

Richard Lyman Bushman: 2011 Recipient of the Junius F. Wells Award

Robert S. Clark

The prestigious Junius F. Wells award was presented to Richard Lyman Bushman by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation on June 18, 2011. The award dinner was held at the Springville Museum of Art at the conclusion of a day-long symposium on “Mormonism in Cultural Contexts.” The dinner was co-sponsored by the Foundation and the LDS Church History Department, and coincided with a celebration of Richard’s eightieth birthday. The symposium was a well-attended conference sponsored by the Church History Department, Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU, and the BYU Religious Studies Center. In his remarks at the symposium, Richard emphasized his belief that we are in a “golden age of Mormon History.”

Richard L. Bushman is one of the most celebrated historians of the LDS Church. The decision to recognize his achievements with the Junius F. Wells award is based on a lengthy career of excellence and contribution in the field of LDS history and support of significant historic sites. Among other things, Richard’s insights into Joseph Smith’s emphasis on “sacred spaces” is of special significance to anyone who treasures Church history sites. Richard is currently the Gouverneur Morris Professor Emeritus of History at Columbia University. He has just completed the inaugural term as the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California. He is a noted author, winning the Bancroft Prize in 1968 for *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765*

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Richard L. Bushman (left) and Richard N. W. Lambert (right), vice-chair of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, enjoying a casual moment before the Junius F. Wells award dinner. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.



Jefferey N. Walker, treasurer of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, was master of ceremonies for the award dinner. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), a prize awarded annually by the trustees of Columbia University for the best book on American history. The publication of Richard's book *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) resulted in numerous additional awards, including the Mormon History Association's annual 2006 Best Book award. Among his numerous publications, the Foundation was privileged to publish his reflections on history and his career in "The Historian's Craft: A Conversation with Richard Lyman Bushman" in the Fall 2009 issue of *Mormon Historical Studies*.

Richard's academic studies began at Harvard University in 1949. After interrupting his education for a mission to New England and parts of Canada, he completed his AB from Harvard, and also an AM from Harvard, magna cum laude, in history. In 1955 he married Claudia Lauper Bushman, who has had a distinguished career in her own right. They are the parents of four sons (Richard, Karl, Sarge, and Ben) and two daughters (Clarissa and Margaret). He completed a PhD from Harvard in 1961 in the history of American civilization. He has taught at Harvard, Brigham Young University, Boston University, and the University of Delaware before joining the faculty of Columbia.

The Junius F. Wells Award is intended to honor individuals who have given extraordinary service in the preservation of Mormon history. Past recipients include President Gordon B. Hinckley, Karl Ricks Anderson, Elder M. Russell Ballard, L. Douglas Smoot, and Florence Jacobsen. Junius F. Wells was a missionary, historian, editor, and organizer of the YMMIA. He is also known as a father of Church historic site preservation. In 1905, under the direction of President Joseph F. Smith, Junius undertook a mission to purchase for the Church the Solomon Mack farm in Sharon, Vermont, where Joseph Smith Jr. was born. He worked tirelessly to establish a beautiful granite marker there, and later helped preserve and establish monuments at other sites, including a monument to the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon at the grave of Oliver Cowdery in Richmond, Missouri, and the Hyrum Smith Memorial in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. His efforts reflected a vision of great significance and recognized the importance of preserving important sites where sacred events occurred.

Jeffrey N. Walker, treasurer of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, served as the master of ceremonies for the evening. A medley of tunes popular in 1955—the year of Richard and Claudia's marriage—was performed by saxophonist Herschel Bullen and guitarist Jim Guss. In recognition that 2011 is the 400th anniversary of publication of the King James Bible, Richard was presented by Foundation vice-chair Richard N. W. Lambert with a display-mounted page from a rare 1611 version of the King James Bible containing Richard's favorite two passages of scripture from the New Testament:



Richard N. W. Lambert (right), vice-chair of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, presented Richard L. Bushman (left) with a page from a 1611 King James Bible. The page included Richard Bushman's favorite two passages of scripture from the New Testament. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:66–69).

If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself (John 7:17).

The Junius F. Wells award, which includes a bronze bust of Wells mounted on wood accompanied by a plaque describing the award, was then presented to Richard Bushman by Foundation chairman Kim R. Wilson.

In Richard's remarks, he described the beneficial growth that is taking place in strengthening scholarship in the field of Church history. Numerous scholars have been nurtured and are achieving distinction through their collegial efforts, including an annual summer seminar on Mormon thought supported by the Mormon Scholars Foundation and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Many of those who are achieving distinction in the



Kim R. Wilson (right), chair of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, presented Richard L. Bushman (left) with the Junius F. Wells award. Bushman is the sixth recipient of the award. Photograph by Kenneth R. Mays.

study of Church history through the summer seminar were in attendance at the dinner and were encouraged by Richard Bushman to continue their efforts.

Richard also recalled with appreciation the opportunity that he and Claudia had to collaborate with the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation in 2005. The Bushmans, together with many Church members in New York City, led the effort to obtain permission to erect a statue of Joseph Smith in lower Manhattan on the 200th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet. The statue—“The Frontier Prophet”—was put in place for several months near Old Slip in New York City, and the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation was privileged to assist in that effort.

The evening concluded with a reception in honor of Richard’s 80th birthday in the Museum of Art’s garden.