

Treasures, Witches, and Ancient Inhabitants (D&C 111)

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After more than 175 years, a certain mystique continues to surround the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants section 111.¹ This is partly due to evidence that the Prophet Joseph Smith and his companions Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith traveled in the summer of 1836 to Salem, Massachusetts, where the revelation was received, seeking to find hidden treasure. Both the reminiscence of a disaffected former member of the Church, Ebenezer Robinson, and collaboration in a letter written by Joseph to his wife Emma² indicate that a man named Burgess informed the Prophet that he knew of money available in Salem, Massachusetts. According to Robinson, Burgess “stated that a large amount of money had been secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts, which had belonged to a widow, and he thought he was the only person now living, who had knowledge of it, or to the location of the house.”³ Sadly, misusing the events surrounding the revelation received in Salem and misconstruing the results of the journey, enemies of the Prophet have helped fulfill Moroni’s warning that Joseph’s “name should be had for good and evil among all nations . . . or that

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it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). In the “notes” section of *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, B. H. Roberts referred to the Salem trip. “Another circumstance connected with this Kirtland period,” Elder Roberts explained, “and in a way related to the financial difficulties of the times, is dwelt upon by anti-‘Mormon’ writers to the disadvantage of the Prophet and of the church.”⁴ Since the time of B. H. Roberts’s *Comprehensive History*, misunderstandings of the Salem trip and its subsequent revelation have continued to be cited in discrediting the Prophet.⁵

A day or two after arriving in Salem, Massachusetts, Sunday, August 6, 1836, Joseph received the revelation recorded as section III in our current Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord assured those who had traveled to Salem, “I have much treasure in the city for you, for the benefit of Zion” (D&C III:2). In addition, he promised that “its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours” (D&C III:4). References in the revelation to treasure have only served to place greater emphasis on treasure seeking. For example, several articles and commentaries examining section III have addressed the Prophet’s debts and involvement in looking for buried treasure, focusing on the Lord’s seeming play on words as he referred to “treasure,” “gold and silver,” and “debts” (D&C III:2, 4–5, 10). Dr. Donald Q. Cannon summarized the expedition’s experience: “Apparently they divided their time between preaching, sightseeing, and looking for the treasure.”⁶

Those that traveled to Salem were desperate to pay their debts and made the journey to this eastern seaboard city to find treasure. Nevertheless, the Prophet and his companions spent precious little time during the month they lodged in Salem looking for buried treasure, and preaching was not the focus of their journey either. Further, a closer examination of the revelation suggests that subsequent visits to museums, libraries, and historical sites in Salem and the surrounding areas had greater import than sightseeing. Indeed, much might be gained from focusing on the Lord’s statement that “there are more treasures than one for you in this city” (D&C III:10). For example, there are significant questions to be answered regarding the time that the Prophet and his companions spent in Salem fulfilling the Lord’s commands to “inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city” (D&C III:9). The Lord specifically commanded these brethren to “tarry in this place, and in the regions round about” (D&C III:7), apparently, to fulfill

this command. This article will seek to answer questions concerning (1) the context of the journey to Salem, (2) what the Lord commanded Joseph and his companions to do, (3) what they accomplished, and (4) the lessons they learned from their time in Salem and the surrounding country.

