn't happen. That this other person was getting anxious to get his money out of it and that I might, and I was feeling him out as far as the possibility of getting money from the church to make the purchase. We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed to get some money to let him know.

Q. Was there an idea here conveyed here that the collection would then be sold to the Church or donated to the Church?

A. The idea was to prevent it from falling in to the enemy's hands.

Q. What did you tell him about what it contained and what the enemy was doing?

A. Not too much. How can I put this?

MR. YENGICH: Put it honestly.

A. Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy's hands, or whatever. And that I would, if he wanted to know, if he asked the questions or whatever, this was a previous technique or thing that we had done. I guess its almost a way of protecting him from knowing something he doesn't want to know. And his interest wasn't so much in having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace where—In fact, I would almost say he almost didn't want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did not fall in to the enemy's hands which was good since I knew I didn't have it, I knew the Church couldn't obtain it.

Q. Did you tell him what was contained in the letters?

A. I don't believe I gave him any details.

Q. Did you tell him there was controversial items?

A. Yes.

.....
 Q. So Hinkley had already been told by you there was a Salt Lake investor?

A. Right, and he was anxious to get his money.

Q. That was Rust?

A. Right.

.....
 Q. Did he ask you why in the world does Al Rust say we've got the collection?

A. No, he didn't say anything about that.

Q. Did you try to explain that?

A. No. I actually had not seen the letter. I just knew something, Al Rust told me about its contents.

Q. Wasn't that a problem that Al Rust was saying that, you know, I understand the Church has it and, of course, the Church knew they didn't have it?

A. Yes, no, that didn't raise a problem in my mind because I knew that Hinkley knew that I was protecting the collection from Rust and anyone else as far as where it was. He knew I had previously told him that I had the material in a safe deposit box in Salt Lake City and that.

See, Hinkley, his concern was that if this disgruntled investor, he wanted to make sure he didn't reach the point where he would make public or try to obtain the collection. The actual meeting that I had with him was more to—The idea I had when I went to Arizona to talk to Carden was that he would obtain phone confirmation, telephone confirmation from President Hinkley that it would be nice of him to buy out this other investor named Al Rust or whatever. Although I didn't realize that he wouldn't be available, that he would be, that he was out of the country. I've communicated with President Hinkley when he's been out of the state before but hadn't, and found that it was difficult to get any sort of confirmation or communication with him when he was in East Germany.

Q. So your idea was to go to Carden?

A. And explain the situation to him and have Carden receive confirmation from Hinkley that Hinkley was aware of the transaction and that it would be, that he would confirm the transaction, that Hinkley would.

Q. What was the transaction to be?

A. That Carden would, first of all Carden wanted—What he wanted to do, if he obtained permission or approval from Hinkley he would just donate the money. I told him all I wanted was a loan and I would pay him off. I was still confident at some time the Oath of a Freeman would come by so I represented it as a loan.

Q. So you represented to him that you had the collection and wanted to get your money back?

A. Yes, I believe.

MR. BIGGS: Was it the understanding that Mr. Carden was going to pay off Rust's interest in the collection?

A. That was the understanding which I left Hinkley with.

.....

Q. What was in your mind. Because you didn't have a collection?

A. What was in my mind is President Hinkley would be happy if eventually I could tell him that I had seen to it that the document would not fall in to the wrong hands. My speaking with Hinkley, like I said wasn't so much—, See you have to remember that this was after the time of the Salamander and the Church was a little bit concerned as far as its public relations in what they were obtaining, if they were trying to buy up embarrassing documents or whatever. He wasn't so concerned, especially when he found out other people knew about this material, to actually obtain it, as to just see that the right people got it.

In other words, it wasn't until Pinock entered the picture and I needed to add, I didn't go into—With Pinock I needed to sound more straight as far as the Church would actually end up with it. That's what was that whole idea as far as the Church actually taking possession of it. We didn't discuss the Church would take possession of it when I spoke with President Hinkley.

Q. The last day or so in June, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?

A. Altogether?

Q. Prior to meeting with Pinock?

A. Prior to meeting with Pinock?

Q. Yes in the last week of June?

A. I would guess three times.

Q. After meeting with Pinock and up to the bombings, how many times did you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?

A. I believe once or twice/

.....

MR. STOTT: Why did you include the Papyrus as part of the McClellin Collection? Did you have information from some sources that he might have it?

A. Just from the rumors that originated with Hugh Nibley, as far as the Papyrus.

Q. Didn't you also add the so-called Canadian Revelation?

A. Yes, that was also supposed to be contained. In fact, I remember specifically when I included that in the list of the material that was in the McClellin Collection was when I was eating lunch one time with Brent Metcalf. I think I mentioned it a couple times before.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 519-534, and 536)

5. GOOD AND BAD FORGERIES

The Library of Congress was asked by the Schiller Wapner Galleries, . . . which also owns part of the "Oath of a Freeman," to authenticate the document. In a statement mentioning that the discovery of the oath "would be one of the most important and exciting finds of the century," the Library said its examination "found nothing inconsistent with a mid-17th-century attribution, though additional tests remain to be conducted." (Undated clipping from the New York Times)

In *Tracking the White Salamander*, pages 119-120, I wrote the following:

The Oath of a Freeman, as far as monetary value is concerned, was supposed to be Mark Hofmann's greatest discovery. Mr. Hofmann, in fact, claimed **it was worth 1.5 million dollars!** Although this figure may be inflated, experts agree that it would be worth a great deal of money if it could be proven authentic. What Hofmann claimed to have was the only extant copy of the first document printed in America. . . .

When I first learned of the Oath of a Freeman I was very skeptical with regard to its authenticity. It reminded me too much of the story of the Salamander letter. The Salamander letter was supposed to have been obtained for only \$25 and sold for \$40,000 (1,600 times the original price). Hofmann claimed he obtained the *Oath of a Freeman* for only \$25 and wanted to sell it for \$1,500,000, which would be **60,000 times its original purchase price!** I also felt that the Oath would be the very type of thing a forger would want to produce. The text fits easily on just one side of a single sheet of paper. In fact, the Hofmann document is only 4 by 6 inches in size.

In his confession, Mark Hofmann freely admits that he forged the *Oath of a Freeman* and gives some fascinating details concerning how it was done:

Q. And I'm also showing you a negative and a Velox and a receipt of another document titled the Oath of a Freeman. And a kind of oldish looking printed document. The Oath of a Freeman, let me start with the Oath, if I can describe it as that. Do you have any familiarity with that?

A. Yes, I had that made and printed.

Q. Okay, I'll show you the receipt under the name Mike Hansen, 448-4584.

Q. Did you use the name Mark Harris or Mike Hansen?

A. I would get [guess?] the word Hansen was used, but Harris was written down but it's hard to [for?] me to say.

Q. Is that your telephone number?

A. I believe that used to be one of my telephone numbers, yes.

Q. I'll tell you right now it is. Also there is a \$2 check written on your checking account around that same time. Do you happen to know what the \$2 was for? To DeBouzek Printing, I'm speaking of.

A. The only thing I can imagine would be I only had \$45 with me and it looks like the cost of this was \$47 so I would have, or when I had \$45 with me, I mean in cash, so I would have written a check to make up the balance.

Q. Where did you—The problem is, of course, that DeBouzek doesn't know for sure. They don't have anything for sure for \$2 so they said obviously he didn't have enough cash. The Oath of a Freeman that starts out the first line, "Give thanks, all yee people give thanks to the Lord." Why did you have that done?

A. My intention was to use this, a printing from this at Argosy Bookstore in order to, well, my intention was to smuggle or take into Argosy Bookstore a printing of this priced at \$25, which I recall I wrote on the back. And purchase it for \$25, getting a receipt from them with the title Oath of a Freeman on it and use that receipt in order to establish a provenance for the document, which actually was not used. I decided I did not like the appearance of this document so I made some new artwork and copied with a photocopy machine, on to a piece of old paper, my version of the Oath of a Freeman, and I used that for the purpose that I originally intended to use this one for.

Q. Similar technique to the one that Lynn Jacobs described?

A. Yes. He taught me that technique. Now, I don't know if you want this on the record or not but Lynn Jacobs, as far as the technique he used was not to defraud, you know, so I hate to associate him with any forgery techniques since he was not a part of any of this.

Q. So that is the plate that you had prepared on March 8th. You didn't actually use the printed material from that plate to salt, if I may use that term, Argosy Book?

A. That's a good term. No, I did not. I used the same idea but not this identical printing.

Q. Why \$25?

A. Having looked at items on the second floor of Argosy Book in their Broadside or print, or engravings department, that seemed to me to be a reasonable price for what appeared to be a 19th Century document of this type.

Q. . . . Now, March 25th, 1985 there's a receipt, M. Hansen for Oath of a Freeman. . . . Is that you as well?

A. Yes. The receipt would have been for a plate similar to this, yes.

Q. What did you do with the plate on March 25th, 1985?

A. I am not sure if it was on that day but soon thereafter I used it to print.

Q. If this will refresh your recollection, I can tell you that approximately between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. the next day you were on a plane to New York.

A. Yes. I probably would have stayed up all night printing, which actually would only take a few minutes but then aging the document, manufacturing ink probably at the same time, both the printing and the writing ink.

Q. How did you prepare the printers ink for the Oath?

A. I knew that this document would be scrutinized so I took pains to assure that the ink would not differ from the 17th Century printing ink. I manufactured the ink.

Q. You were describing for us the ink manufacture.

A. Yes. I got some, I obtained some paper from the same time period, approximately.

Q. Where?

A. This paper would have probably come, would have definitely come from Brigham Young University Library. The paper did not have printing on it, which I guess they'll be happy to hear that. That paper I burnt in an apparatus to make carbon black. The reason I went through this trouble is because I thought that there was a possibility that a carbon 14 test would be performed on the ink.

Q. Go ahead.

A. The apparatus that I used had a glass tube chimney which caught the carbon and that's how I accumulated it. It was mixed with a linseed oil.

Q. Any special linseed oil?

A. It would have been chemically, it was chemically pure linseed oil which I treated to some extent.

Q. How did you treat the linseed oil?

A. Well, I'm going into all of this. You are just dying to hear this, aren't you. The linseed oil was heavily boiled, which thickens it and then it was burned.

Q. Why?

A. I was basically following a recipe from 17th Century ink making recipe.

Q. Where did you get that?

A. From a book. I know you will ask me where I saw the book, which I again, I can probably find for you but I can't describe. I believe it is on, it's a microfilm book from that time period in the University of Utah Library but I can't remember the title of it.

Q. Okay, go ahead.

A. I also added some tannic acid or at least a solution of tannic acid which had dried. It was made from a leather binding from that same time period which had been boiled in distilled water until it turned a nice brown color. There's also some bees wax added, just ordinary bees wax, nothing special to it, and I believe that's all.

Q. And that made the printers ink?

A. That was the printers ink.

Q. After you made the printers ink, you have the plate, picked it up on the 25th, you're at your house where you lived?

A. Right, I was downstairs in my office and printed it. I would have rolled the ink on to the plate. I would have put the paper, that I haven't yet described where I got that, on the plate. A piece of felt behind it, another thick metal copper plate on top of it all and pressed with a C-clamp.

Q. Did you alter the plate in any way? Grind down any of the letters?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Why was that done?

A. For a couple reasons. One being so that it could not be identified as being printed from a zinc plate which I guess is the best reason of all why I did it.

Q. How did you do it?

A. First of all, the whole plate would have been treated in some process with iron wool to round out the corners of the lettering. Some of the letters would have been ground even finer with a small drill containing a fine grinding tip stone. In fact, I believe that was done first and then afterwards the whole thing was iron woolled.

MR. BIGGS: . . . I remember reading in the Library of Congress analysis that went on for umteen hundred pages, they say it obviously came from printing letters because they were different. They pressed on the paper in different amounts and so that it was down further in to the paper and so forth.

A. Part of that would have been the unevenness of the pressure applied by the C-clamp which again is typical, I believe of the crude printing that would have been done. And the other is I believe that too, some letters I purposefully ground down. I can't remember though how or what method I used or how I decided. It may have been random but I can't remember how I did that.

.

Q. Now, let's turn over and look at this. Do you recognize that?

A. I don't believe that I ever saw the negative before but I certainly recognize the photograph.

Q. What is it?

A. It is the Oath of a Freeman, meaning the one with the border around it that purports to be from the 17th Century.

Q. Who created the artwork from which that negative was produced?

A. I did.

Q. Now the receipt for the preparation of the plate says March 25th. How long did it take you to develop the artwork that you took in on the 25th for DeBouzek to make the plate from?

A. Several days. Probably more than a week.

Q. How long had you been developing—Maybe the best word to use would be how long was the conceptual stage for the Oath of a Freeman?

A. Probably more than a month before I actually began working on it. Meaning in that time I was doing research on it.

Q. Where primarily was the research done?

A. I started out in the University of Utah Library. They have a printed facsimile edition of the Bay Psalm Book. Also have a copy, I believe, of two different volumes of that book on microfilm. I studied all three of those sources. In fact, that is the source of the type that was used in preparing the artwork. I also used it to research such things as the spelling of words, the characteristics of the printings.

.

Q. Did you do that with the spelling of the words to some extent?

A. To some extent. The spelling I believe reflects the spelling of the composer who composed the Bay Psalm Book.

Q. How about the border?

A. The border also came from the Bay Psalm Book.

Q. I have somewhere in this book of mine a page from Book 4 of the Bay Psalm Book and it has, or appears to have—

A. Yes, this is the page of the 90th Psalm and it has the same type face as what I used in creating the border. Particularly look at the right, the furthest right character on that page. It is identical to the characters which I composed in the border of the Oath.

.

Q. How is it physically done? Tell me the process by which the very last character of the 4th Book, Psalm 90 Book, the border—

A. These designs also appear in other pages in the book. It was a simple matter of Xeroxing from the facsimile of the Psalm Book several Xeroxes of the pages which I wanted to copy the flourishes or designs. I then used a razor blade, actually an xacto knife to cut out the letters and the designs that I wanted. I glued them on a piece of paper and that was on, and then after they were glued on a piece of paper I Xeroxed my composure and that was the artwork which I took into DeBouzek. . . .

Q. I think you told me this but tell me again because I've obviously forgotten. The type face for the body of the Oath of a Freeman, where that came from?

A. Came from the Psalm Book also. The Bay Psalm Book.

.

Q. How many original forged Oaths of a Freeman did you do in March of '85?

A. Just the one, which is possessed by Justin Schiller.

Q. So the one you gave to Wilding, Jensen, et al., that was done after at a different time?

A. Yes.

Q. Than the Justin Schiller?

A. Yes. That would have been done probably the day before Wilding received it, much later. I had no intentions at the time that I produced the Oath, which is now in New York, of ever producing another one. However, I still had the plate and I was at that time under considerable pressure to satisfy Wilding, et al. And that is when I produced the other copy of the Oath. My intention was never to let it be marketed.

Q. What was your intention?

A. Thinking that that would be too great a coincidence to have two copies of the Oath. My intention was when the Oath, owned by me, which was in the possession of Justin Schiller, when they sold it use that money and claim that that was this particular Oath and pay off my debtors, namely Wilding and company and never to have the second Oath known on the market.

Q. And they would have given you back the second Oath?

A. Well, yes. The original idea was that I would maintain possession of it anyway and so my belief was there would be no way of them nothing [knowing?] when one Oath sold that it was a different Oath than the one which they believed they had an ownership interest in/

.....
Q. There is a little something written on the back, on the verso.

A. This is is [*sic*] the one in New York.

Q. Correct.

A. Yes, it's Elizabethan handwriting which says, as I remember, Oath of a Freeman, or something, Oath of the Freeman or Oath of Freeman, something like that.

Q. Did you do that?

A. Yes, I did.

.....
Q. What type of ink did you use?

A. Ink of my own composure. Tannic acid, ferric sulfate, probably gum arabic and logwood, as I remember.

Q. What did you use to write it with?

A. Quill pen.

.....
Q. Did you create the quill that you write with?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Out of what?

A. A feather and a razor blade.

Q. Any particular type of feather?

A. I believe it was a turkey feather.

.....
A. By the time I forged the Oath I considered myself a pretty good forger. I thought I had a pretty good knowledge of different techniques that would be used in analyzing it.

.....
Q. We are doing an invaluable service here I guess. Did you attempt to age the document after it was printed and the verso was placed on it?

A. Yes. That's when I would have aged it. As far as the oxidizing of the writing on the back, the handwriting, I believe that would have been done with ammonia. It might have also been done with suction. I believe I described that technique before.

Q. Well, there was some talk at one time of placing it in a display case right next to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Did you have any inclination it was going to be that big?

A. For the reasons I just gave, it wouldn't be surprising. It is obviously a valuable historical document. I wasn't too concerned with having it displayed with the Declaration of Independence. My major concern was making as much off of it as I could.

Q. Why did you use Schiller and Wapner? Why not just do it yourself?

A. I had a good relationship with them and I thought that they were, they had better contacts than I in making whatever negotiations.

Q. What was your initial negotiation with them concerning what they would be paid for acting as your agent in the sale of this Oath originally?

A. Originally it was that if it sold for one million dollars or more, we would split 50/50 the proceeds. If it sold for less than a million dollars, I had a right to decline, in which case they were to receive nothing.

.....
Q. Then there is some document on August 5th concerning, therefore and so forth. Okay, on August 12th, '85, the American Antiquarian Society writes Justin Schiller and makes some observations concerning the Oath, right?

A. Yes.

Q. And wants it sent to New Mexico for a cyclotron test?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you know anything about cyclotron testing at the time you prepared the document?

A. Yes.

Q. Did it concern you that it may be tested by cyclotron method?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. Because I felt that the document would pass. Incidentally, I never heard. Did it or didn't it?

MR. BIGGS: Well, it depends on who you talk to. If you talk to Schiller and Wapner, it passed. But if you talk to the people who actually did the tests, they were not that positive about it.

MR. RICH: I'm sure when you called them they were backing up as far as they could.

A. Yes, I'm sure it[if?] it wasn't for the other suspicion, i.e. the bombings, etc., I believe it would have passed very well.

.....
Q. Where did you get the paper for the second Oath, the one that was given to the Wilding group for collateral?

A. The book, the first paper for the first Oath came out of was a series of volumes so I had already identified where the paper could be had so it didn't take me long to drive down to Provo and pilfer a copy from the BYU Library from their old library.

.....
A. . . . I was going to say you asked me before on these documents what I consider the giveaways to be. There is, I believe, a couple giveaways, I believe on the printing which I haven't heard mentioned by the experts as far as characteristics which would establish it to be fraudulent. One of them is on the 5th and 6th lines of the document there is the word, *subject*, with the *J* in *subject* and underneath it, the word *do*. The

J extends below the top of the letter *D* which could not happen in genuine type. I discovered that the day I first showed the document to Justin Schiller before I could do anything about it. And was in fact, on the airplane coming back. So it would have been like that night or the next day or something.

There are, I believe a couple others, or at least one other place where that same sort of thing happens where the typed letters seem to be going through each other, which is impossible in normal type. I see another one, in the first, in the parenthesis where it says *in which free men are to deal*. In the first parenthesis on the top part that parenthesis is higher than the bottom of the *why* in the word *my*.

In looking at old type and if someone else looked at old type they would be able to look at that characteristic and right there be able to say that it was made photographically rather than with a genuine type.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 230-240, 246-247, 250-252, 254-255, 259-263, 265, 274-275, 280-281, 285-286)

OTHER FORGERIES

One of Mark Hofmann's best forgeries was a letter that was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, in 1829. Mormon leaders rejoiced over the letter and it was hailed as a vindication of Joseph Smith's work. On August 24, 1982, *Seventh East Press* printed the following:

The letter mentions Joseph Smith's being led to the location of the gold Book of Mormon plates by an angel. "This pretty much knocks in the head the old evolution theory of Joseph's doctrinal development," [Dean] Jessee said, alluding to the concept that Joseph Smith invented the stories of the First Vision, origin of the Book of Mormon, etc., later in his life in order to vindicate his prophetic calling. "Here's Lucy, repeating the Moroni story in 1829, when the curtain of Church history was just going up. Obviously Joseph didn't think all this up later on."

In *Tracking*, pages 100 and 102, I demonstrated that the Lucy Smith letter had parallels to a genuine letter Mrs. Smith wrote to her brother on January 6, 1831. I suggested that Mark Hofmann or one of his friends obtained a copy of the 1831 letter and that it provided structural material for the 1829 letter. In his confession, Mark Hofmann admits that he did have access to the 1831 letter and used it to create the 1829 letter:

Q. . . . Let's talk about the Lucy Mack Smith Letter. Can you tell us the origin of that? First of all, is that a forged document?

A. Yes, it is. That is the origin of it is that I forged it.

Q. Would you tell us where the idea came from and when?

A. I actually told Brent Ashworth that such a document was in existence even before I attempted to forge it or even research it. He expressed an interest in it and I eventually got around to making the forgery, which I believe was sold to him the day that it was complete . . .

. . . .

Q. To come up with that historical information content, how did you do it?

A. I obtained a Xerox of a genuine Lucy Mack Smith Letter dated 1831 which is in the Church Archives.

Q. Let me give you a copy of that.

A. That was the source of some of the wording and also the handwriting of the document.

Q. Is that the letter you're referring to in 1831 to her brother and sister?

A. Yes, this is the one.

Q. So you used that for handwriting and for style?

A. Yes.

Q. And what, word order?

A. Yes, that was all taken into account as I forged the text.

. . . .

Q. Where did you obtain the paper?

A. It would have been from a book that I believe is on the 4th floor of the University of Utah library and on the east wall, yes that's right, towards the northeast corner of the building.

Q. Postmark on it, how did you create that?

A. It would have been from a plate that I would have created from a genuine folded cover.

Q. Do you remember where you got the genuine postmark from as your sample?

A. No, I obtained Palmyra oval postmarks from a number of sources.

Q. Was this a plate later destroyed by you?

A. Yes. I believe so. You haven't found it, have you?

. . . .

Q. Do you know where you would have obtained your copy of the letter?

A. I would have obtained it from the Church, either with permission of Don Schmidt who sometimes let me have Xeroxes, or from another historian, but I know the original is in the possession of the Church.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 333-335, 339-341)

In *Tracking*, pages 93-98, I showed that Mark Hofmann forged letters by Book of Mormon witnesses David Whitmer and Martin Harris. The Harris letter appeared to be in the handwriting of his son, but the signature was supposed to have been penned by Harris himself. The letters were both addressed to a man by the name of Walter Conrad. In these letters Whitmer and Harris both reaffirmed their testimony to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The Martin Harris letter was considered exceptionally faith promoting because it was the only signed letter in which Harris told how the “Angel” revealed the Book of Mormon plates to him. I first began criticizing the 1873 Martin Harris letter in 1984 in *The Money-Digging Letters*. On page 19 of that booklet, I stated that the signature appeared too good for a man “who was just four months from his ninetieth birthday.” In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1985, I noted that the 1873 Martin Harris letter and the Salamander letter appeared to be diametrically opposed to each other. I pointed out differences in both style and content which seemed to show they did not come from the same mind.

In *Tracking*, page 94, I showed that document expert William Flyn testified that the letter purported to have been written by David Whitmer had cracked ink and was not authentic. In his confession, Mark Hofmann revealed the following:

Q. Dave Whitmer to Walter Conrad. This was an 1982 document which— Is that a forged document?

A. Yes, I forged it.

Q. What is the origin or idea behind this document?

A. Asking myself what a valuable document would be and concluding that one written by one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon concerning their witness to the Book of Mormon would be worth some money.

Q. The motive was money?

A. Yes.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 411-412)

On page 414, Mr. Hofmann was asked how he aged the ink. He responded: “Looking at it I would guess it was ammonia, just because the ink is more of a golden color, but it could be hydrogen peroxide.” On the next page Hofmann said that although “President Hinkley agreed to pay \$10,000.00” for the letter, he said that he would let it go “for \$5,000.00.” Former Mormon Archivist Donald Schmidt, on the other hand, testified that Mr. Hofmann received “a check for \$10,000” for the David Whitmer letter.

In *Tracking*, page 98, I pointed out that it is unfortunate that “the Martin Harris letter to Conrad

cannot be tested in the same way as the David Whitmer letter. According to the Church’s press release, page 3, it ‘was written in indelible pencil on lined paper.’ There is, therefore, no way to determine when it was actually written. The forger would probably be smart enough not to use a modern pencil that might contain some 20th century ingredients.” Since the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office had no hard evidence against the 1873 Martin Harris letter, Mark Hofmann was not charged with forging it. Consequently, Hofmann’s attorney tried to prevent prosecutors from discussing it:

Q. Now again, we’ve kind of covered this point but I just want to ask you about that January 13, 1873 Martin Harris Letter.

MR. YENGICH: It’s not charged.

Fortunately, Mark Hofmann had already “let the cat out of the bag” when discussing the David Whitmer letter. The reader will remember that both the Whitmer and the Harris letter were supposed to have been sent to the same man, “Walter Conrad.” If one postulates that the Martin Harris letter is genuine, then Mr. Hofmann would have obtained the name “Conrad” for the David Whitmer letter from that letter. Hofmann, however, testified that he obtained the name “Conrad” through research:

A. . . . The handwriting [for the David Whitmer letter] would have come from a Xerox that I had of a genuine letter. Walter Conrad, I believe that I looked that up in a Salt Lake City directory from 1873, probably.

Q. Who was he? Was he supposed to be somebody important?

A. No. Just nobody. I believe he was a clerk that worked for ZCMI at the time but somebody that may have written to the witnesses asking for their written testimonies. There were autograph collectors even back in those days.

Since Mark Hofmann obtained the name “Walter Conrad” from research, it is stretching one’s credulity to believe that he would find a genuine Martin Harris letter addressed to the same Mr. Conrad. Hofmann’s testimony, therefore, demonstrates that the Martin Harris letter is also a forgery. The reader will find additional evidence against the letter’s authenticity and a discussion of possible sources in *Tracking*, pages 95-98.

Mr. Hofmann was charged with forging another letter signed by David Whitmer and Peter Whitmer. The letter is supposed to be in the handwriting of Peter Whitmer and is addressed to Bithel Todd. The testimony Mark Hofmann gives concerning this document is

very odd. It seems, in fact, that Hofmann is willing to concede that he may have traced the contents from another authentic letter written by somebody else. It is strange indeed that the “master forger” Hofmann would resort to tracing from another letter, especially since he claims that he doubts that any of Peter Whitmer’s “handwriting is known” (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 319). Mr. Hofmann testified as follows:

A. I remember, I believe, having other folded letters addressed to Mr. Bithel Todd. It is possibly [*sic*] that I would have copied the text of a genuine document and substituted the names, Peter Whitmer, David Whitmer.

.....

Q. Let me show you what was found in your car, because it’s burned. Either in your car or in your house. As you can see it is an envelope with another envelope with the name Whitney Todd with a similar address as on the letter.

A. Yes, this is obviously the handwriting that I was duplicating.

Q. Do you know if you used that to trace, where one or the other was traced?

A. I don’t believe so but do you have a ruler?

Q. I’m just asking if you can independently remember.

A. I can’t remember tracing it. It appears that I did trace it which would have been something I rarely did and I don’t remember doing in this case. But according to measurements it is probably what I did, that is traced the forged Peter Whitmer document from. Unfortunately the letter part of this is here. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 319, 321-322)

On pages 410-411, Mr. Hofmann testified: “. . . I believe that there’s a good chance since I traced the address leaf, that I would have traced the other part of the document as far as the wording of the text, other than, of course, the Peter Whitmer, David Whitmer signatures which I added.” One thing that document examiners always look for is evidence that handwriting has been traced from some other source. Why Mr. Hofmann would consider such a crude method is hard to understand. It reminds me of his use of a metal plate to print the Jack London inscription when all he had to do was write it out in the same way he created the other documents. Mr. Hofmann’s testimony with regard to the Bithel Todd letter will undoubtedly be of interest to those who are looking for co-conspirators.

In *Tracking*, page 70, I discussed one of Hofmann’s poorest forgeries—the Betsy Ross letter:

The method in which the purported Betsy Ross letter was produced was even more bizarre. Instead

of the letter being written out in a consistent style (as in the case of the Salamander letter), an old letter written by someone else with the first name Betsy was obtained. The last name was removed from the letter and the word Ross was inserted in its place. The date also had to be altered so that it would fit into the period in which Betsy Ross actually lived.

On page 119 of the same book under Betsy Ross Letter, the forensic evidence against the Betsy Ross letter was presented. In view of the evidence, I could not help but wonder why a man who “had the ability to create” the Salamander letter, the Lucy Smith letter and the Grandin contract, would use such an “outlandish” method in producing the Betsy Ross letter. In his testimony, Mark Hofmann explained that he never actually intended to sell the letter:

Q. I’m showing you a document we found in your home. It alleged to be a letter written by Betsy Ross to Arebella Smith. Have you seen that before?

A. I have.

Q. Anything that you did to that letter?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell me what.

A. I altered the date . . .

Q. How was that done?

A. Probably with both a chemical and a mechanical process as far as development. It’s hard for me say exactly how it was done without ultraviolet light. The Ross word of the name Betsy was also added to the letter. Both of them were done very crudely as far as I had no anticipation of offering or selling this as a genuine Betsy Ross letter. But it was basically done to satisfy the investors, namely Shannon Flynn and Wilford Carden.

Q. Where did you get the letter to begin with?

A. It was a folded letter I would have obtained from a dealer, I can’t remember for certain who.

Q. Is it an authentic document except for the changes which you have mentioned?

A. Except for those changes, it is.

.....

Q. Was there a last name other than Ross after Betsy which you eradicated to put Ross there?

A. I believe I did but I can’t say for certain, although I could with the right equipment.

Q. And you don’t know for sure where you got the letter?

A. I’ll make a statement as far as eradicating ink for your experts.

Q. Okay.

A. The best way to eradicate ink is chemically, not by using acid or some sort of oxidizer to eliminate it, but to actually wash it chemically from the paper rather than changing it chemically.

Q. How is that done?

A. The way that I probably did it on this was ultrasonically and probably with some sort of mild soap solution. I had, although it wasn't confiscated, in my office, a small ultrasonic cleaner that I had previously used to clean coins which also I used to sometimes eradicate ink.

.....
MR. BIGGS: Turn it over, if you would. Any changes on the outside?

A. On the address leaf?

Q. That's correct?

A. Not that I remember. I don't remember doing anything at all. Like I say, my only attempt was to date it around the time of her life and to add a name. It was a simple thing, and then to make the ink appear to be the same ink as the text of the letter, but it wasn't intended to fool any experts or anything.
(Hofmann's Confession, pages 509-512)

In *Tracking*, pages 114-117, I presented the evidence against the letter of Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham. In his confession, page 387, Hofmann frankly admitted, "Of course, I forged it." On page 117 of *Tracking*, I mentioned that there were a number of books that could have inspired this forgery. One of books I referred to was T. B. H. Stenhouse's book *The Rocky Mountain Saints*. When Mr. Hofmann was asked where he got the information about the possible existence of a letter from Joseph Smith to Jonathan Dunham, he replied:

... I believe that there is a book by Steinhouse which mentions it which was footnoted in a book by Dawn [Donna] Hill entitled *Joseph Smith, the First Mormon*. As I remember Dawn Hill is the first source that I remember for that rumor and I believe she footnotes Steinhouse's book and I believe that there were also some journal references I saw at the Church Historian's Office to that same effect. (page 390)

Mr. Hofmann goes on to state that the Dunham letter was a hasty production which was not completed until after he received the money:

A. Yes. First let me say this is a very poor forgery and it was quickly done. It was done because I was pressed for funds and knew that I could get them immediately and I succeeded in doing that.

Q. When you say poor, why is it a poor forgery in your estimation?

A. I could show you a lot of bad things about it. It is not up to the quality of some of my better attempts, if I can say that humbly.

Q. You're talking about the handwriting, or what?

A. Yes. The handwriting is poor, the ink is certainly poor. I didn't make any attempts, as I would have done with more time, to imitate the ink that I saw Willard Richards use in the jail. Any expert will look at it and tell you it is a crappy job. Let me choose a better word.

Q. That describes it.

A. Okay.

Q. Who was it to be sold to?

A. It was sold, actually before being complete, to Dick Marks in Arizona who, I think who wired the money to my account actually before I had completed forging the document, and I soon thereafter sat down and wrote it out and sent it to him.

Q. So the document was specifically created for him?

A. Yes.

Q. How much did you sell it for?

A. I was desperate for money and so not as much as it is certainly worth. I can't remember exactly. It seems like five or 10 thousand or something.

MR. BIGGS: Does 20 thousand sound about right?

A. Was it 20 thousand? Yes, \$20,000, I believe it was.

(Hofmann's Confession, pages 393-395)

In *Tracking*, page 114, I made this statement concerning the Dunham letter: "This is a document that seems to have been created specifically to fill a request that Brent Ashworth made of Mark Hofmann." Mr. Hofmann testified that he had "previously" mentioned the letter to Ashworth but said: "I don't believe that he brought up the subject or discussed it initially" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 388). He admitted, however, that he had made the Whitmer letter specifically for Brent Ashworth: "The idea was spurred, as I remember, by an interest which Brent Ashworth had in acquiring a Whitmer document. Which I basically manufactured to order" (page 317). With regard to the Dunham letter, in his testimony at Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Brent Ashworth claimed that he told Mark Hofmann that he was extremely interested in obtaining a letter by Joseph Smith from Carthage jail and that "three to four months thereafter, Mark indicated to me that he had located a Carthage jail letter; . . ." Mr. Ashworth claimed that Hofmann told him that he "would have a first option to purchase that letter . . ." Ashworth wanted the letter so badly that he would have been willing to pay up to \$30,000 for it. Mark Hofmann, however, sold it to Dr. Richard Marks for \$20,000. Ashworth soon became aware of the fact that Hofmann had sold the letter out

from under him and became extremely upset. He was so angry that he “drove straight to Mark’s house” at night. He thought that he must “have got Mark out of bed or at least he was dressed in his pajamas with a robe on . . . I was extremely angry, . . . I said ‘You lied to me.’” The story becomes even more bizarre as it goes on. Ashworth claimed that in April of 1985 he was “still hot” over the fact that Mark Hofmann had broken his agreement with him. At that point Hofmann may have realized that if he wanted to continue victimizing Brent Ashworth with his forgeries, he would have to do something to rectify the matter. Mr. Ashworth testified that Hofmann finally called him and said that the letter was available to him again, but this time the price would be \$60,000! Ashworth told Hofmann that he was not interested at that price and the conversation was terminated.

Mr. Ashworth’s obsession to obtain the letter finally got the best of him: “I loved that letter so much that I got over my pride for a moment or two and decided that I better try and go after it.” On July 29, 1985, Mark Hofmann finally turned the letter over to Brent Ashworth for \$60,000. What Mr. Hofmann did not tell Ashworth was the price he had to pay to get the letter back. Hofmann had prearranged for the Mormon Church’s bookstore, Deseret Book, to obtain the letter for him. Curt Bench, of Deseret Book, testified that he bought the letter back from Richard Marks for “\$90,000” and resold it to Hofmann for “\$110,000 plus tax. It came to \$116,000 plus.” Just why Mark Hofmann would take such a loss to get back in favor with Brent Ashworth is not known. Prosecutors were puzzled about the matter because it occurred at a time when Hofmann really needed the money:

Q. Why did you go to the trouble of getting Deseret Book to get it back so you could sell it to Brent? Was it money that you wanted or some other reason?

A. No, it would have been because Ashworth wanted it and I felt like he should have it.

.....

Q. The price really went up?

A. Yes, the price paid to Marks went up and to Deseret Book went up but it dropped dramatically when Ashworth purchased it.

Q. How much did you pay Deseret Book?

A. I believe it was \$100,000.

Q. Do you remember paying them the full amount?

A. Yes, I believe I gave them a cashiers check for that amount plus tax.

.....

Q. And so you bought it for 100 thousand?

A. yes.

Q. And turned around and sold it to Brent for what?

A. Let’s see, it was partially a trade for documents which he overvalued, incidentally, in the preliminary hearing . . .

Q. There where [were?] three letters to Joseph Smith and one to Brigham Young, about \$18,000?

A. Yes, I believe that was right.

.....

Q. Weren’t you in a pretty frenzied state at this time?

A. Yes.

Q. Weren’t you pretty desperate for money?

A. Yes.

Q. Why in the world would you sell it to him, after you paid \$100,000, did you sell it to him for \$18,000 plus trade?

A. For the basic reason that the deal had already been struck and I had never backed out of a deal.

Q. But you were hard up for money.

A. I know. I was desperate as can be.

MR. BIGGS: People were saying like you may go to jail if you don’t get some money and you paid Deseret Book \$116,000 and sold it for documents and 18?

A. I gave Deseret Book Company the check, as I remember, the day that I received the money from the Wilding transaction. Then the next day is when I was threatened with going to jail but it was too late. I had given them the money and couldn’t get it back.

Q. But Christensen had done that previously when you couldn’t come up with the money for the bank. Hadn’t you already written a bogus check for \$188,000 to First Interstate Bank by September of ’85?

A. Yes.

.....

Q. You have owed, at this time, September ’85, you owe hundreds of thousands of dollars to several people?

A. Yes.

Q. And you’re telling us that since you made a deal with Brent Ashworth to get him this forged General Dunham Letter that you went ahead and paid Deseret Book \$116,000 and only got back three documents and \$18,000. Just because you had made the deal with Ashworth you felt duty bound to go through with it?

A. As unreasonable is [as?] it sounds, it is the—

MR. STOTT: It does.

MR. BIGGS: You just defrauded people out of hundreds of thousands of dollars; Wilding, Pinock, First Interstate Bank, Rust. We could go on forever. And you’re telling us the only reason you lost approximately \$80,000 was because you where [were?] duty bound to give them that document?

A. What other explanation is there?

Q. You tell me.

A. There isn't because that was the reason. Like I say, or like I had said, the money was paid to Deseret Book the day before I was threatened with fraud on the Wilding transaction. I anticipated money coming from the Oath.

(*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 400-403, 405-406)

That Mark Hofmann would be willing to sustain such a large loss at that critical time just to keep his word to Ashment does seem very difficult to believe. In *Tracking*, page 182, evidence is presented concerning another strange deal that Mark Hofmann was negotiating with Brent Ashworth. Ashworth claimed that Mr. Hofmann originally sold him the Lucy Mack Smith letter for trade items valued "at around \$33,000." Hofmann later told Ashworth that he was "representing an out of State buyer" who was willing to pay "a quarter of a million dollars" for the letter. Still later Hofmann called again and presented an offer of almost half a million dollars for eight items from Ashworth's collection. Why Mark Hofmann would offer to buy back the forgeries for such an unbelievable price is only a matter of speculation. Since the transaction never went through, it could be possible that Hofmann was only trying to set Ashworth up for an even bigger deal. We may never know what was going on in Mr. Hofmann's mind when he planned these strange deals with Brent Ashworth. The reader will remember that in the prosecutors' summary of their early interviews with Mark Hofmann, they claim that he told them, "he thought about killing . . . Brent Ashworth . . ." (*Hofmann's Confession*, page SS-3).

One of the charges against Mark Hofmann was for counterfeiting a type of early Mormon currency known as "gold notes" or "white notes." In *Tracking*, page 129, I pointed out that the Mormon Church allowed Mark Hofmann access to a manuscript entitled, "Brigham Young's Daily Transactions in Gold Dust." From this manuscript, Mr. Hofmann compiled some important information concerning the "white notes." Harry F. Campbell utilized Mr. Hofmann's work in his book, *Campbell's Tokens of Utah*. On page 312 of this book, Mr. Campbell stated: "The above information, 'Mormon Currency Table' was prepared by Mark W. Hofmann and is shown courtesy of the L.D.S. Church." After it became apparent that some white notes which Mark Hofmann sold were questionable, Jerry Urban pointed out to me that the "Mormon Currency Table" prepared by Hofmann could have been used in a counterfeiting operation. In his confession, pages 324-325, Mark Hofmann freely admitted that the manuscript the Mormon Church allowed him to use played an important role in the forgeries:

A. The primary source of the research was a ledger book possessed by the LDS Church Archives. I believe it is entitled Brigham Young's Daily Transactions in Gold Duties [*sic*]. That book lists the serial numbers of the hand denominations of the issued notes. There is also some reference as far as the numbers being crossed out as to when or which notes, which serial numbers would have been redeemed. The unredeemed serial numbers are the ones I adopted in making the forgeries. In other words, my forged notes have the same serial numbers as the unredeemed notes in that ledger book.

HUNDREDS OF FORGERIES

It is claimed that thousands of manuscripts and books passed through Mark Hofmann's hands and that hundreds of them could have been forged or falsified in some way. Although prosecutors believed that Mr. Hofmann committed a large number of forgeries, they felt that charging him with making the bombs, the murders "and 26 other counts" was sufficient to place him behind bars for many years. In the plea bargain arrangement Mr. Hofmann agreed to only talk of the crimes he was actually charged with committing. His lawyers, therefore, tried to prevent prosecutors from delving into some of the other forgeries. When Hofmann was asked about the letter of Joseph Smith to his polygamous wives, Maria and Sarah Lawrence (see *Tracking*, pages 108-114) he replied: "That's not one of the charges so what do you want me to say" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 111)? While Mark Hofmann was unwilling to talk about some of the forgeries, he freely provided information on others. For instance, in *Tracking*, pages 125-128, the reader will find information concerning a letter Joseph Smith was supposed to have written to his brother, Hyrum. It contained a revelation instructing Hyrum to come to Far West so that Joseph could show him how he could "obtain a grate treasure in the earth even so Amen." When Mr. Hofmann was asked concerning incriminating evidence that detectives had overlooked in his house, he responded:

A. There was a negative/ It was a negative that I used to print a postmark from Far West. The negative I used to make the plate to print the postmark.

Q. On the Joseph Smith to Hyrum Smith letter, saying Hyrum, come out to Far West and you will find riches and that type of thing?

A. That happens to be the exact one.

Q. Anything else that you destroyed that night?

A. Yes. (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 214)

Unfortunately, prosecutors took a break at this point and when questioning resumed they neglected to ask Mark Hofmann the other item(s) he “destroyed.” In any case, Mr. Hofmann’s statements made it very clear that the Far West letter was a fake. Hofmann’s comments might raise questions with regard to Richard L. Anderson’s statement that “every letter in the disputed 25 May 1838 postmark has characteristics of a freehand sketch” (*BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 509). Although he does not actually say it, Hofmann’s statement might give the impression that he used a genuine postmark on a letter to make the negative. A reconciliation of the two statements might be that since Far West postmarks are very rare, that Hofmann had to use a poor Xerox copy and tried to fill in the shape of the letters with a pen. With regard to the “Oath of a Freeman,” Hofmann did testify that he worked from a “Xerox” copy for the type and “used a technical pen” to make “deformations” in the type to “mislead the experts who would examine it” (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 253). It is even possible that Mr. Hofmann did draw the entire Far West postmark and then reduced it when the negative was made. This, of course, would help to hide any imperfections in his work.

Although he was not charged with regard to the matter, in his confession, pages 505-507, Mark Hofmann admitted he had falsified some magic amulets in an attempt to link the Anthon transcript to magic:

MR. STOTT: You wrote a letter here to Dr. Lambert, 15 January of ‘81 in which you talk about some amulets or one amulet, I’m not sure, and in fact, I guess that is a picture of the one that you gave to Brent Metcalf and wasn’t there something else you gave to Lynn Jacobs?

