

Daguerrotype believed to be that of Oliver Cowdery, date unknown, ca. 1846. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington DC, and Patrick A. Bishop. Bishop discovered the daguerrotype in February 2006.

## Oliver Cowdery: Restoration Witness, Second Elder Symposium

*Alexander L. Baugh*

On November 10, 2006, a special symposium on the life and contributions of Oliver Cowdery was held at the BYU Conference Center. The symposium, titled “Oliver Cowdery: Restoration Witness, Second Elder,” commemorated the two hundredth anniversary of Cowdery’s birth. The Mormon Historic Sites Foundation and BYU’s Religious Studies Center sponsored the event. Alexander L. Baugh, associate professor of Church history and doctrine and a member of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation chaired the activities. Approximately five hundred people attended sessions that were held throughout the afternoon.

Oliver Cowdery was born on October 3, 1806, to William Cowdery and Rebecca Fuller in Wells, Rutland County, Vermont. Fortunately, the exact location of his birthplace is known, and the foundation of the home is still clearly visible. The Church placed a beautiful commemorative marker at the site. Oliver married Elizabeth Ann Whitmer, youngest daughter of Peter Sr. and Mary (or Mariam) Mussellman Whitmer, on December 18, 1832, in Kaw Township, Jackson County, Missouri. Oliver had a nine-year association with Joseph Smith from April 1829 until June 1838. Oliver’s name is connected with many titles—Book of Mormon scribe, Book of Mormon witness, priesthood restoration witness, Church historian, missionary, assistant president of the Church, author, editor, banker, and lawyer. Truly, he was an individual of remarkable accomplishment in a life spanning only forty-three years.

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Richard L. Bushman, Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University, was the keynote speaker for the Oliver Cowdery Symposium. The symposium was sponsored by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation and BYU's Religious Studies Center. Photograph by R. Scott Lloyd.

Elder Marlin K. Jensen, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy and Church Historian and Recorder, prepared a statement to be read at the conference. He expressed his gratitude for Oliver Cowdery's contributions to the early Church: "Possessing the same New England heritage as Joseph Smith and being just a year younger, Oliver was chosen to stand at Joseph's side during many of the miraculous events of the Restoration. With both voice and pen he eloquently and courageously witnessed to the reality of those events. His support of Joseph and assistance with the leadership of the restored Church in its first decade helped lay a foundation of doctrine and practice that blesses Latter-day Saints to the present day. Oliver Cowdery deserves to be remembered and appreciated."

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Richard L. Bushman, Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, at Columbia University, and author of the award-winning biography, *Joseph Smith Rough Stone*

*Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). In his remarks, titled, “Oliver’s Joseph,” Professor Bushman emphasized how Oliver Cowdery’s records of key Restoration events were often more detailed than those Joseph dictated or wrote, which produced a more vibrant and more complete history of the Prophet’s life. Patrick A. Bishop’s presentation was a highlight of the symposium. This February, Bishop discovered a daguerreotype believed to be of Oliver Cowdery in the Library of Congress Archives in Washington, DC. For the past ten months, Bishop has been analyzing and studying the image to determine its authenticity. He has concluded that there is “convincing evidence” that the image is indeed, “a heretofore unknown image of Oliver Cowdery.” Other presenters included the following:

Richard L. Anderson	Financial Aspects of Oliver Cowdery’s Conflict with the Church
Susan Easton Black	Oliver Cowdery in the Doctrine and Covenants
Scott H. Faulring	Oliver Cowdery’s Richmond, Missouri, Experience, 1838, 1849-50
Steven C. Harper	Oliver Cowdery: Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration
Richard Neitzel Holzapfel,	The Oliver Cowdery–Three Witnesses
Robert F. Schwartz, and Stanley J. Thayne	Monument, Richmond, Missouri
Larry E. Morris	Oliver Cowdery Before His Association With Joseph Smith, 1828-1829
Royal Skousen	Oliver Cowdery as Book of Mormon Scribe
Mark L. Staker	Oliver Cowdery and the Kirtland Economy
Grant Underwood	Oliver Cowdery’s Early Correspondence with the Prophet Joseph Smith
Jeffrey N. Walker	Oliver Cowdery, Ohio Attorney
John W. Welch	Editor, Defender, and Justice of the Peace in Kirtland
Keith Wilson	Oliver Cowdery as Academic

The papers presented at the symposium will be published in a book next year by the Religious Studies Center and the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation.

In addition to the symposium, and special awards dinner was held in which the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation honored Karl Ricks Anderson, an expert on the Kirtland period of the Church, with the Junius Wells award. The award is given annually to an individual who has been instrumental in helping preserve Church history sites. Richard Lloyd Anderson, an emeritus professor of ancient scripture, was presented the “Lifetime Achievement Award” by the foundation for his research and scholarly work on the Book of Mormon witnesses. Maurine C. Ward was presented with a “Meritorious Service Award” for her service as former editor of *Mormon Historical Studies*.



Artist Ken Corbett unveils his painting of Oliver Cowdery at the Junius F. Wells Award dinner. The painting is based upon a daguerreotype in the Library of Congress Archives believed to be of Oliver Cowdery. The daguerreotype was discovered by Patrick A. Bishop. Corbett was commissioned by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation to create the painting. Photograph by Derek J. Tangren.



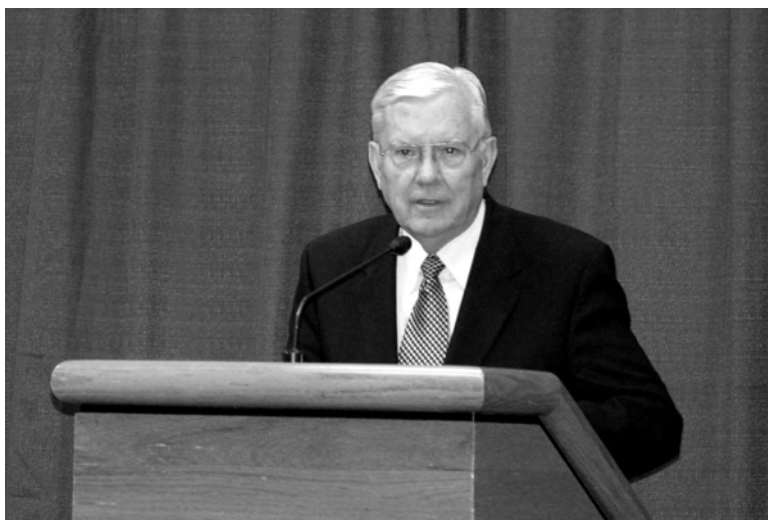
An attentive audience listens to the keynote address of Richard L. Bushman. An estimated five hundred people attended the Oliver Cowdery symposium which was held in the BYU Conference Center. Photograph by R. Scott Lloyd.



Richard Lloyd Anderson (left) is presented with a “Lifetime Achievement” award for his research and scholarly work on the Book of Mormon witnesses. Richard Lambert (right), vice-chairman of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation made the presentation. Richard’s wife, Carma de Jong Anderson (center), is shown displaying the award. Photograph by R. Scott Lloyd.



Karl Ricks Anderson (center) is presented the Junius F. Wells Award by Kim R. Wilson (right), chairman of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. Karl is joined by his wife Joyce (left). The award is given annually to an individual who has been instrumental in helping preserve Church history sites. Photograph by Derek J. Tangren.



Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve presented some brief remarks at the Junius F. Wells Award dinner. Photograph by R. Scott Lloyd.



Over two hundred invited guests attend the annual Junius F. Wells dinner sponsored by the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation. Photograph by R. Scott Lloyd.