Context of the Revelation: Concerns for Debt

Joseph Smith traveled to Salem, Massachusetts, in July through the first week of August 1836, while on a journey from Kirtland, Ohio, to the eastern seaboard.⁷ At that time, heavy debt weighed upon the leaders of the Church due to loans secured to purchase land, to acquire goods for the mercantile establishments of the Church, and to build the Kirtland Temple. In addition, in 1833, when mobs expelled the Saints from Jackson County, Missouri, they also took control of the Church-owned printing press and goods from the Church-owned store. Earlier, leaders in Ohio and in Missouri formed a joint business to manage the Church's assets. This joint business was given the name of the United Firm.⁸ Joseph counted on both of the Missouri enterprises—the printing press and the store—to raise funds to help repay creditors in New York City. With the loss of the income-producing printing press and store commodities, the Church was unable to pay for the goods that members of the United Firm had purchased on credit. In 1834 the Lord temporarily relieved the Church leaders in Kirtland of responsibility to pay the Missouri debt by dissolving the United Firm and commanding them to organize into two separate orders “called the United Order of the Stake of Zion, the city of Kirtland,” and “the United Order of the City of Zion” (D&C 104:48). Furthermore, the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to “write speedily to New York and write according to that which shall be dictated by my Spirit; and I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, that it shall be taken away out of their minds to bring affliction upon you” (D&C 104:81). Notwithstanding his promise to soften the hearts of the United Firm's creditors, the Lord also made it very clear that “it is my will that you shall pay all your debts” (D&C 104:78). Thus, members of the United Firm in Kirtland had the moral responsibility to pay back the debt, albeit they had been given a reprieve for a short time. Accordingly, Joseph and other leaders planned a trip to meet with their creditors in New York City and make arrangements for payment. As cited previously, Ebenezer Robinson asserted that in the

summer of 1836, "a brother in the Church, by the name of Burgess, had come to Kirtland and stated that a large amount of money had been secreted in the cellar of a certain house in Salem, Massachusetts, which had belonged to a widow, and he thought he was the only person now living, who had knowledge of it, or to the location of the house."⁹

The report of prospective Salem treasure must have appeared tailor-made for the trip to meet with creditors in New York City. The Church leaders could provide their creditors with assurances of payment and then to travel to Salem, where they could, providentially, obtain the funds to pay their debts.

As planned, before arriving in Salem, Joseph, his brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney Rigdon traveled to New York City to meet with creditors. "From New York we continued our journey to Providence, on board a steamer," the Prophet wrote, "from thence to Boston, by steam cars, and arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, early in August, where we hired a house, and occupied the same during the month, teaching the people from house to house, and preaching publicly, as opportunity presented; visiting occasionally, sections of the surrounding country."¹⁰ According to Robinson, after arriving, "Brother Burgess met them in Salem, evidently according to appointment, but time had wrought such a change that he could not for a certainty point out the house, and soon left. They however, found a house which they felt was the right one, and hired it."¹¹ Apparently, Robinson had some misinformation. On August 19, 1836, Joseph wrote from Salem to his wife Emma in Kirtland, Ohio, "We have found the house since Bro. Burgess left us, very luckily and providentially, as we had one spell been most discouraged. The house is occupied, and it will require much care and patience to rent or buy it."¹² It is evident, since the group had been in Salem for more than two weeks before the letter was written and left soon thereafter, that the home in which the treasure was supposedly secreted and the house hired by Joseph and his companions could not be one and the same as asserted by Robinson. In addition, the *Essex Register* reported that the Prophet and his companions did not actually rent a home, let alone the alleged treasure home, but rather referred to "the tenement leased by them in Union Street."¹³ Thus there may also be other aspects of Robinson's report that are not entirely accurate.

The Lord's Commandment: Revelation in Salem (D&C 111)

As aforesaid, the revelation published as Doctrine and Covenants 111 came soon after the Prophet's arrival in Salem, Massachusetts. The Lord assured Joseph and his companions, "I . . . am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies" (D&C 111:1). Furthermore, he acknowledged their concerns regarding their debts and promised, "I will give you power to pay them" (D&C 111:5). Rather than summarily dismissing them to return home to Kirtland, Ohio, the Lord commanded them to "tarry in this place, and in the regions round about" (D&C 111:7). Most importantly, he instructed them to "inquire diligently concerning the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city; For there are more treasures than one for you in this city" (D&C 111:9–10). Past articles and commentaries on this revelation have made assertions that tied the Lord's command to inquire "concerning the more ancient inhabitants" (D&C 111:9) to genealogical research regarding the Prophet's ancestors, who lived in nearby Topsfield, Massachusetts.¹⁴ However, as Kenneth W. Godfrey noted, there are no evidences or references provided in the notes of these articles for this assertion.¹⁵ On the other hand, there is ample evidence that the brethren that received the revelation identified the "more ancient inhabitants" as the Puritans, who founded the city of Salem, Massachusetts.¹⁶ Consequently, Joseph and his companions set out to learn the history of Salem and the surrounding areas.