A. I believe I gave Lynn Jacobs a silver Masonic-type amulet or token.

Q. And also Brent Metcalf?

A. Yes.

Q. Where did you come up with those amulets and what do they signify, if anything?

A. I became interested in collecting them at one time. I was a member of a token and metal society. It’s somewhat related to coin collecting, I guess. I ran a few ads in a publication, or whatever, and wrote several dealers that, I shouldn’t say several, a few dealers, who sold such things and at one time had perhaps two dozen or so magical tokens or amulets.

Q. Do you remember, is that something you received from someone else, the amulet itself?

A. It’s not charged.

MR. STOTT: I’m not looking at it as a forged item.

MR. YENGICH: You’re talking been [*sic*] the amulet?

MR. STOTT: Yes, which supposedly has some characters that are—

A. I’ll talk about it. It was indeed a forgery.

MR. STOTT: And it is—

A. That I made.

Q. And the purpose of the forgery?

MR. YENGICH: Mark, lets talk outside for a second.

DISCUSSION HELD OFF THE RECORD

MR. STOTT: What I’m getting at, Mark, I think there was some connection between the writing on the amulet and maybe the writing on the Anthon Transcript.

A. That is correct.

Q. Can you tell us what you did and what it was supposed to be?

A. It is various characters from the Anthon Transcript or at least similar to the Anthon Transcript, which I put on the amulet, on one side of it. The other side is a abracadabra triangle.

Q. Did you represent to people these characters are similar to the Book of Mormon or Anthon Transcript characters?

A. Yes. As I did with a few other tokens which I had in my possession.

Q. What was the purpose of putting the abracadabra on one side and the Anthon Transcript characters on the other side?

A. Nothing in particular.

Q. Did it show some connection?

A. The abracadabra triangle which showed it was magic related.

With regard to the magic amulets, it is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann had shown one of them to Sandra and allowed her to make a tracing by laying a sheet of paper over the amulet and rubbing a pencil back and forth. She had completely forgotten about the incident until the tracing was found in some material we had saved. Linda Sillitoe, who is co-authoring a book on Mark Hofmann with Allen Roberts, asked to see some material we had and while examining it found the tracing together with another sheet on which Mark Hofmann had printed his name and address. From the

two pages, it appears that Mr. Hofmann had come to our store on August 20, 1980, and paid for five copies of the booklet, *Book of Mormon "Caractors" Found*. The publication of the book was delayed, however, and on November 5, 1980, we sent Hofmann a letter telling him that it would be awhile before the book would be available. Finally, on January 14, 1981, Mr. Hofmann came to the store to pick up the copies and allowed Sandra to make the tracing of the magic amulet. Below is a photograph of Sandra's tracing:



For some reason we did not seem to comprehend the significance of the tracing of the amulet and it remained buried in our files until Linda Sillitoe found it. Sandra, however, did remember that Mr. Hofmann had allowed her to trace it.

Although I do not know of any evidence that Mark Hofmann was trying to link Mormonism to magic at the time he created the Anthon transcript, Sandra's tracing of the magic amulet shows that within eight months of the "discovery," he was trying to promote this idea.

In *Tracking*, pages 37-40, 102-104, evidence is presented which shows that Mark Hofmann produced a blackmail-type document which contained the signatures of both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon. Since some Mormon critics believe that Rigdon used a manuscript of a novel written by Spalding to create the Book of Mormon, any document having both these signatures on it would cast doubt on the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. According to Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, Mark Hofmann showed him this forgery and claimed that it was part of the McLellin collection.

I had heard rumors that Mark Hofmann not only tried to alarm Mormon leaders with evidence supporting the Spalding-Rigdon theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon but that he was also trying to link the Book of Mormon to a book by Ethan Smith entitled, *View of the Hebrews*. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts became so disturbed with the parallels between *View*

of Hebrews and the Book of Mormon that he wrote a secret report concerning it (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 96-D to 96-G). B. H. Roberts felt that it was very possible that Joseph Smith had access to a copy of *View of the Hebrews*. If it could be shown that Smith or one of the Book of Mormon witnesses had a copy of this book before the Book of Mormon was produced, it would certainly help support the argument that Ethan Smith's book provided structural material for the Book of Mormon. It now appears that Hofmann did, in fact, create some "evidence" to support that theory by putting a Martin Harris inscription in a copy of *View of the Hebrews*. The inscription read: "Martin Harris Palmyra County of Wayne." It is interesting to note that the Mormon scholar Dean Jessee used this inscription in an article he wrote for *BYU Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4, page 428. Although the inscription is photographically reproduced, the title of the book is not shown. This caption appears below the photograph: "Purported Martin Harris writing from unidentified book. Copy in possession of author." I felt that it was strange that the title of the book was not available. Fortunately, Mark Hofmann answers the question in his confession, pages 497-499:

Q. During this time there was, maybe I should call it a rumor, I don't know what else to call it, that there was a Palmyra County inscription and in fact, that inscription appears in *BYU Studies*. Isn't it one that Dean Jesse obtained through you?

A. Oh, yes. I believe we talked about that before. That was an inscription in a book, yes.

Q. And that was, is that another one that was developed during this time by yourself in relationship to the Salamander Letter or in that whole process?

A. That inscription, I believe Dean Jesse acquired from Lynn Jacobs who acquired it from me.

Q. And that inscription again was one of your creations, is that correct?

A. Am I supposed to be answering these?

MR. YENGICH: Well, the other documents we are not going to talk about. We'll make a note of it and we'll go back to that because they are not on the count?

A. Although I already answered that question in an earlier interview.

MR. YENGICH: Did you answer it in an interview when Brad was here?

A. Yes.

MR. YENGICH: Then answer it.

MR. STOTT: I'm trying to see the relationship to the Salamander Letter.

A. Yes, that's a forged inscription.

.....

Q. And I think you also mentioned there was something about a Martin Harris signature in *A View of Hebrew*?

A. Yes, that was the same book that Dean Jesse got his Palmyra inscription from.

Q. Was that a real book or?

A. It was a real book.

Q. Again that was one of your creations?

A. The signature was, that's correct or inscription was.

Unfortunately, the transcript does not reveal who has possession of this book at the present time.

In *Tracking*, pages 104-108, I gave some interesting information concerning the possibility that Mark Hofmann was building up to a forgery of the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon—also known as the book of Lehi. I noted that “the missing 116 pages of the book of Lehi would be worth millions of dollars.” Unfortunately, prosecutors never asked Mr. Hofmann anything concerning this matter and Hofmann did not volunteer any information. One interesting item concerning the 116 pages did appear in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, March 29, 1987, page 11:

One of the greatest intrigues in Mormon history involves a set of papers known as the 116 Lost Pages of the Book of Mormon. Early in the process of writing the book, a disciple [Martin Harris] carried the pages to his home in another town. The pages soon disappeared and have never resurfaced. Hofmann said he thought the 116 pages were out there, somewhere; he was investigating some leads. At one dinner party he told a friend that the church had offered him \$2 million for the Lost Pages. He said he thought the offer was low. He would ask \$10 million.

Brent Metcalfe also claims that Mark Hofmann said the Mormon Church had offered \$2 to \$3 million dollars for the missing pages, but Hofmann felt they were worth \$10 million.

In *Tracking*, pages 148-150, I explained the early Mormon doctrine of “blood atonement”—i.e., the doctrine that it might be necessary to kill a man to save his soul if he had committed certain sins. I then made this observation:

If Mark Hofmann is indeed guilty of murder, I doubt very much that he did it because he believed in the “blood atonement” doctrine—i.e., believed he was saving the souls of Christensen or Sheets by shedding their blood. On the other hand, the knowledge that the early leaders of his Church (whom he had been taught to revere from his youth) taught such an outlandish doctrine could have affected his thinking with regard to murder.

Mark Hofmann's confession, pages 393 and 395, makes it clear that he was familiar with the doctrine of “blood atonement”:

A. It seems like Dunham, as I remember, went on an expedition from Winter Quarters a couple years after this and never returned. And it seems like there's a rumor that I heard that he may have been blood atoned for not following the advice of this letter. In other words, there are rumors that some people in the Church believe that he had received such a letter and had failed to act on it/

.....

A. . . . I heard rumors, I believe from a journal source, may have been Huntington's journal, that he suspected Dunham of not following through on an order, on this order. I believe that was the same source which suggested the possibility that Dunham had possibly been put under, a favorite Mormon phrase, for not fulfilling the order or at least it is a favorite, blood atonement phrase.

Mark Hofmann's father apparently had a very strong belief that a murderer could only receive forgiveness through “blood atonement.” On January 24, 1987, the *New York Times* printed some strange information concerning the Hofmann case:

SALT LAKE CITY, Jan. 23 — Spurning his father's appeal that he submit to execution to atone for two 1985 murders, a former Mormon missionary chose instead today to plead guilty to the crimes in return for a sentence of life imprisonment. . . . According to family members, the plea arrangement that spared his life was delayed in recent weeks by the intervention of his father, a Mormon, and other family members who said they believed that if the younger Mr. Hofmann was guilty of the murders he should be executed.

This belief is rooted in the Mormon doctrine of “blood atonement,” which holds that some crimes are so grievous that the crucifixion of Jesus had not redeemed their sins. The crimes that fall under the doctrine, promulgated principally by Brigham Young, . . . include murder and adultery. . . .

In the end, church experts said, Mr. Hofmann's father accepted the idea that his son would not have to be executed. In an effort at atonement, Mr. Hofmann, through his attorney, apologized to members of his victims' families at a meeting Thursday.

On page 160 of *Tracking*, I quoted an article written about Elwyn Doubleday which stated that the FBI

told him that “Mark Hofmann in disguise, and . . . his friend, Shannon Flynn” came back east and visited with him. Although Hofmann’s confession does not go into the matter, Mr. Doubleday informed me that the FBI later decided that it was actually two men from a law firm in Idaho. The fact that the name “Hansen” was given probably led investigators to believe that it was Hofmann posing under his alias of “Mike Hansen.”

A careful examination of Mark Hofmann’s confession reveals that he has a very good mind and is very familiar with the chemical processes and techniques required to forge documents. It seems apparent also that if he had not committed the murders, he may never have been caught. The murders, of course, led to a very careful examination of his documents. I feel that the evidence of forgery that investigators found against him after the bombings probably would have been sufficient to convict him of a number of the forgeries. Nevertheless, Mr. Hofmann had some very good lawyers, and that, combined with his brilliant mind, would have made it very difficult for prosecutors. For example, in studying the documents forensic experts found that only Hofmann’s documents had a one-directional running of the ink. This flaw was not visible to the natural eye but was made visible by ultraviolet light. William Flyn described it this way: “On several of the documents. . . some constituent part of the ink . . . ran from the characters. In most instances, it ran in a unidirectional way. That is to say, it appeared that the document had been held vertically and wet so that the running was down, in one direction. It was not even haloing, where the running extended outward evenly in all directions, but rather it was more like a one-directional running” (*Tracking*, pages 65-66). Document experts felt that this showed that some type of chemical solution had been used to age the ink. On page 164 of his confession, Mark Hofmann tells how he would have tried to counter the argument of one-directional running of the ink:

Although the unidirectional running is more suspicious. I guess the only explanation as far as, if you want to know what I would have tried to persuade Ron [his lawyer], perhaps to say in trial to counteract that would be some other documents I know of that have that characteristic which are known to be genuine, which had been in a flood or some such thing, which, in preparation for trial we examined under ultraviolet light and found the unidirectional running type thing.

Mr. Hofmann then goes on to make this revealing comment: “Of course, we couldn’t have disclosed in trial they would have been in a flood.”

While I doubt that Mark Hofmann’s devious mind could have saved him from prison, the prosecutors probably would have had a very difficult time making all the counts stick. It is obvious also that even if Mr. Hofmann had been convicted on many counts, his fertile imagination would have brought forth theories that would have given new life to the documents in the minds of many people. While there is certainly a question in many people’s minds as to whether justice was best served by plea bargaining with a murder, as far as the documents are concerned, we are probably in a far better position than if the case had actually gone to trial.

6. THE CHURCH'S WOUND

The Lord Almighty leads this church . . . You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray . . . (President Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, page 289)

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as the President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. (President Wilford Woodruff, Essentials in Church History, page 609)

It now seems incontestable that Mark Hofmann set out to weaken faith in Mormonism through forgery. His attempt was rather successful for a number of years, but eventually he was overthrown by his own selfishness and ambition. In the end he brought disgrace on himself and on his family. But, even though Mr. Hofmann's designs against the Mormon Church did not pan out as he had hoped, he did administer a wound to the church which may never be healed. His close involvement with church leaders has clearly revealed that the church's claim of latter-day revelation is without foundation in fact. Apostle Dallin Oaks and other Mormon leaders are now fighting desperately to save the concept that the church is run by revelation. The Apostle Bruce R. McConkie once made these claims concerning revelation in the church:

Our Lord's true Church is established and founded upon revelation. Its identity as the true Church continues as long as revelation is received to direct its affairs. . . . without revelation there would be no legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation with binding effect on earth and in heaven. . . . Since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's true Church; and since the Lord's Church must be guided by continuous revelation if it is to maintain divine approval; . . . we could safely conclude . . . that the Church today is guided by revelation. . . . the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church. . . . The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth. . . . For those who reject these revelations there awaits the damnation of hell. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pages 646, 647 and 650)

Apostle McConkie also stated: "Members of the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church—because they are appointed and sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church—are known as the **living oracles**" (Ibid., page 547). Mark Hofmann has put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the so-called "living oracles" are just as fallible as other men. Apostle Oaks and the other Mormon leaders find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely oblivious to what was going on. Not only did they fail to foresee the threat to the church through revelation, but they ignored the many warnings which appeared in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*—a publication which they feel is printed by "apostates" or "anti-Mormons." Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church's highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (*New York Times*, February 16, 1986)

Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to explain the complete failure of the church's revelation system in the following manner:

B. Some have asked, how was Mark Hofmann able to deceive Church leaders?

As everyone now knows, Hofmann succeeded in deceiving many: experienced Church historians,

sophisticated collectors, businessmen-investors, a lie detector test and analysis by national experts, and professional document examiners, . . . But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church leaders with whom he met?

In order to perform their personal ministries, Church leaders cannot be suspicious and questioning of each of the hundreds of people they meet each year. Ministers of the gospel function best in an atmosphere of trust and love. In that kind of atmosphere, they fail to detect a few deceivers they meet, but that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see. (“Recent Events Involving Church History and Forged Documents,” pages 10-11)

Apostle Oaks has not really answered the question. Mr. Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders could not discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart. While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient Apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly does not match up to that of the Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land” (Acts 5:3)?

The Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed that church leaders did have the gift of discernment:

. . . the gift of the discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, lest any come among the saints and practice deception. . . . There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even “the thoughts and intents of the heart” are made known. . . . Where the saints are concerned . . . the Lord expects them to discern, not only between the righteous and the wicked, but between false and true philosophies, educational theories, sciences, political concepts, and social schemes. (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 197)

The Book of Mormon has stories of how the servants of God used the gift of discernment in ancient America. For instance, in the book of Alma we read

how Amulek “silenced Zeezrom, for he beheld that Amulek had caught him in his lying and deceiving (Alma 12:1). After Zeezrom began to tremble, Amulek informed him concerning the gift of discernment:

Now Zeezrom, seeing that thou has been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou has not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit.

And thou seest that we know that thy plan was a very subtle plan, as to the subtlety of the devil, . . .

Now when Alma had spoken these words, Zeezrom began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the power of God; and he was also convinced that Alma and Amulek had a knowledge of him, for he was convinced that they knew the thoughts and intents of his heart; for power was given unto them that they might know of these things according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 12:3, 4 and 7)

In Heleman 9:25-41 we read how a prophet named Nephi revealed by the power of God that Seantum was the one who murdered his brother Seezoram. He told the people that they would “find blood upon the skirts of his cloak.” When Seantum was examined it was found that the words which Nephi said “were true” and “he did confess.” Some of the people then felt that “Nephi was a prophet” and others said “he is a god, for except he was a god he could not know of all things. For behold, he has told us the thoughts of our hearts, . . . and even he has brought unto our knowledge the true murderer of our chief judge.”

As I have already stated, the Prophet Joseph Smith claimed that God Himself warned him of a plan by his enemies to discredit him through forgery. When Smith was in the process of “translating” the Book of Mormon, he allowed Martin Harris to take the first 116 pages of the manuscript and these pages were lost. The pages were never recovered, but according to Joseph Smith he was warned in a revelation that the pages had been altered by his enemies:

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated. . . . I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written; . . . on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; . . . I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing. . . . yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 10, verses 10-12, 14 and 43)

It would seem that if the same powers were functioning in the church today, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann’s “cunning plan” to defraud and disgrace the church. Spencer W. Kimball, who was President of the Mormon Church at the time Hofmann first began deceiving church leaders, was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13). The Book of Mormon also says that “a seer is greater than a prophet . . . a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have . . . a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light (Mosiah 8:15-17). When Mark Hofmann brought the Anthon transcript to the church leaders, President Kimball was unable to translate the characters supposed to have been copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appear on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect that the church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann stood in the presence of President Kimball.

As President Kimball got older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who stood with President Kimball in the 1980 photograph, was deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the church made with Hofmann.

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of the Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises the question as to their testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old? They have seen and inspected Mark

Hofmann’s documents, but they have never seen the gold plates the Book of Mormon was translated from. When it comes right down to it, the Book of Mormon reminds us a great deal of Hofmann’s documents. It shows signs of plagiarism and has absolutely no provenance. No one ever saw it before it showed up in Joseph Smith’s hands, and it was never quoted in any ancient record.

The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie maintained that “the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.” One would think that if such revelation was in operation, Mark Hofmann would have been exposed years before the bombings. With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might try to argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contain extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs. The Salamander letter, for example, changes the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transforms himself from a white salamander and strikes Joseph Smith. Moreover, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the church contain revelations from the Lord Himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.” The 1838 letter of Joseph Smith to his brother, Hyrum, is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that the Mormon leaders were unable to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith. It has always been claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

That the Mormon leaders were unable to detect his iniquity even though they met with him from 1980 to 1985 seems to completely destroy their claim to special revelation. Mr. Hofmann believed that his

“discoveries” would tend to liberalize the Mormon Church as scholars and church leaders came to accept them, and there is little doubt that this has turned out to be the case. Now that the documents have been exposed as forgeries, historians have suffered some loss of credibility with the average member of the church. This would probably tend to strengthen the orthodox position in the church if it were not for another factor—i.e., the loss of credibility that the Mormon leaders have suffered. It is possible, in fact, that the exposure of Hofmann’s documents as forgeries could do more harm to the Church in the long run than if the documents were proven authentic.

Although Apostle Dallin Oaks would have us believe that “Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities,” there seems to be no way to get around the fact that they must bear a great deal of the responsibility in the Hofmann affair. If they had been open and forthright about historical documents, Mr. Hofmann would not have

approached them with his blackmail-like documents with the idea of obtaining large amounts of money. That Mark Hofmann knew they were suppressing important church documents and were anxious to keep anything embarrassing from falling into the hands of church critics set the stage for the tragic events which followed. While Mormon scholars have been blamed for not being more careful, it is the General Authorities of the church who are primarily responsible. For the most part Mormon scholars want an open history and would not have an interest in buying up documents to hide them. We feel that the scholars were honestly trying to learn the truth about the documents. They made no special claims of infallibility. The church leaders, on the other hand, who claimed to have special powers of revelation, played into Hofmann’s hands time after time. As I have already shown, if it had not been for the suppressive policy of the church, its leaders could have brought Mr. Hofmann’s career to an end long before the bombings.

The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection

How Mormon Leaders Suppress a “Key” Item in the Hofmann Murder-Forgery Case

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Second Edition

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The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection

In 1985-86, a blackmail-like scheme to defraud the Mormon Church became known to the world. Newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *London Times* reported developments in this incredible story. Police and federal authorities first became involved in the case on October 15, 1985, after a bomb exploded in Salt Lake City, Utah, killing Steven F. Christensen, a Mormon bishop. Later that morning Kathleen Sheets, the wife of another bishop, was killed when she picked up a package containing a booby-trapped shrapnel bomb. The following day, a Mormon document dealer named Mark Hofmann was seriously injured when a bomb exploded in his car.

After an intensive investigation, it was discovered that Mark Hofmann was the bomber. Hofmann was transporting a bomb he had constructed at the time of the third explosion. Although this bomb was prepared to kill someone else, probably another Mormon bishop by the name of Brent Ashworth, it accidentally went off in Hofmann's own car. Mr. Hofmann later confessed to the murders and was sent to the Utah State Prison.

In October, 1986, while Mr. Hofmann was still maintaining he was innocent, we published the book, *Tracking the White Salamander*. About two months after Mr. Hofmann pleaded guilty in 1987, we published a second book, *Confessions of a White Salamander*. In these books we discussed many important details regarding Hofmann's murders and the forged documents he sold to the Mormon Church and other collectors. Three other books were published the following year. The first book to appear was *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, by Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, two Mormon historians. The second book was entitled, *Mormon Murders*, by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith. The last book, *A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, was penned by Robert Lindsey, a reporter for the *New York Times*.

The authors of all three of these books interviewed investigators and all reached the conclusion that some Mormon leaders had not been forthright in their contacts with law enforcement officials. In addition, they felt that the church had been suppressing important documents from its members.

McLELLIN'S SECRETS

Not long after the bombings, it became clear that investigators were looking into a deal involving documents known as the "McLellin collection." The evidence clearly showed that at the time of the bombings the Mormon Church leaders were meeting with Mark Hofmann with regard to this collection. Hofmann, in fact, met with Mormon Apostle Dallin H. Oaks just after he had killed two people.

Mark Hofmann had convinced Mormon leaders that the McLellin collection contained material which could be very embarrassing if it fell into the hands of the "enemies of the church." Consequently, church officials fell prey to his reasoning and Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the church, helped him obtain a loan for \$185,000 to buy the collection. As it turned out, however, Hofmann did not have the real McLellin collection, only a few documents that he had falsified to deceive the church.

Mark Hofmann's story concerning the embarrassing nature of his so-called "McLellin collection" seemed plausible to Mormon leaders. William E. McLellin was one of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church and was in a position to obtain information and documents which could hurt the church. (The name McLellin appears a number of different ways in books written on Mormonism. For example, in the *History of the Church* it appears as M'Lellin 71 times and as McLellin 26 times. It has also been written as Mcllellin, McLellan, McClellin, Mc.llellin, Mclelen and McLelland.) Apostle McLellin was well acquainted with Joseph Smith and

other church leaders and knew a great deal about what was going on in the early church. Later, however, he turned against the church and made many serious charges against Joseph Smith. We will have more to say about this later in our study.

As we will show, the thing that is really ironical about this whole matter is that the Mormon Church itself actually had a major part of the extant McLellin collection in its own vault at the very time Mr. Hofmann convinced them that he was buying it from someone in another state!

TURLEY'S BOMBSHELL!

Mormon Church leaders were very disturbed about the bad publicity they received regarding the Hofmann case, and on September 18, 1988, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “sources within the Mormon media establishment . . . , said the church already has begun a battle against what it believes is the most serious attack against the church since the polygamy controversy The church has embarked on a massive study of the books and news articles in an attempt to assemble a master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations. ‘Our response to all the allegations made against the church will be made public in about 60 days,’ [Richard P.] Lindsay said.”

Notwithstanding this public announcement, the “master list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations” has never been made public. Some time later, however, it was announced that Richard E. Turley, Jr., managing director of the Mormon Church Historical Department, was writing a book which would give the church’s side of the issue. Mr. Turley’s work finally appeared in 1992 under the title, *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*.

While Mormon apologist Richard Turley seems to have nothing to say about the two books we have written on the subject, he attacks all three of the other books mentioned earlier. He does, however, make observations concerning our warnings about the questionable nature of the Salamander letter (a letter which was forged by Mark Hofmann) and other documents we have dealt with during the last three decades. His comments with regard to our work are generally positive and contain nothing requiring a response.

Richard Turley tries very hard to undermine the authenticity of the other books written on the Hofmann case. He seems to be especially upset with charges that church leaders were trying to cover up facts during the investigation and does his best to try to smooth over these accusations.

Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, however, Mr. Turley’s laborious work of shoring up faith in church leaders comes crashing to the ground when the reader reaches page 248 of his book. It is at this point that Turley divulges one of the most embarrassing secrets that a Mormon historian has ever revealed. Mr. Turley begins by saying that “March 1986 brought a startling discovery,” and goes on to explain that at that time church officials became aware of the fact that they already had an important part of the McLellin collection concealed in the First Presidency’s vault. The church, in fact, had the documents since 1908!

Since the McLellin collection had been hidden in their own vault for so many years, current church leaders apparently had no knowledge of its existence. Therefore, they were completely unprepared to detect Mark Hofmann’s deception. As noted above, Hofmann falsely claimed that he had discovered the McLellin collection and wanted to help church leaders control the collection so that it would not fall into the hands of the anti-Mormons who would use it to embarrass the church. Since William McLellin had publicly made some startling charges against Joseph Smith, church leaders would naturally be nervous concerning what such a collection might contain. In his confession, Hofmann described a conversation he allegedly had with Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church’s First Presidency, regarding the McLellin collection:

A Well, of course, I basically told him that I could tell him **what my fears were concerning its getting in to the enemy’s hands**, or whatever. . . . And his [Hinckley’s] interest wasn’t so much in having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace where—In fact, I would almost say he almost didn’t want the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it **did not fall in to the enemy’s hands** which was good since **I knew I didn’t have it, I knew the Church couldn’t obtain it.** (*Hofmann’s Confession*, page 529)

Eventually, it was decided that Hugh Pinnock, a General Authority in the Mormon Church, would help Mark Hofmann obtain a loan of \$185,000 from First Interstate Bank so that Hofmann could go to Texas and obtain the McLellin collection. According to Richard Turley, Pinnock felt that the collection required special protection: “Pinnock offered to arrange for secure transportation of the documents **by jet or armored car**, but Hofmann said he would send them back to Utah by registered mail, adequately insured” (*Victims*, page 124). The transaction was to be very confidential. David E. Sorensen, “who had recently been asked to preside over the church’s Canada Halifax Mission,”

I am so much in haste that I cannot write more than a few lines. I have written to you before and you know how I feel. I am so much in haste that I cannot write more than a few lines. I have written to you before and you know how I feel.

Independence, Mo. Feb. 22, 1872.

My dear friends,

Yours of Feb. 1st came to hand, and I have just read it over again. I was born on the 18th of Jan, 1806, so you can assure me I calculate to live until I am 85, if I can. We too have had extremely cold weather this winter, but it is so very pleasant today. We have had but little rain, for a good while. We have had no serious accident in our city this winter, except two small fires. We have good health. Grace has been with us most of the winter. She attends school. Otherwise we are alone. I have no faith in A. Smith's criticisms. As to the Urin, I say again it never was on this continent. I have learned more about it and the Interpreting lately. It has been used specially to inquire of God and get answers. The Directory was only used to translate languages, but never used to give translations. Hence all the yammer about getting revelations by or through the Interpreter, is base lies. If you have any doubts consult Page 172 & 173 & 174 & 175 & 176 & 177 & 178 & 179 & 180. Also see Bible, Num. 27: 21. Sam. 28: 6. 1 Sam. 23: 9. 31: 7. 8. These pages and passages will explain a deal of men. Joseph only read off the translation as it was translated and shown on the appearance of parchment before him, when his face was in darkness. True, he was the instrument through whom it was done. He ought to be properly informed, and so speak and write upon all subjects.

Photograph of a letter written by William McLellin on February 22, 1872.

would buy the collection and hide it away from the enemies of the church. Later, however, he would donate it to the church. Richard Turley reported:

Sorensen later recalled that Pinnock “asked if I would listen to **a matter of concern to the church** and determine if I would be in a position or interested in helping.” . . . Sorensen recalled, “Elder Pinnock was interested in seeing if I might purchase the collection. If so, would I consider donating it to the church at a later date.” . . . Sorensen later remembered saying that he would be happy to help the church if he could but wanted to “investigate the matter in a business-like way.” (Ibid., page 136)

Bishop Steven Christensen was supposed to authenticate the McLellin collection for Sorensen on October 15, 1985. Since Mr. Hofmann did not have the collection, he killed Steven Christensen that morning in an attempt to stall for time.

When church leaders later discovered that they already had the most significant part of the McLellin collection hidden in the First Presidency’s vault and that it had been there since 1908, they found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. If they admitted that they had the collection all along, it would prove the charge made by critics that the church suppressed important documents from their people. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for August 1985, we spoke of “the role that Mormon leaders have taken in suppressing important documents.” We noted that in 1983, Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, secretly acquired a letter—later found to have been forged by Mark Hofmann—which purported to be in Joseph Smith’s own hand and linked the prophet to money-digging and magic. President Hinckley, believing the letter was authentic, paid Mr. Hofmann \$15,000 for the letter and then hid it in the First Presidency’s vault.

When researchers learned what happened and charged that it was being suppressed, the church decided to “stone-wall.” A spokesman for the church said: ““The church doesn’t have the letter . . . It’s **not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault**”” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985). Finally, when it became clear that some Mormon scholars had photocopies of the letter and were going to turn them over to the news media, the church backed down, and the same spokesman admitted his earlier statement was “in error”: “The purported letter **was indeed acquired** by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives . . .” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985).

In the issue of our newsletter cited above, we made this observation:

The First Presidency’s archive or vault, where the 1825 letter was concealed, is undoubtedly the ultimate “black hole.” Documents which are embarrassing to the Mormon Church disappear into this bottomless abyss and are seldom heard of again.

The fact that church leaders could lose sight of the McLellin collection in the First Presidency’s vault for almost eight decades shows just how dark it is inside the “black hole” which contains deeper secrets of Mormonism.

SUPPRESSING EVIDENCE

The disappearance and rediscovery of the McLellin collection would almost make one wonder if the right hand knows what the left hand is doing at church headquarters. While Mormons might expect this type of thing to happen in some bureaucratic agency, they will have a difficult time explaining how this could happen in a church which is supposed to be led by direct revelation from God. The implications are very serious indeed. For example, how can one explain the fact that Mormon leaders were helping Mark Hofmann obtain a collection from Texas which they already had in their own vault?

In view of the circumstances, it would be very difficult for church leaders to come forth and admit they had made such a serious mistake. On the other hand, however, they faced a far more serious problem if they did not reveal the existence of the McLellin collection. To continue to suppress the existence of the collection would mean that church leaders would have to deliberately keep a key piece of evidence hidden from investigators who were working on the Hofmann murder case. Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, Richard Turley makes it very clear that church leaders chose to keep law enforcement officials completely in the dark concerning the existence of the McLellin collection.

The importance of this piece of evidence cannot be overstated. While investigators seemed to have a great deal of evidence that Mark Hofmann forged documents and defrauded investors in his schemes, they had a real problem establishing a motive for the murders. At first some investigators believed that the bombings might relate in some way to the Salamander letter. (Hofmann had sold the Salamander letter to Steven Christensen for a great deal of money.) This theory, however, could not be confirmed by any evidence. Christensen apparently believed the letter was genuine and seemed pleased that Hofmann had sold it to him.

The McLellin collection, on the other hand, seemed to provide an explanation for the murder of Steven Christensen. Hofmann’s reluctance to produce the

collection was very upsetting to Christensen. Since Hofmann did not have the collection, there was nothing he could do except to continue to give Mr. Christensen excuses. Consequently, friction continued to mount between the two men. At Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Curt Bench said that about three weeks before the murders, Steven Christensen called him and wanted him to convey a message to Mark Hofmann. Bench testified that Christensen told him that "a member of the First Quorum of Seventy and an apostle . . . were upset because Mark had defaulted on a loan to a bank and had written a check and the check had bounced . . . They were quite upset over this and said some very serious things could happen as a result of that not being taken care of."

Curt Bench went on to say: "Steve told me that various things could occur if Mark didn't make good and some of them were he would certainly lose his credibility and credit with the Church and with President Hinckley, that **criminal action could be taken, that he could conceivably go to jail**, he could also be sued by the bank or even by the Church if the Church was sued. He could **lose his membership in the Church**. . . . It was very serious. And Steve wanted me to convey that to Mark . . ." Bench also testified that "Steve used the term **crook**" when referring to Hofmann (*Tracking the White Salamander*, page 24).

Investigators did not believe that Mark Hofmann had the McLellin collection to turn over to Mr. Christensen and felt that this was Hofmann's motive for killing Christensen—by getting rid of Christensen he could buy some time. They could not, however, actually prove that Hofmann did not have the documents hidden away some place. There was no way to know for certain. If Mr. Hofmann should produce the collection at the time of his trial, it would destroy the motive for murder and could ruin the murder case. The Mormon Church, of course, had the vital information needed by prosecutors in the First Presidency's vault. Church leaders knew that there was no way that Mark Hofmann could produce McLellin's diaries because they already had them. It is plain, therefore, that Mormon Church leaders were suppressing some of the most important evidence in the entire case!

A close examination of Richard Turley's book shows that Mormon Church leaders were engaged in a conspiracy of silence with regard to the McLellin collection to save the church's image. The following quotations from Turley's book make this very clear:

March 1986 brought a startling discovery. Historical Department personnel seeking information about William McLellin had contacted Dean Jessee.

. . . Jessee visited the department and explained to Glenn Rowe that he had found some interesting information about McLellin in his research files. Jessee's notes referred to correspondence in the department's uncatalogued Joseph F. Smith collection. The correspondence mentioned McLellin's diaries and other belongings. . . . Rowe and his staff searched the collection and located letters that amazed church officials.

The first letter had been written by J. L. Traughber of Doucette, Texas . . . Dated January 13, 1908, and addressed to the librarian of the church, the letter explained that Traughber had an original copy of *A Book of Commandments*. . . . what Traughber offered next was even rarer. He wrote, "I also have the **Journal**, in part, of **Elder W. E. McLellin** for the years 1831, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6." Traughber said he had tried to get more of the journal from McLellin's widow, but she had refused to give them up "as she said she did not want some things to be known." Traughber said he also had some manuscript books that McLellin had written. . . . and offered to sell them for fifty dollars.

On January 18, 1908, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors wrote to President Samuel O. Bennion of the Central States Mission. The Presidency . . . instructed Bennion on how to handle the offer: "While we have studiously avoided expressing any particular desire on our part to purchase the things mentioned by Mr. Traughber, we desire you to know that **we would like very much to possess McClellan's Journal**, if for no other reason than to prevent the writings of this unfortunate and erratic man, whose attitude after his apostasy was inimical to the Prophet Joseph Smith, **from falling into unfriendly hands**; and for this reason alone, we feel quite willing to pay the price asked for these things . . ." The Presidency also suggested that Bennion contact McLellin's widow to obtain the rest of the journals, even if their acquisition were to cost another fifty dollars.

The letter to Bennion mentioned an interview Joseph F. Smith and another church leader had had with McLellin in 1878, when McLellin had told them he had writings he wished to publish. The Presidency wrote Bennion that the manuscripts . . . might be the same ones McLellin had mentioned in 1878. "We hope they are," the First Presidency wrote, "as it would be **an act of mercy** on our part to purchase them, and thus **prevent them from being published by unfriendly hands** to the injury of innocent people."

Rowe and his staff also found a February 12, 1908, response from Bennion to the First Presidency. Bennion reported that he . . . had acquired the proffered materials from Traughber. . . . He said he would send all the acquired items to the First Presidency that day by registered mail.

Rowe had kept his new supervisor, **Richard Turley**, informed about Jesse's clue and the letters to which it led. Turley told Dean Larsen about the letters, and Larsen informed [apostles] Packer and Oaks, who in turn contacted the First Presidency. When Gordon Hinckley learned of the letters, he asked Francis Gibbons if the First Presidency's vault contained the items the letters mentioned. Gibbons searched the vault. Hinckley and the other church officials then learned **to their astonishment**, that **the church had owned McLellin's journals and manuscripts all along**.

The journals . . . revealed a man deeply dedicated to his religion. . . .

The little manuscript books, on the other hand, typified the later McLellin, an avowed enemy of the church. . . .

"Like the materials the *Tribune* had discovered, the McLellin items found in church possession were **not the McLellin collection touted by Hofmann**. . . . Unlike the *Tribune's* discovery, however, the church's McLellin materials included a **key item** from the collection Hofmann claimed to have bought. That item, **McLellin's early journals, confirmed to church officials that Hofmann was a fraud**.

The discovered documents did not fall within any of the subpoenas issued to the church, and thus officials were **not legally obligated to mention them** to anyone. Still, **it was apparent they were relevant to the case**, and those involved in the discovery felt the documents' existence should be revealed. Yet disclosing them **would not come without a cost**. Church officials had sought to dispel the notion that they were buying documents to hide them. Disclosure of the newly discovered McLellin materials, however, would **reinforce notions of church suppression** because those documents had in fact been **bought at the direction of the First Presidency and locked away nearly eight decades earlier**, eventually to be forgotten. . . . Alluding in his journal to the day's remarkable discovery, [Apostle] Oaks wrote, "Today [Boyd K. Packer] & I learned that the Church has some documents that have been unknown until now, but will be of great interest when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hoffmann trial (in my opinion)."

What church officials did not know was that there would be no trial. (*Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*, pages 248-251)

This is a shocking disclosure to be coming from the pen of Richard Turley, managing director of the LDS Church Historical Department. As the reader will see from the quotation above, Mr. Turley acknowledges

that he became aware of the fact that the church had the McLellin collection in March 1986. As an attorney Turley had to be aware of the significance of this information, yet he obviously felt it was more important to protect the church than to tell investigators working on the Hofmann case about this important matter. The church continued to suppress knowledge of the collection for six years after it was rediscovered.

Why Turley would reveal the matter at this time is a matter of speculation. It could be that Mr. Turley was bothered by his role in the matter and felt compelled to bring out the truth. On the other hand, there could have been concern that too many people knew what had happened and that the "enemies of the church" would eventually find out about the cover-up and publish the facts to the world. When Mormon leaders are convinced that something embarrassing is about to leak out, they sometimes try to get the information out first. For example, the Mormon Church at first denied that the 1825 letter existed, but then rushed to print it when it was discovered that scholars were preparing to release it to the press. In any case, we are very pleased that Mr. Turley has revealed this information.

After Mormon historian Dean Jesse reported the existence of the correspondence mentioning the McLellin collection, a number of people became aware of the fact that the church had obtained the collection. Church archivist Glenn Rowe received the information from Jesse. Rowe, in turn, reported the matter to Richard Turley and Turley relayed the information to Dean Larsen. Larsen then informed apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin H. Oaks about the matter. These two apostles "contacted the First Presidency." The First Presidency is composed of President Ezra Taft Benson (the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church), President Gordon B. Hinckley and President Thomas S. Monson. Francis Gibbons was the one who finally found the McLellin collection in the vault. In addition, members of Glenn Rowe's staff also knew about the matter.

Although at least a dozen people knew about the McLellin collection, no one seems to have reported the matter to investigators. Those on the lower levels may have felt that church leaders would tell police that the McLellin collection had been found. Instead, the highest leaders of the church chose to remain silent and put the church in a cover-up situation. Since the church is supposed to have a "living prophet," one would think that he would point out that the information must be reported to investigators.

the high, or royal, priesthood is the priesthood of the gospel age, and Christ is
 its only High Priest. The highest office in it for man on earth now, or
 since the Apostolic age is the Apostleship. Christ sat in his Church,
 with the Apostles, &c. and so on to the present.

I have in my possession (in manuscript & a copy of) The Criticism (written
 by the Church) given in June 1830 - and it was given from the unprinted book, written
 during the year 1831. I also have a copy of the book of Criticisms, written & printed
 in Jackson Co. Mo. in 1832 - but which was afterwards altered
 and printed in the book of Doctrine & Covenants, & in it (as at his year)
 there is no mention of High Priest or of Episcop. Priest. It is a true
 witness in High Priest, or Episcop. Priest, within in this age, or dispensation.
 These things were first mentioned at the same Conference, in Kirtland, in 1831.
 After that, Hyatt had joined the church. You & the president in that assembly
 giving the witness following. They got up the case of Priest, & the witness was
 "All this was contrary to the New Testament, the book of Mormon, & the constitution
 of the Church, hence all wrong! And if I am right in this (and I stand firm)
 I am all Elder Shaver's side as a heart. You have already joined them, and understand
 when you speak of Christ, you say "I believe in Christ, as a good man."
 And in the same speech you go strongly to condemn the principles & practices
 of polygamy. & do not seem to say hard things to you of your Mother, but to say
 if you will only go to your own state. Mother, she can tell you that he
 lived in polygamy and practiced it long before his violent death! that he
 introduced a revelation sanctioning, regulating, and establishing it - and that
 he actually bound the keys of dominion before me (y). Elder can tell you that
 (he saw its constitution) it was read in the High Council of Nauvoo, over
 which we presided. Your Mother told me these things when I was in Nauvoo.
 I am in Nauvoo in visions, seeing all founded statutes - and would not
 you of first things, I had never been created. But she, I have got it in
 duty to say these things before you. And she, your Mother, is a lady (disparaging)
 comparing you a mother (such as she) you are coming back as far as the state of
 your birth. Then she, if you are honest, began in Nauvoo you are
 more, so more, proceeding again either publicly or secretly that
 "Believe my father was a good man", whilst the means to know his
 real character is so near you - even in the bosom & memory of
 your Mother. I write this to you because you are now in a responsible position.
 Now, if your Mother was a "good man", and you are a legal daughter,
 then you are legally & morally bound to carry out the will of her

Photograph of a letter written by William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated January 10, 1861. In this letter McLellin strongly asserts that the Mormon Prophet was a polygamist.

Furthermore, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks had enough legal knowledge that he should have demanded that a full report be immediately turned over to the police. Richard Turley informs his readers that Apostle Oaks “served as a United States Supreme Court clerk, University of Chicago law professor, American Bar Foundation executive director, Brigham Young University president, and Utah Supreme Court justice” (*Victims*, page 116). Mr. Turley also states that “Oaks’s experience as a lawyer and judge **made him sensitive to investigators’ need for any information** that might help solve a crime . . .” (*Ibid.*, page 163).

On page 171 of the same book, Turley reports that after the bombings, Shannon Flynn came to church headquarters and talked with Apostle Oaks. Flynn wanted to know what to tell investigators. Oaks responded:

“As soon as I learned that Mark Hofmann had been the object of a bomb, I knew that I had some facts that would help police. . . . I talked to two F.B.I. agents. I told them **everything I knew** about it. The Church is **going to cooperate fully and it has absolutely nothing to hide**. Sometimes there are some confidential transactions but this is a murder investigation. **Confidentiality is set aside**. We will cooperate fully.”

On page 153, Turley tells of Mark Hofmann coming to Apostle Oaks’ office:

Hofmann said he thought bombing investigators might want to question him. He worried about what to tell them. Oaks told him to tell the truth. . . . Oaks said that as far as he knew, Hofmann’s activities with the McLellin collection, though confidential . . . had nothing to do with the bombing investigation. Police probably would not ask him about the deal. If they did, he should answer **truthfully and completely**.