Inquiring Diligently Concerning the Ancient Inhabitants and Founders of Salem¹⁷

Perhaps Salem is best, or rather worst, known for the court trials held there accusing citizens of being witches. In 1692, reports from a group of young girls fueled an inquisition to rid the town of evil influences in which they accused innocent people of using the power of the devil to torment them. Local religious and municipal leaders joined this misdirected crusade, which led to the deaths of more than twenty individuals and horror for more than two hundred who were accused of being in league with Satan. Eventually, the girls confessed their fatal mischief and expressed sorrow for their roles in the tragedy. For years a specter of shame hung over the families of those involved in sentencing innocent people to death.¹⁸

During the approximately three weeks that they remained in the Salem area, in obedience to the Lord's command, Joseph and his companions learned much regarding the early history of New England. For example, they visited the East India Marine Society Museum in Salem. The guest register for the museum exhibits the names of Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Ridgon, and Joseph Smith. Cowdery and Ridgon visited the museum on August 6, 1836, and Joseph on August 9, 1836. Both visits were within one week of receiving the Lord's instructions to inquire after the ancient inhabitants of Salem.¹⁹ They also traveled to the nearby countryside rich with tales of religious fervor and patriotism.

As editor of the Church's newspaper, Oliver Cowdery wrote to his brother²⁰ in the Kirtland, Ohio, area concerning the corruption and wickedness that he witnessed in traveling to the East Coast before they arrived in Salem. In addition, Oliver Cowdery addressed the activities and information they learned in and around Salem. Two of Oliver's letters were published in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* concerning his experiences and thoughts during the time he spent in and around Salem, Massachusetts. These letters offer insight into the locations visited and the lessons learned from obeying the Lord's command to inquire after the founders of Salem and its ancient inhabitants. "During my tarry in this country," Oliver wrote, "I have visited Salem, 15 miles from this city [Boston]. I viewed the hill, immediately to the north-west of the town, on which they used, in olden times when they were very righteous, to hang people for the alleged crime of witchcraft—it still bears the name of 'witch hill,' and looks down upon this ancient town like a monument set up to remind after generations of the folly of their fathers."²¹

In addition, it is evident that Oliver and possibly other members of the party visited the library or purchased books on the history of Salem's "ancient inhabitants." In the following lengthy quotation from the *Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver gave attention and detail to this aspect of the visit to Salem. Based on his descriptions, it becomes clear that Oliver considered the "ancient inhabitants" mentioned in the revelation to refer to the early Puritan settlers in Salem. Furthermore, the time that Oliver dedicated to researching the ancient inhabitants and his lengthy letter documenting his research manifest that he gave great importance to his findings. He wrote,

This witch business began in 1691, and was so effectually carried on for about two years that the innocent blood of hundreds moistened the earth to gratify the vile ambition of jealous mortals.

It may not be wholly uninteresting to the readers of the *Messenger*, to give a short account of this disgraceful affair, as found in some of the ancient writings on that subject. I am aware that the *fact* is familiar with us all, but the *matter* of fact is not. The first appearance of any thing of this nature, was in the family of a priest, by the name of Parris, who, it is said, could not make money fast enough by merchandizing, therefore undertook the traffic in men's souls—he lived in Salem. After preaching about two years, he contrived to get “a grant from a part of the town, that the house and land occupied, and which had been allotted by the whole people to the ministry, should be and remain to him, &c. as his own estate in fee simple.”²² At this many of the good people revolted, upon which strife and contention were stirred up. Soon a number of Mr. Parris' children were sorely tormented—bewitched—thrown down—scratched—pinched—bitten—squeezed, and many other grievous things, by some of the neighbors. The result was, prosecution, imprisonment and death. Remember, by the way, that none of these were afflicted by corporeal hands, but could see the persons' spirits or appearances coming to, and tormenting them—sometimes in the form of cats, dogs, hogs, &c.