Richard Turley shows that Oaks also gave Alvin Rust similar advice:

[Martell] Bird recorded, “He told Brother Rust that he should tell the truth in every instance, and that he **should not be worried at all about the Church**, because when the facts all come out, the Church will have no need to be embarrassed . . .” (page 175)

On December 11, 1985, Apostle Oaks addressed members of the Historical Department. According to Turley, Oaks encouraged employees to be forthright:

Of the bombing investigation, he said, “We are like others in that we **must cooperate fully** in an investigation and tell the truth on all matters material to that investigation.” (page 226)

While at first Apostle Oaks claimed that he told the F.B.I. “everything I knew” about the Hofmann case and freely gave advice to others about how they

should be completely honest and provide all relevant information to investigators, when he realized that the church would be embarrassed by the truth, he clammed up just like the other church leaders. While Richard Turley claimed that “Oaks’s experience as a lawyer and judge **made him sensitive to investigators’ need for any information** that might help solve a crime,” he put a bridle on his tongue and joined in the conspiracy of silence when he saw the church was in danger.

The reader will remember that Turley quoted this statement from Apostle Oaks’ journal written on the very day that the McLellin collection was discovered: “Today [Boyd K. Packer] & I learned that the Church has some documents that have been unknown until now, but will be of great interest when they are revealed, as they should be prior to the Hoffmann trial (in my opinion).”

While Turley seems to feel that this entry shows Oaks’ openness, it seems to foreshadow the possibility of a cover-up. The reader will note, for example, that Oaks does **not** mention the fact that he is talking about the McLellin collection. He merely states: “I learned that the Church has some documents . . .” Why would he hesitate to identify the documents? If Turley had not revealed that Oaks was talking about the McLellin collection, a person reading his diary today would not know what he was talking about and would assume that whatever the documents were, they had been made available.

Apostle Oaks’ statement that “when they are revealed, **as they should be** prior to the Hofmann trial (in my opinion)” seems to suggest that there was a possibility that they would not be revealed prior to the trial. (They, of course, would be of no value to prosecutors after the trial.) The words, “in my opinion” seem to imply that if the other church leaders did not want them available, Oaks would support the decision.

If the church had no plans for a cover-up, Apostle Oaks would have written something like the following:

Today I learned the Church has had the McLellin collection stored in a vault since 1908. Since this is very important to the Hofmann case, we have called the county prosecutor and informed him of this development. He will pick up the documents in the morning.

Oaks’ statement that the documents should be revealed “prior to the Hofmann trial” certainly raises an important question. By March 4, 1986, the day Oaks made the entry in his journal, church leaders were well aware of the fact that prosecutors were preparing for Mark Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. If the prosecution could not produce sufficient evidence at that hearing, Hofmann would be set free and there would be no trial. For this reason investigators were working feverishly to obtain the evidence necessary to be sure that Hofmann would be bound over for trial.

The fact that the Mormon Church had rediscovered the McLellin collection would have been extremely important to their case.

Since Apostle Oaks did not mention anything about revealing the McLellin collection “prior to the Hofmann trial,” it is obvious that church leaders were planning to keep it suppressed at least through the preliminary hearing. The preliminary hearing did not start until April 14, 1986. This gave church leaders almost a month and a half to turn over the McLellin collection to investigators. Instead of coming clean, however, they chose to keep the documents hidden. The General Authorities of the church were already concerned enough about the bad publicity the church would receive during the preliminary hearing and must have hoped that no trial would ever occur. This, of course, is exactly what happened and the church never had to reveal the truth about the McLellin collection to investigators.

Since Salt Lake County prosecutors did not have the important piece of evidence that the church could have provided, their case on the murders was not as strong as it could have been. They were obviously concerned about the strength of their case. Robert Lindsey reported the following:

At the end of a week of testimony, David Biggs [one of the prosecutors] wrote in his journal: “I really feel as if we’ve missed the ‘glue’ that connects the pieces of this puzzle together. **The pieces don’t seem to want to stay together.** We have evidence, motive, murder, but it is all just a degree off. I’m still trying to find out what the problem is.” (*A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, page 317)

As we have already shown, Richard Turley has admitted that the McLellin collection in the church vault “included a **key item**” which “confirmed to church officials that Hofmann was a fraud.” Turley also acknowledged that “it was apparent they [the McLellin documents] were **relevant to the case**, and those involved in the discovery felt the documents’ existence **should be revealed.**” A person certainly does not have to be a lawyer to know that the church should have immediately made these documents available.

Church leaders had publicly stressed how they were cooperating with investigators. In the beginning, the church officials pledged “our **fullest cooperation** with city, county and federal authorities in the investigation” (*Victims*, page 165). Hugh Pinnock, the General Authority who helped Hofmann obtain the loan for \$185,000, wrote a letter to Steven Christensen’s widow in which he said: “Several of us have talked with law enforcement people. We want them to know **whatever is relevant**” (Ibid., page 176).

On October 19, 1985, “the church issued its news release . . . ‘From the outset of this investigation,’ the release noted, ‘the Church has cooperated fully with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, **responding to every inquiry and request.** The Church will continue to cooperate with law enforcement officials **to bring to light any facts that may contribute to this investigation**’” (Ibid, page 177).

A VERY BAD EXAMPLE

Church leaders obviously broke their pledge to “bring to light any facts” that would help investigators. Richard Turley tried to justify the church’s suppression of the records by saying. “The discovered documents **did not fall within any of the subpoenas** issued to the church, and thus officials **were not legally obligated to mention them to anyone**” (page 250). This is certainly a very poor excuse. It seems analogous to a person finding a pistol used to commit a murder and then maintaining there was no obligation to turn the gun over to police because it had not been subpoenaed.

Investigators certainly would have subpoenaed the McLellin collection if they had any idea that the church had it. Church leaders should have been well aware of this because just three months before the church rediscovered the McLellin collection, Dawn Tracy [now Dawn House] discovered “three manuscript books” written by William McLellin in Texas. These books were owned by H. Otis Traughber, the son of the man who sold the McLellin material to the church in 1908. On December 4, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, reported that Mr. Traughber “has been subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury meeting in Salt Lake City on Thursday.” Because of a serious health problem in his family, Mr. Traughber was not able to come to Salt Lake City. Investigators, however, considered the matter so important that “John Foster, a Salt Lake City detective . . . had flown to Houston with Treasury agent Michael Taylor after the *Tribune* reported its discovery of the McLellin Collection” (*A Gathering of Saints*, page 257). The fact that investigators would subpoena Mr. Traughber and fly two investigators to Texas to see these documents must have made an impression on church leaders regarding the importance of McLellin documents. The Mormon Church, of course, discovered they had a far more important part of the collection which included the very McLellin journals Hofmann claimed to have found. While investigators went all the way to Texas to examine McLellin documents, the Mormon Church, which is within a few blocks of the Salt Lake County Attorney’s Office, refused to provide any help to investigators.

On October 19, 1985, the Mormon Church issued a news release which stressed that the McLellin collection had never been purchased by the church: “So far as we have been able to determine, no Church officials or personnel have ever seen the “McLellin Collection,” **nor has it been purchased by the Church**, directly or indirectly” (*Victims*, page 178).

On October 23, 1985, the church held a press conference. Richard Turley quoted President Gordon B. Hinckley as saying:

“I had **never heard of the McLellin collection**,” Hinckley said, and he asked Hofmann what was in it . . . “I have never seen any such collection,” Hinckley continued, “and **know nothing about it** beyond that.” (Ibid., pages 191-192)

Turley quotes Apostle Dallin Oaks as saying the following at the same press conference:

“Moreover,” Oaks explained, “to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it.” (Ibid., page 193)

Since Mormon leaders had emphatically stressed that they had never seen the McLellin collection and that the church had not obtained it, law enforcement officers had no reason to think otherwise. When the collection was finally located in the church’s vault, Mormon officials took advantage of the fact that investigators were in the dark concerning the matter and simply never mentioned the find.

Lynn Packer has written an excellent article concerning the rediscovery of the McLellin collection which was published in *Utah Holiday* magazine. Mr. Packer asked an important question about the suppression of the collection by Mormon leaders:

Following the bombings, at the church’s press conference on October 23, 1985, Apostle Oaks denied that the church had the McLellin papers. Upon learning otherwise, did he have an ethical obligation to correct that statement? (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 36)

On page 34 of the same magazine, Mr. Packer said that “Church officials remained silent despite interviews following their discovery, thus allowing court testimony that the church had no such collection. . . . Anticipating the [Turley] book’s publicity, the church public relations department prepared a press

release on the discovery—but didn’t release it unless reporters specifically asked. Until *Utah Holiday* called, no one asked.”

On page 36, Packer discusses the press release:

The church press release responds: “The existence of writings of William McLellin acquired by the Church in the early 20th Century was not announced earlier because their discovery in the historical files occurred after Mark Hofmann had been formally charged with crimes, but before judicial proceedings were concluded. Consequently it was felt that a public announcement of the discovery at that time might prejudice the proceedings.” The statement appears to ignore both the fact that the judicial proceedings had not yet begun and the option of privately revealing the information to officers of the court, not to the public.

As Lynn Packer points out, the church’s press release certainly does not explain away the problem. The church’s first responsibility was to turn the collection over to the prosecutors and let them decide how and when the material would be used in court. Moreover, the statement does not explain why the discovery of the documents was not announced for six years. If church leaders really wanted the public to know about the existence of the McLellin collection, they could have reported the discovery after Hofmann pleaded guilty in 1987. The church’s craftily-worded statement that “a public announcement of the discovery at that time [March 1986] might prejudice the proceedings” is simply nonsense. One would think that the church would be ashamed to issue such a poorly-thought-out press release.

Mr. Packer also shows that one of the church’s attorneys, who played an important role in the legal proceedings, made some very strange statements when questioned about the church’s role with regard to the McLellin collection:

Two attorneys, Oscar McConkie Jr. and Wilford Kirton, represented the church . . . McConkie . . . told *Utah Holiday* he learned about the church’s discovery only when he read a manuscript of *Victims*.

The church had no legal obligation to disclose the information, McConkie said. What about a moral obligation? “Your guess on that is as good as mine,” he said. “It’s not the responsibility of a third party to make a case for the police.” Should McConkie have been told by his clients? “There was no reason for them to come to legal counsel about that and, in point of fact, they didn’t on this sort of thing,” McConkie said. (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 36)

It seems almost unbelievable that Oscar McConkie would make a statement in which he maintained that it was “not the responsibility” of the church “to make a case for the police.” Investigators were not asking church officials to “make a case” against Hofmann; they were simply asking the church to be cooperative and provide relevant information. If all people were to follow the obstructive methods the Mormon leaders used in the Hofmann case, it would be very difficult to bring criminals to justice. McConkie’s admission that he did not know anything about the rediscovery of the McLellin collection is extremely interesting. Why would church leaders fail to consult their own attorney about such an important legal matter? Were they fearful that he might tell investigators about the collection? That the General Authorities of the church did not report the discovery to their own lawyer tends to demonstrate how secretive they were with regard to the matter.

The fact that there was a conspiracy of silence is evident from the following: Hugh Pinnock, the General Authority who arranged the loan of \$185,000 for Mark Hofmann, was called upon to testify at Hofmann’s preliminary hearing. The following is taken from an official tape recording of the hearing:

ROBERT STOTT—To your knowledge, **did any authority in the LDS Church ever obtain or possess** the McLellin collection?

HUGH PINNOCK—No.

This would have been a very good time for Mr. Pinnock to have said, “Yes, the McLellin collection has been in our vault since 1908.” Richard Turley tries to explain away this testimony by saying: “He [Pinnock] had **not been told about the McLellin materials** discovered the previous month” (*Victims*, page 274). It may be true that Hugh Pinnock was not told about the discovery, but if this is the case, it raises a very important question: why would the other church leaders keep him in the dark about such an important issue. The answer, of course, must be that they were doing their best to hide the information from investigators and feared that if Pinnock knew about the collection he might have to tell prosecutors the church had it. It is also interesting to note that on page 36 of his article, Lynn Packer says that Oscar McConkie represented Pinnock at the preliminary hearing. As noted above, McConkie claimed that church leaders kept him in the dark regarding the rediscovery of the McLellin collection.

HINCKLEY NOT CALLED

Even if Hugh Pinnock did not know about the discovery, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who many believe is really running the church because of President Ezra Taft Benson’s age, knew all about the matter. He was subpoenaed to testify at the preliminary hearing about two weeks after he learned that the church had the McLellin collection in its vault.

Richard Turley gives this interesting information about a meeting Hinckley had with the prosecutors:

Before the preliminary hearing, Hinckley received a visit from prosecutors Bob Stott and David Biggs. Church counsel Wilford Kirton also attended the meeting. . . .

Biggs recalled that they told Hinckley why they were there, and then Kirton began to do most of the talking. Eventually, however, the prosecutors explained that they needed to talk to Hinckley so they could find out what his relationship had been with Hofmann. Hofmann had claimed a close relationship with the church leader, telling people that he had Hinckley’s private numbers and could get hold of him day or night, in the country or out. Prosecutors wanted to know when, where, and how many times Hinckley had met with Hofmann and with Christensen.

Hinckley said he had met about half a dozen times with Hofmann, but he could not recall any information about those meetings beyond what he had told investigators earlier. His answers frustrated both Stott and Biggs. “President Hinckley was very little help, **extremely little help**,” Stott later said. “His memory of the occasions was very poor.” . . . Though he kept a journal, Hinckley had been forced to turn to Francis Gibbons when trying to reconstruct for investigators the meetings he had with Hofmann. (*Victims*, pages 253-255)

Although we may never know what President Hinckley told the prosecutors concerning the McLellin collection at that time, one thing is certain: he did not reveal that the church had the collection in its vault.

All accounts seem to agree that Mr. Hinckley did not want to testify at the preliminary hearing. Although there were probably a number of reasons why he did not want to be questioned under oath, he must have been very concerned that he would be asked questions which might lead to the disclosure of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection. Richard Turley gives this information:

Because Hinckley was so busy, [church counsel Wilford] Kirton suggested to the prosecutors that they **postpone calling him as a witness until the**

trial itself rather than using him at the preliminary hearing. **Hinckley added that he would prefer not to testify.** Kirton's suggestion riled Stott, who thought the attorney was being paternalistic. "How old is he?" Stott later asked, recalling the incident. "Anyway, the old experienced lawyer going to tell the young lawyer how to handle the case. **I became very incensed** at that . . . he's saying, 'Why don't we do it this way? Why don't we save President Hinckley for the trial and don't use him at the prelim.?' I got a little upset at that, him trying to tell me how to run my case. And so I just told him, 'I'm in charge. I need President Hinckley. And **he'll testify.**' . . .

"Kirton let it be known explicitly, 'Is there some way we could **get along without President Hinckley?**' Stott recalled. 'Is there some way that he could have a deposition or whatever it takes?'"

Stott told Kirton the only way the prosecution would consent to have Hinckley not testify at the preliminary hearing would be for the defense to agree to stipulate to what the prosecution wanted Hinckley to testify about if he were present: that he bought the Stowell letter from Hofmann on a certain date for a given price. **Kirton and Hinckley asked Stott if he would broach the subject with the defense, and he agreed to do so.** (*Victims*, pages 255-256)

President Hinckley finally got his way and did not have to testify at the preliminary hearing. Robert Lindsey wrote the following regarding this matter:

To most members of the prosecution team, it was plain that Mark Hofmann had blackmailed the church. It was equally clear that leaders of the church were terrified that Gordon B. Hinckley would be required to testify against him and would be forced to testify, under oath, about his dealings with Hofmann.

From the first weeks of the investigation, lawyers for the church sought to head off this possibility. . . .

Shortly before the preliminary hearing was scheduled to begin, David Biggs and Bob Stott met with Hinckley . . .

Hinckley said it was not in the best interests of the church that he be subpoenaed to testify at the preliminary hearing . . . He had **far more important** things to do as a member of the First Presidency's Office than to appear in court; Hofmann's hearing was insignificant compared with the important challenges that he faced in his job . . .

Gordon Hinckley was not summoned as a witness after all.

Judge Grant, a devout Mormon, later attributed his absence to the trial attorneys' concern for Hinckley's health. But church spokesmen said

Hinckley was not ill, and in fact the reasons were more complex than that. Ron Yengich, Hofmann's lawyer, was no more eager to have the leader of the church that dominated the community raise the specter of his having been blackmailed by his client than the church wanted a man close to its Prophet to appear to have been blackmailed.

Yengich agreed to accept a statement—a stipulation . . . (*A Gathering of Saints*, pages 311, 318)

The stipulation itself proves to be embarrassing to the church now that it is known that President Hinckley knew about the rediscovery of the McLellin collection before the stipulation was entered into. According to Richard Turley, the "stipulation, which Biggs noted was 'prepared and signed by Mr. Yengich and Mr. Stott,' identified Gordon Hinckley and stated that he met with Hofmann sometime between January 11 and 14, 1983 . . . Finally, it stated that Hinckley '**has never seen nor possessed nor has any knowledge of the whereabouts of a document or a group of documents known as the McLellin Collection**'" (*Victims*, page 303).

It is clear, then, that notwithstanding the fact that President Hinckley was fully aware of the rediscovery of the McLellin collection, both the prosecution and the defense understood him to say he never knew anything about any "group of documents known as the McLellin Collection."

Richard Turley tries to minimize the importance of this by saying that the stipulation was "read into the [court] record without Hinckley ever seeing it. Had he reviewed it, Hinckley **could** have revised the stipulation to reflect the church's discovery of McLellin materials in its possession" (*Ibid.*). The reader will notice that while Turley says that Gordon B. Hinckley "**could** have revised the stipulation," he does not go so far as to say that he "**would**" have revised it. In any case, it is clear that President Hinckley not only refused to provide the important information about the McLellin collection to the prosecution, but his statements made to those who took part in the stipulation led them to believe that he had absolutely no knowledge of the location of any McLellin material.

Lynn Packer provides the following information about Hinckley's stipulation:

Hinckley may not have seen an advance copy of the stipulation. But Turley offers no proof to back his assertion Hinckley would have corrected the error had he had the chance. Indeed Hinckley had passed up at least two opportunities to tell attorneys

about the find. And even if Hinckley did not see an advance copy of the stipulation, he had an opportunity to read it in the *Deseret News* [the church's own newspaper] on May 24, 1986, the day after it was entered. Hinckley was among many church officials, including Turley himself, who could have read the newspaper story, noted the falsity of the stipulation and notified authorities of the new evidence the church possessed. Each of those church officials who knew of the stipulation chose silence instead. (*Utah Holiday*, pages 36-37)

Mr. Packer revealed that on May 6, 1986, "defense attorney Ron Yengich interviewed Hinckley and asked about the McLellin diaries and papers. Hinckley denied knowing anything about them except that Hofmann had offered them for sale" (Ibid., page 35). According to Packer, Ron Yengich made the following statement about the suppression of the church's rediscovery of the McLellin collection:

"My belief is that when there is an ongoing criminal investigation that anybody . . . has an obligation to clear up a misconception of fact," Yengich said. "It was extremely significant, an extremely significant matter, their having the collection when the State of Utah was running around looking for that very collection." (Ibid.)

A DANGEROUS GAMBLE

In holding back the McLellin collection from investigators, the Mormon Church was taking a real risk. Richard Turley acknowledged that over two months before the preliminary hearing, prosecutors informed church counsel Oscar McConkie and Hugh Pinnock that they "thought **the McLellin collection would play a key role in the case**, and they anticipated that Hofmann would raise two defenses. The first was that the church had acquired materials it was holding back" (*Victims*, page 238).

As we stressed earlier, Richard Turley admitted that the collection which was rediscovered included "a key item" which convinced church leaders "Hofmann was a fraud." Moreover, Turley acknowledged that this "key item" was "relevant to the case." This raises a very important question: what if the suppression of the McLellin collection by church leaders made it impossible for prosecutors to get Hofmann bound over for trial? If prosecutors had failed to make a strong enough case, we could have had a cold-blooded murderer walking the streets of Salt Lake City today.

If church leaders were convinced that Hofmann was a fraud after learning about the McLellin collection, why was Judge Grant not allowed to see this highly significant part of the evidence?

Richard Turley explains that the church hoped that the prosecutors had sufficient evidence without the church revealing the discovery of the McLellin collection:

If the prosecution's evidence was as strong as some sources had **hinted**, the preliminary hearing would almost certainly result in Hofmann's being bound over for trial. (*Victims*, page 251)

Turley, however, tries to show that the church did not have an inside track on what was going on in the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office:

The cautious distance being kept between church headquarters and investigators meant church officials remained **largely unaware** of the direction the investigation was taking, except to the extent they could piece together clues from media reports, subpoenas, and other sources. (Ibid.)

Turley reports that on February 6, 1986, Apostle Dallin Oaks expressed doubts regarding the prosecution's ability to prevail:

Dallin Oaks, who viewed the case with his extensive legal background, began to wonder about the adequacy of the murder case against Hofmann and about whether, even at this late date, the prosecution had filed its charges prematurely. "I hope the prosecution has more evidence on the murder charges than the newspaper speculation has hinted," he confided in his journal. (Ibid., page 243)

According to Lynn Packer, church counsel Oscar McConkie recently acknowledged that he believed "prosecutors had a 'very tenuous' case against Hofmann and were 'very fortunate to get Hofmann to cough up a plea'" (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 36).

It is certainly deplorable that church leaders would take such a gamble with regard to a person charged with two murders just so they could protect the church's image. On page 251, Turley tries to justify this by making this strange statement: "Because a preliminary hearing was not a trial to determine ultimate guilt or innocence, state law would allow prosecutors **to try again if they failed** during the first hearing to prove probable cause." Turley seems to be hinting that if the prosecutors did not succeed the first time around, the Mormon Church could bring forth the McLellin collection and a second preliminary hearing could be conducted.

Does Mr. Turley realize the implications of what he is suggesting? The preliminary hearing extended over five weeks causing great pain to the relatives of the victims. In addition, it cost a great deal of money and a great deal of inconvenience to many people. It seems

hard to believe that if prosecutors were unsuccessful in their first attempt to bind Hofmann over for trial, that church leaders would have stepped forward with the McLellin collection. The church was already very upset with the bad publicity it had received. In the *Messenger* for September 1987, page 8, we quoted Apostle Dallin Oaks as saying:

In the course of this episode, we have seen some of the most sustained and intense LDS Church-bashing since the turn of the century. . . . the Church and its leaders have been easy marks for assertions and innuendo ranging from charges of complicity in murder to repeated recitals that the Church routinely **acquires and suppresses church history documents in order to deceive its members and the public.** . . . a February 11, 1987, *New York Times* feature states:

“According to investigators, the church leaders purchased from Mr. Hofmann and then hid in a vault a number of 19th-century letters and other documents that cast doubt on the church’s official version of its history.” This kind of **character assassination** attributed to anonymous “investigators” has been all-too-common throughout the media coverage of this whole event.

It is very interesting to note that Apostle Oaks made this denial of the claim that the church was suppressing documents in 1987—at the very time that the church was hiding the McLellin collection from investigators as well as members of the church!

At any rate, if church leaders had come forth with the McLellin collection after an unsuccessful preliminary hearing, it would have caused a far greater outcry than they encountered during the early investigation of the bombings. The church would have been accused of covering up and protecting a murderer to save face with the public. A second preliminary hearing would have probably taken a great deal of time to schedule and complete. In the meantime a murderer, who might kill again, would have been left running loose. Furthermore, investigators and prosecutors would have been incensed at church leaders who had hidden a “key item” from them. Many of them were already upset with the church’s lack of cooperation. Fortunately, Judge Grant did find there was enough evidence to warrant a trial.

Richard Turley makes this peculiar statement regarding the period after the hearing: “When the curtain closed on the preliminary hearing, church officials . . . anticipated a long intermission before the next acts began in the legal drama. While waiting for the curtain to rise again, they continued to cooperate with investigators and prosecutors gathering evidence in the case” (*Victims*, page 307). How Turley can

convince himself that the church was cooperating when they were withholding one of the most important pieces of evidence is very difficult to understand. That church leaders would continue to hide this vital information from investigators is almost beyond belief.

THE PLEA BARGAIN

The new information about the suppression of the McLellin collection also raises questions regarding the plea bargain which finally ended the Hofmann case without a trial. It seems obvious that church leaders did not want the case to go to trial and were hoping that some kind of agreement could be reached. Although President Hinckley managed to maneuver his way out of testifying at the preliminary hearing, he probably would have been called as a witness at the trial. Hinckley would have been very uncomfortable testifying concerning the McLellin collection when he knew that it was being suppressed in the First Presidency’s vault. Furthermore, Glenn Rowe knew about the rediscovery and it seems likely that he would have been called as a witness.

If prosecutors had an airtight case they probably would have sought the death penalty and would not have agreed to the type of plea bargain they entered into. Although we may never know for certain, the fact that the church refused to provide important evidence it had in its possession may have made the prosecutors more willing to accept the agreement and cancel Hofmann’s trial.

DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE

A number of the people who worked on the Hofmann case are members of the Mormon Church. Understandably, it is difficult to get them to publicly express their views about the Mormon Church’s lack of cooperation in the case. Since Utah is predominantly Mormon, even non-Mormons who were involved and still live in the state may be hesitant to discuss their real feelings about the matter. Nevertheless, Lynn Packer did question some of those involved in the legal proceedings. For example, Mr. Packer interviewed Robert Stott:

Lead prosecutor Stott, when informed about Turley’s revelation, said **he should have been told.** “Certainly if the church had some McLellin diaries or documents that could have been included in what Hofmann had categorized as the ones he had, we certainly would have been interested in them.” (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 35)

On page 34 of the same article, Mr. Packer wrote:

Not knowing that church officials had found the McLellin collection **hurt the state's case**, according to Salt Lake County investigator Michael George. "It goes to show elements of fraud and deception; from that standpoint, **it's important**," George said. "If Hofmann claims to have the McLellin collection, and if we could have proved the McLellin collection existed, and existed somewhere else than where Hofmann claimed, [we'd] show Hofmann in a deception."

Judge Paul Grant, who conducted the preliminary hearing, is reported to be a devout Mormon. While Judge Grant was impressed that the church leaders "finally fessed up" that they had the McLellin collection, he was obviously disturbed that they kept him and the prosecutors from having this information at the time of the hearing. Lynn Packer revealed that "Grant . . . says it was a public relations mistake for the church not to have disclosed the McLellin papers when they were first discovered . . ." According to Packer, the church's suppression of this important evidence may have seriously affected the outcome of the case:

Grant said the case **may have taken a different course had the church promptly disclosed**. He said a significant shift in public opinion against Hofmann might have prompted Hofmann's attorneys to enter plea negotiations before the preliminary hearing began, rather than after, as they did. (Ibid., page 36)

Judge Grant seems to be suggesting that if the Mormon Church had come forth with the truth about the McLellin collection, the case might have been settled without a preliminary hearing. This would have prevented the court and all the officials involved from being tied up for such a long time. In addition, it would have saved the State of Utah an incredible amount of money.

However this may be, Gerry D'Elia, one of the prosecutors in the Hofmann case was also disturbed by the church's suppression of the McLellin collection. Peggy Fletcher Stack interviewed D'Elia concerning this matter:

"I can't believe that nobody came forward with it," says Gerry D'Elia, the Salt Lake County attorney . . . "It was a waste of our time and taxpayers' money."

Mr. D'Elia believes the information would have helped prosecutors. Knowing the church already had the McLellin collection could have established Hofmann's motives.

"Our biggest problem was the motive—**that goes to the heart of the case**," says Mr. D'Elia. (Salt Lake Tribune, October 31, 1992)

SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

The suppressive actions of the top leaders of the Mormon Church in the Hofmann investigation have done more damage to the church than the "enemies of the church" could have done in many years. It is going to be very difficult to sweep this matter under the rug. Their actions will undoubtedly haunt the church for many years to come.

As stated earlier, in 1908 Joseph F. Smith, the sixth prophet of the church, ordered that the McLellin collection be purchased by the church to keep it "from falling into unfriendly hands." If President Smith had made the collection available to researchers instead of suppressing it, its contents would have been known by researchers and Mark Hofmann never could have claimed to have the collection because scholars would have known that it was in the church archives. Consequently, Steven Christensen would not have become involved in trying to obtain the collection from Hofmann and Christensen and Kathleen Sheets would probably be alive today.

In trying to keep Hofmann's purported McLellin collection from falling into unfriendly hands, Hugh Pinnock followed in the footsteps of President Smith and opened the way for the tragedy when he arranged a loan of \$185,000 for Hofmann to purchase the imaginary collection.

As if this is not bad enough, when church leaders discovered the real collection, they were so embarrassed that they kept it hidden from investigators. This conspiracy of silence forced investigators to spend untold hours trying to pin down the truth about the collection. If the church had been forthright about the matter, investigators could have spent this time in pursuing more profitable areas. The church's silence concerning this matter definitely hurt prosecutors and left them with a weaker hand in their dealings with Hofmann's lawyers.

While it is true that the General Authorities of the Mormon Church have preached openness, honesty and trust in God from the pulpit, when it came right down to it, some of the very highest leaders of the church were unable to live up to the lofty teachings they have set forth. They apparently did not believe that the God they serve was able to handle the embarrassing situation the church found itself in. Therefore, they proceeded

to protect the church with their own strategy. In their attempt to save the church, they gave an advantage to a man whom they knew was a desperate criminal who was charged with murder. Their behavior with regard to this matter did not match up with their twelfth Article of Faith: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in **obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.**”

While it is true that they did not receive a subpoena for the McLellin collection, it was only because they kept its existence well hidden from the prosecution. Now that this information has come to light, the actions of these leaders speak louder than their words. The message seems to be that the church’s image is more important than the truth, even to the point of withholding key evidence in a murder investigation! We feel that this is a terrible example to set before the youth of the church.

WHAT’S IN THE VAULT?

While Richard Turley stresses the cooperation by church officials during the investigation, the evidence seems to provide a different story. Robert Lindsey relates the following:

. . . Salt Lake City detective Jim Bell spoke at a meeting that had been called to review what detectives knew . . . He said he suspected **the church was concealing information about Hofmann and the murders.**

“They’re hiding something; the church is doing everything it can to make this as difficult as possible. I’ve never seen anything like this in a homicide investigation.” (*A Gathering of Saints*, page 236)

Lindsey went on to say that “many of the investigators” felt “that they were being stonewalled by leaders of the church” (Ibid.). On pages 268-269 of the same book, we find this information:

The salamander letter and several other documents Hofmann had sold to the church were still in Washington at the FBI laboratory. When Ted Cannon [Salt Lake County Attorney] pressed the church to let his investigators look at the originals of those that were still in Salt Lake City, a lawyer for the church said that **would be impossible**, because some of the documents were **extremely confidential** and the church did not want to risk having them made public.

Cannon said that if the church declined to provide the documents voluntarily, he would subpoena them

—and indeed, he subsequently did so. But, to head off a court fight over the subpoena, Cannon surrendered to a demand by the church’s lawyers to keep the substance of the documents a secret.

“The content and meaning and interpretations to be placed upon what is iterated within the documents,” Cannon wrote to Wilford Kirton, the church’s lawyer, “is either immaterial or of secondary concern as far as this investigation is concerned. . . . every reasonable measure will be employed to secure not only the documents themselves, but the contents thereof, from scrutiny or discussion by anyone outside the authorized investigative team. . . .”

Cannon agreed to let church officials maintain a sign-in/sign-out log identifying everyone who examined the documents and agreed with the church’s demands that members of his staff would have to **turn over to the church all notes, photocopies, photographs and negatives** made during examination of the documents. Cannon ended his letter with an expression of thanks for the church’s cooperation, a clause that brought snickers from many of those in the War Room [i. e., the room where investigators met to discuss strategy in the Hofmann investigation].

Richard Turley acknowledges that there were some problems regarding documents the prosecution wanted and goes so far as to say that at one point Church leaders were preparing to resist a subpoena:

The next morning, [Apostle] Dallin Oaks telephoned Rowe . . . Rowe described the burden the request imposed on the Historical Department and the risks it posed to the 261 books and manuscripts involved. Oaks, in turn, wrote to Thomas Monson of the First Presidency about the request. “It would be a very large burden and risk for the Church to produce 261 books and manuscripts, or to copy them,” Oaks observed. He also doubted the investigators really needed all they were seeking. He recommended that **the church go to court to resist the subpoena**, even though **“our differences with the County Attorney would then become public.”** After drafting the letter, Oaks received a telephone call from his fellow Historical Department adviser, [Apostle] Boyd Packer . . . **Hinckley and Packer both backed Oaks’s recommendation.** (*Victims*, page 248)

As it turned out, the Mormon Church did not go to court to resist any of the subpoenas, but it did impose very unusual restrictions on the use of its documents. This quibbling with investigators over access to documents undoubtedly cost prosecutors a good deal of time that could have been spent on more important matters.

Michael P. George, of the county attorney's office, felt that President Hinckley was not telling the truth about his dealings with Hofmann. On page 224 of his book, Richard Turley provided this information:

In response to other questions, Hinckley said he knew of no dealings between Hofmann and general authorities of the church beyond those already mentioned. Mike George later explained that "what we were talking about at that time was other dealings involving Hofmann in regards to documents being sold to members of the First Presidency." When Hinckley said he knew of no others, **George did not believe him.**

Hinckley answered based on his recollections, supplemented by information provided him by Francis Gibbons and Glenn Rowe. Two pieces of information had eluded church officials, however, in their attempts to reconstruct Hofmann's dealings with the church. They recalled that the Grandin printing contract had been purchased by the Historical Department using funds provided by the First Presidency. Later research would convince them, however, that the transaction itself was closed in Hinckley's office.

The other elusive item was the Bullock-Young letter. Hofmann had given it free to Hinckley for the church . . . In the more than four years that had elapsed since the gift, Hinckley had forgotten about it . . . Later, Gibbons would rediscover the Bullock-Young letter and bring it to Hinckley's attention, but on December 9, 1985, when George and Farnsworth interviewed him, the document had been forgotten.

The Bullock letter was a very controversial Hofmann forgery which church leaders assumed was authentic and suppressed in the First Presidency's vault. Mark Hofmann had previously sold the Mormon Church a document he had forged in which Joseph Smith blessed his son, Joseph Smith III. According to former Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, Hofmann received material from the archives which was valued "in the neighborhood of \$20,000" for the blessing document. This blessing indicated that Joseph Smith III was the prophet's true successor, not Brigham Young.

In the purported letter to President Brigham Young, church scribe Thomas Bullock indicated that he would not turn over the blessing because he feared Young would destroy it. Bullock told Young that he did not have "licence to destroy every remnant of the blessing which he received from his Father . . . I will not, nay I can not, surrender that blessing, knowing what its certain fate will be if returned . . ." (*Victims*, page 61).

This letter tended to put Brigham Young in a very bad light, and therefore Mormon leaders felt it must

be suppressed. Turley relates that Mark Hofmann brought the Bullock-Young letter directly to President Gordon B. Hinckley:

After Hinckley read the document, Hofmann said he was a believing, active Latter-day Saint, that he wanted to give the original document to Hinckley, and that **he did not want to blackmail the church.** . . . Hinckley asked, "Are you telling me that you wish to give this document to the Church without cost?"

Yes, Hofmann answered. He also told Hinckley he had not kept a copy of the document for himself. . . . Hinckley discussed the matter with his fellow counselors in the First Presidency, N. Eldon Tanner and Marion Romney. . . . The men decided to file the document **in the First Presidency's vault.** (*Victims*, page 62)

President Hinckley was obviously fooled by Mark Hofmann's clever attempt to make him believe he was a faithful Mormon. Since Hofmann told him that he had not even retained a copy of the letter for himself, Hinckley apparently thought that he could hide it in the First Presidency's vault and that it would never be brought to light.

It seems unlikely that Hinckley would have forgotten such an important transaction with Hofmann. In any case, Richard Turley gives this information about the matter on pages 232-233 of his book:

Also on January 8, Francis Gibbons transferred to Dean Larsen the original and a typescript of the Bullock-Young letter, which Gibbons had rediscovered. . . . It was overlooked until Gibbons happened across it.

The **rediscovery of the letter put church officials in an awkward position.** Because the letter had been **forgotten**, it had not been mentioned in the church's news conference **or in previous interviews with investigators.** Undoubtedly, its discovery would subject church officials to ridicule. Despite the likelihood of criticism, however, Hinckley directed Gibbons to turn the letter over to investigators. In his memorandum to Larsen, Francis Gibbons wrote, "The brethren understand you will make this letter available to the Salt Lake County Attorney under a subpoena which has been served on the Church to produce all documents in its possession received from Mark W. Hofmann . . ."

Michael George, of the County Attorney's Office, was rather upset when he learned of the existence of the Thomas Bullock letter. In *A Gathering of Saints*, page 274, Robert Lindsey reports what happened when the "rediscovery" of the letter became known:

After being issued a subpoena, the church had released to Throckmorton and Flynn what it said were all of the documents it had acquired from Hofmann since 1980, including some that it **had previously kept secret**.

When the First Presidency's Vault yielded the letter presented to Gordon Hinckley by Hofmann in which Thomas Bullock accused Brigham Young of having tried to destroy the Blessing of Joseph Smith III, it caught the War Room by surprise.

"What else are they hiding?" Michael George demanded. "None of the church historians I've talked to—Don Schmidt, Leonard Arrington, Dean Jessee—even knew this existed. *They've never heard of it*. What else do they have? **Who knows what's in the First Presidency's Vault?**"

Now that we know that the McLellin collection was also hidden in the First Presidency's vault, Michael George's question concerning what else is in the vault seems almost prophetic.

In the paperback edition of *A Gathering of Saints*, page 393, Robert Lindsey reported a conversation Mark Hofmann had with Michael George in 1988:

One more question troubled the investigator.

"Mark, does the church have any of your documents that we don't know about yet, that they never told us about?"

"Yes," Hofmann said.

"You got most of 'em," he added, but the church had several of his forgeries that had not been made public, including some, he said, that church officials might not realize originally came from him.

"Are there any other documents in the First Presidency's Vault that the church hasn't told us about?"

Hofmann's face became blank and the slightest hint of a blush appeared on his glistening white scalp [Hofmann had shaved his head].

As George waited for him to answer, his question seemed to hang in the air, the words echoing between the narrow walls of the small room.

Several long moments passed before Hofmann shook his head affirmatively. Yes, he said, there was **one**.

George asked him what the document was.

"I don't really want to talk about it," he said. George fought to convince him: It didn't matter now, he said; he might as well get everything out in the open and be done with it. But this time George's powers of persuasion failed him.

Suddenly subdued, Hofmann became silent again, then said: "I just don't want to talk about it."

Mark Hofmann seemed to be reluctant to cause any additional embarrassment to the Mormon Church. An examination of his published confession leads us to believe that his lawyer did not want him to say anything that would antagonize the Mormons. Since Utah is predominantly Mormon, it would have been unwise for Mr. Hofmann to attack Mormonism in any way. It seems reasonable to believe that the more humiliation he brought upon the Mormon leaders, the more pressure people would put on the board of pardons to keep him from being released from prison.

Lynn Packer suggests the possibility that Mark Hofmann may have learned that the church had the real McLellin collection after he began his scam:

If Hofmann knew McLellin's diaries and papers were in the vault, and if he also knew the church leaders were unaware, the risks he ran in the multiple McLellin deals seem more plausible. Ostensibly, he had only to describe the collection and its whereabouts, claim he had sold it to the church, trust in the church's secrecy and fears of publicity, and cover himself with alibis. . . . In 1988, Mike George interviewed Hofmann . . .

"Are there any other documents in the First Presidency's vault that the church hasn't told us about?" George asked. . . . Yes, he said, there was one. . . . But he wouldn't tell George what it was.

*"He could have meant the McLellin collection," George told *Utah Holiday*, "or he could have just been hanging it out there." (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 39)*

If Mark Hofmann learned that the McLellin collection was in the First Presidency's vault, it is unlikely that he knew about it when he first began telling tales about the collection. In his confession Hofmann claimed that he did not believe the church had the collection at the time he started the rumors:

Q—What was it that came in to your mind which triggered it [the idea of finding the McLellin collection] and what was your idea?

A—Don Schmidt at one time in, well actually even before then, I had seen a statement or read a statement concerning a number of diaries, papers or whatnot, that McClellin claimed to have had. I believe this was in a letter which he addressed to *Saints Herald* which was an RLDS publication in

the late 19th Century. **I knew those documents had not in [sic] been purchased by the LDS Church,** BYU, the Reorganized Church or Yale University, Huntington or other large collections, large collectors of LDS Church documents and were, therefore, still missing or unknown as far as where their present location was. Which was the basic source of the rumor that I had located that location. . . . (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 519-520)

While there is no way to know which document Hofmann was referring to, it is certainly interesting to note that the McLellin collection came to light about four years after Hofmann made the statement that there was another secret document in the First Presidency's vault.

THE COWDERY HISTORY

The fact that church leaders continued to hide the McLellin collection for six years after they knew of its existence raises questions regarding other documents. One very important document the Mormon Church has been accused of suppressing is the "Oliver Cowdery History." Since 1961 we have tried to get church leaders to make this history available.

Unfortunately, Mark Hofmann used the church's suppression of the Oliver Cowdery History as part of a cunning plan to promote his forgery scheme. When Mr. Hofmann saw that we were printing a great deal of material criticizing his Salamander letter, he was concerned that Mormon scholars might become disillusioned with the letter and his other forgeries. A few months before the bombings Hofmann came up with a new angle to shore up belief in the Salamander letter. He told his friends that he had actually seen the Oliver Cowdery History and that in this document a "white salamander" played an important role in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This, of course, supported Hofmann's Salamander letter which related that Joseph Smith said, "the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold [i. e., the gold plates which contained the Book of Mormon] but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times & held the treasure . . ."

Mark Hofmann told his story of the Oliver Cowdery History to John Dart of the *Los Angeles Times*. Hofmann "insisted on anonymity" so that it would not be known that he was feathering his own nest. Dart wrote that "The source said he decided to

be interviewed about the history because the Cowdery documents **provide corroboration** for the salamander references in the Harris letter [i. e., the Salamander letter] . . . The salamander appeared on three occasions, once to Alvin and twice to Joseph, he added" (*Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985).

After reading the article, we became suspicious that the mysterious source of this report might be Mark Hofmann himself. In the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we suggested that Hofmann might be the "Deep Throat" who gave the information to the press. When Hofmann finally confessed, he frankly admitted that he "was the deep throat" who pretended to have access to the secret Oliver Cowdery History. In Hofmann's confession we find the following testimony:

A—It would have been a little later that I introduced . . . the alleged reference in the First Presidency's vault of a [Cowdery] history of Alvin. . . .

. . . .

Q—Is there anything to that story?

A—No.

Q—Is that all a creation of yours?

A—That's pure creation. (*Hofmann's Confession*, pages 451-452)

When Mark Hofmann was asked whether he told the reporter from the *Los Angeles Times* about the Cowdery History, he responded as follows:

A—Yes, I think it would have been John Dart is his name. . . . Dart was . . . told that an inside source named Limy had access to some materials in the First Presidency's vault and was willing to make a statement . . .

Dart flew into Salt Lake. . . . We then went to a park where we sat down at a table . . . and I told him this fabrication. It is purely made up. It's not based on anything I saw in the First Presidency's office or elsewhere.

Q—My next question would be, had you ever seen anything or ever been invited in to the First Presidency's vault?

A—No. I saw some materials from the First Presidency's vault and looked in to the First Presidency's vault but I've never set foot in the vault.

Q—Some things were brought out and showed to you?

A—Right.

. . . .

Q—The Oliver Cowdery [History] was made up by you?

A—Right.

. . . .

Q—Never saw it in the First Presidency’s vault or anywhere?

A—Right.

Q—How did you come up with the story?

A—There was a footnote in a book, I believe by Joseph Fielding Smith, where he discussed something about that history and said it was in the possession of the Church. . . .

Q—Why did you go to John Dart . . . ?

A—I didn’t. My intention wasn’t to have that happen . . . somehow word of this Oliver Cowdery history got out . . . Let’s see, I said there were a couple of reasons for the story. The other, obviously, would have been that part of the Oliver Cowdery History was there was a white salamander as far as Alvin’s involvement and that would have validated the history presented in the forged Salamander Letter.

Q—Again made up by you?

A—Again made up by me. One forged idea to validate another forged idea. (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 452-455)

Although Mark Hofmann has really fogged up the issue of the Oliver Cowdery History, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth president of the church, did, in fact, make comments which led many people to believe that a history written by Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was still in existence. The fact that church officials did not find the McLellin collection when they searched the First Presidency’s vault for the Cowdery History certainly leads one to question how thorough the search really was. While we have no reason to believe that the Cowdery History contained any information about a salamander appearing to Joseph Smith, the document would undoubtedly throw important light on church history.

The late Wesley P. Walters preserved a letter written to him by Francis M. Gibbons, Secretary to the First Presidency. This letter tells that a search of the First Presidency’s vault failed to turn up the Oliver Cowdery history:

I have been asked to acknowledge your letter dated May 28, 1985 in which you requested

permission to read through the early portion of the alleged history written by Oliver Cowdery which has been noted recently in the public press.

Since the report of the existence of this history, purportedly written by Oliver Cowdery, surfaced, a thorough inspection has been made of both the archives in the Historical Department and of **the First Presidency’s vault**. These searches have **failed to reveal the existence of a record** such as the one referred to by the person whom the press has quoted as saying such a record exists.

I also have been asked to extend best wishes to you. (Letter written by Francis M. Gibbons to Wesley P. Walters, dated June 4, 1985)

About three weeks after Wesley Walters received this letter from Francis M. Gibbons, he came to Salt Lake City and met with Gibbons. After the meeting, Walters made some handwritten notes concerning what transpired. According to Walters, Gibbons not only denied that the church had the Cowdery history in the vault, but also said that the McLellin collection was not in the vault:

. . . Asked for clarification on the Cowdery History. He affirmed, with his, arm to the square, that there is no such item as described by the *LA Times* in the 1st Presidency Vault. He said **there is a 25 page history of the period 1829-1831**, consisting of 12 sheets written on both side[s], in Cowdery’s hand, (but this is not certain), but it says nothing about salamanders.

I asked about an inventory of the vault following Joseph Fielding Smith’s death. He confirmed there was an inventory of his vault made, but none of the 1st Presidency vault. However Mr. Gibbons indicated he knew what was in the vault & no such Cowdery item in bound volume form is there, the 25 pages being loose sheets. Furthermore only he and Pres. Hinckley know the combination and Hinckley gets him to open the safe for him. Therefore, anyone gaining access to the vault would of necessity have to go through him.

Further he indicated that the vault was for material “sensitive” and “personal” in nature. No one will be given access unless the First Presidency decides to open the materia[l] to others.

I asked about the McClellan collection and he affirmed that it was **not in the vault & he had never seen it**. I also asked him about the seer stone [Joseph Smith's seer stone] being in the vault and his response was to ask where I got such an idea. . . . Before leaving I asked if I could see the outside of the vault but he refused permission. (Wesley P. Walters' handwritten notes of an interview with Francis M. Gibbons, June 25, 1985)

Wesley Walters' report of Francis Gibbons' comments concerning a "25 page history of the period 1829-1831," thought to be in Cowdery's handwriting, certainly raised anew the question of whether the church was suppressing Oliver Cowdery's History. We suspected that the history mentioned by Gibbons was the very history written by Oliver Cowdery which Joseph Fielding Smith had mentioned. Because the Cowdery document was the very first written history of the church, it would be one of the most important documents in the church's possession. In the June 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we wrote the following about the Oliver Cowdery History:

On April 6, 1830, the very day the Mormon Church was organized, the prophet Joseph Smith gave a revelation in which he was commanded to see that a history of the Church was kept: "Behold, there shall be a record kept among you; and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, . . ." (*Doctrine and Covenants* 21:1).

Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery was appointed to keep this history. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the 10th President of the Church, claimed that the Historian's Office had preserved this important history:

"Oliver Cowdery was the first one appointed to assist Joseph in transcribing and **keeping a history of the Church**; John Whitmer took his place, when Oliver Cowdery was given something else to do. **We have on file in the Historian's Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the**

first historian, or recorder of the Church" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 201).

In 1961 we tried to get the Church to make Cowdery's history and other documents available. We were informed by the Assistant Church Historian, however, that Joseph Fielding Smith was "not interested in the project you have in mind." (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, June 1985, pages 1-2)

About a month before Francis Gibbons discussed the Cowdery document with Wesley Walters, Jerry P. Cahill, director of public affairs in the church's Public Communications Department, seemed to acknowledge the possibility that the Oliver Cowdery History was in the church's possession and had been removed from the Historical Department:

LDS spokesman Jerry Cahill said the LDS Historical Department does not have the Cowdery history. He said he would not ask members of the church's ruling First Presidency if the history is locked up in a special presidency's vault.

When asked about references to a Cowdery history in a book by former President Smith, Mr. Cahill said **he assumes the church has the history but it is no longer in the church's Historical Department**.

"I don't intend to respond to every report or rumor of documents in the First Presidency's vault," said Mr. Cahill. "I have no idea if the history is there, **nor do I intend to ask**. I can't have my life ordered about by rumors. Where does it end?" . . .

Mr. Cahill said he has no way of "confirming or denying rumors," and he will "not pursue the matter" of the Cowdery history. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 15, 1985)

Since Francis M. Gibbons claimed that the document in the First Presidency's vault contained a "history of the period 1829-1831," it seemed very reasonable to believe that it was indeed the Cowdery History which Joseph Fielding Smith referred to in *Doctrines of Salvation*. Both Smith and Gibbons maintained that the Cowdery document ended in 1831.

In light of the information available to us when we published the first edition of this book, we took the position that the document Francis M. Gibbons spoke of was probably the long lost Cowdery History and that church leaders were suppressing it. New evidence, however, leads us to question that position.

On February 8, 1993, we received a phone call from H. Michael Marquardt regarding an article written by Richard L. Anderson which was published in *The Ensign* in August 1987. On page 60 of the article, Dr. Anderson mentioned that the church had issued a news release mentioning “a little-known draft of Joseph Smith’s published history that some persons apparently have mistakenly assumed to be the Cowdery history.” Mr. Marquardt wondered if this could possibly be the document mentioned by Francis M. Gibbons. At first we felt that Marquardt’s suggestion was highly unlikely.

Since we had closely followed matters relating to Mark Hofmann’s false claims, we were aware of Anderson’s article. Unfortunately, however, we never associated the document Anderson spoke of with the manuscript mentioned by Gibbons. In any case, Mr. Marquardt mentioned that the document Richard Anderson referred to was printed by Dean C. Jessee in *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1989, vol. 1, pages 230-264. On page 230, Mr. Jessee stated that the document contained “thirty-six pages.” Since the history mentioned by Gibbons was supposed to have had twenty-five pages, we felt that the case was closed—it could not be the same document.

However, upon re-examining Richard Anderson’s article we realized that one of his statements threw some important light on the question at hand. Anderson said that “The last eleven pages are blank, without evidence that the writer intended to add more.” It was clear, therefore, that the document had exactly twenty-five written pages the exact number mentioned by Gibbons!

In view of this evidence, we are inclined to believe that the manuscript published by Jessee is, in fact, the same document Gibbons referred to. According to Dean Jessee, it was written in 1839 by Joseph Smith’s scribe, James Mulholland. Anyone who is familiar with the “Manuscript History” of the church can see that this document is related to the history Joseph Smith began dictating in 1838. Moreover, even a cursory examination of the contents of the document reveal that it was dictated by Joseph Smith and that Cowdery is referred to in the third person.

The reader may wonder how this document could be confused with the writings of Oliver Cowdery. The answer to the puzzle might be that the author did not put his own name upon the manuscript. Furthermore, Jessee informs us that “a filing notation on the front, apparently in the hand of Willard Richards, reads ‘Early part of the history commencing with Joseph and **Oliver’s** Baptism.’”

Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the church’s prophet, served as Church Historian for many years. Smith had a very suppressive policy and was unqualified to deal with the documents which he controlled with an iron hand. It is possible that Smith saw this document and without really verifying the matter with experts made the statement that “We have on file in the Historian’s Office the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery the first historian, or recorder of the Church.” The manuscript was apparently later removed to the First Presidency’s vault because it was believed to be extremely important, and Francis M. Gibbons may have perpetuated the false identification ascribed to the document by Joseph Fielding Smith.

On the other hand, we cannot completely dismiss the idea that the church may possess the original Cowdery History and that it could be located some place among the many documents the church is keeping from its people.

While church officials continue to suppress a vast number of their own documents, they apparently have come to realize that they have to make the McLellin collection available to researchers now that its existence has become known to the public. In the *Deseret News*, Church Section, October 24, 1992, it is reported that the McLellin documents “purchased by the Church in 1908 and locked away, eventually to be forgotten, have now been cataloged by the Church Historical Department and are available for study to qualified researchers.” In light of the facts presented above, however, we cannot be certain that the Mormon leaders have made all the documents available. On August 21, 1901, J. L. Traughber wrote that he had “**over thirty** letters compactly written by Dr. M[']Lellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism.” The article in the *Deseret News* does not mention these thirty letters, but merely speaks of “several journals and four little manuscript books.”

Furthermore, Richard Turley informs us that “Traughber said he had tried to get more of the journal from McLellin’s widow, but she had refused to give them up ‘as she said she did not want some things to be known.’ . . . The Presidency also suggested that Bennion contact McLellin’s widow to obtain the rest of the journals, even if their acquisition were to cost another fifty dollars” (*Victims*, page 249). Turley, however, does not tell us whether the Presidency ever obtained these items McLellin’s widow wished to suppress.

MASKING INFORMATION

Mormon leaders were not only uncooperative with investigators when it came to providing historical documents, but they were secretive regarding other matters as well. The book, *Mormon Murders*, claimed that a detective by the name of John Foster wanted to get a copy of a page from “the Church Administration Building log” which showed Hofmann had come to the church offices on a certain day. According to Naifeh and Smith, when Foster “went to pick up the photocopy, every entry except the one relating to Hofmann **had been whited out** . . . giving police no way to determine if relevant entries had been whited out along with irrelevant ones” (page 302).

Richard Turley, on the other hand, maintained that “the log photocopy attached to Foster’s police report has no whited-out entries. Investigative Information Memo #840 . . .” (*Victims*, page 439, footnote 1). After making this point, however, Turley turned right around and said that “there was one Administrative Building log page on which **extraneous entries were whited**

out before being given to police. It was a page for October 15, 1985, that was furnished to investigators who asked when Hofmann met with [Apostle] Dallin Oaks on that day. The unmasked entry answered their question, and they did not ask to see the other entries, which had been whited out because they were irrelevant to the question and because church officials felt ethically bound to protect church visitors’ privacy unless required by investigators to do otherwise” (*Ibid.*, pages 439-440).

That the Mormon Church would find it necessary to hide such information from the police is certainly strange. We would expect that type of reaction from the CIA or the FBI, but to have a church which proclaims that it operates “in full light” with “no secrecy about its doctrine, aim, or purpose” behave in such a manner makes one rather curious as to what is really going on. It also seems strange that there was no attempt to force the church leaders to produce the original log. While there may not have been anything else of importance in the log, the fact that most of the material was deleted would make one wonder if Hofmann met with Apostle Oaks more than once on the day of the two murders or if other important figures involved with Hofmann or the McLellin transaction were in Oaks’ office that day. The entire log book should have been subpoenaed and thoroughly examined for all meetings between church leaders and Hofmann as well as others who were in any way associated with Hofmann’s document deals. We seriously doubt that other people in Salt Lake City would have received the preferential treatment which the LDS leaders received in the Hofmann investigation.

At any rate, on page 247 of his book, Richard Turley admits that this was not the only time that the church “removed or masked information” provided to investigators:

When Mike George delivered one [subpoena] the next day, the county’s request had expanded to “any records, check out slips, logs, cards, or other documentation of visits to the LDS Church Historical Archives and the documents, books, catalogs, letters, information, etc.” that Hofmann and five others had used since 1975. . . .

The next day, February 20, a county investigator delivered a subpoena to the church’s Missionary Department asking for missionary records pertaining to Hofmann and one of his associates. . . . library circulation records and missionary records dealt with living individuals and thus raised issues of privacy that were hot topics among legal scholars, librarians, and archivists across the United States. Church officials felt a responsibility to comply with the subpoenas while at the same time fulfilling their legal

and ethical responsibility to safeguard the privacy of living individuals. Thus in responding to requests for information, **officials sometimes removed or masked information** not specifically required by the investigators. When Kirton received the missionary records, he reviewed them and **eliminated portions** not required by the subpoena. . . . On February 27, Kirton sent **the screened materials** on to the county.

Although the title of Richard Turley's book begins with the word *Victims*, it is basically the story of only one victim, the Mormon Church. The story of the real victims of the tragedy seems to be glossed over. While we have to agree that the church was a victim of Mark Hofmann's devious plans, we feel that Richard Turley, Apostle Dallin Oaks and other church officials have painted a role of martyrdom which does not fit with the facts.

When a person carefully examines the evidence, it becomes evident that church leaders shot themselves in the foot. The Mormon church hierarchy must accept a great deal of blame for the tone of the books and articles which have tended to embarrass the church. The fact that church leaders alienated a significant number of the investigators who worked on the Hofmann case with their secrecy and lack of cooperation seems to have made a very negative impression on the authors who interviewed them.

It seems that the Mormon leaders and the investigators were on a collision course from the day of the bombings. Church officials felt that in order to prevent embarrassment to the church they had to remain as quiet as possible about the McLellin collection Hofmann had dreamed up and the role Hofmann, Christensen and Sorenson were playing in its suppression. The investigators, on the other hand, needed this very information to solve the murder case. Although the Mormon leaders' main concern seems to have been to protect the church and themselves from embarrassment, they ended up obstructing the investigation, wasting the valuable time of investigators and, consequently, delaying the arrest of the murderer.

TESTING THE PROPHETS

If the leaders of the Mormon Church did not make such extravagant claims concerning their prophetic ability to detect and fight off evil influences, it might be easier to accept the idea that they were martyrs in the Hofmann scandal. Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, maintained that in his youth he had seen a vision of both God and Christ. In this vision he was told that all other churches were corrupt. The following

statement by Smith is taken from the *Pearl of Great Price*, one of the four standard works of the church:

. . . I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right . . . and which I should join. I was answered that **I must join none of them, for they were all wrong**; and the Personage who addressed me said that **all their creeds were an abomination in his sight**; that those professors **were all corrupt**; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." He again **forbade me to join with any of them** . . . (*Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:18-20)

Mormon leaders teach that all other churches are in a state of apostasy. More than fifty pages of the Introduction to the *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* are devoted to proving that all churches except the Mormon Church are in error and operating without any authority from God. The following is found on page XL: "Nothing less than a **complete apostasy from the Christian religion** would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Church members are taught that only men who hold the Mormon priesthood have the authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel. Consequently, those who perform baptisms in other churches do not operate with any authority and such baptisms are invalid in the sight of God.

The Mormons, as we have pointed out, claim to be led by revelation from God. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these claims regarding Mormon revelation:

Our Lord's true Church is established and **founded upon revelation**. Its identity **as the true Church continues as long as revelation is received** to direct its affairs . . . without revelation there would be no legal administrators to perform the ordinances of salvation with binding effect on earth and in heaven. . . . Since The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints **is the Lord's true Church**; and since the Lord's Church must be guided by continuous revelation . . . we could safely conclude . . . that the Church today is guided by revelation. . . . the Spirit is **giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren** in the administration of the affairs of the Church. . . . The presence of revelation in the Church is positive proof that it is the kingdom of God on earth. . . . **For those who reject these revelations there awaits the damnation of hell.** (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, pages 646, 647, 650)

Apostle McConkie also stated: “Members of the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch to the Church—because they are appointed and sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church—are known as the **living oracles**” (Ibid., page 547).

Unfortunately for church leaders, Mark Hofmann put the claim of revelation in the church to the acid test and found that the “living oracles” are just as fallible as other men. Because of this, President Hinckley, Apostle Oaks and other Mormon leaders find themselves in a very embarrassing position. At a time when revelation was really needed, they seemed to be completely in the dark as to what was going on.

In his youth Mark Hofmann undoubtedly was taught that Mormon Church leaders were led by revelation and had the gift of discernment to detect deceivers. The prophet Joseph Smith, in fact, claimed he received a revelation from God himself warning him that his enemies were falsifying an important religious document (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 10). Hofmann, however, finally came to the conclusion that the church was not led by revelation and that he could even deceive the “living prophets” and the top Mormon scholars. In his confession, Mr. Hofmann said that he could “look someone in the eye and lie” and didn’t believe that “someone could be inspired” in a religious sense as to what “my feelings or thoughts were.” He claimed that he “had lost faith in the Mormon Church” and that he “**wasn’t fearful of the Church inspiration detecting the forgery**” (*Hofmann’s Confession*, pages 99, 112).

Not only did church leaders fail to foresee through revelation the threat Hofmann presented to the church, but they completely ignored the many warnings about Hofmann’s documents which began appearing in our newsletter about eighteen months before the bombings. In *Victims*, page 89, Richard Turley commented about this matter: “Surprisingly, the article [in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1984] concluded, ‘While we would really like to believe that the [Salamander] letter attributed to Harris is authentic, we do not feel that we can endorse it until further evidence comes forth . . .’” The *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 1984, reported that “The Tanners suggestion of forgery has surprised some Mormons, who note that the parallels in wording also could be taken as evidence of authenticity.” Thirteen months before the murders, September 1, 1984, the church’s own *Deseret News* printed the fact that “outspoken Mormon Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner suspect the document is a forgery, they told the *Deseret News*.” In an article published in the *New York Times* after the bombings, Robert Lindsey wrote:

In a newsletter that he publishes with his wife, Sandra, Mr. Tanner began raising questions about their authenticity, in some cases comparing the texts with known Mormon writings.

But if senior Mormon officials were aware of his warnings, they apparently paid little attention. Several of the church’s highest officials have acknowledged negotiating to acquire documents from Mr. Hofmann until the day of the first two bombings. (*New York Times*, February 16, 1986)

Richard Turley has a quotation from Hugh Pinnock, the Mormon General Authority who was working on the McLellin transaction, which indicates that church leaders still believed in Hofmann two or three days after the bombings. Writing on April 17, 1986, Pinnock observed:

“It seems that Hofmann has left a trail of evidence. The only effective manner to understand this situation is to realize that M[ark] H[ofmann] was **well considered** before 10-17 or 18th even though he . . . M[ark] H[ofmann] did not internalize the gospel.” (*Victims*, page 271)

Apostle Dallin Oaks met with Mark Hofmann just hours after he had killed Kathleen Sheets and Steven Christensen. Oaks never suspected that Hofmann was involved in the bombings and encouraged him to go on with the McLellin transaction. On page 153 of *Victims*, Richard Turley wrote:

Oaks asked Hofmann if he still intended to proceed with the closing on the collection . . . Oaks told him he ought to get in touch with David E. West, Sorensen’s attorney, who would doubtless wonder how Christensen’s death would affect the transaction. . . . **Oaks thanked Hofmann for his work in discovering church documents** and for his willingness to sell the McLellin collection to **someone “friendly” to the church.**

Apostle Oaks later made a feeble attempt to explain why church leaders were unable to detect Hofmann’s evil plans (see *Confessions of a White Salamander*, page 64). He commented: “But why, some still ask, were his deceits not detected by the several Church leaders with whom he met?” Oaks maintained that Church leaders “cannot be suspicious and questioning” of the many people they meet with every year and noted that if “they fail to detect a few deceivers . . . that is the price they pay to increase their effectiveness in counseling, comforting, and blessing the hundreds of honest and sincere people they see.”

Apostle Oaks never really answered the question. Mark Hofmann was not meeting with church leaders for “counseling, comforting, and blessing.” He was meeting with them for the express purpose of deceiving them so that they would give him large amounts of money and authentic documents in exchange for his fraudulent documents. Furthermore, he had many visits with high Mormon officials. These meetings went on for years, yet church leaders were unable to discern the wicked plan that Hofmann had in his heart.

While the Mormon leaders claim to have the same powers as the ancient apostles in the Bible, their performance with regard to Mark Hofmann certainly did not match up to that of Apostle Peter when he caught Ananias and Sapphira red-handed in their attempt to deceive the church with regard to a financial transaction: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land” (Acts 5:3)?

In a revelation given by Joseph Smith on March 8, 1831, the Lord warned against being “seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils . . . **beware lest ye are deceived**; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts . . . it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations . . . to others **the discerning of spirits**. . . . And to the bishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint . . . are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts **lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God**” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 46:7, 8, 16, 23, 27).

Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie proclaimed that church leaders did have the gift of discernment:

. . . the gift of the **discerning of spirits is poured out upon presiding officials in God’s kingdom**; they have it given to them to discern all gifts and all spirits, **lest any come among the saints and practice deception**. . . . There is no perfect operation of the power of discernment without revelation. Thereby even “the thoughts and intents of the heart” are made known. . . . Where the saints are concerned . . . the Lord expects them **to discern, not only between the righteous and the wicked**, but between false and true philosophies, educational theories, sciences, political concepts and social schemes. (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 197)

It would seem that if these powers were really functioning in the church today, the “Prophet, Seer and Revelator” would have received a revelation warning him concerning Mark Hofmann’s “cunning plan” to defraud and disgrace the church. Furthermore, a revelation regarding his deception would have prevented two people from dying.

Spencer W. Kimball, who was the prophet and president of the church at the time Hofmann first began deceiving church leaders, was supposed to be a “seer” and have the power to “translate all records that are of ancient date” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 8:13). The Book of Mormon also says that “a seer is greater than a prophet . . . a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have . . . a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light . . .” (Mosiah 8:15-17).

When Mark Hofmann showed LDS leaders the forged Anthon transcript, which was supposed to contain characters Joseph Smith copied from the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, President Kimball was unable to translate the characters. Instead of using the “seer stone,” he examined the characters which appeared on the transcript with a magnifying glass. Not only did he fail to provide a translation, but he was unable to detect the document was a forgery and that the church was being set up to be defrauded of a large amount of money and many historical items out of its archives. Moreover, he entirely failed to see the devastating and embarrassing effect this transaction and others which followed would have on the Mormon Church. If ever revelation from the Lord was needed, it was on that day in 1980 when Mark Hofmann first stood in the presence of President Kimball.

As President Kimball grew older, he became less able to function and President Gordon B. Hinckley took over many of his responsibilities and became to all appearances the acting president of the church. Hinckley, who posed with Mark Hofmann, President Kimball and other church leaders in a photograph taken in 1980, was also deceived on a number of occasions by Mr. Hofmann. He, together with Apostle Boyd K. Packer (also shown in the picture), approved many of the deals the church made with Hofmann.

It appears that if the Mormon Church was ever led by revelation, it has been lacking since Mark Hofmann came into the church offices with the Anthon transcript. The inability of Mormon leaders to detect the religious fraud perpetrated upon them raises a question with regard to their testimony regarding the authenticity of the Book of the Mormon. After all, if they could not determine that Hofmann’s documents—which were supposed to be only 150 years old—were forgeries, how can we trust their judgment with regard to a record which is supposed to be ten times as old?

The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie maintained that “the Spirit is giving direct and daily revelation to the presiding Brethren in the administration of the affairs of the Church.” One would think that if such revelation were in operation, Mark Hofmann would have been exposed years before the bombings. With regard to the inability of the Mormon leaders to detect that the Hofmann documents were fraudulent, a person might argue that these documents were not really important spiritual writings, and therefore the Lord did not see fit to intervene when the General Authorities examined them. The truth of the matter, however, is that they contained extremely important material directly relating to spiritual affairs.

The Salamander letter, for example, changed the story of the Angel Moroni appearing to Joseph Smith to that of a cantankerous and tricky “old spirit” who transformed himself from a white salamander and struck Joseph Smith. Mormon Apostle Dallin Oaks tried to reconcile the Salamander letter with Joseph Smith’s account by saying:

One wonders why so many writers neglected to reveal to their readers that there is another meaning of “salamander,” which may even have been the primary meaning . . . That meaning . . . is “a mythical being thought to be able to live in fire” . . . A being that is able to live in fire is a good approximation of the description Joseph Smith gave of the Angel Moroni . . . the use of the words **white salamander** and **old spirit** seem understandable. (“1985 CES Doctrine and Covenants Symposium,” pages 22-23)

After the Salamander letter was proclaimed a forgery, Apostle Oaks must have been very embarrassed that he ever made such an outlandish statement.

Significantly, some of the purported Joseph Smith writings which Hofmann sold to the church contain revelations from the Lord himself. For instance, the Joseph Smith III Blessing document gives this message from the Lord: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord will receive him, in an instant, unto myself.”

Mark Hofmann also forged an 1838 Joseph Smith letter to his brother, Hyrum, which the Mormon Church purchased in 1983. This letter is in its entirety a revelation purporting to come from the Lord. It begins with the words, “Verily thus Saith the Lord,” and ends with the word “Amen.” The fact that Mormon leaders were not able to recognize the spurious nature of these revelations casts doubt upon their ability to discern the truthfulness of the other revelations given by Joseph Smith.

The church has always claimed that it is virtually impossible for a person to write a revelation that would compare with Joseph Smith’s. It now appears, however, that there is someone who can write revelations comparable to Joseph Smith’s and that it is even possible to get them past the scrutiny of the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.

As we have noted earlier, another thing that shows the church’s lack of revelation in times of crisis is the way the rediscovery of the McLellin collection was handled. President Spencer W. Kimball died about three weeks after the bombings, and Ezra Taft Benson became the thirteenth prophet on November 10, 1985. It was only four months after Benson became president of the church that the McLellin collection was found in the First Presidency’s vault. On page 250 of his book, Richard Turley affirms that this information was reported to the First Presidency in March 1986.

One would think that at this vital period in the church’s history President Benson, “the living prophet,” would have had the insight to inform the other members of the First Presidency that the McLellin collection must be made available to investigators. Instead of Benson receiving the word of the Lord to point the church in the proper way, it seems that the heavens were silent and the Mormon leaders were left to their own devices. While there are probably some Mormons who would suggest that President Benson was led by the Lord to suppress the discovery, we believe that most members of the church would feel that such an idea would be unthinkable.

Some may excuse Benson’s failure in this matter by saying that he was too advanced in age to deal with such problems. While there may be some truth in such an argument (he was 86 years old at that time and just recently turned 93), this explanation does not provide much comfort to the faithful. If Benson is not really capable of leading the church through revelation, who is in control? Although there were six General Authorities in the Mormon Church who were informed about this matter, none of them stepped forward to help investigators!

Although Apostle Dallin Oaks would have us believe that “Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities,” there seems to be no way to get around the fact that they must bear a great deal of the responsibility in the Hofmann affair. If they had been open and forthright about historical documents, Mr. Hofmann would not have approached them with his blackmail-like documents with the idea of filling his pockets with the church’s money. Hofmann’s knowledge of the fact that church leaders were anxious to keep anything embarrassing from falling into the hands of church critics set the stage for the tragic events which followed.

HOFMANN'S TALES ABOUT THE McLELLIN COLLECTION

Mark Hofmann's claims concerning the McLellin collection evolved as time went on. In 1982 Hofmann said he had acquired William McLellin's 1831 journal:

One of my favorites is the 1831 journal of William E. McClellan. He was an early Apostle, and this was his missionary journal. I think it's important because he labeled it as "the Book of **Mahalaleel**." That's the code name he went by. And even in last year's revised *Doctrine and Covenants*, he's still unidentified in Section 82. In other words, no one knew that this is referring to William E. McClellan. In that sense I think it's a pretty historic item. I sold that to a private collector without any copies going to the Church. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 17)

In an interview printed in the *Seventh East Press*, September 28, 1982, Hofmann spoke again of McLellin's 1831 journal:

Hofmann has since [the discovery of the Anthon Transcript] enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency's vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks is the fact that "I am not a historian. I'm not going to write an exposé of Mormonism." . . . Hofmann has bought and sold many other important historical documents . . . A partial list would include. . . . William E. McClellan's missionary journal, which, among other things, identifies McClellan as the "Mahalaleel" mentioned in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. . . . Speaking specifically of the McClellan journal, Hofmann remarked that he was sorry that historians will not soon have the chance to study the journal, but "I am not in the business for historians; I am in it to make a living."

The 1831 missionary journal which Mark Hofmann spoke of had actually been locked up in a vault by the Mormon leaders since 1908. Hofmann, therefore, could not have acquired it and sold it to a private collector as he claimed. It is also interesting to note that Mr. Hofmann seems to have made a serious mistake when he identified the journal as "the Book of Mahalaleel."

Mark Hofmann told H. Michael Marquardt about his discovery of the McLellin journal and mentioned that Mahalaleel was the code name for McLellin. Mr. Marquardt was puzzled by this statement. Although Marquardt did not know that Hofmann was a fraud at that time, he called us and mentioned that there must

have been some kind of a mistake. As it turns out, Mr. Hofmann, was apparently not aware of the fact that David J. Whittaker found that Mahalaleel was really the code name for Algernon S. Gilbert, not William McLellin.

Mr. Whittaker found a sheet written by William W. Phelps in "the Brigham Young Collection in the Historical Department of the Church." Whittaker feels that it was "probably composed in 1863" and revealed some of the code names that had been forgotten (see *Brigham Young University Studies*, Winter 1983, pages 103-112). While the edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* Hofmann had at the time he supposedly found the McLellin journal did not have the true name for "Mahalaleel," the current edition gives the name "A. Sidney Gilbert" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 82:11).

As far as we can remember, Mark Hofmann never discussed his discovery of the McLellin collection with us until August 23, 1984. We believe that he brought the matter up with us because of the attack we were making on the authenticity of his documents. He was apparently trying to shore up our faith in his "discoveries" by claiming that some very important McLellin documents, which were known to exist around the turn of the century, would soon come to light.

As noted earlier, we questioned the authenticity of the Salamander letter in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in March 1984. By August 1984, we began to have doubts about all the important discoveries Mark Hofmann had made since 1980. On August 22, 1984, we printed the first part of the pamphlet, *The Money Digging Letters*. On page 9 of that publication, the following statement appeared: ". . . a number of important documents have come to light during the 1980's. The questions raised by the Salamander letter have forced us to take a closer look at some of these documents." The same publication contained the following concerning the Salamander letter: "The more we examine this letter attributed to Harris, the more questions we have about its authenticity" (page 6).

The day following the publication of *The Money-Digging Letters* (August 23, 1984), Mark Hofmann came to our home and had a long talk with one of the authors of this book (Sandra). He seemed very distressed and hurt that we, of all people, would question his discoveries. He had expected that opposition might come from those in the church, but he was amazed that Utah Lighthouse Ministry had taken a position which was critical of him. Mr. Hofmann tried to explain that he could not reveal the source of the Salamander letter

because he had sold it to Christensen. With regard to the Joseph Smith III Blessing, Hofmann indicated that he had given the Mormon Church an affidavit which stated where he had obtained it. He could not reveal the source to the public, however, because the member of the Bullock family from whom he had purchased the document also had important papers concerning Brigham Young's finances that would be embarrassing to the church.

Mark Hofmann seemed to be almost to the point of tears as he pled his case as to why we should trust him. He did not make any threats, however, nor did he show any sign of being violent. At any rate, Hofmann did not provide satisfactory answers to our questions.

One thing that Mark Hofmann claimed while at our bookstore was that the very piece of Egyptian papyrus Joseph Smith used for Facsimile No. 2 in the Book of Abraham was in the McLellin collection. This, of course, would be an extremely important document. In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 337-344, we demonstrated that a drawing of the papyrus—known as a hypocephalus—which appears in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar* had been suppressed by the church for 130 years.

The reason it was not made available was obvious—it showed that portions of the original papyrus were damaged and that Joseph Smith had made imaginative restorations from other pieces of papyrus to restore what was missing on the original. Since Smith did not know the language or what should actually appear on the papyrus, he made many serious mistakes. For example, he combined two types of Egyptian writing (hieratic and hieroglyphic) on the same lines and actually added in hieratic writing upside down to the hieroglyphic! Egyptologists had maintained for many years that the facsimiles which appear in Smith's Book of Abraham in the *Pearl of Great Price* had been falsified.

When the original papyrus used for Facsimile No. 1 was rediscovered in 1967, it verified that Egyptologists were right about this important matter. Critics of Joseph Smith's work, who carefully examined the drawing which appeared in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, knew that if the original of Facsimile No. 2 were ever rediscovered, it would provide some devastating evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Mark Hofmann, therefore, capitalized on the church's fear with regard to this matter by claiming that the original of Facsimile No. 2 was in the McLellin collection.

Four months after Sandra's discussion with Mark Hofmann, we received an anonymous letter (postmarked December 20, 1984). The letter contained the following information:

I am writing you anonymously [*sic*] to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discover[er] Mark Hoffmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyptian Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G.P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church go[t] it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

Shortly after the bombings, we turned this letter over to the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office. Although we believed that it was a genuine letter at the time we received it, we later came to believe that it was written by Hofmann or one of his friends for the purpose of giving publicity to the McLellin collection and driving the price up.

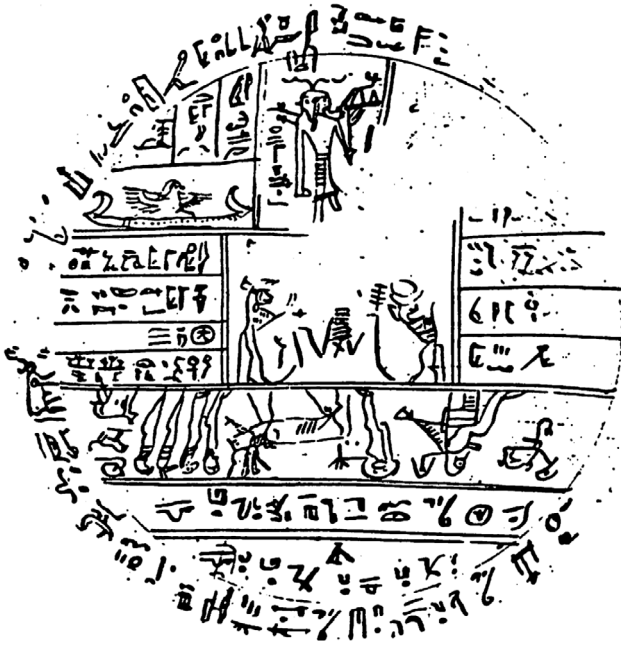
In the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, page 15, we wrote: "It has recently been reported that Mark Hofmann has obtained the original Egyptian Papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. It is also claimed that Hofmann plans to secretly sell the document to the Church so that it can remain hidden from the eyes of the public." Dawn House, a reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, began working on the story of the McLellin collection. She soon learned, however, that it was difficult to get any meaningful information and found that it was very hard to get in touch with Mr. Hofmann. Finally, on July 6, 1985, she was able to write an article which contained the following:

One of the most famous relics in Mormondom—considered by the faithful to be sacred scripture—has been located and sold in Texas. But the manuscript's location and name of the buyer are secret, according to a collector who discovered the relic and other significant documents.

The relic, called Facsimile No. 2, is part of a collection containing papyrus fragments that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe church founder Joseph Smith translated into the Book of Abraham. . . .

Mark Hoffman, a Salt Lake seller of historical autographs and manuscripts, said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle. . . .

Mr. Hoffman said other items in the latest find are diaries of William McLellin, including "day-to-day and weekly activities, and papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830's."



EXAMPLE NO. 1 — A drawing of the Mormon Hypocephalus which appears in *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*. This drawing was suppressed for 130 years. The reader will notice missing areas of this drawing.



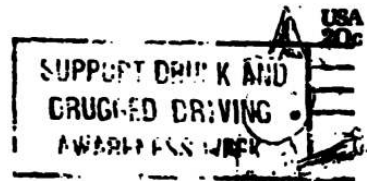
EXAMPLE NO. 2 — A photograph of Facsimile No. 2 as it was first published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. Notice that the areas that are blank in the drawing to the left have been filled in.

JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER,

I am writing you anonymously to tip you off to a cover up by the Mormon church and the document discover Mark Hoffmann.

A few days ago Mark showed me the original actual Egyption Papyrus of the round facsimile of the P. of G. P. It is in many pieces and is pasted onto a piece of heavy paper. There are pencil and ink drawings filling in the missing parts. There is another square piece of papyrus pasted on the same piece of paper. Mark told me not to tell anyone about this. He told me it would never be seen again after the church go it. He is keeping a large color photograph.

I am telling you these things because I do not think it should be covered up and I think you can find out more about it. Mark payed over \$1,000 from someone in Texas. Please do not tell ANYONE you were tipped off by this letter. Good Luck.



Season's Greetings

JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER
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S. L. C., UTAH 84110

Photograph of an anonymous letter and the envelope in which it was sent. This letter was probably written in an attempt to deceive us so that we would give publicity to the so-called McLellin Collection.

“The collection is of considerable historical value in regards to the early [Mormon] church,” he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1985)

While we had serious questions regarding the authenticity of Mark Hofmann’s major discoveries, we also knew that he was buying and trading documents from other people. Many of the documents Mr. Hofmann obtained from the Mormon Church and other collectors were authentic. Hofmann’s sensational documents, on the other hand, seemed to be appearing out of nowhere. The Salamander letter, for instance, seemed to have no provenance—i. e., there was no record or history of where it came from. On August 22, 1984, we published the following about this problem:

We feel that one of the most important tests of the letter’s authenticity is its history since it was written. If Mr. Hofmann will tell historians where he obtained the letter, then it may be possible to trace it back to its original source. If, for instance, it had been in the Phelps family for many years, this would add a great deal to a case for its authenticity. We would feel much better about the matter if it could even be traced back prior to 1976 when Knight’s account of the finding of the Book of Mormon plates was first published. Mr. Hofmann is usually very cautious about this information, claiming that it will hinder his work as a document collector if people know his sources. . . .

In his public statement about the Joseph Smith III Blessing documents Hofmann said he a[c]quired it from a descendant of Thomas Bullock. An official from the Reorganized Church [Richard Howard] told us that when he asked Hofmann the specific source of this document, he would not reveal it. The same man [Howard] asked us the question, “Would you want to buy a used car from someone who wouldn’t tell you who the last owner was?”. . . . While we sympathize with Hofmann’s desire not to reveal the source of his discoveries, we feel that it is very important that historians know the source of these finds. (*The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 8-9)

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1985, page 13, we printed the following in an article entitled, “Dilemma of a Mormon Critic”:

If no information about the pedigree [of the Salamander letter] appears in *BYU Studies*, I will have to assume that it cannot be traced back beyond the hands of collectors. **I do hope that scholars will not side-step this important issue.** Too many of the documents which have recently come forth appear to be like Melchisedec, “Without father, without mother, without descent . . .” (Hebrews 7:3)

While the Salamander letter, Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter and a number of other documents Hofmann claimed to have discovered had no provenance, there was, in fact, solid evidence that William McLellin did have a collection of documents. In a letter to Joseph Smith III, president of the Reorganized LDS Church, McLellin told of two important items he had:

I have in my possession (in manuscript) a copy of the Articles and Covenants of the church given in June 1830—and drawn from their imprinted book of revelations during the year 1831. I also have a copy of the book of Commandments—as far as printed in Jackson Co. Mo. in 1832—but which was afterward *altered*—and printed into the book of Doctrine & Covenants. (Letter dated January 10, 1861)

It is interesting to note that Mark Hofmann told Sandra that the *Book of Commandments* was in the McLellin collection which he discovered. This book is now worth about \$50,000.

After McLellin’s death, a good part of McLellin’s collection fell into the hands of a man by the name of John Logan Traughber. Robert Lindsey gives this information concerning how Traughber obtained the documents:

The first search for the McLellin Collection had begun in the 1870s, when John Logan Traughber, Jr. . . . decided to write a book about Mormonism. . . . he interviewed and corresponded with William McLellin . . . After McLellin died in 1883, Traughber traced his widow to a remote Texas frontier town and inquired whether she had saved any of her husband’s writings. Yes, she replied to his letter, she still had many of his papers, although some had been burned and others had been given away. On November 5, 1884, Traughber . . . went to the railway depot near his home . . . and after paying fifty cents in express charges, took home the McLellin Collection. The widow of the former church Apostle had sent him as a gift many of her husband’s papers and loaned him others, including his daily journals covering six years in the 1830s. (*A Gathering of Saints*, page 255)

On July 11, 1901, John Logan Traughber wrote a letter to A. T. Schroeder in which he revealed that McLellin originally had two copies of the *Book of Commandments* and that he (Traughber) had one of these copies:

I have some pamphlets and papers. I have a copy of the Book of Commandments of 1833, one page

I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-2-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism.

Yes, I could be induced to part with what I have on the subject of Mormonism, provided I could get enough for it to do me some good. If I dispose of any of it, I want to make a clean sweep and wipe my hands forever from all that pertains to the matter.

If from what I am able to tell you in this letter, you think you can give me anything that amounts to anything for what I have, let me know about what you think you could afford to give.

If I can't get enough out of my possessions on Mormonism to do me some good in a financial sense, I don't care to part with any of it.

I think I shall do a little corresponding after awhile on the subject of the original M.S. of the B. of M. I think I read in the Scout, Nerald's some fifteen or more years ago, that Major Bidamon, last husband of J. Smith's widow, owned the N. E. corner stone of the Parson's House, and took out the M.S. of the B. of M. it contained, but that on account of water seeping got into the repository, the M.S. soon crumbled to pieces when exposed to air. I feel sure I did not dream this. Do you know anything of the kind?

George W. L. Switzer, grandson (not son-in-law, as you have it), of David Whitmer has what David W. claimed was the only copy of the M.S. of the B. of M. that was ever made. I am, or used to be, acquainted with Mr. Switzer of Richmond, Mo.

If you are not used in the private history of the Whitmers I can show you some statements made to me in 1854 by ex-Whitmerites and relatives by marriage of the Whitmer family that would astonish you.

If you are able financially to work the matter up, I could help you to get some important testimony, if the parties are still living. If I had time, I could take some statements made to me in May, 1854. I could not get the parties then to make statements to publish and don't think they would now, but if it was agreed that their statement should not be published in their files, I think they might be induced to make statements and swear to them.

I have several letters from Charles B. Thompson, Bancroft, alias John in his last incarnation. He has an original theory of the authorship of the B. of M.

Hoping you will pardon delay, and accept stress of business work as an excuse for your writing, I trust to hear from you again soon.

Very, v. respectfully.

J. L. Traughber.

gone. Dr. M[c]Lellin, (one of the first Twelve) told me that he had a printer boy to gather up the sheets out of the streets after the Mob had torn down the printing office at Independence. He had two copies—one he had bound . . . the other [is] the one I have. The fact that it was picked out of the street after the mobbing gives it a little extra historical value.

The following month, Mr. Traugher revealed more concerning the material he had obtained from McLellin's widow and expressed a desire to sell it:

I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. M[c]Lellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-2-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. M[c]Lellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism.