A deeper laid plan for the purpose of satiating revenge, upon such a principle, I think I never read of. In the family of this Parris, resided an Indian and his wife: the latter, as appears, was the first complained of by Parris' children. She was committed to prison, and her master (P) refusing to pay the fees, suffered her to be sold for the same. The account is not a little astonishing, while it discloses the grand secret of the matter. Speaking of her being sold for the fees, the historian says . . .²³

Oliver proceeded to quote liberally—four columns of newsprint—without identifying who “the historian” might be.

Further investigation has revealed that Oliver Cowdery had access to Robert Calef's volume, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*. Calef challenged the presumptions and accusations in the previously published volume

by Cotton Mather, the similarly named *Wonders of the Invisible World*. Originally published in London in 1700, Calef's work had been reprinted in Salem in 1823.²⁴ Thus, while in Salem, Oliver either spent considerable time with a volume from the library, copying page after page into his notes, or he purchased a personal copy for himself. It seems clear that Oliver saw his searching this volume as fulfillment of the Lord's command to inquire after the ancient inhabitants of the city.

Oliver concluded his extensive quotations from Calef's work with a few observations and additional notes: "I presume your patience is exhausted in reading this horrid affair," he wrote, "one which spreads, and must, while the account remains upon the page of history, or in the minds of men, a dark gloom over Salem, with all its modern politeness, refinement and religion."²⁵

Cowdery further wrote of nearby locations that he visited. From his references to other areas and events, it appears that he, and possibly Joseph, Hyrum, and Sidney, visited Lexington, the Bunker Hill monument (then being erected),²⁶ the State House in Boston, the navy yard in Charleston, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. After visiting the Charleston navy yard, Oliver recounted, "From this we went to Bunker hill, viewed the ground which, on the 17th of June, 1775, was drenched with blood for the liberty I enjoy. . . . The history of this battle is so familiar in the minds of the readers of the *Messenger*, that it would be occupying space unnecessarily, to give even a detail; but judge of the feelings of my heart, when I viewed, from the top of the monument, the entire theater on which was fought one of the most important battles ever recorded in history."²⁷

Lessons Learned in Obeying the Revelation: Visiting the "Areas Round About" Salem

From visits to the surrounding areas, Oliver gained additional understanding of the harm that a misplaced religious zeal might inflict on others. He shared with readers of the *Messenger and Advocate*, "In this place and in Boston, you know, the poor Baptists and Quakers, suffered, also, because their religion was better than their neighbors', of the good *steady* habits order. Undoubtedly you have read of their sufferings and are prepared to decide upon the injustice of their persecutors as well as the cause." Oliver referred to the area around Boston as "the cradle of liberty—where the first germ of American independence was seen to sprout."²⁸

One particular visit to the vicinity of Charleston made a poignant impression upon the brethren during their time in Salem. They visited the ruins of the recently burned Catholic Ursuline Convent. Built in an area of ardent Protestantism, the compound included a convent, a school, a chapel, gardens, and other buildings. Most of the students at the private school were from Protestant families. Anti-Catholic sentiment, fired by rumors of nuns held against their will, led to mob-inspired terrorism, ultimately resulting in the August 11, 1834, burning of the entire compound. After the Church leaders walked through the grounds and observed the destruction, Oliver Cowdery wrote his thoughts.