Yes, I could be induced to part with what I have on the subject of Mormonism, provided I could get enough for it to do me some good. If I dispose of any of it, I want to make a clean sweep and wipe my hands forever from all that pertains to the matter. (Letter from John L. Traugher to A. T. Schroeder, dated August 21, 1901)

Mr. Traugher's letters seem to establish the fact that there was a McLellin collection at the turn of the century. At the time that Mark Hofmann claimed he had the McLellin collection, we had no idea that the Mormon Church secretly bought it in 1908. Therefore, it seemed possible to us that Mark Hofmann could have obtained it.

Nevertheless, we did have a question regarding how the original of Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham could have ended up in McLellin's collection. One explanation was that William E. McLellin had stolen it from Joseph Smith's house. In the *History of the Church*, vol. 3, pages 286-287, the following accusation was made regarding an event that occurred in 1838: "William E. McLellin is guilty of entering the house of Joseph Smith, Jun., in the city of Far West, and plundering it of . . . a number of very valuable books of great variety, a number of vestings, with various articles of value."

Some scholars felt that McLellin stole the original of Fac. No. 2, at that time. We had some doubts about this matter which we expressed in the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, page 11:

So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it [in] 1842.

DIDN'T HAVE COLLECTION

At the time Mark Hofmann made his confession to investigators, it became very clear that he never had any part of the McLellin collection. When Hofmann was specifically asked if he had even attempted to find the McLellin collection, he replied: "No" (*Hofmann's Confession*, page 521). It is certainly ironic that the man who claimed to have the McLellin collection did not have even one document from that collection! On the other hand, the Mormon Church, whose leaders maintained that they did not have the collection and tried to work out a plan so that the church could obtain it from Hofmann, actually had it all along! This appears to be one of those cases where the truth really is stranger than fiction.

Since Hofmann did not really have the documents he spoke of, he engaged in some fabrication to persuade church leaders that he had some of Joseph Smith's papyri and another document that could be very embarrassing to the church. As strange as it may seem, Kenneth Rendell, the man who authenticated Hofmann's Salamander letter, gave very strong testimony with regard to Hofmann's attempt to deceive.

Just before the bombings occurred, one of the authors (Jerald) had become very suspicious that Hofmann did not really have the McLellin collection and felt that the documents which he claimed to have might be forgeries. Jerald knew, however, that it would be very difficult to forge the fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri which Hofmann claimed were part of the McLellin collection. He decided to discuss the matter with the Mormon Egyptologist Edward H. Ashment. Jerald told Mr. Ashment that scholars should be very careful about accepting the original of Fac. No. 2. because it might be possible for a person to obtain a real Egyptian hypocephalus that looked somewhat like the one Joseph Smith used for Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham. The areas which did not agree with the drawing could be broken off or damaged. In this way another piece of papyrus could be palmed off for the one owned by Smith. Mr. Ashment agreed that it might be possible to buy a hypocephalus, although it would be rather expensive.

While it now seems doubtful that Mr. Hofmann ever actually obtained a hypocephalus, the evidence shows that he did, in fact, obtain some pieces of genuine Egyptian papyrus which he tried to palm off as part of the Joseph Smith Papyri in the McLellin collection. According to the *Deseret News*, October 28, 1985, Kenneth Rendell "said he also sent two

pieces of Egyptian papyri to Hofmann on a \$10,500 consignment. . . . He said he found it strange that Hofmann wanted something from the first- or second-century A. D. containing hieratic script rather than hieroglyphics, which are much more desirable to collectors. He said Hofmann stressed how secret this transaction had to be.”

At the preliminary hearing, Kenneth Rendell “definitely” identified the papyrus which Hofmann represented as being from the McLellin collection as being material he had let him take on consignment: “. . . the two came to a total of [\$]10,500. I told him that if he took both of them I would knock the 500 off. It would be 10,000 for the pair. They were clearly on consignment. It wasn’t a sale.” Mr. Rendell also testified concerning Mark Hofmann’s request that the matter be kept “very confidential”:

Q—Now, pursuant to the conversation between Mr. Hofmann and Leslie Kress, was there a memorandum circulated around your . . . office?

A—Yes, there was.

Q—And . . . what that memorandum said was approximately what, to the best—

A—. . . the memorandum basically said that Mark Hofmann had called and he wanted to make certain that we understood that this transaction was to be considered very confidential and no information given out to anyone about the transaction.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for October 28, 1985, printed this revealing information:

Detectives removed pieces of papyrus from Mr. Hofmann’s home and burned-out automobile. Officers, acting on a search warrant, also took a piece of papyrus from a safe deposit box used by Mr. Christensen. . . .

Detectives believe that Mr. Hofmann, 31, fragmented either one or both of the 30-inch by 9-inch papyrus scrolls lent to him on consignment by Mr. Rendell in mid-September, and then showed the pieces to various investors, telling them that they belonged to the missing McLellin papers.

The papyrus was apparently broken in such a way that it would make it very difficult for an Egyptologist to read the text. This, of course, would help disguise where it came from. In any case, the *Deseret News* for October 31, 1985, revealed that Mark Hofmann took the fragmented papyrus to the very man with whom Jerald had discussed the possibility of a papyrus switch:

[Edward] Ashment said he was first contacted by Hofmann in July about the papyri fragments in the McLellin papers. Ashment later photographed one

fragment during a meeting in the Church History Library. But Ashment said the fragment did not match previous descriptions of the four papyri purported to be in the McLellin papers. . . . Rendell said the fact that the papyrus was fragmented suggested some sort of illicit dealings. He said there could be no legitimate reason for fragmenting the papyrus because the individual pieces would be worth dramatically less than the whole . . .

“The document in pieces is worth 10 percent of what it is as a complete unit,” Rendell said. “The piece that now remains is worth well under \$1,000.”

It is certainly ironic that the very man who authenticated the Salamander letter would turn out to be one of the first to speak of fraudulent dealings with regard to the McLellin collection. Mr. Rendell’s statement that breaking up the papyrus greatly diminishes its value is certainly true in any regular transaction. In Mr. Hofmann’s case, however, this would not necessarily be true. The fact that he represented it as a part of the Joseph Smith Papyri greatly enhanced its value. Wade Lillywhite claimed that Mark Hofmann contacted him before the killings “and offered to sell for \$100,000 a papyrus document purported to be an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 22, 1985). From this it would appear that Mr. Hofmann was greatly inflating the price of common Egyptian papyri by claiming it was part of the McLellin collection. Brent Metcalfe, who was doing some work for Mark Hofmann, acknowledged that Hofmann deceived him by telling him that the papyrus once belonged to Apostle McLellin.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 15, the following information appears:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Curt Bench, a representative of Deseret Book, that on or about September 19, 1985, Mark W. Hofmann showed Mr. Bench a piece of papyrus, claiming it to be a part of the [“]McLellin Collection” and that Mr. Bench could purchase it for \$40,000.00.

At Hofmann’s preliminary hearing, Curt Bench testified as follows:

A—Mark showed me a piece of papyrus encased in plastic that he wanted to sell to us for a figure of \$40,000.

Q—And what did you say about that?

A—I asked him specifically if it was from the so-called McLellin collection, and he indicated that it was.

In *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 15, we find this information:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigations and reports that Wade Lillywhite, a representative of Deseret Book, that on or about (September 30, 1985) Mark W. Hofmann showed Mr. Lillywhite a piece of papyrus, claiming it to be part of the “McLellin Collection.” Subsequently, on (September 30, 1985), Mark Hofmann and Wade Lillywhite contacted Hugo Gardner and Jack Wignall in an attempt to obtain \$150,000.00, part of which was to be collateralized by the papyrus which Mark W. Hofmann maintained, to Jack Wignall was part of the Joseph Smith collection used to translate the Book of Abraham for the Pearl of Great Price.

Wade Lillywhite confirmed these statements in the testimony he gave at the preliminary hearing:

. . . on the 30th when we were reviewing the items to be used as collateral, he said . . . that the papyrus came from the McLellin collection; that it was [a] piece of papyrus that had been in possession of Joseph Smith and probably one of the items used in production of the Book of Abraham.

This information is found on page 16 of *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*:

Your affiant has been informed by police investigators and reports that Brent Ashworth . . . between the dates of September 23 through September 26, 1985, Ashworth had negotiations with Mark W. Hofmann in which Mr. Hofmann showed Ashworth a piece of papyrus representing it to be a part of the “McLellin Collection,” and offered to sell it to him for over \$10,000.00. These negotiations were precipitated by a phone call from Mark Hofmann.

Brent Ashworth was also called upon to testify at the preliminary hearing. He said that Hofmann told him that the fragment of papyrus he showed to him “came from the Joseph Smith Papyrus from the McLellin collection.” He further testified that Hofmann told him he had “kept back” this piece of papyrus when he sold the McLellin collection. Ashworth asked Hofmann if he could show the papyrus to Dr. Hugh Nibley but Hofmann responded, “no, I don’t want you showing it to anybody. This has to remain absolutely quiet.”

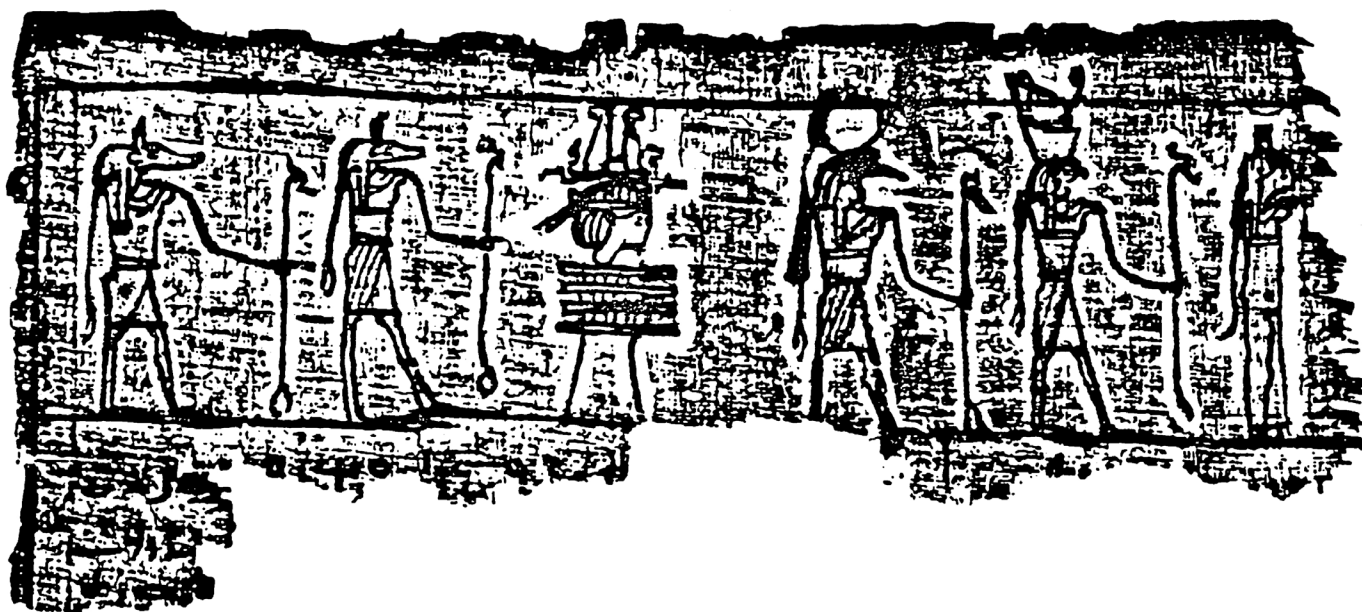
According to *The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann*, page 16, Leslie Kress and Kenneth Rendell maintained that the papyrus actually “came from a European Collection which was consigned to defendant

for an expected sum of \$10,000.00. Rendell positively identified the papyrus as having never been part of a ‘McLellin Collection’ nor known as a Joseph Smith Papyrus.”

Mr. Hofmann’s attempt to make the contents of the McLellin collection seem very sensational must have been motivated by a desire to extort more money from those who wished to keep it hidden from public view. His claim that some of the Joseph Smith Papyri were in the McLellin collection undoubtedly stems from a rumor that some of the papyri had been found in Texas. We had reported this in the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in May 1971. We quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.”

At first Mark Hofmann only claimed that he had the original of Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham and some fragments of papyri. After the bombings, however, we learned that he also asserted that he even had the original of Fac. No. 3. As stated earlier, the *Tribune* reported that Hofmann offered to sell Wade Lillywhite “an ancient papyrus facsimile from the McLellin papers.” Mr. Hofmann wanted “\$100,000” for this document. We assumed, of course, that this was Fac. No. 2, but when we contacted Mr. Lillywhite, he informed us that it was really Fac. No. 3 that Hofmann offered him! At the preliminary hearing, Wade Lillywhite testified that he received a telephone call the day before the bombings: “He [Hofmann] indicated that he was in need once again of raising some money; that he had an item that he wished to sell, which was Facsimile No. 3 from the Book of Abraham . . .” Mr. Lillywhite confirmed that Hofmann wanted “\$100,000 for it.” He also testified that Hofmann said it “came from the McLellin collection, and I asked him once again how that could be seeing I thought the collection had been previously sold, and he once again indicated that was one of those items that he had retained from the McLellin collection.”

Although Kenneth Rendell indicated that the papyrus Mark Hofmann broke up was “worth well under \$1,000” because it was damaged, Hofmann tried to sell it for over forty times its value by representing that it was part of the McLellin collection. When a list of collateral was prepared for a loan Mr. Hofmann was planning to obtain, the value was listed as \$100,000—over 100 times the amount Rendell said it was worth!



A photograph of the papyrus Mark Hofmann said he found in the McLellan collection. It was indentified by Kenneth Rendell as coming from his collection.

Steven Christensen's belief that Mark Hofmann was a "crook" may have partly come from the fact that he learned Hofmann was trying to sell this piece of papyrus, which was supposed to be part of the McLellin collection, to someone else. The whole collection, of course, was supposed to eventually end up in the hands of the Mormon Church through a donation by an investor. In his testimony at the preliminary hearing, Curt Bench claimed that he informed Steven Christensen of this duplicity on Hofmann's part:

Q—Did you have an occasion to tell a Mr. Steven Christensen about this papyrus transaction or attempted transaction with Mr. Hofmann?

A—I did. Mark had asked me to not tell anyone about it and I was keeping it confidential, but when Steve had been talking to me about some matters concerning Mark, I felt it best, at that time, to tell him that Mark had offered that piece of papyrus to us and indicated that Mark had said it was from the McLellin collection—

Curt Bench said that Mark Hofmann later "asked if I had told anyone about the piece of papyrus and I told him that I had." Hofmann then indicated that Steven Christensen had discussed the matter with him and he was "curious" how Christensen "found out." Mr. Bench went on to testify:

A—At some point . . . I had indicated to Steve the fact that Mark had offered a piece of papyrus, and that, of course, made Steve curious because he was wondering where the McLellin collection was and why would there be a piece offered for sale if indeed it was supposed to go to the church.

Q—You conveyed that information to him?

A— . . . Yes, I told him . . . that Mark had attempted to sell that to me because I felt in light of the seriousness of the situation, Steve should know that.

The information that Mark Hofmann was trying to sell a part of the collection out from under the Church must have come as a real shock to Steven Christensen.

ATTEMPTED BLACKMAIL?

Until the time of the bombings, Hofmann's friends were leaking out all kinds of information concerning what was in the McLellin collection and how damaging it would be to the Mormon Church if it fell into the hands of the public. The church leaders apparently became very concerned that the material be suppressed. The *Chicago Tribune* for October 25, 1985, printed this interesting information:

SALT LAKE CITY—After questioning a leading authority on rare documents, police here are piecing together a theory that the wave of bombings that hit this city last week was part of a daring scheme to conceal an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.

The scenario revolves around a plan to threaten the church leadership with a collection of artifacts deliberately concocted to appear particularly damaging to the credibility of Mormonism's founder, Joseph Smith.

At Mark Hofmann's preliminary hearing, Wilford Cardon testified that Hofmann asked him for "\$185,000" so that the McLellin collection could be obtained. According to Cardon, Hofmann claimed that he was trying to keep the collection from falling into the hands of critics of the church: ". . . Mr. Hofmann told me it was important that they be given to the Church. That others who were not friendly to the Church also knew of the documents; that it was important that he purchase the documents . . . and give them to . . . President Hinckley . . . it was important that the Church not purchase the documents outright or that they not be donated to the church, but that they be . . . put in the Church's possession for safe keeping." Fortunately for Mr. Cardon, he became suspicious of Hofmann's story and did not provide any money for the project.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, October 25, 1985, document dealer Kenneth Rendell claimed that "in repeated interviews with the Salt Lake City Police Department, officers told him they believe Hofmann had planned to use those papyri as part of the so-called McLellin collection.

"Then, according to this scenario, Hofmann would try to sell the collection to somebody in the church or affiliated with the church who would want to keep the items from public view to avoid embarrassment."

Just two months before the bombings, we had printed some important information about the purported McLellin collection and condemned Mr. Hofmann's attitude with regard to the church suppressing documents. We said that this behavior was "deplorable, to say the least" (*Salt Lake City Messenger*, August 1985, page 10). In the *Los Angeles Times* for November 8, 1985, we read:

According to Flynn, who often worked with Hofmann on deals, church officials and Hofmann had heard that anti-Mormon groups were "hot on the trail" of the McLellin Collection. Flynn said Hofmann told him the papers were being held by a Texas bank as loan collateral.

“I was told by Mark that President Hinckley was anxious to get this stuff,” Flynn said in an interview. “Evidently, they had caught wind the ‘antis’ were after it, and they were anxious to get it here to Salt Lake as soon as possible.”

Mark Hofmann made it clear to Wade Lillywhite that the McLellin collection contained material that would cast doubt on Joseph Smith’s story of the First Vision of 1820 in which both God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to him. Furthermore, it was supposed to have information about Smith’s practice of polygamy. In his testimony, Mr. Lillywhite related that he had learned from Hofmann that the McLellin collection included affidavits: “Some of the affidavits such as Emma Smith’s affidavit concerning the First Vision of Joseph Smith—that his first experience with the divine was to have been the visit from the Angel Moroni, other affidavits regarding Joseph Smith’s plural relationships with women, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and so forth.” Mike Carter reported that Hofmann told Shannon Flynn that “President Hinckley . . . ‘was nervous’ to have the collection” so that it would not fall into the hands of “the anti-Mormon group, Saints Alive” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 28, 1986).

SPALDING-RIGDON SCARE

In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for April 1986, we printed the following

Allen Roberts and Fred Esplin reveal that “Police sources indicate that Steve Christensen’s personal journal records that Elder Hugh Pinnock asked Hofmann to find for him two important items: the lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon and something ‘too sensitive to mention,’ that the late Elders Mark E. Petersen and G. Homer Durham were most involved in prior to their deaths” (*Utah Holiday*, January 1986, page 58). It has been suggested that the item that is “too sensitive to mention” may be the gold plates of the Book of Mormon or a “seer stone.” Both of these suggestions appear unlikely. One thing that might qualify, however, is evidence that Solomon Spalding or Sidney Rigdon wrote the material which Joseph Smith used for his Book of Mormon. Although we have never put a great deal of stock in the theory, many critics of the Mormon church have maintained that Sidney Rigdon stole a manuscript written by Spalding and that this was used to create the Book of Mormon. If this idea could be proven, it would destroy the claim that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired. Any hard evidence on this subject

would certainly be “too sensitive to mention.” Like the 116 lost pages of the Book of Mormon, such “evidence” might be sold to the Mormon church for millions of dollars. This, combined with the secrecy that would surround its transfer to the church, could very easily lead to disagreements and perhaps even to murder.

We have recently learned that investigators have been looking into a document which was in the possession of Hofmann or Jacobs which has the signatures of both Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon on it. The document apparently bears clear evidence of falsification.

At the Mormon Church’s press conference concerning the bombings, Apostle Dallin Oaks stated: “Mark Hofmann has shown Elder Pinnock a letter that he said was part of the [McLellin] collection . . .” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). When the preliminary hearing was held, it was revealed that the “letter” which Hofmann showed to Mr. Pinnock was the mysterious Spalding-Rigdon document which links the two men together. Hugh Pinnock, a member of the Church’s First Quorum of Seventy, testified as follows:

Q—Could you tell us what transpired at that meeting?

A— . . . well, he reported he’d been able to get the collection . . . and showed me . . . a document that he reported was from that collection.

Q—Do you know what that item was?

A—It . . . was a deed or some legal document . . . between Asa and Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon and some other parties. It dealt, if I remember correctly, with the transfer of property.

Q—Did he tell you anything else more about that particular item?

A—No. I asked him if I could have a copy and he said, “Yes, as long as we wouldn’t distribute it.” So we made a copy.

Q—Was there anything of significance, that you noticed about this document?

A—Well, . . . in the Church we’ve all heard of . . . Solomon Spalding and . . . that document would have established the fact that Solomon Spalding and Sidney Rigdon knew one another.

.....

Q—Were you told anything about keeping that document or confidentiality or anything like that?

A—Yes.

Q—_____ you told?

A—Just to keep it confidential. That there would be a number of other people interested in the collection and its location and it should be kept . . . secret.

Hugh Pinnock seemed to believe that this document was genuine, and he probably realized that it could have a devastating effect if it became known by critics of the Church. That Hofmann would show this particular document to Pinnock certainly supports the accusation that he was engaged in “an attempted blackmail of the Mormon church itself.”

As it turned out, the document was a very obvious forgery. Document experts testified that the names Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding were not on the document when it was originally written and that the date had been changed from 1722 to 1822. Even the altered date, however, presented a serious problem to those who were informed concerning the Spalding-Rigdon theory concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon. Solomon Spalding could not have signed any document in 1822 because he died in 1816!

In any case, although Hofmann represented to Pinnock that the document was part of the McLellin collection, he turned right around and sold it out from under the Church. Steven Barnett gave some very interesting testimony concerning the Spalding Rigdon document:

Q—Let me show you what’s been marked State’s Exhibit 114. I’ll ask you if you can identify that exhibit.

A—Yes, I can.

Q—What is that exhibit?

A—It . . . is a document with the signature of Sidney Rigdon and a Solomon Spalding.

Q—When did you first come in contact with that document?

A— . . . about the 18th of September, last year.

Q—1985?

A—Right.

Q—Tell us where you were and who, if anyone, brought that document to your attention.

A—I was at my desk in the rare book room and Mark Hofmann brought it in to me.

Q—[Was] that the first time you’d ever seen such a document?

A—Yes, it is.

Q—What did he do with the document when he brought it in to you?

A—He put it on the counter and asked me if I’d like to look at it

Q—Did he make any other comments about it?

A— . . . he had invited me to come over and look at it. I did and it appeared to have two signatures on it that were rather unusual as far as Mormon history is concerned.

Q—Two signatures that you recognized?

A—Well, I recognized Sidney Rigdon . . . as a witness on the item but I’d never seen a item signed by a Solomon Spalding.

Q— So those two names caught your attention?

A—Right.

Q—Now, did . . . Mr. Hofmann say anything about . . . the document to you?

A— . . . [he] commented that it was probably going to be a controversial item. It had the possibility of being.

Q—Were there discussions about you purchasing the item.

A—Ah, yes.

Q—Now, would this be for yourself or . . .

A—No. For the store.

Q—Okay. What were those conversations?

A—Well. . . . we discussed the fact that it apparently was signed by both Sidney Rigdon and Solomon Spalding and so at that particular point, since I’d never seen anything signed by Spalding, I decided I’d better do some research on it.

Q—Was there any figures, monetary figures, discussed?

A—Yes. \$2,000.

Q—Was that the price he wanted for the document?

A—Right.

Q—You wanted to do a little research?

A—Yes.

Q—Where did you want to research?

A—Well, I wanted to find out if I could . . . find some handwriting of Solomon Spalding to compare it with.

Q—What did you do?

A—I researched that evening and found out that the Solomon Spalding had died several years prior to the date on the item.

Q—Okay. What did you do with that information?

A—Mark called me the following day and I just informed him of the discrepancy of the date.

Q—What happened then? Did he respond?

A—Yes. He said that he’d check back with me later in the day.

Q—Did he do so?

A—Yes, he did.

Q—Tell us about that conversation.

A—Well, what he told me was, would I be interested in the item as a Sidney Rigdon autograph?

Q—And your response?

A—I thought that could be arranged but I wouldn’t be able to pay as much money for it as such.

.....

Q—Did . . . you come to a figure you could pay for it simply because of the Sidney Rigdon signature?

A—Mark, I believe asked four hundred, at that point, based upon the value of the Sidney Rigdon autograph.

.....

Q—Did you subsequently . . . pay him some money?

A—Yes.

.....

Q—And what did you pay him?

A—Two hundred dollars in two payments.

Q—A total of four hundred dollars?

A—Right

Q—And that is from Cosmic Aeroplane?

A—. . . yes.

Mark Hofmann's attempt to make it appear that William E. McLellin left a collection that would be very embarrassing to the Mormon Church was certainly a success. A number of prominent Mormons became concerned about helping Hofmann. We have already mentioned that Hugh Pinnock offered Mark Hofmann an armored car, or an airplane so he could obtain the McLellin collection. (An employee of KSL told us that this information came from the diary of Steven Christensen.) Mark Hofmann declined the offer saying that this would not be necessary. Pinnock said that since the transaction was to be made on a day when the banks were to be closed, the individual receiving the cashier's check would not be able to call and verify that the check was legitimate. He wondered, therefore, if Hofmann would prefer to take cash from a fund that was available. Hofmann, however, thought that this would not be necessary. The fact that Hugh Pinnock felt that an armored car might be necessary to carry out the transaction may show that he was very concerned that the documents not fall into the wrong hands.

In any case, we certainly would like to know more about this cash fund. In a paper prepared for the 1986 Sunstone Theological Symposium, John Heinerman and Anson Shupe gave this information:

Also, KSL-TV news reporter, Lynn Packer, told one of us late last year that when Hofmann met with Pinnock and explained he needed the money right away, that Pinnock reassured him that if the bank loan didn't go through that he (Pinnock) could get some from **the Nielsen Trust**, a private trust fund administered by the Church through their Deseret Trust (Packer, 1985). ("Mark Hofmann and the Mormon Manuscript Bombings: Fraud and Deceit in a Religious Context," pages 6 and 7)

Before Hugh Pinnock began helping Mark Hofmann obtain the McLellin collection Hofmann had approached coin dealer Alvin Rust about the matter. Mr. Rust testified:

Q—Sometime in the first part of April or March of 1985 were you approached by Mr. Hofmann concerning a McLellin Collection?

A—Yes, I was.

Q—And can you tell us approximately when this occurred and where it was?

A—Well, his first approach on the McLellin collection was possibly February or March, indicating to me there was a very important collection in New York called the McLellin collection.

Alvin Rust said that Hofmann told him that the McLellin collection was "twenty times more important than anything we had ever purchased before." Mr. Rust went on to testify that, "The one thing he stressed was that this had to be very confidential. The collection was only known by he and two or three of the hierarchy of the Mormon Church. . . . Gordon B. Hinckley being the agent that he was dealing with and . . . he stressed emphatically that I couldn't tell a soul and that no one was supposed to know about the transaction."

After Mr. Rust invested in the collection, Hofmann pretended that he obtained it. Later he told Rust that he had actually "sold the entire collection to the LDS Church for \$300,000." Hofmann, however, did not repay Alvin Rust's investment and began to give Mr. Rust a number of different stories about what was happening with this mysterious collection. Rust, in fact, claimed that Hofmann gave him four different accounts about what was going on:

Q—From April 23rd through October the 12th, how many different accounts of what was transpiring with the McLellin collection did Mr. Hofmann give to you?

A—Well, it'd be four different accounts.

Q—Did he ever return your money?

A—No, he has not.

Alvin Rust said that in the "latter part of August—I think it was August 25th or so—Mark came into my store and gave me a check for \$132,000 . . ." Mr. Rust said he deposited the check in the bank "and it didn't clear." When Rust was asked if he ever got his "funds from the check," he replied, "No, I did not." Mr. Rust finally filed a lawsuit against Hofmann in which he claimed "he was defrauded of \$132,000 in the deal for the McLellin papers" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 15, 1985). Hofmann had repaid Mr. Rust \$17,900, leaving a balance of \$132,100.

The Mormon church's involvement in the McLellin transaction was discussed at some length at the Church's press conference held October 27, 1985. Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the church's First Presidency, admitted that Mark Hofmann had approached him about the McLellin collection but said that Hofmann "wanted to donate the collection to the church. There

was no discussion of our purchasing it” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985). However this may be, Mr. Hofmann not only obtained \$150,000 from Mr. Rust, but he also approached the church claiming that he needed \$185,000 to buy the collection. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks revealed the following:

In late June, Mark Hofmann and Steve Christensen told Elder Pinnock that Hofmann had an option to buy the McLellin collection from a man in Texas for about \$185,000. . . .

Elder Pinnock asked me if I thought the church would loan Mark Hofmann \$185,000 for this purpose. I said, emphatically not. President Hinckley was in Europe at the time of this conversation. No one else could or would approve such a transaction. . . . to have the church involved in the acquisition of a collection at this time would simply fuel the then current speculation reported by the press that the church already had something called the McLellin collection or was trying to acquire it in order to suppress it. . . . We discussed whether the church would be interested in receiving the collection as a gift. It was my judgment that the church probably would at some future time, but in that event it had to be a genuine gift from a real donor. . . . Elder Pinnock inquired whether it would be appropriate to put him in touch with banking officials. I said I saw no harm in that provided it was clearly understood by all parties that the church was not a party or a guarantor and that Hugh Pinnock was not a party or a guarantor to such a loan. . . . The bank made the loan to Hofmann. Hofmann said he had acquired the McLellin collection in Texas and shipped it to Salt Lake City where it was stored in a safety deposit box. The loan came due and it was not paid by Hofmann. . . . Mark Hofmann at that point said or implied, he would have to sell the collection entirely or a piece at a time. This information reached me sometime in September. . . . Elder Pinnock mentioned at that time that he knew of at least two individuals who might be interested in purchasing the collection. Was there any harm in calling its availability to their attention? . . .

I was later informed that a buyer was interested but he wanted to remain anonymous. . . .

Sometime about the time of October Conference, the potential buyer phoned me. . . . He also asked whether the church would be interested in receiving it as a gift at some future time if he purchased it and later saw fit to give it. I said I supposed so . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

During the press conference, Apostle Oaks was asked the name of the potential buyer. He replied, “He wished to remain anonymous and the police are aware of his identity and I think it would not be ethical for me to make it aware [*sic*] except to say that he is a

person who is a member of the church” (Ibid.). The name of the potential buyer was a real secret. Donald Schmidt, formerly Church Archivist, testified that the man’s lawyer “said his client wanted to remain anonymous.” The *Salt Lake Tribune* found out the buyer’s name, but he would not let his lawyer talk about the transaction unless the paper agreed to “maintain his anonymity” (*Tribune*, October 25, 1985). At the preliminary hearing, Hugh Pinnock had to reveal the name of the anonymous buyer:

A—. . . I called a friend of mine and he said, yes, he would purchase it.

.....

Q—Who was that you called?

A—David Sorenson.

Q—And where was he at the time?

A—He’s a mission president in Nova Scotia, Canada.

When Detective Don Bell originally questioned Hugh Pinnock about the buyer, he felt that Pinnock was trying to keep from revealing his name. Richard Turley said that Detective Bell claimed he never directly asked the buyer’s name, but felt that Pinnock was hedging about the matter:

. . . Bell recounted that Pinnock had referred to Sorenson first by the descriptions “Canadian friend” or “Canadian buyer.” Bell said that later in the interview, Pinnock referred to Sorenson by name, “and I immediately went back up where I had circled ‘Canadian’ and wrote under [it] ‘Mr. Sorenson’ ’cause I now had a name and I knew that I was feeling pretty good ’cause I knew he never had any intention of divulging his name, but it just kinda came out, and I said to myself, ‘I know who the Canadian buyer is now.’” (*Victims*, page 443, footnote 17)

According to Mormon apologist, Richard Turley, Dallin Oaks met with “two FBI agents and a local police officer” a few hours after Hofmann’s car blew up. Turley admits that although Apostle Oaks told the investigators how they could get the buyer’s name he refused to directly tell them who it was:

He told the investigators **he did not feel at liberty to provide the potential buyer’s name** but that they could get it from West, who was the buyer’s attorney. (*Victims*, page 164)

In this case Apostle Oaks’ action does not seem to square with the advice he said he gave to Shannon Flynn. The reader will remember that Oaks declared that he had “talked to two F. B. I. agents. I told them **everything I knew** about it. The Church is **going to**

cooperate fully and it has absolutely nothing to hide. Sometimes there are some confidential transactions but this is a murder investigation. **Confidentiality is set aside. We will cooperate fully.**”

Apostle Oaks’ refusal to provide the name does not give us the impression that he was cooperating “fully.” While Oaks advised Flynn that “confidentiality is set aside” he did not seem to follow his own advice with regard to the name of the buyer.

Now, it could be that David Sorenson was so concerned about the transaction that church leaders promised they would not reveal his name. On the other hand, it could be that Oaks was trying to buy some time for the church. He obviously knew that investigators would find out the name of the buyer within a few hours. If, however, they had to go to David E. West to get the name, it would take a little longer. This, of course, would make it possible for the church to get in touch with Sorenson before he spoke to investigators.

However this may be, Hugh Pinnock became very concerned when the loan for \$185,000, which he helped Hofmann obtain from First Interstate Bank, became due. According to Pinnock’s testimony, Hofmann did take a check to the bank to pay off the loan but he understood “the check bounced.” A month later Mr. Hofmann visited Pinnock at his home:

A—. . . on October the 3rd, about 10:30, I got—

Q—In the evening

A—In the evening . . . I got home and . . . Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Christensen were in my front room.

Q—At that time, did you have a discussion with them?

A—Yes.

Q—Tell us . . . what that conversation consisted of?

A—Mr. Christensen said to Mr. Hofmann, “You’ve got to let Elder Pinnock know the situation.” And at that time, Mr. Hofmann mentioned that the Library of Congress was not able to authenticate or validate the Oath of a Freeman, at least at that time, and that he owed a doctor some money, and that he was now concerned about being able to donate the McLellin collection to the Mormon Church.

From Curt Bench’s testimony, it is obvious that just before the bombings Hugh Pinnock was pressuring Steven Christensen to relay to Mark Hofmann that he was headed for serious trouble if he did not fulfill his promises. In his testimony, Mr. Pinnock told of a brief encounter he had with Hofmann in the underground parking lot at the Church Office Building after the bombings:

Yes. One thing that I said is that it appeared as if the bombings were related to the business that Mr. Christensen and Mr. Sheets had shared together, and we also talked about . . . going ahead with the closing of the McLellin collection.

As noted earlier, Apostle Dallin Oaks met with Mark Hofmann just hours after Steven Christensen was murdered. They discussed the possibility of completing the transaction with the anonymous buyer:

Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve, said in a memorandum about his meeting with Mr. Hofmann the day of the homicides that he had a conversation “from a potential buyer” referred to him by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock . . .

Elder Oaks also suggested to Mr. Hofmann that he “ought to get in touch with the buyer’s attorney, who undoubtedly would be wondering what would be happening in view of the news reports about Christensen’s death,” and reminded Mr. Hofmann that another person would have to be found to verify the authenticity of the documents—a task that was to be Mr. Christensen’s, according to Mr. West and the church reports. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 25, 1985)

In the Mormon Church’s press conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said that the Church has a “mandate” to obtain important historical documents. Apostle Oaks, however, indicated that the Church was “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection:

FRED MOSS: Fred Moss with KBYU News. I just have a question. Why is the church so intent on getting the papers? Is it to secure them in the right hands so that they are not taken advantage of and make the church look bad? And where does the money come [from] to purchase these letters?

ELDER OAKS: Can I answer the first part . . .

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY: Yes, go ahead.

ELDER OAKS: Again, why, you say, is the church so intent on getting the papers? I thought it was clear from my statement that **the church was very intent on not getting the papers**, so that there would be no misunderstanding about this. Could you rephrase that question? (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 27, 1985)

From all we can learn about the McLellin transaction, it appears obvious that while Church leaders may have been “intent on not getting” the McLellin collection in a way that would become known to the public, they were working behind the scenes to see that the collection could be acquired secretly.

On November 15, 1985, KUTV News did a story concerning the discovery of Steven Christensen's diary. Christensen was quoted as saying the following about the McLellin collection: "Elder Pinnock has saved the Church time, money and effort in countering an avalanche of negative publicity should the collection have fallen into the wrong hands."

It is apparent that if the Church leaders had not continued to engage in secret dealings with Hofmann, they would not have found themselves in the embarrassing situation they are in today. The McLellin fraud cost Hugh Pinnock a great deal of money. He claimed that although he was not "legally obligated to the bank," he felt morally responsible to pay back the balance of the \$185,000 loan that Hofmann owed to First Interstate Bank. On October 26, the *Deseret News* announced that he had repaid the loan out of his own money. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1986, page 13, we commented that Pinnock's actions "avoided the sticky situation of the bank taking Hofmann to court and the embarrassing testimony that might follow. It is also obvious that neither Pinnock nor the church would want Hofmann to become an enemy." Mr. Pinnock may have felt that his action in paying off the loan made him appear a little too generous to Hofmann. In any case, a few months later he turned right around and filed a lawsuit against Mark Hofmann: "An attorney representing Hugh W. Pinnock has filed a suit in 3rd district court seeking to recover more than \$170,000 from Mark W. Hofmann" (*Deseret News*, April 1, 1986). Since this suit was filed just before the preliminary hearing, one wonders if it was an attempt by Pinnock to put some distance between himself and Mr. Hofmann. In any case, it certainly was an exercise in futility because Hofmann will probably never be able to repay the money.

Richard Turley has thrown some new light on Hugh Pinnock's problem with First Interstate Bank:

At Wednesday's news conference, Hinckley, Oaks, and Pinnock had all reaffirmed their understanding of the loan Hofmann received from First Interstate Bank . . . When the reporter suggested the church had agreed to repay the loan, Hinckley declared the church had not agreed, and would not agree, to pay it.

These statements apparently surprised some officials at the bank, who had seen the loan from their perspective as being guaranteed either by Pinnock personally or by the church. Thursday morning, October 24, the bank chairman telephoned Pinnock and voiced this view. . . . Oaks and Pinnock met to discuss the matter. Pinnock explained the telephone call he had received. Though he had not signed any

kind of loan agreement, bank officials said the only reason they made the loan was that Pinnock had asked for it. Sometime during Pinnock's interaction with the bank, one of its officials had asked about security for the loan. . . .

While assuring bank officials, Pinnock recalled, he may have said something like "We have lots of assets," or even "I've got assets—[the] Church has assets. You'll be paid." These statements, whatever they may have been, meant little to him at the time because he was convinced Hofmann was both financially sound and morally upright. . . . Suddenly, Hofmann could not be relied on in any way to repay the loan. Thus, Pinnock's earlier assurances took on new meaning, and bank officials looked to him to make good on his word. (*Victims*, pages 201-202)

It is interesting to note that three years before the discovery of Hofmann's crimes Hugh Pinnock warned against fraudulent deals:

"Utah is third in the nation for business loan defaults, and last year had 11 major business frauds. It's bizarre, but it's true," said Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, a member of the LDS First Quorum of Seventy . . . Elder Pinnock called Utah's white collar crime an overwhelming embarrassment and said it can and should be stopped. (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 10)

IMPORTANT DISCOVERY

On November 28, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported: "The *Tribune* has located what may be the McLellin collection, . . ." The discovery of this material was made possible because of research done by Wesley P. Walters some years ago. Mr. Walters obtained a copy of a letter from the New York Public Library. This is the same letter we cited earlier. It was written by John L. Traughber on August 21, 1901, from his home in Mobile, Tyler County, Texas. Michael Marquardt made a typed copy of a portion of this letter, and we printed it on page 10 of the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*.

We felt that it was possible that the collection could have been preserved in the "area of Texas" where Mr. Traughber had lived. Dawn House, a reporter for the *Tribune* followed up the lead furnished by Mr. Traughber's letter and found at least a portion of the McLellin collection in the possession of his son, H. O. Traughber. While the collection does not have the McLellin diaries, it does have some "little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin." The handwriting on the documents shown in the photographs published in the *Tribune* appears to be the same as that found

in copies of letters written by McLellin. Furthermore, the contents of the material appears to be exactly what one would expect from the hand of McLellin. We will refer to this material later in this book.

Unlike most of the sensational documents discovered by Mark Hofmann, the documents Mr. Traugher has in his possession have a good pedigree stretching back to McLellin himself. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the documents are genuine. While most of the material in H. O. Traugher's possession is in the handwriting of his father, it still throws important light on Mormonism because it quotes from the original papers of Apostle McLellin.

J. L. Traugher's papers show that the McLellin collection was scattered and some of it was even burned by his wife: "After the death of Dr. McLellan, his widow broke up housekeeping and left Independence, Mo., where they had been living from 1869 to 1883. As she had no particular use for them, she burnt a great many of the Doctor's papers, and gave away others to persons who asked for them."

The *Deseret News*, Church Section, October 24, 1992, page 5, explains that besides Hofmann's purported McLellin collection, "at least three other 'McLellin collections' do exist":

- A Salt Lake City newspaper [*Salt Lake Tribune*] reported in late November 1985 that it had located "what may be the McLellin collection". . . In a follow-up story Dec. 2, the newspaper reported that the located material consisted of just three small manuscript books thought to have been written by McLellin and some interpretive writings regarded as the work of Traugher.

- Some McLellin letters are in the archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

- The Church Historical Department has a collection of McLellin material found in 1986—a time the investigation into Hofmann's crimes was under way.

In an article published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1985, Dawn House said that "the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints owns 10 McLellin letters; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owns one."

We believe that Mark Hofmann may have made up the idea of a large and important McLellin collection after reading some of McLellin's letters located in the RLDS Church Archives. As we have shown, in his confession Mark Hofmann said he had "read a statement concerning a number of diaries, papers or whatnot, that McLellin claimed to have had. I believe this was in a letter which he addressed to *Saints'*

Herald which was an RLDS publication in the late 19th Century."

On August 23, 1984, Mr. Hofmann told Sandra that he was aware of papers concerning McLellin which were possessed by the RLDS Church. In McLellin's letters he spoke of some items he had in his possession. In the July 1872 letter to Joseph Smith III, for instance, McLellin stated: "Now all L.D. Sism claims that Joseph Smith translated the Book [of Mormon] with Urim and Thummim, when he did not even have or retain the Nephite or Jaredite Interpreters but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a *small stone*. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver's widow), Martin Harris, and Emma [Smith] Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer." From information obtained from Mark Hofmann, Brent Metcalfe helped an LDS Institute teacher compile a list of the material found in the McLellin collection. This list mentions the identical items contained in the McLellin letter: "d. Affidavits he collected about translation of Book of Mormon process: Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Emma Smith."

The evidence provided by the papers in Mr. Traugher's possession seems to show that although Mr. Hofmann knew from McLellin's 1872 letter about these statements concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon, Hofmann never actually obtained them. Brent Metcalfe said on KUED that it was his understanding that some of the affidavits dated back to 1831 and that the one by Emma Smith cast doubt on Joseph Smith's story of his First Vision. (Metcalfe's statement agrees with Curt Bench's testimony on the content of the Emma Smith affidavit.)

Another report given by a local television station claimed that Steven Christensen wrote in his diary that the Emma Smith affidavit was very damaging to the Mormon Church. The Traugher papers seem to demonstrate that Hofmann did not know what the Emma Smith statement contained and that he was probably trying to raise the price of the collection by claiming that there was very embarrassing information in it.