It was a religious persecution—a disgraceful, shameful religious persecution—one, or more, religious societies rising up against another. Is this religion? The good people here, being very tenacious of right, as well as the tradition of their ancestors, thought it doing God service to burn a Catholic convent, because the Catholic religion was different from their own. The Author of my existence knows the sorrowing of my heart, on the reflection that our country has come to this, that the weak must be trodden down by the strong, and disorder, confusion and terror, must distract our land and sow the discordant seeds of party strife and party animosity in the hearts of ignorant men, led on by infatuated priests, to overwhelm the continent with blood, and spread destruction and devastation throughout our happy asylum, and expose us to the fire, the sword, the rack and to death! I confess I retired from this scene of mobbery with a heavier heart than from the far-famed Bunker hill, rendered doubly so, by the patriotism, virtue, integrity, connected with the righteousness of the cause in which our fathers died!²⁹

History of the Church includes the following summary of the time spent in and around Salem: “[we] arrived in Salem, Massachusetts, early in August, where we hired a house, and occupied the same during the month, teaching the people from house to house, and preaching publicly, as opportunity presented; visiting occasionally, sections of the surrounding country, which are rich in the history of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England, in Indian warfare, religious superstition, bigotry, persecution, and learned ignorance.”³⁰

The Prophet Joseph Smith was equally affected by this visit to the Ursuline Convent. Expressing his thoughts and feelings regarding that experience, he wrote,

Well did the Savior say concerning such, “by their fruits you shall know them.” And if the wicked mob who destroyed the Charleston convent, and the cool, calculating religious lookers on, who inspired their hearts with deeds of infamy, do not arise, and redress the wrong, and restore the injured four-fold, they in turn, will receive of the measure they have meted out till the just indignation of a righteous God is satisfied. When will man cease to war with man, and wrest from him his sacred rights of worshiping his God according as his conscience dictates? Holy Father, hasten the day.³¹

Conclusion

The journey to Salem, Massachusetts, brought forth fruits much more valuable than treasure hunting. On one hand, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty this journey’s influence on the Prophet Joseph Smith and the other three leaders of the Church. On the other hand, it appears to be clear that they had many opportunities to learn about the need for the Latter-day Saints to welcome into their communities individuals of goodwill from all faiths or even of no membership to any particular faith. The lessons of justice, equality, fairness, tolerance, and inclusion, so important to the fledgling restored Church, were further imprinted upon the minds of its leaders during their time in Salem.

It appears highly likely that the Lord sought to insure that these brethren learned the distinction between intolerance for wickedness and tolerance for differing religious beliefs. Later in Nauvoo, the Prophet would write to welcome individuals of all religious persuasions or no religious persuasions to join with the Saints in building up that city³²—a city that had similar aspirations to the Salem of the founders and ancient inhabitants about whom the Lord commanded Joseph to inquire. The Salem dream was shattered when its early inhabitants became overzealous in their attempts to establish a New Jerusalem, persecuting innocent people. Evidently, the Lord hoped to warn and educate the early leaders of his Church concerning the tendency of some in religious societies to establish their own righteousness by excessively

crusading against real and supposed evils among them. When this occurs, innocent individuals suffer at their hands and religion becomes a stink in the land. The kingdom of God has needed and will continue to need to put into practice these important lessons. Consequently, the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants section III has had more influence on the building up of the kingdom of God than it has previously been given credit for. The Lord has worked and will continue to work by small and simple means to bring to pass his purposes (see Alma 37:6–7; D&C 64:33). In summation, there continue to be more treasures than one to be gleaned from the revelation received in Salem, Massachusetts.

Notes

1. Section III was not included in the Doctrine and Covenants until the 1876 edition. It was first published in the *Deseret News* (December 25, 1852). See Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 221.

2. Joseph wrote, “With regard to the great object of our mission, you will be anxious to know. We have found the house since Bro. Burgess left us, very luckily and providentially, as we had one spell been most discouraged. The house is occupied, and it will require much care and patience to rent or buy it. We think we shall be able to effect it; if not now within the course of a few months. We think we shall be at home about the middle of September.” Joseph Smith, “To Emma Smith, August 19, 1836,” *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. and ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 349–50.

3. Ebenezer Robinson, “Items of Personal History of the Editor. Including Some Items of Church History Not Generally Known,” *The Return* 1, no. 7 (1889): 105, <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/RigWrit/M&A/Return1.htm>. Robinson wrote that he left the Church over the seeming preoccupation of Church leaders with temporal financial concerns.

4. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 1:410.

5. The main published sources of criticism of the Prophet’s trip to Salem are Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 192–93; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, 1972), 49; and Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 31. Brodie asserts that upon hearing of treasure in Salem, Massachusetts, Joseph Smith was overcome by an irresistible force to treasure hunt and left his prophetic duties to look for buried gold. She also mistakenly asserts that Joseph considered this a “missionary tour.” Jerald and Sandra Tanner refer to section III as

“The Treasure Hunt Revelation” and suggest that any explanation of the revelation is “an attempt to keep from facing reality.” The Ostlings imaginatively assert that Joseph hoped to use a seer stone to tell him where the reported treasure lay, but “the seer stone failed again, and his money-digging was no more successful than before.”

6. Donald Q. Cannon, “Joseph Smith in Salem: D&C 111,” *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 1, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 435. In citing Cannon’s work, I in no way wish to disparage his research, as he has been an esteemed colleague in the department of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University and graciously opened and shared with me all of his research files on the Prophet’s journey to Salem, Massachusetts.

7. “Section 111, received on Sunday, 6 August 1836 . . . departed for Kirtland, about 25 August 1836. . . [and] arrived back in Kirtland sometime in September 1836.” Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 221. Also see *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 2:464–66.

8. See Craig J. Ostler, “The Laws of Consecration, Stewardship, and Tithing,” *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center and Brigham Young University, 2004), 155–75; Max H. Parkin, “Joseph Smith and the United Firm: The Growth and Decline of the Church’s First Master Plan of Business and Finance, Ohio and Missouri, 1832–1834,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 5–66; Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph Smith and the Law of Consecration* (Provo, UT: Grandin Book, 1985).

9. Robinson, *Return*, 105. Ebenezer indicated that “[they] saw the brother Burgess, but Don Carlos Smith told [them] with regard to the hidden treasure.”

10. *History of the Church*, 2:464. Interestingly, no mention of the treasure is made in *History of the Church*. On the other hand, Joseph made reference to the house and Brother Burgess in his letter to Emma (see endnote 3).

11. Robinson, *Return*, 106.

12. Smith, “To Emma Smith,” 350.

13. *Essex Register* (Salem, MA), August 25, 1836. The tenement, a complex of apartments identified with that leased by the brethren, evidently still remains and is located on the northwest corner of Union Street as it makes a T with Herbert Street. As such, it does not meet the description of a home in which a treasure was hidden. There is only one tenement building on Union Street.

14. See Cannon, “Joseph Smith in Salem: D&C 111,” 432–37; Kenneth W. Godfrey, “More Treasures Than One,” in *Hearken O Ye People: Discourses on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Sandy, UT: Randall Book, 1984), 191–202; Leau Ottens, “Applying the Doctrine and Covenants to Daily Life,” in *Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, January 27, 1979, 37–49; Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 729; Sidney B. Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 610; Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 4:76; Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 897; Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the*

Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 412–13; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 328–29.

15. Godfrey, “More Treasures Than One,” 196, 203n23. I found that most authors quote one another in a circular fashion. The earliest inference to the ancient inhabitants referring to genealogical research in the Smith line that I have been able to locate is that of Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, cited above. It appears that all others have taken their lead from Smith and Sjodahl’s work.

16. In addition to Oliver Cowdery’s references to Salem in “olden times” and “this ancient town,” I found other publications that referred to the homes and cemetery of the early Puritans as an “ancient house,” “ancient leanto houses,” and the “ancient burying ground.” See *Essex Antiquarian* (Salem, MA), February, July, August, and September, 1901. Also, Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines *ancient* as follows: “Ancient is opposed to *modern*. . . . When we speak of a thing that existed formerly, which has ceased to exist, we commonly use *ancient*.” Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile of the 1828 edition (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1995), “ancient.”