Dawn House reported that at some point J. L. Traugher was shown the Emma Smith affidavit by William E. McLellin and copied it "for a book." The entry originally written by Emma Smith reads:

The first that my husband translated was translated by the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost. After that, he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather of a dark color. March 29, 1870. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 3, 1985)

When we read Emma Smith's statement in the *Tribune*, we felt that it had a familiar ring. In discussing the matter with Michael Marquardt, he correctly identified it as being a quotation out of a letter Emma Smith wrote to Mrs. Emma Pilgrim. We had printed this statement many years ago from an article written by James E. Lancaster in the *Saints' Herald*, an RLDS publication. It is found in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 42:

Now the first that my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, and that he **used a small stone**, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color . . .

The reader will see that the statement is essentially the same as Traugher's copy made from McLellin's collection. Michael Marquardt gives the date of the letter as March 27, 1870. William E. McLellin seems to have copied the item from Emma Smith's letter to Mrs. Pilgrim. Traugher, in turn, copied it into his manuscript and Dawn House recopied it for publication in the *Tribune*. In the letter to Mrs. Pilgrim, Joseph Smith's widow even asked about Mr. McLellin. This would indicate that Mrs. Pilgrim was in touch with McLellin. In his letter of July 1872, McLellin referred to the statements he had collected concerning the translation of the Book of Mormon as "certificates." It may be that when he copied the material from the letter, he had Mrs. Pilgrim certify that it was a correct copy. This might explain why Emma Smith's statement was later referred to as an affidavit.

While it is true that the statement that Joseph Smith used "a small stone" to translate the Book of Mormon is damaging to the Mormon position because it links Joseph Smith to magic, the fact that it had already been published in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and other publications would make it of very little value. That Steven Christensen was so worried about the "affidavit" seems to show that Mr. Hofmann had misrepresented its contents.

The statement of Oliver Cowdery's widow, which Hofmann claimed he had found, was quoted by McLellin himself in a letter written in February 1870. It has already been published by Van Wagoner and Walker in an article in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1982, page 51:

I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon. He translated the most of it at my Father's house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph—never

had a curtain—drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.

The Mormon scholar Michael Quinn says that he told Mark Hofmann about the possibility of McLellin material surviving in the Traugher family. It appears, however, that Hofmann was not sufficiently interested to pursue the matter. H. O. Traugher insists that Mark Hofmann never even contacted him.

IMAGINARY COLLECTION

Although investigators did not know that the Mormon Church had the real McLellin collection at the time of the preliminary hearing, the inconsistencies found in Mark Hofmann's statements about the collection cast serious doubt upon its existence. For instance, according to Hugh Pinnock's testimony, Hofmann claimed "he had located the collection down in Texas." He told many other people the same story. However, when he approached Alvin Rust, he informed him the McLellin collection was in New York. Rust testified as follows:

Q—Where was the collection?

A—It was in New York City.

Mr. Rust also testified that at one point Hofmann told him that a potential buyer—not the seller—was in Texas: ". . . the Church had decided not to purchase the collection—that he had a buyer in Texas that was going to purchase the collection and he was going to in turn donate it to the LDS Church." When Alvin Rust originally gave the money to Mark Hofmann to purchase the McLellin collection, he made it clear that he wanted his son to go back to New York with Hofmann to obtain the papers. Although this must have caused Hofmann some concern, he found a way to trick Mr. Rust's son into believing he had obtained the collection without actually showing it to him. The *Deseret News* reported:

In April, Hofmann borrowed \$150,000 from Rust to buy the McLellin papers, which he told Rust were in New York City. On April 23, Hofmann and Rust's son, Gaylen, flew to New York City to get the papers.

Gaylen Rust accompanied Hofmann to New York because of the size of his father's investment. "I was going back as a safety precaution," Gaylen said. "This had been the largest amount we had given Mark, and my father and I felt it was critical that Mark not go alone."

Gaylen said he and Hofmann planned to carry the more valuable documents back on the plane with them. The rest were to be shipped back to Rust's Coin and Gift for inventory. They would later be sold by Rust and Hofmann.

It didn't happen that way. On the morning of April 26, Gaylen went to Hofmann's hotel room to go with him to buy the papers. Hofmann had already left.

Hofmann met Gaylen later in the day and told him he had bought the papers and shipped them back to Salt Lake City. He showed Gaylen three shipping receipts for \$75,000 each.

Hofmann didn't send the papers to the Rust store, as agreed, but instead shipped them to himself.

"At that time, he told me he felt it was safer to ship everything back registered than to carry it around New York City until Monday," Gaylen said. When they got back to Salt Lake City, Hofmann told Gaylen he would come to the Rust store the next day with the documents. He didn't show.

Gaylen didn't doubt Hofmann because Hofmann had been scrupulously honest in several other business deals with Gaylen's father. "We trusted him implicitly," Gaylen said. "If I had doubted the (purchase of the papers), I would have made sure I had been there, even if it had been against his wishes." (*Deseret News*, October 23, 1985)

At the preliminary hearing, Deputy Salt Lake County Attorney Robert Stott argued as follows:

The only logical conclusion that can be drawn from the evidence is that . . . there is no so-called McLellin collection, [it] just doesn't exist. Or if by some chance it does exist, it certainly isn't what Mark Hofmann claimed it to be. . . . No one's ever seen this McLellin collection, not his creditors [to] whom he promised to show it. Promised Al Rust he'd show it, promised Hugh Pinnock of First Interstate Bank, never showed it to them. His business associates—Wade Lillywhite, Curt Bench, Brent Ashworth—none of those ever saw it. His close friends didn't see it—Lyn Jacobs, Flynn—they never saw it. . . . I think kind of important, even Wilding never saw it. And you know how much—how important it was for Mark Hofmann to please Mr. Wilding and his friends those last couple of weeks. He was attempting to placate them and to satisfy them in any manner he could. But they never even saw the McLellin Collection.

Mark Hofmann gave a variety of versions and conflicting stories as to the whereabouts of the McLellin collection. He told Al Rust in April that it was in New York, but yet in June, he told Hugh Pinnock it was in Texas. Directly conflicting stories. He told Wade Lillywhite clear back in March before Al Rust that he, Mark Hofmann, had already bought the collection and had given it to or sold it to a third

party who [would] give it to the Church. Then he told Wilford Cardon in June that he, Mark Hofmann, had located the collection and had deposited it with President Hinckley. And then he told Brent Ashworth in September that he had sold it to a Salt Lake City businessman. A variety of stories inconsistent with each other.

After the bombings, Mark Hofmann still maintained that the McLellin collection was a reality. The following appeared in *Utah Holiday* in January 1986: "(Brent] Metcalfe was telling *Utah Holiday* in early December that within days Hofmann would reveal his own ties to the McLellin collection of early Mormon documents, and would, in fact, produce the papers as proof of his long-standing connection to the sought-after materials" (page 42). Some people believed that Hofmann would produce the McLellin collection at his preliminary hearing. As it turned out, however, neither Hofmann nor his lawyers mentioned anything about the location of the collection. A number of people felt that Hofmann's friend, Brent Metcalfe, had seen the collection.

When Brent Metcalfe appeared on a KUED television program, November 19, 1985, he made it clear that he had "never seen it [the McLellin collection] in his possession." Ed Ashment had listened to Lyn Jacobs give such a detailed description of the papyri (apparently including the original of Fac. No. 2), that he felt Jacobs must have had access to them:

Jacobs had described four papyri fragments in meticulous detail over the telephone, said Ashment, who took notes at the time. "Lyn gave a physical description of the fragments. Three only had writing. The largest was about three square inches. The fourth had a detailed design and had been cracked and glued. Someone had patched papyrus in. The outer edge had been damaged. It sounded like it was really there in front of him."

Recently, Ashment said, Jacobs told him he had only repeated Hofmann's description to him, but had never actually seen the fragments.

After Jacobs' description, Ashment arranged last July to meet Hofmann and Metcalfe in the LDS Church Historical Library to photograph the four fragments. Instead they showed him a fifth fragment, he said, and allowed him to photograph it. (*Deseret News*, November 30, 1985)

Lyn Jacobs was a very close friend of Hofmann's and worked with him on selling the Salamander letter. In *Sunstone*, vol. 10, no. 8, page 13, Jacobs was questioned about the McLellin collection:

SUNSTONE: . . . Did you work with Mark at all on the McLellin collection?

JACOBS: No, I didn't. Anything I have ever understood concerning the McLellin papers has simply been what Mark has told me about it in passing.

SUNSTONE: Have you seen any part of it?

JACOBS: No, not to my knowledge.

SUNSTONE: Do you believe it exists?

JACOBS: I have no reason to doubt the collection exists as Mark has described it to various individuals.

There appears to be three items that Mark Hofmann actually showed to others which he claimed were from the McLellin collection. In every case, however, it can be shown that he was not telling the truth. We have already shown that the papyrus he broke up and represented as being part of the Joseph Smith Papyri which survived in the McLellin collection was in reality purchased from Kenneth Rendell. The Spalding-Rigdon document, which Hofmann told Hugh Pinnock was part of the McLellin collection, is clearly a forgery. The third item is the Emma Smith hymnal. Brent Ashworth testified that when Hofmann sold him this book he told him it was from the McLellin collection:

A—He also indicated to me that it was originally from the McLellin collection, and I was impressed by that fact and I asked him, I said . . . Mark its unsigned . . . can you give me an affidavit to that effect, and he said he would do that, but I never received it.

Q—Did he ever tell you where Lyn Jacobs got it? From whom Lyn Jacobs—

A—Just from the McLellin collection.

According to the testimony of both Lyn Jacobs and Donald Schmidt, the Emma Smith hymnal actually came from the Mormon Church Archives. Furthermore, document experts have testified that Hofmann falsified this book to make it worth approximately ten times as much as when Lyn Jacobs originally showed it to him.

Since all three items which Hofmann showed or sold to others as pieces from the McLellin collection can be shown to be either forgeries or obtained from some other source, Judge Paul Grant, who presided over the preliminary hearing, did not believe that Hofmann ever possessed such a collection. In *Utah Holiday*, November 1991, page 36, Lynn Packer wrote the following about Judge Grant:

He said it was clear to him that Hofmann did not have the McLellin collection and "simply had a scam going on with so many different people that

suddenly he was put in a position where he would be revealed, and that was the motivation for the Steven Christensen murder."

Judge Grant concluded that all of the evidence pointed to the inescapable conclusion that the McLellin collection was only a figment of Mark Hofmann's imagination.

THE REAL McLELLIN

The *History of the Church*, vol. 1, page 220, says that William E. McLellin "was born in the state of Tennessee, about the year 1806." The *History* notes, however, that "The exact date of the birth of William E. M'Lellin cannot be ascertained." Fortunately, a letter written by McLellin has survived which does give this information: "I was born on the 18th of Jan. 1806 . . . I calculate to live until I am 85, *if I can*" (Letter by William E. McLellin, dated February 22, 1872).

William McLellin first came into contact with the Mormons while he was living in Illinois. Mr. McLellin was very impressed with Mormonism, and just a month after coming into contact with the missionaries, he was baptized.

Now that the Mormon leaders have admitted they have the McLellin collection, we can read McLellin's own contemporary record of his conversion and his original zeal for the church. In McLellin's 1831 journal, the following appears:

Commenced the 18th of July 1831

At this time I was living in Paris, Illinois. Teaching school—

This morning I heard very early that two men (who said they were traveling to Zion, which they said was in upper Missouri. They had also a book with them which they said was a Revelation from God, calling it the book of Mormon) . . . Their names were Harvey Whitlock and David Whitmer. The people were assembled in a beautiful sugartree grove. Mr. Whitlock arose and gave some particulars respecting the book and some reasons why he believes it to be a divine revelation. Spoke some of the signs of the times. Then he expounded the gospel [with more] plainness than I ever heard in my life, which astonished me. D. Whitmer [one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon] then arose and bore testimony to having seen an Holy Angel who had made known the truth of the record to him. All these strange things I pondered in my heart. I invited them to go and preach in Paris, which they did the next day. . . . I made many inquiries and had much conversation with them. . . . from the solemnity which attended these men in giving their

testimony and the plainness of the truths which they declared I was induced to believe something in their mission. People seemed to be anxious for them to stay longer. They told me that Joseph Smith, the man who translated the book, and a number of others had gone to Jackson Co. Mo. and if I would go there I could see them. They said also that Smith was a prophet. Finally I told them if they would stay one week longer that I would go with them. They agreed to stay. Then H. W. arose and spoke about three hours. I never heard such preaching in all my life. The glory of God seemed to encircle the man and the wisdom of God to be displayed in his discourse. Some of the people seemed to be much affected. The meeting was closed by a few observations of D. W. A solemn testimony also of the truths which they had just heard.—Journal, pages 1-2.

August 18 [1831]. I rose and paid 37 cents and rode on 10 miles to Independence—Jackson Co. . . . I conversed with a number in the village about those people that they called Mormonites. They thought they were generally a very honest people but very much deluded by Smith and others. . . . before I got out of the village I met with David Whitmer & Martin Harris [also one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon] who accompanied me about 10 miles further westward where I found The Bishop E. Partridge and his council . . . with several other Elders and a number of private members both male and female. I spent the evening with them and had very agreeable conversation.

Friday 19th. I rose early, talked much with those people: Saw Love, Peace, harmony and Humility abounding among them. A rare circumstance occurred while attending family prayer which convinced me that the Elders had the power of discerning spirits. It affected me so that my weakness was manifest. I took Hiram the brother of Joseph and we went into the woods and set down and talked together about 4 hours. I inquired into the particulars of the coming forth of the record, of the rise of the church and its progress . . .

Saturday, the 20th. I rose early and betook myself to earnest prayer to God to direct me into truth, and from all the light that I could gain by examinations, searches and researches I was bound as an honest man to acknowledge the truth and validity of the book of Mormon and also that I had found the people of the Lord. The Living Church of Christ. Consequently as soon as we took breakfast I told Elder H. Smith that I wanted him to baptize me because I wanted to live among a people who were based upon pure principles and actuated by the Spirit of the Living God. I went with the Elders present to the water and was immersed according to the commandment of Jesus Christ by H. S. and was confirmed by the water's edge by the laying on of hands. . . .

I felt very happy, calm and pleasant during the day until evening, then the Enemy of all righteousness made a mighty struggle to persuade me that I was deceived until it seemed to me sometimes that horror would overwhelm me. . . . I told my brethren that I felt bad and they prayed for me. Bro. N. Knight after arising from prayer came and by the spirit of God was enabled to tell me the very secrets of my heart and in a degree to chase darkness from my mind.—Journal, pages 5-7.

Wednesday [Aug.] 24th [1831]

For the first time I went to the grove and made it a subject of solemn prayer respecting my ordination to the ministry. . . . I returned to the house perfectly resigned to the will of God and seated myself in conference with my brethren . . . they called on me to know if I had any thing to offer. I arose and told them that I was resigned to the will of God in the matter and I believed that God will make my duty known to them if they would inquire. I then sat down. Brother H. S. [Hyrum Smith] immediately arose & said he had received a witness of the Spirit that I should be ordained an Elder. This agreed with the minds of all present and Elder H. Smith and Bishop E. Partridge ordained me to be an Elder in the Church of Christ.—Journal, pages 8-9.

Thursday [Sept.] 15th [1831]

We started on, though I was quite sick. . . . I lit from my horse in the prairie and lay down on my great coat and blanket and gave up to shake again. . . . I opened my mind to bro. H. We immediately bowed before the Lord . . . bro. H. arose and laid his hands upon me. But marvelous for me to relate that I was instantly healed And arose and pursued my journey in health with vigour.—Journal, pages 12-13.

....

Wednesday [Dec.] 21st [1831]

My cold increased and my breath and lungs became so exceeding sore I was cast down upon my bed and mostly confined until

Tuesday [Dec.] 27th

Brothers Joseph, Hyrum, Reynolds & Lyman visited me and

Wednesday [Dec.] 28th

In the morning Brother Joseph came to my bedside and laid his hands upon me and prayed for me and I was healed so that I got up and eat breakfast and attended an appointment made for then. The brethren spoke. I then arose and was enabled to speak about half an hour.—Journal (unnumbered page) (William E. McLellin Journal, 1831, McLellin Collection, LDS Church Historical Department, as cited in *Deseret News*, Church Section, October 24, 1992, pages 5, 13)

Joseph Smith was very impressed with William McLellin and it was not long before he held a prominent position in the Mormon Church. On October 25, 1831, Smith received a revelation for McLellin. This revelation is still published in the church's *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 66:

Behold, thus saith the Lord unto my servant William E. McLellin—Blessed are you, inasmuch as you have turned away from your iniquities, and have received my truths, saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Savior of the world, even of as many as believe on my name.

Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel . . . I say unto you, my servant William, that you are clean, but not all; repent, therefore, of those things which are not pleasing in my sight, saith the Lord . . . verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should proclaim my gospel from land to land, and from city to city . . . bear testimony in every place, unto every people and in their synagogues, reasoning with the people. . . .

Lay your hands upon the sick, and they shall recover . . .

Seek not to be cumbered. Forsake all unrighteousness. Commit not adultery—a temptation with which thou hast been troubled. . . .

Continue in these things even unto the end, and you shall have a crown of eternal life at the right hand of my Father, who is full of grace and truth.

Verily, thus saith the Lord your God, your Redeemer, even Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 66:1-3, 4-5, 7, 9-10, 12-13)

William McLellin is mentioned in other revelations given by Joseph Smith (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, sections 68, 75 and 90).

In February 1835, McLellin was chosen to be one of the Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church. On February 15, the Apostles received their “ordinations and blessings.” In his blessing McLellin was told that the “tempter” would not prevail over him:

William E. M'Lellin's Blessing: — In the name of the Lord, wisdom and intelligence shall be poured out upon him, to enable him to perform the great work that is incumbent upon him; that he may be spared until the Saints are gathered; that he may stand before kings and rulers to bear testimony, and be upheld by holy angels; and **the nations of the earth shall acknowledge that God has sent him**, he shall have power to overcome his enemies; and his life shall be spared in the midst of pestilence and destruction,

and in the midst of enemies. **He shall be a prince and savior to God's people. The tempter shall not overcome him**, nor his enemies prevail against him; the heavens shall be opened unto him, as unto men in days of old. He shall be mighty in the hands of God, and shall convince thousands that God has sent him; and his days may be prolonged until the coming of the Son of Man. He shall be wafted as on eagles' wings, from country to country, and from people to people; and be able to do wonders in the midst of this generation. Even so. Amen. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, pages 190-191)

On January 21, 1836, Joseph Smith recorded a vision in his diary in which he saw William McLellin using his apostolic power in the midst of a vast multitude:

I saw the 12 Apostles of the Lamb, who are now upon the earth who hold the keys of this last ministry, in foreign lands standing together in a circle . . . I also beheld Elder McLellin in the South standing upon a hill surrounded with a vast multitude preaching to them and a lame man standing before him supported by his crutches. He threw them down at his word and leaped as an hart (hart) by the mighty power of God. . . . I finally saw the twelve [Apostles] in the Celestial Kingdom of God. (*An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 1987, page 119)

On April 3, 1976, the Mormon Church canonized this vision as Section 137 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Unfortunately, however, over 200 words which appeared in Joseph Smith's diary were omitted from this revelation without any indication when it was “accepted as scripture.” This revelation, as it was originally recorded in Smith's diary, presented serious problems. For example, it has William McLellin using the “mighty power of God.” Before the year was up, however, McLellin had become disillusioned with the Mormon Church.

Another problem with Joseph Smith's vision is that Smith claims he “finally **saw the twelve [Apostles] in the Celestial Kingdom of God.**” The Mormon prophet seems to have been oblivious to what was about to happen to his Apostles. At least half of the Apostles were excommunicated, and four of them apparently died out of the church (see *Essentials in Church History*, 1942, pages 663-665). Since Apostles William E. McLellin and William Smith (Joseph Smith's own brother) tried very hard to destroy the Mormon Church, it seems hard to believe that Smith

would see all of these “twelve” men “in the celestial Kingdom of God.” In any case, the present-day leaders of the Mormon Church did not seem to feel that it would be wise to canonize this part of the revelation. In addition, a very serious problem with regard to Adam has been deleted without any indication (see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 31-B).

EXCOMMUNICATION

Although William McLellin says he lost faith in the church in 1836, he was not excommunicated until May 11, 1838 (*Essentials in Church History*, page 664). Although McLellin felt that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet, he was convinced that Smith had appointed David Whitmer to be his successor. In the “Far West Record” Joseph Smith acknowledged that he had ordained David Whitmer:

President Joseph Smith jr gave a history of the **ordination of David Whitmer**, which took place in July 1834, to be a leader, or **a prophet to this Church**, which (ordination) was on conditions that he (J. Smith jr) did not live to God Himself.

President J. Smith Jr. approved of the proceedings of the High Council, after hearing the minutes of the former councils. (*Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, 1983, page 151)

Since William McLellin believed that Joseph Smith had fallen, he was absolutely convinced that Whitmer should be the prophet of the church. McLellin’s desire to make Whitmer the leader of the church made Joseph Smith very angry. While he was in Liberty Jail in December, 1838, Joseph Smith wrote a letter in which he denounced William McLellin. Smith also made an attack on all of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon (David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris) and also castigated John Whitmer, one of the Eight Witnesses:

I would remember **William R. McLellin**, who comes to us as one of Job’s comforters. God suffered such kind of beings to afflict Job—but it never entered into their hearts that Job would get out of it all. This poor man who professes to be much of a prophet, **has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer**, to forbid his madness when he goes up to curse Israel; and this ass not being of the same kind as Balaam’s, therefore, the angel notwithstanding appeared unto him, yet he could not penetrate his understanding sufficiently, but that he brays out cursings instead of blessings. **Poor ass!** Whoever lives to see it,

will see him and his rider perish like those who perished in the gainsaying of Korah, or after the same condemnation. . . .

Perhaps our brethren will say, because we thus write, that we are offended at these characters. If we are, it is not for a word, neither because they reproved in the gate—but because they have been the means of shedding innocent blood. Are they not murderers then at heart? . . . Renegade “Mormon” dissenters are running through the world and spreading various foul and libelous reports against us . . .

Such characters God hates; we cannot love them. The world hates them, and we sometimes think that the devil ought to be ashamed of them. . . . Such characters as McLellin, John Whitmer, David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris, **are too mean to mention** and we had liked to have forgotten them. (Letter from Joseph Smith, dated December 16, 1838, as cited in *History of the Church*, vol. 3, pages 228, 230 and 232)

The Mormons not only accused McLellin of robbing Joseph Smith’s house, but they also circulated a story about him trying to fight Joseph Smith on “unequal terms.” In the *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 215, we find the following.

While the brethren were imprisoned at Richmond it is said that “McLellin, who was a large and active man, went to the sheriff and asked for the privilege of flogging the Prophet. Permission was granted on condition that Joseph would fight. The Sheriff made known to Joseph McLellin’s earnest request, to which Joseph consented, if his irons were taken off. McLellin then refused to fight unless he could have a club, to which Joseph was perfectly willing but the sheriff would not allow them to fight on such unequal terms. McLellin was a man of superficial education, though he had a good flow of language. He adopted the profession of medicine.”—Mill. Star, vol, xxxvi: pages 808, 809.

William McLellin denied this charge. Dawn House reported that in the Traugher material found in Texas, there is an extract from a letter by McLellin which deals with the matter:

One purported extract of a letter refutes a charge that McLellin attempted to beat up Smith while the prophet was shackled. The entry states the McLellin talked to the prophet when Smith was arrested and put in a Richmond jail, but there was no attempted fight. “I have been a little particular in this matter because LDS love to bat me, but I fear them not,” states the entry. “In those matters I have a conscience—like Paul—void of offense.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1985, page A-3)

Although William McLellin rejected the leadership of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, he retained his belief in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. In a letter to James T. Cobb, a critic of the Book of Mormon, McLellin was not very helpful and advised Cobb to “cease your opposition and strife against the Book, and fight against wrong doing in professors . . .” In the same letter, written about three years before McLellin’s death, he wrote the following:

I have set to my seal that the Book of Mormon is a true, divine record and it will require more evidence than I have ever seen to ever shake me relative to its purity. . . . I have no confidence that the church organized by J. Smith and O. Cowdery was set up or established as it ought to have been. And the further its run its run still farther from the true way—farther from the plain simplicity of that Divine record, the Book of M. . . . But when a man goes at the Book of M. he touches the apple of my eye. He fights against truth—against purity—against light—against the purist, or one of the truest, purist books on earth. I have more confidence in the Book of Mormon than any book of this wide earth! (Letter by William McLellin, dated August 14, 1880, as cited by Larry C. Porter in *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1970, page 486)

In a postscript to the same letter, McLellin wrote: “I left the church in Aug. 1836, not because I disbelieved the Book or the (then) doctrines preached or held by the Church, but because the *Leading men* to a great extent left their religion and run into and after speculation, pride, and popularity! Just like the Israelites and the Nephites often did. I quit because I could not uphold the Presidency as men of God; and I never united with Joseph and party afterwards” (Ibid., page 487)!!

FEAR OF McLELLIN

For more than a century Mormon leaders have been fearful with regard to what William McLellin’s writings might reveal about Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church. There has also been some concern about what church documents he had in his possession. Richard Turley commented:

Both before and after his excommunication, McLellin collected materials about the church. At one time or another, he reportedly owned the original record of the Quorum of the Twelve, two copies of *A Book of Commandments*, manuscript revelations, certificates from early church members, and various

books, pamphlets, and periodicals containing church information. McLellin was also a writer. Later in his life he worked on a book about Mormonism that he nearly finished but never published. (*Victims*, page 112)

On February 22, 1872, William McLellin wrote a letter in which he spoke of the book he was writing: “I am doing but little only writing[.] I have my book almost finished, but have no means to print it.”

In Joseph Fielding Smith’s book, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, we learn that in 1878 Joseph Fielding Smith (who later became the sixth prophet of the Mormon Church) and Apostle Orson Pratt visited William McLellin in Missouri:

Friday, Sept. 6, 1878. Arrived this morning at Kansas City . . . At Kansas City I got tickets for Independence . . . Bro. Pratt and I took the bus some mile and a half to the town . . . We also learned that William E. McLellin resided here, whom we determined to see. After parting with Mrs. Eaton, we . . . passed over the street past the Court House to the residence of William E. McLellin, whom we found at home, and who welcomed us heartily. He is a very tall, strong man, quite grey, but well preserved. . . . We had a long conversation. He avowed his disbelief in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, in polygamy, in the Lesser Priesthood, and in all offices either in the Higher or Lesser Priesthood; but he believes in the Apostleship, but no man could confer it. He disavowed his belief or faith in his own ordination to the Apostleship and in that of all of the first Twelve. He mentioned many circumstances which exhibited the great darkness of his mind. . . . The Doctor read us an essay of his own on polygamy and another on faith. Adam was created male and female. Noah and his sons were monogamists. These were chosen to people and repeople the world, and hence this is the unvarying type of marriage. Hence if there is a blotch in the sacred Bible polygamy is that blotch and of all others the foulest. He said Emma Smith [Joseph Smith’s widow] told him that Joseph was both a polygamist and an adulterer, and what was most strange to him was that she should join in with her son Joseph in his theory of religion which holds up the Prophet as the founder of their faith. . . . He also said Joseph had given a false revelation in 1829, ordering Oliver Cowdery to go to Canada and get the copyright of the Book of Mormon, and afterwards acknowledged it was false, now, therefore, he (McLellin) doubted all of Joseph’s revelations subsequently given. (*Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 1938, pages 238-240)

The reader will notice that in the material cited above it is claimed that William McLellin showed Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt some material that he had written. Some thirty years later, after Joseph F. Smith had become president of the Mormon Church, he still remembered what McLellin had shown him and was anxious to obtain it so that it could be hidden away. As noted earlier, Richard Turley spoke of the interview Smith and Pratt had with McLellin in September, 1878, and reported that “The Presidency wrote Bennion that the manuscripts . . . might be the same ones McLellin had mentioned in 1878. ‘We hope they are,’ the First Presidency wrote, ‘as it would be **an act of mercy** on our part to purchase them, and thus **prevent them from being published by unfriendly hands** to the injury of innocent people’” (*Victims*, page 249). As it turned out, of course, the attempt to suppress these documents eventually brought a great deal of embarrassment to the church.

Church leaders actually had good reasons to be afraid of what William McLellin might reveal. There is no question that he had a close relationship with Joseph Smith and other church leaders and knew a great deal about the church. In his letter to Joseph Smith III, McLellin wrote the following:

I have thought for a great while I would address a letter to you. I want you should read it carefully over before you lay it away as useless. I will try to write nothing but truth. I was very intimate and familiar with your Father from Oct. 1831 until Aug[.] 1836. I certainly knew him well, for he attended my High School during the winter of 1834, and the winter of 1835 we learned Hebrew together in the same class. Here I had good opportunity to know his make and strength of mind. I was with him in many councils, and a number of general conferences when I was usually Clerk. I traveled with him hundreds of miles, eat (*sic*) with him, slept with him etc. He attended with me two days while I debated with a Campbelite preacher. It seems to me but few men had better opportunities to know J. Smith for five years than I, except those who were with him all the time . . . (Letter by William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July, 1872; quoted from a typed transcript of the copy in the RLDS Church Library-Archives)

AN AFFAIR IN THE BARN?

One thing that the Mormon leaders must have feared was William McLellin’s inside knowledge regarding the origin of polygamy. We have already shown that when Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt visited McLellin, he told them that Joseph Smith’s first wife, Emma, informed him that Joseph Smith “was both a polygamist and an adulterer.” In his letter to Joseph Smith III, McLellin gave some very explosive information concerning his father:

Now in as much as you are a candid man, you will look at these things honestly and fairly. I have spent about two years since I retired from active business pursuits (*sic*) in carefully, studiously, and prayerfully reading, writing and reflecting upon the great work of the Last Days. My motto was and is “I will without prejudice or preconceived opinions embrace truth, and only truth” . . .

Now Joseph I will relate to you some history, and refer you to your own dear Mother for the truth. You will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, retired in the Mansion House in Nauvoo. I did not ask her to tell, but I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams practiced with me in Clay Co. Mo. during the latter part of 1838. And he told me that at your birth **your father committed an act with a Miss Hill—a hired girl**. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. **He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness.** Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was true!! Again I told her I heard that one night **she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. she went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true.**

Now I would not have told you this had it not been for one thing. You said in your speech at Amboy April 6th 1860, “I believe my father was a good man, and a good man never could have promulgated such doctrines.” You referred to Polygamy. Now let me tell you my dear Sir. I asked your Mother particularly upon this subject. She said, one night after she and Joseph had retired for the night, he told her that the doctrine and practice of Polygamy was going to

ruin the church. He wished her to get up and burn the revelation. She refused to touch it even with tongues (*sic*). He rose from his bed and pulled open the fire with his fingers, and put the revelation in and burned it up. But copies of it were extant, so it was preserved. You say, "I have never believed it and never can believe it." Can you dispute your dear Mother? She related this to me, and will if you ask her tell you the same thing. It made a powerful impression on my mind at the time, and I've often reflected on it since.

Now Sir suppose you could be convinced that your father not only believed in Polygamy but actually practiced it his individual self, then what would you say—and then do about it? Was he an adulterer so long ago, and still a "good man." You say, "I believe in the doctrines of honesty and truth." So do I. But I can't believe your father continued to be a religiously honest man. No sir. I can't for if I should I would have to believe your Mother a liar, and that would be hard for me to do, considering my acquaintance with her. . . . I feel that I *know* I love the Lord Jesus, and the glorious principles of the Gospel. But I don[']t—I can[']t love falsehood, hypocrisy, and wrong doing. And I see so much wrong-doing in Joseph's official cases, I could not go with him, nor could I go with ONE who takes up the work where he left it. They practiced so much wrong that I quit them in 1836. And even now in looking back over the matter I am not sorry! Only for the cause. (Letter by William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July, 1872)

The *Salt Lake Daily Tribune* for October 6, 1875, reported that William McLellin was interviewed and mentioned the incident in the barn:

The Doctor was so distressed about the case, (it created some scandal at the time among the Saints,) that long afterwards when he visited Mrs. Emma Smith at Nauvoo, he charged her as she hoped for salvation to tell him the truth about it. And she then and there declared on her honor that it was a fact—"saw it with her own eyes."

The Mormon writer Richard S. Van Wagoner wrote that following concerning the Fanny Alger affair:

Fanny Ward Alger, one of ten children born to Mormons Samuel Alger and Clarissa Hancock, was nineteen years old when she became a maidservant in the Smith home in 1835. Benjamin F. Johnson, a long-time friend of the prophet, described Fanny as "a varry nice & Comly young woman . . . it was whispered eaven then that Joseph *Loved her*." Warren Parrish, Smith's personal secretary, told Johnson that he and Oliver Cowdery both knew that "Joseph had Fanny Alger as a wife for They were Spied upon & found together" (Zimmermon, 38)." (*Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 1986, page 6)

There is some impressive evidence that supports William McLellin's allegations regarding a relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger. In 1838, Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, asserted that he knew that Smith had had an adulterous relationship with Alger. In a letter dated January 21, 1838, Cowdery wrote:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. **A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's** was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. (Letter written by Oliver Cowdery and recorded by his brother Warren Cowdery; see photograph in our book, *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 27)

Mormon apologists have tried to put the best possible light on this embarrassing situation. John J. Stewart, for example, commented: "Joseph as a servant of God was authorized to enter plural marriage, and it is not at all unlikely that he did so in the early or mid-1830's. Perhaps Nancy Johnson or Fanny Alger was his first 'plural' wife at Hiram or Kirtland, Ohio" (*Brigham Young and His Wives*, page 31). Andrew Jenson, who served as Assistant Church Historian, made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. In this list he referred to "Fanny Alger, one of the **first plural wives** sealed to the Prophet" (*Historical Record*, May 1887, vol. 6, page 233).

Since Joseph Smith did not actually give his revelation on polygamy until July 12, 1843, it certainly raises questions concerning how he could be justified in entering into plural marriage in the "early or mid-1830's." In any case, although the Mormon Church no longer allows the practice of polygamy, the revelation regarding the doctrine is still published in the church's *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132. In verses 52, 60-62, we find the following:

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, **receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph**, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, **shall be destroyed**, saith the Lord God. . . .

Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him . . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and **if he espouse the second**, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, **then is he justified**; he cannot commit adultery . . . if he have **ten virgins given unto him** by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.

For more information concerning Joseph Smith's system of plural marriage and the serious problems it has brought upon the Mormon Church see our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 202-244F.

A FALSE REVELATION

The reader will remember that when Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt visited William McLellin in 1878, they were told by McLellin that “Joseph Smith had given a false revelation in 1829, ordering Oliver Cowdery to go to Canada and get the copyright of the Book of Mormon, and afterwards acknowledged it was false, now, therefore, he (McLellin) doubted all of Joseph's revelations subsequently given.”

In his letter to Joseph Smith III, William McLellin discussed the Canadian revelation:

I know the claim is made for you that you are a Seer. But I ask you candidly do you yourself believe you are a Seer? . . . I am very anxious to find and see a Seer of the Lord. But again, Joseph had a revelation for Oliver and friends to go to Canada to get a copy-right secured in that Dominion to the Book of Mormon, **It proved so false that he never would have it recorded printed or published. I have seen and mad (sic) a copy of it**, so that I know it existed. So do all those connected with him at the time. . . . You may think me an enemy. But I assure You I have kindly feelings for yourself, and the family of the Smiths. . . . I firmly believe in God, and in the sacred book of Mormon . . . in the spring of 1830 the revelation to the Canada mission was certainly untire [untrue]. Now if he delivered a word by pretended revelation which was positively false, then I ask you how we can depend upon any of his future predictions. (Letter from William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July, 1872)

Since William McLellin said that he had made a copy of the Canadian revelation and Mark Hofmann claimed he had found the McLellin collection, Mormon Church leaders were undoubtedly concerned that the Canadian revelation might fall into unfriendly hands. According to Richard Turley, there was even some concern that we might have the Canadian revelation:

In 1984 church officials heard a rumor about the discovery of a copy of an early revelation Joseph Smith had purportedly received. The revelation itself had been mentioned in historical sources for years, but no copies of it had been thought to survive. . . .

On August 9, 1984, the president of Brigham Young University dictated a message for [President] Gordon B. Hinckley. Among other things, he mentioned that Jerald and Sandra Tanner might have the original copy of a revelation in which Joseph Smith asked Oliver Cowdery and others to try to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon in Canada. (*Victims*, pages 114-115)

While we never had “the original copy” of the Canadian revelation, nor even a typescript of it, in the August 1985 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger* we reported that we had been told “that Mark Hofmann did obtain a copy of the revelation to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon as part of the McLellin collection.” The claim that the Canadian revelation was in the McLellin collection was undoubtedly part of Mark Hofmann's blackmail-like scheme to get Mormon leaders to help him with his evil plans.

At any rate, the claims that William McLellin made concerning the Canadian revelation are substantiated by David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon:

In June 1829, the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished . . .

When the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, more money was needed to finish the printing of it. We were waiting on Martin Harris who was doing his best to sell a part of his farm, in order to raise the necessary funds. After a time Hyrum Smith [Joseph Smith's brother] and others began to get impatient, thinking that Martin Harris was too slow and under transgression for not selling his land at once, even if at a great sacrifice. Brother Hyrum thought they should not wait any longer on Martin Harris, and that the money should be raised in some other way. Brother Hyrum was vexed with Brother Martin, and thought they should get money by some means outside of him, and not let him have anything to do with the publication of the Book, or receiving any of the profits thereof if any profits should accrue.

He was wrong in thus judging Bro. Martin, because he was doing all he could toward selling his land. Brother Hyrum said it had been suggested to him that some of the brethren might go to Toronto, Canada, and sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon for considerable money: and he persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone,

and received a revelation that some of the brethren should go to Toronto, Canada, and that they would sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon. Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery went to Toronto on this mission, but **they failed entirely to sell the copy-right**, returning without any money. Joseph was at my father's house when they returned.

I was there also, and am an eye witness to these facts. Jacob Whitmer and John Whitmer were also present when Hiram Page and Oliver Cowdery returned from Canada. Well, we were all in great trouble; and **we asked Joseph how it was that he had received a revelation from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copyright, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking.** Joseph did not know how it was, so he enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: "*Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of man: and some revelations are of the devil.*" So we see that **the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copy-right was not of God**, but was of the devil or of the heart of man. Without much explanation you can see the error of Hyrum Smith in thinking evil of Martin Harris without a cause, and desiring to leave him out in the publication of the Book; and also the error of Brother Joseph in listening to the persuasions of men and enquiring of the Lord to see if they might not go to Toronto to sell the copy-right of the Book of Mormon, when it was made known to Brother Joseph that the will of the Lord was to have Martin Harris raise the money. (*An Address To All Believers In Christ*, by David Whitmer, 1887, pages 30-31)

In a book he wrote on Mormonism, W. Wyl quoted a letter from "Mr. Traugbber" which contained the following:

"Early in 1830 . . . Joe delivered a whooping *big revelation* directing Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page to go over into Kingston, Canada, and sell a copyright . . . the boys went over on the ice and as they had not money enough to bear their expenses, came back nearly starved, completely wearied, with no money nor copyright sold either. In 1831, when Joe and Sidney were talking about having the revelations published, David Whitmer got up in the council and said all he could against the measure. But Joe raved and declared that the Revelations should be published. David said, "Brother Joseph, are you going to publish all of them?" Joe replied, "yes, all, in the order of their dates." Then David asked, "are you going to publish that revelation for Oliver and Hiram to go to Kingston and get out a copyright for the

Book of Mormon?" Joe hung his head a while, then answered, "NO." "Why not, Brother Joseph?" asked honest David. "Because, replied Joe, "IT WAS NOT TRUE." I have this from both Dr. W. E. McLellin [apostle and apostate] and David Whitmer, both of whom have read the revelation. Dr. McLellin was secretary of the council in which David talked to Joe about it." (*Mormon Portraits*, 1886, page 311)

Mormon historian B. H. Roberts frankly discussed this false revelation in his *History of the Church*:

. . . our knowledge of the "Toronto Journey Incident" rests chiefly upon the testimony of David Whitmer, and the possibility is suggested of his misapprehending some detail of the matter . . . That, however, is but conjecture; and while the possibility and even probability of misapprehension by Whitmer is great, still the incident must be considered as it is presented by him, since **his testimony may not be set aside.** . . . The question presented by this state of facts is: May this Toronto incident and the Prophet's explanation be accepted and faith still maintained in him as an inspired man, a Prophet of God? I answer unhesitatingly in the affirmative. **The revelation respecting the Toronto journey was not of God**, surely; else it would not have failed; but the Prophet, overwrought in his deep anxiety for the progress of the work, saw reflected in the "Seer Stone" his own thought, or that suggested to him by his brother Hyrum, rather than the thought of God. . . . in this instance of the Toronto journey, **Joseph was evidently not directed by the inspiration of the Lord.** (*A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1, pages 164-165)

REVELATIONS ALTERED

William McLellin not only charged that Joseph Smith gave false revelations, but he also asserted that the revelations which were printed had been falsified before publication:

I presided in a council in Hiram, Portage Co. O. in Nov. 1831 in which J. Smith, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon were appointed a committee to read over and prepare the revelations for the press. . . . I am aware that those important [documents] **were altered three times** before they appeared in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. And there were many other great changes made in the Church. . . . the committee altered his own revelations materially—**so as to take out whole paragraphs and add others.** This was eminently

wrong. In the first place God spoke what he meant, and meant what he spoke, if he spoke at all. . . . I know because I was present, that they were materially altered, then sent to this City for publication. In the spring of 1832 Joseph &ct. came to this place and in council it was determined—Here I'll give an item from your father's history. "W. W. Phelps, O. Cowdery, and J. Whitmer be appointed to review and prepare the revelations for publication." This was their second alteration. Sep 24th, 1834 **more than twenty material alterations in one revelation.** Remember that altered, mutilated thing is what you now have in the book of *Doctrine and Covenants*. And you claim authority according to it. You seem to base your authority to act as Prophet, Seer &ct according to it. What! dont you think God could speak plainly without alteration? . . . My dear Sir, let me tell you that you stand on a slippery foundation, and the floods will sweep you away. (Letter from William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July, 1872)

As in the case of the Canadian revelation, Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer supported William McLellin's charges regarding the alteration of the revelations:

I want to tell the brethren, that when the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* was published, and presented to the church assembly in Kirtland, Ohio, in August, 1835 . . . a very few of the brethren then knew about most of the important changes that had been put in the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*. In time it was generally found out, and the result was that some of the members left the church on account of it. . . . When it became generally known that these important changes had been made in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, many of the brethren objected seriously to it, but they did not want to say much for the sake of peace, as it was *Brother Joseph* and the leaders who did it. The majority of the members—poor weak souls—thought that anything *Brother Joseph* would do, must be all right; so in their blindness of heart, trusting in an arm of flesh, they looked over it and were led into error, and finally all talk about it ceased. I was told that Sidney Rigdon was the cause of those changes being made: by smooth talk he convinced Brother Joseph and that committee that it was all right. . . . I will not accuse those who did it of being fully aware of the grievous error they were making when they added those items—that is, made those changes; I would rather believe that they were spiritually blinded when they did it: and that Satan deceived them, whispering to them that it was all right and acceptable unto God.

Some of the Latter Day Saints have claimed that God had the same right to authorize Brother Joseph

to add to any revelations certain words and facts, that He had to give him any revelations at all: but only those who are trusting in an arm of flesh and are in spiritual blindness, would pretend to make this claim; that God would give his servants some revelations, command them to publish them in His *Book of Commandments*, and then authorize them to change and add to them some words which change and reverse the original meaning: as if God had changed his mind after giving his word. No brethren! God does not change and work in any such manner as this; all those who believe that God does work this way, my prayer for them is that they may repent, for they are in utter spiritual blindness. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 61)

On page 49 of the same book, David Whitmer made these observations:

. . . in order to support the errors which were afterwards introduced by man, some of the early revelations have been changed and added to . . . Oh the weakness and folly of man! How any person can be so blind in the face of all this evidence, as to still uphold the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, is more than I can understand. But there are none so blind as those who will not see.

You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are to-day in the *Book of Commandments*, to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revelations to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc. You have altered the revelations to support you in going beyond the plain teachings of Christ in the new covenant part of the Book of Mormon. You have changed and altered the revelations to support the error of publishing those revelations in a book: the errors you are in, revelations have been changed to support and uphold them. You who are now living did not change them, but you who strive to defend these things, are as guilty in the sight of God as those who did change them.

"A BASE FORGERY"

In addition to his charges that Joseph Smith gave false revelations and significantly altered the wording in a number of his other revelations, William McLellin also asserted that the joint statement testifying to the truthfulness of the revelations in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of the four standard works of

the Mormon Church, was a forgery. The current edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* still contains an “Explanatory Introduction” which purports to be the “Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.” This statement contains William McLellin’s name and the names of eleven other Apostles. Apostle McLellin, however, claimed that this “Testimony” was “a base forgery”:

Apostle McLellan says: “So far as the testimony of the Twelve published in that book (*Doc. & Cov.*) is concerned, **it was a base forgery.** The Twelve left Kirtland in May, proceeding on an eastern tour. They were in the State of Maine, or at least in the east. They held their last conference in Farmington, Maine, Oct. 24th, 1835. So their testimony could not in truth be in that Assembly in Sep. 24th, 1835.” *Saints’ Herald*, Aug. 1, 1872. (*Changing of the Revelations*, by Daniel Macgregor, Independence, Mo., 1927, page 32)

A great deal of additional information concerning the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations, including photographic proof showing important changes, is found in our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 14-31D.

ANGELIC VISITATIONS?

Mormon leaders proclaim that the Aaronic Priesthood was restored to the church by John the Baptist, and that Peter, James and John later restored the Melchizedek Priesthood. William McLellin, however, had some serious doubts about these claims. In the McLellin-Traughber papers found in Texas, J. L. Traughber quoted McLellin as questioning the restoration of the priesthood by angels:

I joined the church in 1831. **For years I never heard of John the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver. I heard not of James, Peter and John doing so.** These things were gotten up in after years in order to sustain them in their false priesthoods. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, December 4, 1985)

The reader will notice the similarity between this quotation and a statement that appears in the letter McLellin wrote to Joseph Smith’s son in 1872:

But as to the story of John, the Baptist ordaining Joseph and Oliver on the day they were baptized: **I never heard of it in the church for years,** altho I carefully noticed things that were said. And today **I do not believe the story.**

In the McLellin collection, which was rediscovered in the LDS First Presidency’s vault, William McLellin wrote:

“I never saw such an amount of egregious folly as is manifest in trying to introduce a dead priesthood into the church of Christ and then continue in all the parties of L. D. Saintism. It’s a perfect impossibility that the old law priesthood should be revived into existence again. And then a priest of that order would be bound to administer the laws of Moses, but not the gospel of Jesus. He would only know the law, but would not know the gospel of Christ, hence could not administer it. Again I say O The folly of otherwise good men!!—**Some of My Thoughts in 1878—Why I am not an L. D. Saint of any Click or Party,** (un-numbered page).” (As cited in *Deseret News*, Church Section, October 24, 1992, page 13)

David Whitmer and some of the other Book of Mormon witnesses also believed that the priesthood had evolved. Whitmer, in fact, felt that Sidney Rigdon had a great deal to do with the matter:

This matter of “priesthood,” since the days of Sydney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling block of the Latter Day Saints. Priesthood means authority; and authority is the word we should use. I do not think the word priesthood is mentioned in the New Covenant of the Book of Mormon. Authority is the word we used for the first two years in the church—until Sydney Rigdon’s days in Ohio. This matter of the two orders of priesthood in the Church of Christ, and lineal priesthood of the old law being in the church, **all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon.** He explained these things to Brother Joseph in his way, out of the old Scriptures, and got Brother Joseph to inquire, etc. He would inquire, and as mouthpiece speak out the revelations just as they had it fixed up in their hearts. As I have said before, according to the desires of the heart, the inspiration comes, but it may be the spirit of man that gives it. How easily a man can receive some other spirit, appearing as an Angel of Light, believing at the time that he is giving the revealed will of God; a doubt never entering his mind but what he is doing God’s will. Of course I believe that Brother Joseph gave every revelation—including the one on polygamy—in all good conscience before God. This is the way the High Priests and the “priesthood” as you have it, was introduced into the Church of Christ almost two years after its beginning—and after we had baptized and confirmed about two thousand souls into the church. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 64)

In an interview David Whitmer had with Zenas H. Gurley on January 14, 1885, we find the following:

13 Q — Were you present when Joseph Smith received the revelation commanding him and Oliver Cowdery to ordain each other to the Melchisedek Priesthood, if so, where was it and how?

Ans — No I was not—**neither did I ever hear of such a thing as an angel ordaining them** until I got into Ohio about the year 1834—or later.

14 Q — Can you tell why that Joseph and Oliver were ordained to the lesser Priesthood by the hand of an Angel but in receiving the Higher they ordained each other?

Ans — I moved Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to my fathers house in Fayette . . . in the year 1829, on our way I conversed freely with them upon this great work they were bringing about, and Oliver stated to me in Josephs presence that they had baptized each other seeking by that to fulfill the command—And after our arrival at fathers sometime in June 1829, Joseph ordained Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder, and Oliver ordained Joseph to be an Elder in the church of Christ and during that year Joseph both baptized and ordained me an elder in the church of Christ. . . .

I never heard that an Angel had ordained Joseph and Oliver to the Aaronic priesthood until the year 1834, 5, or 6—in Ohio. My information from Joseph and Oliver upon this matter being as I have stated, and that they were commanded so to do by revelation through Joseph. **I do not believe that John the Baptist ever ordained Joseph and Oliver** as stated and believed by some, I regard that as an error, a misconception. (Zenas H. Gurley’s interview with David Whitmer, as cited in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, by Lyndon W. Cook, 1991, pages 154-155)

Even the Mormon historian B. H. Roberts, who had access to some of the most important records in the church archives, had doubts about the priesthood and the alteration of documents which were published by the church. Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn revealed the following concerning Roberts’ doubts:

. . . B. H. Roberts, a seventy, had problems directly involved with the writing of Church history. In November 1910, Church President Joseph F. Smith told the Salt Lake Temple fast meeting that **Elder Roberts doubted that Joseph Smith had actually received a priesthood restoration from John the Baptist**. Church president Heber J. Grant

also required B. H. Roberts to censor some documents in the seventh volume of the *History of the Church*. Elder Roberts was furious. “I desire, however, to take this occasion of disclaiming any responsibility for the **mutilating of that very important part of President Young’s manuscript**,” Roberts replied to President Grant in August 1932, “and also to say, that while you had the physical power of eliminating that passage from the *History*, **I do not believe you had any moral right to do so**.” Despite such strident defense of maintaining the integrity of LDS church history, B. H. Roberts received no formal censure. (*Sunstone*, February 1992, pages 13-14)

B. H. Roberts, of course, wrote the *Comprehensive History of the Church*, and served as editor for the official seven-volume *History of the Church*.

That the priesthood came through a process of evolution rather than angelic visitation is evident to anyone who takes the time to examine the changes in Joseph Smith’s revelations and other historical information on the subject. (See *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 14-31, 179-182.)

NO ENDOWMENT

One of the most important events in Mormon history was the “endowment” which was supposed to have occurred in the Kirtland temple in 1836. Joseph Smith declared that on March 27, 1836, the Kirtland temple was filled with angels:

Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld **the Temple was filled with angels**, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place. (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 428)

William McLellin was serving as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles at that time. One would expect that if such an endowment occurred, McLellin would have supported the story; instead, however, he took a strong stand against the purported

These sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people. The Prophet and his associates sought for divine guidance, and these revelations certify that they received it. In the revelations one sees the restoration and unfolding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times. The westward movement of the Church from New York and Pennsylvania, to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois, and finally to the Great Basin of western America, and the mighty struggles of the saints in attempting to build Zion on the earth in modern times, are also shown forth in these revelations.

Several of the earlier sections involve matters regarding the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon (see Sections 3, 5, 10, 17, 19). Some later sections reflect the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith in making an inspired translation of the Bible, during which many of the great doctrinal sections were received (see, for example, Sections 37, 45, 73, 76, 77, 86, 91, and 132, each of which has some direct relationship to the Bible translation).

In the revelations the doctrines of the gospel are set forth with explanations about such fundamental matters as the nature of the Godhead, the origin of man, the reality of Satan, the purpose of mortality, the necessity for obedience, the need for repentance, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the ordinances and performances that pertain to salvation, the destiny of the earth, the future conditions of man after the resurrection and the judgment, the eternity of the marriage relationship, and the eternal nature of the family. Likewise the gradual unfolding of the administrative structure of the Church is shown with the calling of bishops, the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Seventy, and the establishment of other presiding offices and quorums. Finally, the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power—makes this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth.

A number of the revelations were published in Zion (Independence), Missouri, in 1833, under the title *A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ*. Concerning this publication the elders of the Church gave solemn testimony that the Lord had borne record to their souls that these revelations were true. As the Lord continued to communicate with his servants, an enlarged compilation was published two years later in Kirtland, Ohio, with the title *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*. To this publication in 1835, the written testimony of the Twelve Apostles was attached as follows:

TESTIMONY OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES TO THE TRUTH OF THE
BOOK OF DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

The Testimony of the Witnesses to the Book of the Lord's Commandments, which commandments He gave to His Church through Joseph Smith Jun., who was appointed by the voice of the Church for this purpose:

We, therefore, feel willing to bear testimony to all the world of mankind, to every creature upon the face of the earth, that the Lord has borne record to our souls, through the Holy Ghost shed forth upon us, that these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men and are verily true.

We give this testimony unto the world, the Lord being our helper; and it is through the grace of God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, that we are permitted to have this privilege of bearing this testimony unto the world, in the which we rejoice exceedingly, praying the Lord always that the children of men may be profited thereby.

The names of the Twelve were:

Thomas B. Marsh	Orson Hyde	William Smith
David W. Patten	Wm. E. McLellin	Orson Pratt
Brigham Young	Parley P. Pratt	John F. Boynton
Heber C. Kimball	Luke S. Johnson	Lyman E. Johnson

In successive editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, additional revelations or other matters of record have been added, as received, and as accepted by competent assemblies or conferences of the Church.

Beginning with the 1835 edition a series of seven theological lessons was also included; these were titled the "Lectures on Faith." These had been prepared for use in the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1834-1835. Although profitable for doctrine and instruction, these lectures have been omitted from the Doctrine and Covenants since the 1921 edition because they were not given or presented as revelations to the whole Church.

In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants three documents have been included for the first time. These are Sections 137 and 138, setting forth the fundamentals of salvation for the dead; and Official Declaration 2, announcing that all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.

It is evident that some errors have been perpetuated in past editions, particularly in the historical portions of the section headings. Consequently this edition contains corrections of dates and place names and also a few other minor corrections when it seemed appropriate (such as discontinuing the unusual names beginning with Section 78). These changes have been made so as to bring the material into conformity with the historical documents. Other special features of this latest edition include maps showing the major geographical locations in which the revelations were received, plus improvements in cross references, section headings, and subject-matter summaries, all of which are designed to help readers to understand and rejoice in the message of the Lord as given in the Doctrine and Covenants.

A photograph of the Explanatory Introduction of the 1989 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Notice that William E. McLellin's name appears in the "Testimony of the Twelve Apostles to the Truth of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants." McLellin, however, claimed that this testimony was "a base forgery."

endowment. In 1848, he asserted: “. . . we boldly affirm that **no endowment** from God has as yet been given in Kirtland” (*Ensign of Liberty*, Kirtland, Ohio, March, 1848, page 69).

On pages 6-7 of the same publication, William McLellin joined with five others in stating:

And, during the winter of thirty-five and six, hundreds upon hundreds of the Ministers of the Church collected . . . to receive the “**Endowment From on High**.” . . . Finally, the 6th of April, the time, the long looked for time arrived. . . . most of them expecting to wait on the Lord there, until he visibly displayed himself, by shedding upon them, as it were, “cloven tongues of fire,” so that they might go to all the world, and preach to them in their own languages . . .

But we are sorry to have to record, that the light of the next morning’s sun found disappointed hundreds wending their way from that noble edifice, to their homes and their firesides, to reflect upon, and brood over their sad disappointment. The least we can say relative to the anticipated endowment is, **it was a failure!!**

In Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, vol. 2, page 427, it is claimed that David Whitmer saw angels at the Kirtland endowment:

President Frederick G. Williams arose and testified that while President Rigdon was making his first prayer, an angel entered the window and took his seat between Father Smith and himself . . . **President David Whitmer also saw angels in the house.**

It is interesting to note, however, that David Whitmer called the story of the endowment a “trumped up yarn.” Although the *History of the Church* says that Whitmer “saw angels in the house,” in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 60, we show that this statement was not in the original published report of the endowment. A newspaper reporter stated that David Whitmer, like McLellin, absolutely denied the manifestations in the temple:

The great heavenly “visitation,” which was alleged to have taken place in the temple at Nauvoo [should read Kirtland], was **a grand fizzle**. The elders were assembled on the appointed day, which was promised would be a veritable day of Pentecost, but there **was no visitation. No Peter, James and John; no Moses and Elias, put in an appearance.** “I was in my seat on that occasion,” says Mr. Whitmer, “and **I know that the story sensationally circulated**, and which is now on the records of the Utah Mormons as an actual happening, was nothing but a trumped up yarn.” (*Des Moines Daily News*, October 16, 1886)

Present-day Mormons are not supposed to use any kind of alcoholic beverages, and most members of the church believe that Joseph Smith abstained from drinking. While it is true that in 1833 Joseph Smith gave a revelation known as the Word of Wisdom (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 89), counseling members to abstain from intoxicating drinks, in the years that followed Smith himself had a very difficult time conforming to the revelation. In Joseph Smith’s *History*, as it was first published in the church’s *Millennial Star*, vol. 23, page 720, Smith freely admitted that he “**Drank a glass of beer at Moessers.**” When this was reprinted in the *History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 424, this offending statement was suppressed.

In the *Millennial Star*, vol. 21, page 283, we read that Joseph Smith even encouraged some of his followers to drink “whiskey.” He said that he “gave them **a couple of dollars, with directions to replenish the bottle** to stimulate them in the fatigues of their sleepless journey.” All of these words were deleted without any indication when this portion of Smith’s *History* was reprinted (see *History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 450). The *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pages 616-617, does acknowledge that Joseph Smith drank wine in the Carthage jail just before his death:

Before the jailor came in, his boy brought in some water, and said the guard wanted some **wine**. **Joseph** gave Dr. Richards two dollars to give the guard . . . The guard immediately sent for a **bottle of wine** . . . Dr. Richards uncorked the bottle, and **presented a glass to Joseph**, who tasted, as brother Taylor and the doctor, and the bottle was then given to the guard, who turned to go out.

William McLellin felt that wine served in the Kirtland temple played an important role in what took place there:

When that noble structure the Temple in Kirtland was dedicated, after only being partly finished, it was done **without any power being sent forth**, or manifested in any degree to the large congregation assembled in it. I was present and know what I say. In 1836 when they undertook to get an endowment in the Kirtland Temple. All washed and with oil anointed themselves, and appeared in the Temple at sunrise, then all feet were washed, and about five hundred ministers took their places, and solemnly prayed. We remained there fasting until sunrise next morning. We however partook of some bread and

wine in the evening. And some partook so freely, on their empty stomachs, that **they became drunk!** I took care of S. H. Smith in one of the stands, so deeply intoxicated that he could not nor did sense anything. I kept him hid from the crowd in the stand, but he vomited [in] the spit-box five times full, and his dear brother Carlos would empty it out of the window. But I would prefer to draw a curtain over the awful scene! Others imbibed to[o] much also. But let the curtain fall!!

This was a dedication with a vengeance to it, instead of pure *power* from the Lord. (Letter written by William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872)

On March 18, 1855, Mormon Apostle George A. Smith spoke of “the day of the Kirtland endowment and great solemn assembly.” Apostle Smith’s comments about the endowment show that it was a shocking event for many of the people and raises the question concerning how much wine was used on that occasion:

The Lord did actually reveal one principle to us there, and that one principle was apparently so simple, and so foolish in their eyes, that a great many apostatized over it, because it was so contrary to their notions and views. It was after the people had **fasted all day**, they sent out and **got wine** and bread, and blessed them, and distributed them to the multitude, that is, to the whole assembly of the brethren, and they ate and drank, and prophesied, and bore testimony, and continued so to do until some of the High Council of Missouri stepped into the stand, and, as righteous Noah did when **he awoke from his wine**, commenced to **curse their enemies. You never felt such a shock** go through any house or company in the world as went through that. There was **almost a rebellion** because men would get up and **curse their enemies**; although they could remember well that it is written that Noah cursed his grandson, and that God recognized that curse to such an extent that, at this day, millions of his posterity are consigned to perpetual servitude.

Many men are foolish enough to think that they can thwart the power of God, and can liberate the sons of Ham [the blacks] from that curse before its time has expired. Some of the brethren thought it was **best to apostatize, because the spirit of cursing was with men** who had been driven from Missouri by mob violence. . . . The Lord dared not then reveal anything more; He had given us **all we could swallow**; and persecution raged around us to such an extent that we were obliged to forsake our beautiful Temple, and flee into the State of Missouri. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 216)

In the 1872 letter to Joseph Smith III, William McLellin had more to say about intemperance in the early Mormon Church:

In the spring of 1836 I took a mission south and returned the last of June; but only returned to find the Presidency to a great extent absolved in temporal things. They had gone to New York and run into debt about forty thousand dollars for goods—which was never paid!!! They brought on a kind of stuff they called Cordial. It would intoxicate. I myself saw your father [Joseph Smith] so much under its influence that he could not walk strait (*sic*)! You may doubt what I say, but it matters not. They formed a kind of an association and kept it up until they went into that swindling Kirtland banking concern, about which so many *lies* were prophesied. Popularity, and drinking, feasting and hilarity was the order of the day.

The Presidency and leading men got up a ride to Cleveland, some 15 couple. . . . They drove into Cleveland and through the streets. . . . People inquired who is this? O its Joseph Smith—the Mormon Prophet! They put up at a first class hotel, called in the wine &c. Some of them became high, and smashed up things generally. Next morning their bill was over two hundred dollars. No matter—we are Big-merchant-men of Kirtland. Next day on their way home they took dinner at Euclid, and imbibed so freely than [that?] when they started home they commenced running horses, turned over and smashed up one buggy so they had to haul it home in a wagon. But no confessions were ever required or made. All seemed to go swimmingly!! But I sickened! I left!! I could tell much more.

The reader will notice that in the quotation above William McLellin referred to the “swindling Kirtland banking concern.” In the *Ensign of Liberty*, McLellin had more to say about this matter:

Soon, therefore, it is determined that a Kirtland Bank must be established, to hold their treasures; and to aid them to get more. So eager were they, and so sanguine of success, that they **did not even wait to get a charter** from the State, but seemed to think that everything must bow at their nod—**thus violating the laws of the land** in which they live, which in the end brought upon them swift destruction. (*Ensign of Liberty*, March, 1847, page 7)

The fall of the financial institution promoted by Joseph Smith and other leaders of the church brought disillusionment to many members of the Mormon Church. Warren Parrish, who had been Joseph Smith’s

scribe and an officer in the bank, left the church and made this revealing statement concerning the matter:

I have listened to him [i. e. Smith] with feelings of no ordinary kind, when he declared that **the audible voice of God, instructed him to establish a Banking-Anti Banking institution**, who like Aaron's rod **shall swallow up all other Banks** (the Bank of Monroe excepted) and grow and flourish and spread from the rivers **to the ends of the earth**, and **survive when all others should be laid in ruins**. (*Painesville Republican*, February 22, 1838, as quoted in *Conflict at Kirtland*, by Max Parkin, 1966, page 297)

Wilford Woodruff, who eventually became the fourth prophet of the Mormon Church, confirmed in his journal that Joseph Smith did claim to have a revelation concerning the bank:

6th I visited the office of the Kirtland Safety Society & saw the first money that was issued by the Treasurer or Society. . . .

I also he[a]rd **President Joseph Smith Jr. declare** in the presence of F. Williams, D. Whitmer, S. Smith, W. Parrish, & others in the Deposit Office that **he had received that morning the Word of the Lord upon the Subject of the Kirtland Safety Society**. He was alone in a room by himself & he had not ownly the voice of the Spirit upon the Subject but even **an audable voice**. He did not tell us at that time what the LORD said upon the subject but remarked that if we would give heed to the Commandments the Lord had given this morning all would be well.

May the Lord bless Brother Joseph with all the Saints & support the above named institution & Protect it so that every weapen formed against it may be broaken & come to nought while the Kirtland Safety Society shall become **the greatest of all institutions on EARTH**. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 1833-1898, January 6, 1837, vol. 1, page 120)

Before the year ended, the Kirtland Safety Society had become bankrupt, and many people lost their savings. Mormon historian B. H. Roberts acknowledged that the banking venture "ended disastrously" (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 401-402). In a thesis written at the church's Brigham Young University, Mormon scholar Gary Dean Guthrie commented:

The State legislature refused the Kirtland Safety Society its charter upon which the name of the bank was changed to Kirtland Anti-Banking Society. . . .

Joseph [Smith] and Sidney [Rigdon] were **tried in court for violating the law, were found guilty and fined \$1,000**. . . . Other lawsuits followed. . . .

During the summer of 1837, Joseph spent much of his time away from Kirtland to avoid these lawsuits. . . .

The blame of the bank failure fell heavily on Joseph. He had issued a formal invitation to his followers to take stock in the venture and the institution had been organized **outside the law**. Heber C. Kimball [who became a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young] later was to comment that at this moment, "there were not twenty persons on earth that would declare that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God." Six of the apostles came out in open rebellion. . . . Joseph first established the bank **by revelation** and then had to later admit that because of poor management and other internal and external conditions **the project was a failure**. ("Joseph Smith As An Administrator," M. A. thesis, May 1969, pages 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 88)

For a great deal more concerning the failure of the Kirtland Bank see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 529-535, 544A-544B.

McLELLIN'S 55 REASONS

When Dawn House found part of the McLellin papers in Texas, she discovered that one booklet written by McLellin had a list of 55 things about Mormonism which he rejected. Forty-nine of these reasons were photographically reproduced in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 2, 1985. We quote the following from that list:

Things which I do not believe that is generally believed by Latter Day Saints most firmly.

[1.] **I do not believe**, that Joseph tran[s]lated the book of Mormon. He only read the translation as it appeared before him. The Lord translated it for him. So says the book "Wherefore, thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee" Page 111, of the Palmyra edition.

[2.] **I do not believe**, he ever possessed the Urim and Thummim during his whole life.

[3.] **I do not believe**, he ever pos[s]essed the Interpreters after he lost the 116 pages first translated.

4. **I do not believe**, that he ever received authority to gather the Gentiles to a Zion.

5. **I do not believe**, that he or any man ever had authority to appoint and ordain Apostles of Christ.

6. **I dont believe**, that an Angel ever ordained a man to any ministerial office in the Church of Christ.

7. **I dont believe**, the church was ever established by Joseph, it was only organized. Setup by man's authority.

8. **I do not believe**, in receiving J. Smith's word as from the mouth of God as we are commanded on the 6th of April [18]30.

9. **I dont believe**, in holding general Conferences to make rules and laws for the government of the church of Christ.

10. **I do not believe**, in disembodied spirits communing with man, as Angels do.

11. **I dont believe**, In a Prophet being placed at the Head of the church as Leader and sole Dictator. Sep. 1830

12. **I dont believe**, in *nine* officers as ministers placed in the church, instead of *three*.

13. **I dont believe**, in two Priesthoods existing in the church of Christ at one and the same time, as Smith planted them.

14. **I dont believe**, in Aaronic or Melchizedec high Priests existing in the true church of Christ in this dispensation.

15. **I dont believe**, in altering (said to be) true revelations from God, as Smith did in a miserable manner in 1831.

16. **I dont believe**, in the order of Enoch, and false names, as was set up and practiced in Zion in the spring of 1832.

17. **I dont believe**, in an entire change of name of the church to that of the church of Latter Day Saints on the 3 of May 1834.

18. **I dont believe**, in setting up *three* men as first Presidents of the church, instead of *twelve* Apostles at the Head.

[19]. **I dont believe**, in a council of 15 men as the highest court in the church to try transgressors, when three could do better.

20. **I dont believe**, in the spirit and practice of War as practiced or acted by J. Smith and army in 1834, in their tramp to Missouri.

21. **I dont believe**, in the word sent by O. Hyde and J. Gould, from Smith and council, for the church to fight in their own defence.

[2]2. **I dont believe**, in revelating and ordaining a Bishop, to take charge of Church property as his business.

[23]. **I dont believe**, in ordaining a Patriarch to give patriarchal blessings to the whole Church.

24. **I dont believe**, in pretending to dedicate Zion, and the Temple in Kirtland, and no power from God to assist them.

25. **I do not believe**, in pretending to translate with Urim and Thummim when only a small Stone was used.

26. **I dont believe**, in only *one* man to receive and give off revelations for the whole church. Its unchristian[.]

27. **I dont believe**, in Moroni's revealing the place of the plates to Joseph Smith in 1823, again in 1827.

28. **I dont believe**, in John the Baptist, or Peter, James and John ordaining J. Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

29. **I dont believe**, in the Tithing law, it is opposed to the consecration law, and sets it aside. One was all, the other one 10 [percent].

30. **I dont believe**, in driving the [Book of Mormon] *witnesses* from Far West by his Danites at the peril of their lives, as was done in 1838.

31. **I dont believe**, in robbing the Gentiles in Davis Co. in 1838 of quantities of household goods, as the L. D. Saints did do.

32. **I dont believe**, in the doctrine of hereditary rights of priesthood in the Gospel system.

33. **I dont believe**, in the doctrine of plurality of Gods, and God making, as J. Smith taught in Nauvoo; in a sermon there.

34. **I dont believe**, in the doctrine of baptizing for the dead by proxy as was taught and practiced in Nauvoo.

35. **I dont believe**, that God himself was once a man as men are now, and that he rose by exaltation to be a God.

36. **I dont believe**, that men can or will ever by any system of exaltation become Gods and reign over [a] world glorified.

37. **I dont believe**, in polygamy as taught and practiced by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, in Far West and in Nauvoo.

38. **I dont believe**, in the book of Abraham translated (pretended to be) from Papyrus taken from the bosom of an Egyptian Mummy.

39. **I dont believe**, in Joseph's savage abuse of Elders who hap[p]ened to differ with him in their opinions.

40. **I dont believe**, in giving false and fictitious names as Smith gave to nine elders in Zion in the year 1832.

41. **I dont believe**, in the attempted endowment in the Temple in Kirtland in 1836. It was an entire failure.

42. **I do not believe**, in giving false revelations as Oliver's to the Lamanites, that Teachers have no authority to baptize & [some words illegible].

43. **I dont believe**, that any man has any authority to ordain or consecrate a Seer or Prophet of the Lord. Its a gift from God.

44. **I dont believe**, in ordaining or having high Priests, or Aaronic Priests in the true church Christ in the gospel dispensation.

45. **I dont believe**, Smith's revelations ought to have been printed in 1833, and the Lord suffered a mob to destroy them.

46. **I dont believe**, Smith's everlasting orders of Enoch, set up in Zion, and then in Kirtland in 1832 ever accomplished any good.

47. **I dont believe**, in altering his revelations three times before they were printed in the book of Doctrine and Covenants.

48. **I dont believe**, in Smith's places of gathering in Zion, in Kirtland, in Far West, in Diamon, and in Nauvo[o,] _____ [all failures?]

4[9]. **I dont believe**, in building a great Temple in Kirtland, and going in debt there for \$30,000 dollars, but it went to _____ [word illegible] (Manuscript book written by William McLellin, pages 2-3)

McLELLIN'S FOLLOWERS

We have previously mentioned that Joseph Smith appointed David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to be "a prophet to this Church" if he "did not live to God himself." Consequently, William McLellin strongly believed that David Whitmer was the true successor to Joseph Smith.

At the time of Joseph Smith's death, the majority of the Book of Mormon witnesses who were then living were no longer affiliated with the Mormon Church. The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon were, in fact, in a state of confusion. Even before Smith's death, Oliver Cowdery had joined the Methodist Church in Tiffin, Ohio. On July 15, 1841, the Mormon Church's official publication, *Times and Seasons*, printed a poem which made it clear that the Mormons believed that Oliver Cowdery had denied his testimony to the Book of Mormon. The poem asked if the fact that Peter denied Jesus proved that "Christ was not the Lord." It went on to ask, "Or [the] **Book of Mormon not his word Because denied, by Oliver**" (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 2, page 482)?

Martin Harris lived in Kirtland, Ohio, for many years. Richard Anderson, of the church's Brigham Young University, had to admit that Harris' life showed signs of "religious instability." Professor Anderson also revealed the following:

The foregoing tendencies explain the **spiritual wanderlust** that afflicted the solitary witness at Kirtland. In this period of his life he **changed his religious position eight times**, including a **rebaptism** by a Nauvoo missionary in 1842. Every affiliation of Martin Harris was with some Mormon group, except when he was affiliated with **Shaker belief** . . . (*Improvement Era*, March 1969, page 63)

While he was with the Shakers, Martin Harris indicated that he had a greater testimony to the Shakers than to the Book of Mormon. In a thesis written at

Brigham Young University, Wayne Cutler Gunnell stated that on December 31, 1844, "Phineas H. Young [Brigham Young's brother] and other leaders of the Kirtland organization" wrote a letter to Brigham Young in which they stated:

There are in this place all kinds of teaching, **Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism**, says his **testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon**. ("Martin Harris—Witness and Benefactor to the Book of Mormon," 1955, page 52)

The teachings of the Shakers were definitely incompatible with the doctrines of the Mormon Church. For example, the Shakers felt that "**Christ** has made his second appearance on earth, **in a chosen female** known by the name of Ann Lee, and acknowledged by us as **our blessed Mother** in the work of redemption" (*Sacred Roll and Book*, page 358).

While we have no evidence that David Whitmer expressed any doubts about the Book of Mormon, he did reject Joseph Smith's revelations published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, believed that Joseph was a fallen prophet and claimed that God himself told him that he should leave the Mormon Church:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, **God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to "separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints**, for as they sought to do unto me, so should it be done unto them." (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 27)

About a year after Joseph Smith's death, a Mormon by the name of James Jesse Strang claimed that he was visited by an Angel. Like Joseph Smith, Strang claimed he was directed to some plates which he translated with the Urim and Thummim. Some members of Joseph Smith's family, including his mother, Lucy Smith, and his brother, William, were so credulous that they were led into another movement involving plates. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that some of the Book of Mormon witnesses were influenced by Strang. On January 20th, 1848, James J. Strang wrote:

. . . early in 1846 . . . I received a letter from Hiram Page, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, and a neighbor and friend to the Whitmers' who lived near him, and that they rejoiced with exceeding joy that **God had raised up one to stand in place of Joseph** . . . He goes on to say that **all**

THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES.

BE it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, his brethren, and also of the people of Jared, which came from the tower, of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety, that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shewn unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvellous in our eyes: Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things.— And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgement seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY,
DAVID WHITMER,
MARTIN HARRIS.

AND ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF EIGHT WITNESSES.

BE it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jr. the Author and Proprietor of this work, has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record, with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shewn unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety, that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen: and we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER,
JACOB WHITMER,
PETER WHITMER, JR.
JOHN WHITMER,
HIRAM PAGE,
JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.
HYRUM SMITH,
SAMUEL H. SMITH.

the witnesses of the Book of Mormon living in that region received the news with gladness, and finally that they held a council in which David and John Whitmer and this Hiram Page were the principle actors; and . . . sent up to me **as a prophet of God to tell them what to do**. . . . I received another letter from the same Hiram Page . . . giving me the acts of another council of himself at the Whitmers' in which, among other things, they invite me to come to their residence in Missouri and receive from them, David and John Whitmer, church records, and manuscript revelations, which they had in their possession. . . . These documents they speak of as great importance to the church, and offer them **to me as the true shepherd who has a right to them**. . . . (*Gospel Herald*, January 20, 1848)

In a letter to David Whitmer, dated December 2, 1846, William E. McLellin stated:

I was visited by James J. Strang of Voree, Wisconsin. . . . The brethren here generally received him as the Successor of Jos. Smith, according to his profession—He told me that **all the witnesses to the book of Mormon yet alive were with him**, except Oliver. . . .

I received a letter from Oliver . . . He thinks Strang is a wicked man. (*The Ensign of Liberty*, April 1847, pages 17, 19)

We know that John Whitmer, one of the Eight Witnesses, initially fell for Strang's claims. In his history of the church, John Whitmer wrote the following—later, however it was crossed out:

God knowing all things prepared a man whom he **visited by an angel of God** and showed him where there were [*sic*] some ancient record hid . . . **Strang Reigns in the place of Smith** the author and proprietor of the Book of Mormon. (*John Whitmer's History*, chapter 21, page 23)

Martin Harris joined the Strangite movement and actually went on a mission to England for the group. The Mormon Church's own publication, *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, printed some very revealing statements concerning Harris:

One of the **witnesses to the Book of Mormon, yielded to the spirit and temptation of the Devil** a number of years ago—turned against Joseph Smith and became his bitter enemy. He was filled with **the rage and madness of a demon**. One day he would be one thing, and another day another thing. He soon became **partially deranged** or shattered, as many believed, **flying from one thing to another**, as if reason and common sense were thrown off their

balance. In one of his **fits of monomania**, he went and **joined the "Shakers"** or followers of Anne Lee. He tarried with them a year or two . . . but since Strang has made his entry into the apostate ranks, and hoisted his standard for the rebellious to flock too, Martin leaves the "Shakers," **whom he knows to be right**, and has known it for many years, as he said, and joins Strang . . . We understand that he is appointed a mission to this country [England], but we do not feel to warn the Saints against him, for his own unbridled tongue will show out **specimens of folly** enough to give any person a true index to the character of the man . . . **evil men, like Harris**, out of the evil treasure of their hearts bring forth evil things.

. . . .

Just as our paper was going to press, we learned that Martin Harris . . . had landed in Liverpool . . . he tells some of our brethren . . . that he was of the same profession with themselves . . . there was a strangeness about him, and about one or two who came with him, that gave them plainly to see that the frankness and honest simplicity of true hearted brethren were not with them. **A lying deceptive spirit attends them**, and has from the beginning . . . they know that they are **of their father, the Devil**, who was a liar from the beginning . . . The very countenance of Harris will show to every spiritually-minded person who sees him, that **the wrath of God is upon him**. (*Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, vol. 8, November 15, 1846, pages 124-128)

Although the Book of Mormon witnesses were attracted to Strang for a short time, they soon became interested in the fact that William McLellin was trying to start a new movement. McLellin had at one time "given some encouragement" to Strang, but he soon changed his mind. Writing in *The Ensign of Liberty*, page 32, McLellin commented:

He claims to be "like Joseph." And we ask for the likeness between his three brass ones [i. e., plates], and that great pile of gold plates delivered to Joseph Smith. We saw Strang's, and we should think that they were not over two and a half inches long by one and one eighth wide. Mormon's plates were about eight inches long by six wide. No comparison in metal or size. . . . Who knows whether Strang translated his plates correctly? No Man.

Five of the Book of Mormon witnesses definitely supported William McLellin's movement and another—Oliver Cowdery—gave some encouragement to it. According to McLellin, Martin Harris was baptized into his movement in 1847:

On Saturday 13th, of February, Martin Harris, William E. McLellin, Leonard Rich and Aaron Smith, were

immersed, confirmed, and reordained to the same authority which we had held in the Church before Latter Day Saintism was known. (*The Ensign of Liberty*, January 1848, page 56)

Martin Harris, whose name appears in the Book of Mormon as one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, signed the same type of statement for the McLellin group. He joined with Leonard Rich and Calvin Beebe in a “Testimony of Three Witnesses” that Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer as his “Successor in office”:

Testimony of Three Witnesses.

We cheerfully certify, to all whom it may concern, that we attended a general conference, called at the instance of Joseph Smith, in Clay county Mo., on the 8th day of July, 1834, at the residence of Elder Lyman Wight. And while the conference was in session, Joseph Smith presiding, he arose and said that the time had come when he must appoint his Successor in office. Some have supposed that it would be Oliver Cowdery; but, said he, Oliver has lost that privilege in consequence of transgression. **The Lord has made it known to me that David Whitmer is the man.** David was then called forward, and Joseph and his counsellors laid hands upon him, and ordained him to his station, to succeed him. Joseph then gave David a charge, in the hearing of the whole assembly. Joseph then seemed to rejoice that that work was done, and said, now brethren, if any thing befall[*i*] me, the work of God will roll on with more power than it has hitherto done. Then, brethren, you will have a man who can lead you as well as I can. He will be Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator before God.

MARTIN HARRIS
LEONARD RICH,
CALVIN BEEBE.

(*The Ensign of Liberty*, December 1847, pages 43-44)

In a letter dated September 8, 1847, David Whitmer informed Oliver Cowdery that it was “the will of God” that he join with the McLellin group:

Dear brother Oliver.—I write in answer to your last . . . Now I say it is your duty to prepare so fast as God will open the way before you to cut loose from the world . . . and assist in building up the church, even the church of Christ. . . we have established, or commenced to establish the church of Christ again, by laying aside our dead works, and being re-ordained to our former offices of President and Counsellor, as formerly—and it is the **will of God that you be one of my counsellors in the presidency of the church.** Jacob [Whitmer] and Hiram [Page] have been ordained High Priests, and W. E. McLellin

President, to stand in relation to me as you stood to Joseph, &c. &c. Now you behold that **the time has come**, to clear away the old rubbish, and build again those principles which constitute the church of Christ. Brother McLellin has still to continue his work in exposing the man of sin, &c. &c.

I am your] brother in the new Covenant,
DAVID WHITMER

(Letter by David Whitmer, as printed in *The Ensign of Liberty*, May 1848, page 93)

The Mormons were very disturbed by the endorsement which the Book of Mormon witnesses gave to William McLellin’s movement. Hosea Stout made this entry in his journal on December 3, 1848:

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmore & W. E. McLelland were trying to raise up the kingdom again, also William Smith. But the “Sound of their grinding is low.” They are **all waiting for the Twelve & Presid[e]ncy to fall.** (*On the Mormon Frontier; The Diary of Hosea Stout*, edited by Juanita Brooks, vol. 2, page 336)

In *The Ensign of Liberty*, for August 1849, William McLellin gave this information concerning a conference held in September, 1847:

When I published the third number of this paper, I did not then deem it wisdom to publish the particulars of the conference held in Far West, on the 7th and 8th days of Sept., with **some of the original “witnesses” of the book of Mormon.** . . . It will be remembered that in Dec. 1846, I wrote a long letter to President David Whitmer. . . . When I parted with O. Cowdery the last of July, in Wisconsin, he immediately wrote to David and acquainted him with the fact that I was on my way to make him a visit. . . .

On the 4th of Sept., about sunset, I arrived in Richmond, Ray Co., Mo., at the residence of David Whitmer. . . .

On the 6th, **David and Jacob Whitmer**, and **Hiram Page**, accompanied me to Far West, to visit their brother **John Whitmer.** . . . We conversed freely, and particularly about the re-organization of the same church by us in Kirtland, in Feb. 1847. . . . The following revelation which we had received . . . was the cause of the re-organization, was read and approved:

“Verily I the Lord say unto those who are now present . . . as you desire to know my will and how you shall go forward to please me, as you have taken upon you the name of Christ, mine Anointed, then it will be pleasing unto me that you should also take upon you mine ordinances of baptism and confirmation, and then re-ordination—or rather a

confirmation of the holy authority of the Priesthood which you had received in my church. . . .

“And now concerning the authority of my servant David, I would say unto you that no man being directed by my spirit will ever condemn what my spirit now teaches you. . . . amen!” (pages 99-101)

William McLellin went on to relate that David Whitmer, who had been chosen by Joseph Smith to be one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, had turned against the Mormon Church, giving revelations supporting McLellin’s movement and condemning the Mormon leaders:

We then agreed to call upon the Lord to know his mind and will concerning those who were there present. And we agreed or covenanted to implicitly obey what the Lord might reveal to us. I took my seat at a table prepared to write; David took his seat near to me, and he requested the others to gather near around him.—Then after a few moments of solemn secret prayer, the following was delivered solely through and by **David Whitmer, as the Revelator**, and written by me as scribe, viz:

“Verily, verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servants **David**, and **John**, and **William**, and **Jacob**, and **Hiram**, it is for my name’s sake . . . that your sins are now forgiven, and that you shall have my word concerning you. . . . Behold I have looked upon you from the beginning, and have seen that in your hearts dwelt truth, and righteousness. And now I reveal unto you my friends, through my beloved son, your Savior. And for the cause of my church **it must needs have been that ye were cast out from among those who had polluted themselves and the holy authority of their priesthoods**, that I the Lord could preserve my holy priesthood on earth, even on this land on which I the Lord have said Zion should dwell.

“Now marvel not that I have preserved you and kept you on this land. It was for my purpose, yea even for a wise purpose . . . for my church for a time did not dwell on earth,—speaking of the righteousness of the church of Christ. For verily, verily saith the Lord, even Jesus, your Redeemer, **they have polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight**, therefore shall they be led whithersoever I will and but few shall remain to receive their inheritances. Therefore I say unto you my son David, fear not, for I am your Lord and your God; and I have held you in my own hands. . . . Now I say unto you that **my church may again arise**, she must acknowledge before me **that they all have turned away from me and built up themselves**. Even in the pride of

their own hearts have they **done wickedness in my name, even all manner of abominations, even such that the people of the world never was guilty of**.

“Therefore I the Lord have dealt so marvelously with **my servant William [McLellin]**. Therefore I have **poured out my spirit upon him from time to time**, that the ‘man of sin’ might be revealed through him. To him I have given my Holy Spirit. I have inspired his heart **to discern the true principles of my kingdom, that he may again build up my church as from the beginning**. Therefore **I have inspired him to build it up** according to my law. Therefore he shall continue to do all things according to the pattern that **I have shown to him**. Now I say unto you **my servant William**, that you may not err, be meek and humble before me, and you shall always know by my spirit the correct principles of my kingdom. Therefore I the Lord command you to instruct all the honest in heart, and to break down all those false theories and principles of all those who claim to hold authority from my church.—And the work that thou shalt do in my kingdom shall be to preach and to gather out those who are honest in heart . . . I have a work for thee to do in the land where thy family resides. For there shalt *thy* work commence.

“Thou shalt build up my church even in the land of Kirtland, and set forth all things pertaining to my kingdom. Thou shalt write concerning **the downfall of those who once composed my church**, and set forth to the world by the light and power of my spirit, why I the Lord did not prosper them. For verily, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, thine heart have I prepared to do this work. . . . Therefore have I the Lord said that ‘the meek shall inherit the earth,’ even so, amen.”