17. Puritan Roger Conant is credited as being the founder of Salem. The Prophet and the other leaders who traveled to Salem left no writings mentioning Conant nor any other specific founders. It may be that the Lord referred to “the more ancient inhabitants and founders of this city” as a group and not as individuals for which to search. On the other hand, important lessons can be learned from a study of Roger Conant’s life. His steadfast faith in the establishment and even the naming of Salem as the “city of peace,” is worthy of study. The standard biography of Conant’s life is Clifford K. Shipton, *Roger Conant: A Founder of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945). Modern historian Jim McAllister has also provided insightful tribute to the efforts of Roger Conant. See Jim McAllister, *Salem: From Naumkeag to Witch City* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2000); Joseph Flibbert et al., *Salem: Cornerstone of a Historic City* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 1999); and Jim McAllister, “Roger Conant: Salem’s Founder,” <http://www.salemweb.com/tales/conant.shtml>.

18. For detailed accounts and analysis of the Salem witch trials, see *Salem-Village Witchcraft: A Documentary Record of Local Conflict in Colonial New England*, ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); and Frances Hill, *A Delusion of Satan* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1995).

19. See Alexander L. Baugh, “A Historical Note on Joseph Smith’s 1836 Visit to the East India Marine Society Museum in Salem, Massachusetts,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 11, no. 1 (2010):143–50.

20. Likely, this was Oliver’s eldest brother, Warren, who shouldered much of Oliver’s responsibilities as an editor for the *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* while Oliver journeyed to New England.

21. Oliver Cowdery, “Prospectus,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, (October 1836), 388. “No one knows for certain where nineteen people condemned as witches were hanged. But all the evidence contained in the surviving records, including death warrants, Samuel Sewall’s diary, and Robert Calef’s *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, points to the lower ledges of what is now called Gallows Hill.” Frances

Hill, *Hunting for Witches: A Visitor's Guide to the Salem Witch Trials* (Beverly, MA: Commonwealth Editions, 2002), 93.

22. Quoted from Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World, or The Wonders of The Invisible World Displayed* (London, 1700, reprinted Salem, MA: John D. and T. C. Cushing, Jr. for Cushing and Appleton, 1823), 187.

23. Cowdery, "Prospectus," 388–89.

24. I am indebted to Richard Lloyd Anderson for identifying that Oliver Cowdery quoted Robert Calef in his letters published in the *Messenger and Advocate*. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith's Journeys," *Church Almanac 2006* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2005), 146. Cowdery quotes from Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, 187, 189, 192, and, nearly in their entirety, 197–206. A copy of the 1823 reprint in Salem, Massachusetts, is located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

25. Cowdery, "Prospectus," 391.

26. Cowdery identified that the monument had reached eighty feet in height at the time of his visit. The granite obelisk currently stands 221 feet tall, honoring the group of bedraggled farmers who fought the British troops in the first major battle of the Revolutionary War, June 17, 1775. It is located across the Charles River from Boston, on top of Breed's Hill.

27. Cowdery, "Prospectus," 392.

28. Cowdery, "Prospectus," 391.

29. Cowdery, "Prospectus," 393. Oliver took in the principles of religious and personal liberty like fire in his soul. He wrote to his brother and to the Saints regarding the sacred rights of individuals. I wonder if this fire burned out of control in his defense of his actions as he faced excommunication from the kingdom less than two years later in Missouri. Note that his defense for selling his lands in Jackson County is couched in terms of his rights as an American citizen trumping his covenants as a consecrated member of the Church of Jesus Christ.

30. *History of the Church*, 2:464.

31. *History of the Church*, 2:465. No one was ever brought to justice and held responsible for the burning of the convent.

32. *History of the Church*, 4:273.