One thing in the foregoing revelation came in direct contact with one of my previous opinions. I had supposed that Kirtland would become the residence of David, the Lord’s Prophet. But while I was marveling in my mind how the work could go on and he remain in Missouri, and also freely speaking to John Whitmer some of my thoughts and feeling on the subject, brother David came and seated himself near me again, and said, brother William, the Lord has something more for us, and you may write again. And the word of the Lord came as follows:

“Behold I the Lord, say unto you my friends . . . I will reveal unto you this mystery . . . Therefore as I had built up my kingdom according to my holy order,

and placed you upon this land, and consecrated you to the holy order of my priesthood, therefore my servant David if thou should'st leave this land, and those of thy brethren who have remained with thee, then you shall forfeit your right and make the word of God of none effect. . . . For now ye do hold the right of this, the consecrated land of Zion . . . Now I say no more unto you concerning this matter, even so, amen.”

With the above I was perfectly satisfied. . . . But then I saw what a great responsibility would rest on me, especially when I should return to Kirtland. . . . I expressed my anxiety to my brethren present, and the enquiry being made, the Lord through his servant David, made known, while I wrote the following:

“Verily, verily thus saith the Lord your God, unto you my servant William . . . I have called you to my work. . . . it must needs be that you must have my spirit, even the spirit of discernment. For thou shalt discern between the righteous and the wicked, for there will be many spirits which shall manifest themselves in the church of Christ. . . . Therefore I have given you the pattern, and the power, and the wisdom, and the understanding to build up my church in Kirtland, to be a standard and a light to the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that the **church of Christ** is established here on earth. . . . it is wisdom in me saith the Lord, that my people . . . should observe harmony and good order, that the truth of God may prevail among the children of men.

But here **David said a vision opened before him**, and the spirit which was upon him bid him stop and talk to me concerning it. He said that in **the bright light** before him he **saw a small chest or box of very curious and fine workmanship** which seemed to be locked, but he was told that it contained precious things, and that if I remained faithful to God, I should obtain the chest and its contents. I marveled at this relation, from the fact that on the 29th day of April, 1844, while in vision, I saw the same or a similar chest, and received a similar promise from the Spirit which talked with me. I was told that it contained “the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge from God.”

At this point we counselled particularly relative to the authority by which the church was reorganized in Kirtland . . . morning came . . . We repaired to the water about a mile distant, and there on the bank of a beautiful stream, we dedicated ourselves to God in the united solemn prayer of faith. I then

led those four men into the water and ministered to them in the name of the Lord Jesus. But as we returned again to our council room, brother David and I turned aside, and called upon the Lord, and received direct instruction how we should further proceed. And we all partook of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. I then confirmed those who were now born into the church of Christ, anew.—And then (as directed) I ordained H. Page to the office of High Priest, in the holy priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God. And we two ordained Jacob Whitmer to the same office. Then we all laid hands on John Whitmer and re-ordained him to the priesthood, and to be counsellor to David in the first presidency of the church. And then with the most solemn feelings which I ever experienced, we stepped forward and all laid hands upon David and re-ordained him to all the gifts and callings to which he had been appointed through Joseph Smith, in the general assembly of the inhabitants of Zion, in July 1834. The above being accomplished, David said to me we will now inquire of God, and finish the revelation to you, commenced on yesterday; and we received the following, viz:

“Now again I the Lord say unto you my servant William, that you must be contented with what you have received concerning Zion. Thou shalt again return to the land of Kirtland, and there thou shalt teach and expound, and write all things concerning my kingdom. For to thee have I given power . . . For I the Lord willeth that my people should know the great preparation that must be brought about in establishing this last kingdom. . . . Now I say unto *you*, my servant William, to thee have I given wisdom and light, therefore teach them in spirit and in truth, and thou shalt be blessed in *thy* calling. And now you know your calling, therefore; Amen.” W. E. McLELLIN, Secretary.

(*The Ensign of Liberty*, August 1849, pages 101-104)

On pages 98-99 of *The Ensign of Liberty*, William McLellin made this comment concerning David Whitmer's revelations:

I, as scribe, have written revelations from the mouth of both the **revelators Joseph Smith and David Whitmer**. . . . therefore I speak as one having experience. . . . I have known both those men mentioned above, to seat themselves, & without premeditation, to thus deliver off in broken sentences, some of the most sublime pieces of composition which I ever perused in any book. But here I might be asked, do you endorse the principles and conduct

of Joseph Smith? And I answer no. His professional career for good wound up with his appointment of David, his successor, in the year 1834. Between this period and the time when the church was first organized in 1830, I believe Joseph endeavored to live a holy life, but after that important event he never even professed to give but a few revelations, and **in then I have no confidence**. In those published in this paper given **through David I have all confidence**. They were dictated, I believe, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As noted earlier, William McLellin had a great deal of influence on most of the Book of Mormon witnesses who were still living in the late 1840's. Of the six living witnesses, five were baptized into McLellin's church. He converted two of the Three Witnesses—David Whitmer and Martin Harris—and all of the Eight Witnesses who were still alive. Nevertheless, McLellin's grip on these witnesses did not last long. While his report concerning the conference which was held in 1847 (actually printed in 1849) seems to present a glowing picture of unity, there seems to be some evidence that as early as 1848 William McLellin and David Whitmer had a difference of opinion. The following appeared in the Strangite publication, *Gospel Herald* under the date of May 11, 1848, page 32:

The following is a postscript to a letter just received from Kirtland . . .

Since writing the foregoing McLellin's church have received a letter from David Whitmer, the contents of which, though it is as far as possible kept from the public, yet enough has been learned to enable us to say unequivocally that **Mc**. [William McLellin] and **David are at logger heads**, and that Wm. has either apostatized from David or David has from Wm. It is on the existence of the office of high priests in the church. David (it appears) denies any powers of priesthood in Joseph save the power of translating the Book of Mormon, consequently his own ordination as the successor of the prophet Joseph. . . . all the members of McLellin's church of Christ, must give up David . . . Mc will not again write that David is the Lord's Seer, since he does not see with the doctor. AUSTIN COWLES.

From this it would appear that David Whitmer was moving away from McLellin and from the teachings of Joseph Smith. Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, wrote a letter on June 24, 1849, in which he stated that McLellin's movement was "not in accordance with the order of the Gospel Church." He, in fact, admitted that they—the Book of Mormon witnesses—had made a mistake when

they followed McLellin. He claimed that the offices of "Seer" and "High Priest" which Joseph Smith had established were not supposed to be in the church. He also talked of the "abominations practiced by the Mormons":

To all the saints . . . who are built up and stand upon the true order of the church of Christ. . . . In 1847 brother William (McLellin) commenced vindicating our characters as honest men; in that he done well . . . he made us a visit and professed to have been moved upon . . . to come here and have us organize ourselves in a church capacity . . . But we had not as yet come to an understanding, but **consented to the organization** after three days successive entreaties. Now **we acknowledge that the organization was not in accordance with the order of the Gospel Church**. . . . The understanding which we have received is as follows:

1. That **the office of High Priest does not belong to the church of Christ** under the gospel dispensation . . .

2. The office of a Seer is not, nor never has been the means by which the Lord intended his church should be governed, after he had ministered to them in the flesh . . .

3. That the gathering dispensation has not come . . .

4. That the manner of the teaching to the world should be to teach the plain, simple doctrine of the gospel of salvation . . .

5. That a reorganization of the church of Christ in this generation, contrary to that of April 6, 1830, is inconsistent . . . When a man receives authority of God by ordination, his authority remains with him until death . . . unless he denies the faith or defiles the priesthood.

6. That any Elder of the church who has not lost his authority upon the principles of injustice . . . has a perfect right to organize and build up according to . . . the order of the church as established on the 6th of April, 1830, and he can ordain others . . .

Any High Priest who has been legally ordained an Elder by legal authority, and has not denied the faith or defiled the holy priesthood, can act in his office as an Elder after confessing before the Lord **the abominations of the church**.

In consequence of **the abominations practiced by the Mormons** . . . it is evident that the way is not opened for us to organize as we would; but when the way is opened, we shall organize according to the Apostolic order. . . .

P. S. The above is in answer to a letter directed to David Whitmer, by the above named gentlemen [Alfred Bonny, Isaac N. Aldrich and M. C. Ishem], of Kirtland, Ohio! (*The Olive Branch*, Springfield, Ill., August 1849, pages 27-29)

Later in his life, David Whitmer was reluctant to talk about his association with William McLellin:

To show you that Brother Joseph [Smith] and myself still loved each other as brethren after this [i. e., after a disagreement about publishing the revelations], I will tell you that he had so much confidence in me that in July, 1834, he ordained me his successor as “Prophet[,] Seer and Revelator” to the Church. He did this of his own free will and not at any solicitation whatever on my part. I did not know what he was going to do until he laid his hands upon me and ordained me.

Now, bear in mind, brethren, that I am not claiming this office; as I have told you, I do not believe in any such an office in the church. I was then in error in believing that there was such an office in the Church of Christ. I suppose this is news to many of you . . . but it is in your records . . .

This is why many of the brethren came to me after Brother Joseph was killed, and importuned me to come out and lead the church. **I refused to do so.** Christ is the only leader and head of the church. (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 55)

It would appear that in this statement David Whitmer completely skirted the issue of his involvement with McLellin and the false revelations he received at that time.

As we indicated earlier, Oliver Cowdery, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, gave some support to William McLellin. Nevertheless, Cowdery was not baptized into McLellin’s church. In a small pamphlet David Whitmer wrote (not to be confused with his larger booklet with a similar title), he revealed that after Cowdery was rebaptized into the Mormon Church in 1848, he rejected Joseph Smith’s revelations published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and, like Whitmer, died believing that Smith was a fallen prophet:

I did not say that Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer had not endorsed the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1836. They did endorse it in 1836; I stated that they “**came out of their errors (discarded the Doctrine and Covenants), repented of them, and died believing as I do to-day,**” and **I have the proof to verify my statement.** If any one chooses to doubt my word, let them come to my home in Richmond and be satisfied. In the winter of 1848, after Oliver Cowdery had been baptized at Council Bluffs, he came back to Richmond to live, and lived here until his death, March 3, 1850. . . . Now, in 1849 the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John Whitmer,

Oliver Cowdery and myself nearly all the remaining **errors in doctrine** into which we had been led by the heads of the old church. We were shown that the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* contained **many doctrines of error**, and that **it must be laid aside** . . . They were led out of their errors, and are upon record to this effect, **rejecting the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.** (*An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon*, 1887, page 2)

Although William McLellin and David Whitmer had differences of opinion about how the church should be reorganized in the late 1840’s, in the years that followed they both grew more dissatisfied with the work Joseph Smith had done after he translated the Book of Mormon. Toward the end of their lives they both strongly argued against Joseph Smith’s revelations published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the priesthood which Smith believed to be essential to the restoration. David Whitmer’s arguments are clearly laid out in his booklet, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, and McLellin’s views are found in his letters and other documents. We have previously reported that the *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, published in 1938, contains some of McLellin’s doubts. A contemporary account appeared in the church publication *Millennial Star*. In the issue for December 9, 1878, page 770, we find this frank statement:

At Independence we met with Wm. E. McLellin, one of the first Council of the Twelve. . . . **he denounced, in toto, all the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and the idea of the restoration of the priesthood of Melchisedek or of Aaron to man**, but believes in the Apostleship, which he thinks comprises everything, although he had no faith in the ordination of the first Twelve.

Although William McLellin and David Whitmer were unable to continue working together, toward the end of their lives their views regarding Mormonism were strikingly similar.

McLellin suffered a number of disappointments after he left the Mormon Church. In April 1847, he related how he had been misled by Sidney Rigdon, who had previously been Joseph Smith’s first counselor in the First Presidency, and also told how James Strang had tried to deceive him:

At the death of Joseph Smith, I looked around and reflected, and I finally hoped that S. Rigdon had reformed, as he said, and that he would assist in carrying out the original design of God in raising up his church; and **I united with him**, and remained

about six months. But I found in him (after a little trial) hypocrisy, dishonesty and fanaticism. . . . I quit him, and last spring we settled in Shalersville . . . While there busily engaged in the practice of medicine, I was visited by James J. Strang of Voree, Wisconsin. He laid siege to me in order to have me unite with him in his organization. **I gave him some encouragement**, and took the matter under advisement, but the more I prayed and reflected, the more I have doubted his claims. (*The Ensign of Liberty*, page 17)

We have already noted that as early as 1838 Joseph Smith wrote that “William E. McLellin . . . has no other dumb ass to ride but David Whitmer . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 228). McLellin really believed that Whitmer should be the prophet for the church. In McLellin’s publication, *The Ensign of Liberty*, page 19, the following appeal was made to David Whitmer:

Brother David, inasmuch as you were ordained by Joseph, and that was sanctioned in Heaven, then no man can lead this church out of her present distress, and then onward to triumph, but yourself, unless you refuse and fall, through unbelief and hardness of heart. There is, therefore, even now, a great responsibility resting upon you. The church now calls upon you to come and take your place, and make the seat of the First Leaders in the church here in Kirtland. . . . We have the promise that in this place, we shall have an endowment from on high. . . . You know that you have been ordained, and now I would say to you, as Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man.” You must lead the church of Christ to triumph—to glory. . . .

Will you, my dear brother, inquire of God, and come up and take your place among the people of the Lord here, or will you let another take your crown? I would urge you by all that you consider sacred to you in life, and in eternity, to let your trump lie still no longer . . . Arise, shake yourself, and magnify your calling, and then your crown will be sure—will be great.

As we have shown, David Whitmer did come to Kirtland, Ohio, and was ordained prophet of the McLellin group. Unfortunately for McLellin, however, Whitmer did not wish to remain in Kirtland. He gave a revelation which directed McLellin to stay there, but he (Whitmer) was commanded to return to “the land of Zion,” which was in Missouri. McLellin seems to have been shocked by this revelation:

But then I saw what a great responsibility would rest upon me, especially when I should return to Kirtland. I then saw and in some measure realized, that we should see each other but seldom. **Near a**

thousand miles would separate us and our fields of labor . . . I expressed my anxiety to my brethren present. (*The Ensign of Liberty*, page 103)

The fact that so many miles separated McLellin from the Whitmers and other believers in Missouri undoubtedly contributed to the break up of McLellin’s church. Eventually, McLellin did move to Missouri, but it was apparently too late to patch up the differences.

When Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt visited William McLellin in 1878, they learned of another disagreement between David Whitmer and McLellin:

After dinner Dr. McLellin called at the hotel and we accompanied him to his house. He related a visit to David Whitmer, and said that David had started out in a new organization, his grandson, George Schweich, is a “seer,” possessing a “peepstone,” and is to be the “coming man” to bring forth the hidden plates and translate them. David has ordained this grandson an elder and authorized him to perfect his great and wonderful mission. Dr. McLellin believes this is **a species of spiritualism and denounces it as from the devil. On this point he and David Whitmer split.**

This young man, through his peepstone, sees caves in which are vast stores of records; cave in succession to cave, all filled with treasures of golden plates and sacred records. He sees in the north pole a gigantic race of people; in the south a liliputian race; all the good are white, all the bad are spotted and unclean and among these is Dr. William E. McLellin. (*Life of Joseph F. Smith*, page 239)

The evidence that is available indicates that a number of the Book of Mormon witnesses were rather gullible. All of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, David Whitmer, Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery, were easily deceived. Joseph Smith himself wrote the following in his *History* regarding how some of the witnesses were fooled by a “peepstone” in 1830:

To our great grief, however, we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive, and seeking whom he might devour. Brother Hiram Page [one of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon] had in his possession **a certain stone**, by which he had obtained certain “revelations” concerning the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the Church, etc., all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God’s house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations. . . . many, especially **the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone**, we thought best to inquire of the Lord concerning so important matter . . . (*History of the Church*, vol. 1, pages 109-110)

David Whitmer sometimes related a story concerning an encounter Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and himself had with one of the ancient Nephites. Although the Book of Mormon states that the Nephites were destroyed about four centuries after the coming of Jesus Christ, it declares that three of the Nephites were to remain upon the earth until Christ returns. In addition, Joseph Smith also claimed that the angel who revealed the gold plates to him was actually an ancient Nephite. In Joseph Smith's *History*, as it was originally published by the Mormon prophet himself, Smith stated that the angel's name was Nephi: "He called me by name and said . . . that his name was **Nephi**" (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, page 753). In modern printings of the *History of the Church*, however, Mormon officials have changed this to read Moroni: "He called me by name, and said . . . that his name was **Moroni** . . ." (vol. 1, page 11). Nephi, who was born about 600 B. C., was the first Nephite king. Moroni, on the other hand, lived about A. D. 400, and saw the destruction of his people.

In any case, David Whitmer told a very strange story concerning how the Nephite angel who had charge of the gold plates suddenly appeared as he was riding in a wagon with Smith and Cowdery. Richard L. Anderson, of the church's Brigham Young University, printed part of this story in a faith-promoting book he wrote concerning the Book of Mormon witnesses:

The earliest journal account relates David's story as follows: "And an aged man about 5 feet 10, heavy set and on his back an old-fashioned army knapsack strapped over his shoulders and something square in it, and he walked alongside of the wagon and wiped the sweat off his face, smiling very pleasant. David asked him to ride and he replied, 'I am going across to the Hill Cumorah' [this was the Nephite name for the hill where Joseph Smith discovered the gold plates]. Soon after they passed, they felt strangely and stopped but could see nothing of him—all around was clear. And they asked the Lord about it. He said that the Prophet looked as white as a sheet and said that it was one of the Nephites, and that he had the plates." (*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 1981, page 30)

Professor Anderson gives the source as "Edward Stevenson, Journal, December 23, 1877." Anderson, however, does not include a part of the story which we feel is rather important. It relates to the Nephite hiding "under the bed." Fortunately, Lyndon W. Cook has published the rest of the story. We will begin with the last sentence Richard Anderson quoted (the reader

will note that Cook has not corrected the spelling found in the original journal):

. . . he Said that the Prophet Looked as White as a Sheet & Said that it was one of the Nephites & that he had the Plates. on arriveing at home they were impressed that the Same Person **was under the bed & again they were informed that it was So.** they Saw whare he had been & the next Morning Davids Mother Saw the Person at the Shed and he took the Plates from A Box & Showed them to her She Said that they Were fastened with rings . . . he turned the leaves over this was a Satisfaction to her. She Died in the room ware Wee visited Sitting up in her chair without a Struggle. (*David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, by Lyndon W. Cook, 1991, page 13)

While William McLellin recruited David Whitmer to be the prophet with the hope that the teachings of the Book of Mormon would be spread throughout the world through his group, the appointment of Whitmer actually dealt a blow to the book. What it tended to demonstrate was that David Whitmer gave false revelations in the name of the Lord. Since Whitmer set forth revelations stating that God was re-establishing his church on the earth through the McLellin group and since that group completely disintegrated, it is obvious that the revelations did not come from God. The reader will remember that David Whitmer not only dictated false revelations, but according to McLellin, he also claimed to see a "bright light" and in that light "he saw a small chest or box of very curious and fine workmanship, which seemed to be locked."

This, of course, raises an interesting question with regard to David Whitmer's testimony to the Book of Mormon. In "The Testimony of Three Witnesses," at the beginning of the book, Whitmer joined Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris in asserting that they saw a vision in which "an angel of God" appeared with the gold plates upon which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been written.

Now, the problem seems obvious: if Whitmer could have false revelations when he was associated with McLellin and even see a vision of a "chest or box of very curious and fine workmanship," how can we trust his testimony with regard to the Book of Mormon? A person does not have to rely upon McLellin's statements concerning David Whitmer's tendency to have revelations to fit the different situations he found himself in. As we have shown earlier, Whitmer himself published this statement in his own booklet, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, page 27:

If you believe my testimony to the Book of Mormon; if you believe that God spake to us three witnesses by his own voice, then I tell you that in June, 1838, **God spake to me again by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to “separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints . . .”**

It is clear, then, that when Whitmer wished to support Joseph Smith’s claim concerning the Book of Mormon, he was able to see an angel with the gold plates, but when he became alienated from Joseph Smith and the Mormons who continued to support him, he was able to hear the voice of God telling him to leave the church. Furthermore, almost a decade later he received a revelation from “the Lord, even Jesus, your Redeemer” which stated that the Mormons “**have polluted my name, and have done continually wickedness in my sight . . .**”

Mormons, of course, have a very difficult time explaining the revelations given by their own witness, David Whitmer, that contradict the claim that the Mormon Church is the true church of Christ. His visionary experiences and statements are a source of embarrassment to faithful members of the church. It should also be remembered that Whitmer was not the only Book of Mormon witness who questioned Mormonism. Four other witnesses—Martin Harris, John Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer and Hiram Page—supported Whitmer and McLellin in their attack on the authenticity of the Utah Mormon Church. In addition, Oliver Cowdery left Joseph Smith’s organization and became a Methodist. As we have shown, David Whitmer maintained Cowdery died believing Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet. For additional information concerning the Book of Mormon witnesses see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 50-63.

Two decades after David Whitmer withdrew from his role as prophet of William McLellin’s movement, McLellin still spoke highly of him and was apparently willing to have him act as prophet. In a letter written to “My dear Friends” in 1870, McLellin commented:

Your last came in several days ago, and I will answer. Last Tuesday I went to visit David Whitmer again in Richmond. I found them as well as usual for them. David has got to be an old man with all the infirmities of age. He is quite feeble—still smart for an old man. He is one year older than I. I found him just as strong in the faith as he ever was. But he says the Lord tells him, “when I want you I will call you.” “Be still therefore and know that I am God.” He says he’s not able to get beyond that. I dont think there would be much object of his acting much without

he can obtain the *Interpreters*. Altho he and I do not differ in sentiment except about the time to set up the Church, and establish it permanently. I staid in Richmond two days and nights. . . . I had hours and hours of conversation with David. I tell you he is posted in doctrine and principle, and says he is ready whenever the Lord says go—said he, I will go, and gladly go too. I am now looking for some man to rise with the Interpreters or Directors—those ancient eyes by which hidden treasures can and will come to light. (Joseph in his history and all L. D. Sism call those interpreters the Urim & Thummim), but I prefer calling it by its proper name—it never was Urim nor Thummim but LDSism nicknamed almost every holy thing which it touched I have less and less pati[e]nce with its unholy doings, the more I see of it. David promised to come and see us just as soon as the weather got warm so he could venture out. . . . (Letter by William McLellin, dated February 1870, RLDS Library-Archives, as cited in *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness*, pages 233-234)

William McLellin did not live to see his dreams concerning the “church of Christ” fulfilled. He passed away on April 24, 1883, at Independence, Missouri. David Whitmer died five years later—January 25, 1888. Although a number of Mormon splinter groups have arisen since that time, they have not achieved the success which McLellin and Whitmer seem to have expected.

Although William McLellin was probably very discouraged that he was not able to sufficiently rally believers in the Book of Mormon to form a strong church, his persistence in defending his views has certainly helped many people to have a greater understanding of Mormonism. Even though he was never able to publish the book he envisioned, the letters and documents he left behind have been very helpful to historians.

McLellin was hated by Joseph Smith and other early Mormon leaders, and a century after his death church officials were still so fearful of anything coming from his pen that they tried to suppress what turned out to be an imaginary collection attributed to him. Under the title “History Repeats,” Lynn Packer pointed out some strange coincidences in the story regarding the McLellin collection:

Twice Mormon officials arbitrated receiving the McLellin papers, first in 1908 and again in 1985. Twice the church attempted to get the collection ahead of supposed church enemies—the ostensible reason for the bank loan and Pinnock’s offer of an armored

car or a prop jet, as noted in Steve Christensen's diary. Twice a mission president would become involved in the deal. And twice fear of public censure and secrecy played a role in the outcome of the McLellin deals. Had the church, at any time between 1908 and 1985, made the McLellin collection available to even its own historians, Hofmann's McLellin fraud would have ended before it began. (*Utah Holiday*, November 1992, page 37)

While Mormon leaders have tried very hard to erase all memory of William McLellin from the minds of their followers, all their efforts have been in vain. The story of McLellin's life and the important questions he raised have come back to haunt the church. It seems that the harder the church fights to suppress McLellin's views, the more information concerning him comes to light.

APPENDIX

MARK HOFMANN'S OWN CONFESSION REGARDING THE McLELLIN COLLECTION

A photographic printing of pages 519-537 of *Hofmann's Confession*. This part of Mark Hofmann's confession was made at the Utah State Prison on May 15, 1987, in the presence of prosecutors from the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office. We have underlined some portions of the transcript to point out interesting items.

1 directly to.

2 MR. STOTT: Let's go on the McClennin
3 Collection because some of that goes back pretty far, we'll
4 talk a little bit about that, okay?

5 A Okay.

6 Q I would like to do that just part of it, not up
7 to the murders but early on when did you developed an idea
8 concerning the McClellin Collection.

9 A When did I develop it?

10 Q Yes, the idea.

11 A Probably around 1982 or '83-type of thing, I
12 would guess.

13 Q What was it that came in to your mind which
14 triggered it and what was your idea?

15 A Don Schmidt at one time in, well actually even
16 before then, I had seen a statement or read a statement
17 concerning a number of diaries, papers or whatnot, that
18 McClellin claimed to have had. I believe this was in a
19 letter which he addressed to Saints Herald which was an RLDS
20 publication in the late 19th Century. I knew those
21 documents had not in been purchased by the LDS Church, BYU,
22 the Reorganized Church or Yale University, Huntington or
23 other large collections, large collectors of LDS Church
24 documents and were, therefore, still missing or unknown as
25 far as where their present location was. Which was the

1 basic source of the rumor that I had located that location.

2 I had spoken to Don Schmidt, I would guess in
3 '83, somewhere around there, and told him that I knew where
4 the material was and he also interestingly told me that he
5 had a pretty good idea where it was too. He had a name and
6 address, which I, let's see, from a location in Texas.

7 Q Did he give you that name and address?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Did you follow it up?

10 A No.

11 Q What was your purpose for-- Was it in '83 that
12 you began to tell them that you had access to it?

13 A Or that I knew where it was.

14 Q Yes.

15 A Somewhere around there.

16 Q Why were you doing this? What was in the back
17 of your mind? Was some scheme starting to form?

18 A Not at that time. It was just like all the
19 other stories I told people just to make them think I was
20 the great document sluth or whatever, that I had located
21 some other important documents. Also, the idea would have
22 been in locating some known, lost documents, it would have
23 given credibility to me as a document finder as far as many
24 of these documents were known to have been missing or lost
25 or whatever. But where other forgeries, without any basis

1 in Church history, as far as any in written basis in Church
2 history, no basis.

3 Q Did you ever attempt to find a so-called
4 McClellin Collection?

5 A No.

6 Q Did you ever go out and do some research or
7 visit anybody?

8 A No/ Dawn Tracy did.

9 Q For example, were you aware and we are talking
10 about before 1985 of the Hugh Nibley Story with the
11 McClellin Collection, for example?

12 A Yes, I heard that. I can't remember exactly
13 when. I heard both that he had discovered its location and
14 there were also rumors to the effect that the second
15 facsimile to the Book of Abraham was in those documents.

16 Q Now were you aware during this time or
17 subsequent time that the RLDS archives actually had some
18 correspondence concerning McClellin or somebody who was
19 familiar with him that mentioned some of these items that
20 might be in it?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Had you had access to a copy of that?

23 A Yes, I had. That was the document I was
24 referring to. I believe it appeared in the Saints Herald.

25 Q What about it? Were you aware in the New York

1 Library there was some materials relating to what might be
2 in the McClellin Collection? Were you aware of that?

3 A Yes, I believe I was aware of that.

4 Q Did you see that or go to the New York Library
5 or--

6 A From some source I obtained a copy. I didn't
7 acquire it directly from the New York Public Library.

8 Q Did it evolve over a period of time that you
9 began to keep almost an inventory of what might be in the
10 McClelland Collection and start to tell people or is it
11 something that you just sat down and thought up at once?

12 A That's what it was, something I thought of from
13 taking pieces from the different items and adding a few from
14 the different alleged items that were supposed to be
15 contained in the Collection and I made up a few as well.

16 Q When it was all said and done what did you
17 purport the McClellin Collection to contain?

18 A I told different people different things. I
19 told people it contained the second facsimile to the Book of
20 Abraham and also some other information. I told them it
21 contained affidavits from a number of Church leaders and
22 other individuals in the Church such as Emma Smith, Oliver
23 Cowdery, Joseph Smith himself, I believe. I believe I said
24 it contained an affidavit of some sort from his father,
25 Joseph Smith, Sr. I described it as containing a number of

1 diaries or journals,

2 Q When did it start to come to your mind that
3 rather than just telling people that you had access to it
4 you were actually going to use that in a scheme to obtain
5 money?

6 A On some occasion when I needed money or felt a
7 need for money is when I made that that transfer from just a
8 story of something that I knew where it was and could obtain
9 it, to actually actively trying to pursue it and obtain it.

10 Q Was this sometime when you approached Al Rust?

11 A Right, Al Rust was the first one.

12 Q Before you approached Al Rust was the story you
13 were giving out, were you emphasizing the controversial
14 nature of the material or--

15 A Yes, with Al Rust I believe.

16 Q I know you did with Al, but with other people
17 during that time?

18 A Yes. Most historians would feel like any
19 historical Church matter from that early time period would
20 have been controversial in nature. In other words, varied
21 somewhat from the official, or history which has evolved.

22 MR. BIGGS: You said that you put together a
23 kind of recipe what was in the McClellin Collection and
24 would tell people different things?

25 A Right.

1 Q And it changed over from just telling people so
2 to something that you could obtain and would obtain when you
3 needed money?

4 A Right.

5 Q So you went to Al Rust in April of '85 and you
6 get \$150,000. What did you need that much money for in
7 April of 1985?

8 A You tell me from my bank records. Where did
9 the money go?

10 Q The money was given to you in a cashier's check
11 and you and Rust got on a plane and it never went in to
12 your account?

13 A That's right. It went to various sources, do
14 you want me to name the sources where, as I remember?

15 Q Yes if

16 MR. YENGICH: No.

17 A The money went to various sources. That trip
18 we went to a New York book fair. It purchased a number of
19 books. Let's see, that wouldn't have been nearly \$150,000,
20 obviously.

21 Q Those would have been some pretty nice books.

22 A There were some pretty nice books. That was
23 also when I made payment for that last Joseph Smith Letter
24 we were talking about that I had purchased from Rendell/
25 That was some books they had that Schiller and Wapner told

1 me about that I purchased and I'm sure, I presume that
2 Schiller and Wapner received some sort of commission for
3 those or whatever, I don't know exactly how that transaction
4 worked.

5 Q So you bought books at a book fair?

6 A I remember I owed Lynn Jacobs some money and I
7 remember purchasing some books for him at the fair also.

8 MR. BIGGS: Did you come home with any money?

9 A Yes, I'm sure I did. Was there something in my
10 account at a later time, a week or so later?

11 Q (Indicating in the negative)

12 A I lived it up in New York didn't I. Let me
13 think about that, because I know I can think of other places
14 where it went.

15 Q And when you got home, Mr. Rust was, after a
16 period of time somewhat concerned about his purchase?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And you showed him three receipts?

19 A Yes.

20 Q That you had mailed something from New York?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Did you actually mail something from New York?

23 A Yes, I did.

24 Q What was that?

25 A They would have been the books I purchased in

1 New York.

2 Q What did you tell Mr. Rust that you mailed from
3 New York?

4 A In fact, I still have those receipts
5 incidentally. I told him it was the McClellin Collection/

6 MR. STOTT: When you approached Al Rust, what
7 was your intention as far as getting the money back to him?
8 I mean, you must have had a plan. I mean, getting \$150,000
9 from him and there's no such thing as the McClellin
10 Collection. Somehow were you going to get the money back to
11 him or were you just going to take it, period?

12 A No, it would have gone back to him.

13 Q Did you have an idea at that time?

14 A Yes, I'm sure I did. The question is if I can
15 think of it.

16 MR. BIGGS: Wasn't that just about two weeks
17 after you had given the Oath of a Freeman to Schiller and
18 Wapner?

19 A Yes. That's probably what I had in mind was
20 the money would be not too long coming back from that.
21 Let's see, actually he was paid, although we conflict in
22 what money was paid back when I got that money from First
23 Interstate Bank as far as it went to a list of items of
24 money that I owed him. And on that list was the money for
25 the McClellin Collection but he, I think in preliminary

1 hearing, said that was an independent transaction from what
2 the repayment money was for, or whatever.

3 MR. STOTT: According to him there was a big
4 amount of money you owed him prior to that.

5 A That's right. That would have been false
6 profits or alleged profits on other transactions.

7 Q There came a time, and we are talking March of
8 '85, and your deal was to bring it back and sell it from his
9 office and yet this went on until October. Why was it you
10 were able to put him off? Was this frustrating to you? Was
11 it your plan to put him off that long or what was going on?

12 A No, my plan wasn't to put him off that long but
13 it just worked that way, just kept on going. That is, I
14 believe that initially was the idea that the Oath of a
15 Freeman would provide the funds but then when that didn't
16 happen, I approached the Church, with President Hinkley
17 specifically, with the fact that the McLellin Collection, I
18 wanted the Church to obtain it or at least to prevent some
19 people from obtaining it who might use it in a negative sort
20 of fashion against the Church.

21 Let me ask you this: You say you approached
22 President Hinkley directly. Is this before you were
23 introduced to Pinock by Christensen?

24 A Yes.

25 Q When would this have--

1 MR. BIGGS: Let's give you some surroundings.
2 You got the money from First Interstate the last week of
3 June of '85 and that was the time President Hinkley was in
4 East Germany.

5 A I remember. My intention was, I tried to get
6 Carden to put up the funds for the McClellin Collection but
7 before talking to him I had talked to President Hinkley and
8 gotten his support as far as we need to make the purchase.

9 MR. STOTT: Do you remember when you first
10 talked to President Hinkley about this?

11 A President Hinkley, I told him that-a person in
12 Salt Lake had gone in with me on it, had put up the money
13 for it. That I was anticipating being able to come up with
14 the money from another source, which didn't happen. That
15 this other person was getting anxious to get his money out
16 of it and that I might, and I was feeling him out as far as
17 the possibility of getting money from the Church to make the
18 purchase. We left it, after the meeting, we just left it at
19 the point that if things got real desperate or if I needed
20 to get some money to let him know.

21 Q Was there an idea here conveyed here that the
22 collection would then be sold to the Church or donated to
23 the Church?

24 A The idea was to prevent it from falling in to
25 the enemy's hands.

1 Q What did you tell him about what it contained
2 and what the enemy was doing?

3 A Not too much. How can I put this?

4 MR. YENGICH: Put it honestly.

5 A Well, of course, I basically told him that I
6 could tell him what my fears were concerning its getting in
7 to the enemy's hands, or whatever. And that I would, if he
8 wanted to know, if he asked the questions or whatever, this
9 was a previous technique or thing that we had done. I guess
10 its almost a way of protecting him from knowing something he
11 doesn't want to know. And his interest wasn't so much in
12 having the Church obtain it as having it going someplace
13 where-- In fact, I would almost say he almost didn't want
14 the Church to obtain it, he just wanted to make sure it did
15 not fall in to the enemy's, hands which was good since I
16 knew I didn't have it, I knew the Church couldn't obtain it.

17 Q Did you tell him what was contained in the
18 letters?

19 A I don't believe I gave him any details.

20 Q Did you tell him there was controversial items?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Now, can you put a time or date on this?

23 A It would have about before I met with Carden.

24 MR. YENGICH: How much before you met with
25 Pinock?

1 A Let's see, it was also, this was, I believe
2 the reason why. See, sometime after this transaction with
3 Rust we were talking about, he, Rust wrote a letter to the
4 Church or to President Hinkley and made some comment about
5 that he wanted to get his money for the McClellin
6 Collection which he understood the Church was acquiring or
7 whatever, and this whole conversation which took place
8 beforehand with Hinkley pretty much prepared him or set him
9 him up for that. Therefore, I don't think it really raised
10 any question in Hinkley's mind or whatever.

11 Q So Hinkley had already been told by you there
12 was a Salt Lake investor?

13 A Right, and he was anxious to get his money.

14 Q That was Rust?

15 A Right.

16 Q Did you subsequently talk with President
17 Hinkley about the letter with Al Rust?

18 A Did I talk to him about the letter? I remember
19 doing that at a later time, after he got back from East
20 Germany or wherever he was.

21 Q Did he ask you why in the world does Al Rust
22 say we've got the collection?

23 A No, he didn't say anything about that.

24 Q Did you try to explain that?

25 A No. I actually had not seen the letter. I

1 just knew something, Al Rust told me about its contents.

2 Q Wasn't that a problem that Al Rust was saying
3 that, you know, I understand the Church has it and, of
4 course, the Church knew they didn't have it?

5 A Yes, no, that didn't raise a problem in my mind
6 because I knew that Hinkley knew that I was protecting the
7 collection from Rust and anyone else as far as where it
8 was. He knew I had previously told him that I had the
9 material in a safe deposit box in Salt Lake City and that.

10 See, Hinkley, his concern was that if this
11 disgruntled investor, he wanted to make sure he didn't reach
12 the point where he would make public or try to obtain the
13 collection. The actual meeting that I had with him was more
14 to-- The idea I had when I went to Arizona to talk to
15 Carden was that he would obtain phone confirmation,
16 telephone confirmation from President Hinkley that it would
17 be nice of him to buy out this other investor named Al Rust
18 or whatever. Although I didn't realize that he wouldn't be
19 available, that he would be, that he was out of the country.
20 I've communicated with President Hinkley when he's been out
21 of the state before but hadn't, and found that it was
22 difficult to get any sort of confirmation or communication
23 with him when he was in East Germany.

24 Q So your idea was to go to Carden?

25 A And explain the situation to him and have

1 Carden receive confirmation from Hinkley that Hinkley was
2 aware of the transaction and that it would be, that he would
3 confirm the transaction, that Hinkley would.

4 Q What was the transaction to be?

5 A That Carden would, first of all Carden wanted--
6 What he wanted to do, if he obtained permission or approval
7 from Hinkley he would just donate the money. I told him all
8 I wanted was a loan and I would pay him off. I was still
9 confident at some time the Oath of a Freeman would come by
10 so I represented it as a loan.

11 Q So you represented to him that you had the
12 collection and wanted to get your money back?

13 A Yes, I believe.

14 MR. BIGGS: Was it the understanding that Mr.
15 Carden was going to pay off Rust's interest in the
16 collection?

17 A That was the understanding which I left Hinkley
18 with.

19 Q Was that what you would have done with the
20 money if Carden gave it to you?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Where was the collection to go as far as Carden
23 and Hinkley understood?

24 A That was, I believe, left pretty much up in the
25 air with Carden as far as how the Church would obtain it or

1 what would happen to it.

2 Q What was in your mind. Because you didn't have
3 a collection?

4 A What was in my mind is President Hinkley would
5 be happy if eventually I could tell him that I had seen to
6 it that the document would not fall in to the wrong hands.
7 My speaking with Hinkley, like I said wasn't so much-- See
8 you have to remember that this was after the time of the
9 Salamander Letter and the Church was a little bit concerned
10 as far as its public relations in what they were obtaining,
11 if they were trying to buy up embarrassing documents or
12 whatever. He wasn't so concerned, especially when he found
13 out other people knew about this material, to actually
14 obtain it, as to just see that the right people got it.

15 In other words, it wasn't until Pinock entered
16 the picture and I needed to add, I didn't go into-- With
17 Pinock I needed to sound more straight as far as the Church
18 would actually end up with it. That's what was that whole
19 idea as far as the Church actually taking possession of it.
20 We didn't discuss the Church would take possession of it
21 when I spoke with President Hinkley.

22 Q The last day or so in June, how many times did
23 you meet with President Hinkley about the McClellin
24 Collection?

25 A Altogether?

1 Q Prior to meeting with Pinock?

2 A Prior to meeting with Pinock?

3 Q Yes in the last week of June?

4 A I would guess three times.

5 Q After meeting with Pinock and up to the
6 bombings, how many times did you meet with President
7 Hinkley about the McClellin Collection?

8 A I believe once or twice/

9 Q I want to talk to you about Dawn Tracy. There
10 came a point where rather than just telling some of your
11 associates about the McClellin Collection, you started to
12 tell the news media?

13 A Yes, that was basically at the insistence of
14 Lynn Jacobs. In fact, she called--

15 Q When you say she, who is that?

16 A Dawn Tracy called oh, I guess a number of
17 occasions.

18 Q Do you know how she learned about it? Was it
19 through Lynn?

20 A Oh, there were pretty general rumors flying
21 around. I don't know exactly how she found out about it but
22 she must have known Lynn was involved or knew something
23 about it. Finally Lynn promised her that or told her that
24 he would see to it that I called her and, which I did
25 against my will, basically. I didn't really want to get

1 into it all. But there was one time when I did talk to her.
2 We were on my car phone. Lynn Jacobs was in the car
3 although he kept his mouth shut so she wouldn't know that he
4 was there. I had a little microphone on the ceiling.

5 MR. STOTT: That's pretty hard for him.

6 MR. YENGICH: Leave that on.

7 A And basically didn't tell her much except I
8 told her I had obtained it or whatever and it was going, I
9 remember saying something to the effect that it was going to
10 some source who wanted to remain anonymous. It was not
11 going to the Church. I can't remember when this
12 conversation took place.

13 MR. STOTT: In July. So you say your
14 conversation was over the phone or didn't you have a face to
15 face meeting with her?

16 A I don't believe I've ever met her face to face.

17 Q And did you give her any more information than
18 you had been giving out to your friends? Were you building
19 the story or was it pretty much the same?

20 A I might have said-- I can't remember.

21 Q Was it your intention to indicate to her that
22 you had the collection or that it was at the Church or that
23 it was at with a third party?

24 A That it was with a third party, I believe at
25 this time is what I was talking about. I can't remember. I

1 know I wouldn't have told her the Church had it. I may have
2 either told her I was in the process of obtaining it or it
3 was in the hands of an anonymous third party.

4 Q Were there any others you spoke with about the
5 McClellin Collection that you remember?

6 A Not that I remember. Were there? I can't
7 remember any.

8 Q Was it this time when we are talking, we are
9 talking July or so of '85, that you started to be concerned
10 or think about Papyrus?

11 A Might have been. Might have about around the
12 time that I called Rendell.

13 MR. BIGGS: First part of September?

14 MR. STOTT: Why did you include the Papyrus as
15 part of the McClellin Collection? Did you have information
16 from some sources that he might have it?

17 A Just from the rumors that originated with Hugh
18 Nibley, as far as the Papyrus.

19 Q Didn't you also add the so-called Canadian
20 Revelation?

21 A Yes, that was also supposed to be contained.
22 In fact, I remember specifically when I included that in the
23 list of the material that was in the McClellin Collection
24 was when I was eating lunch one time with Brent Metcalf. I
25 think I mentioned it a couple times before.

1 Q Was that at Wendy's again?

2 A No, this was at the Hires restaurant on 4th
3 South.

4 MR. BIGGS: I have one question, and I have to
5 ask it because I may be hit by a bus tomorrow. One of the
6 pieces of the Papyrus you cut up and we have one little
7 piece of it.

8 A Right.

9 Q Where are the other pieces?

10 A Mostly destroyed.

11 WHEREUPON, the proceedings were concluded at the hour
12 of 10:30 a.m.

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Sandra and Jerald Tanner

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