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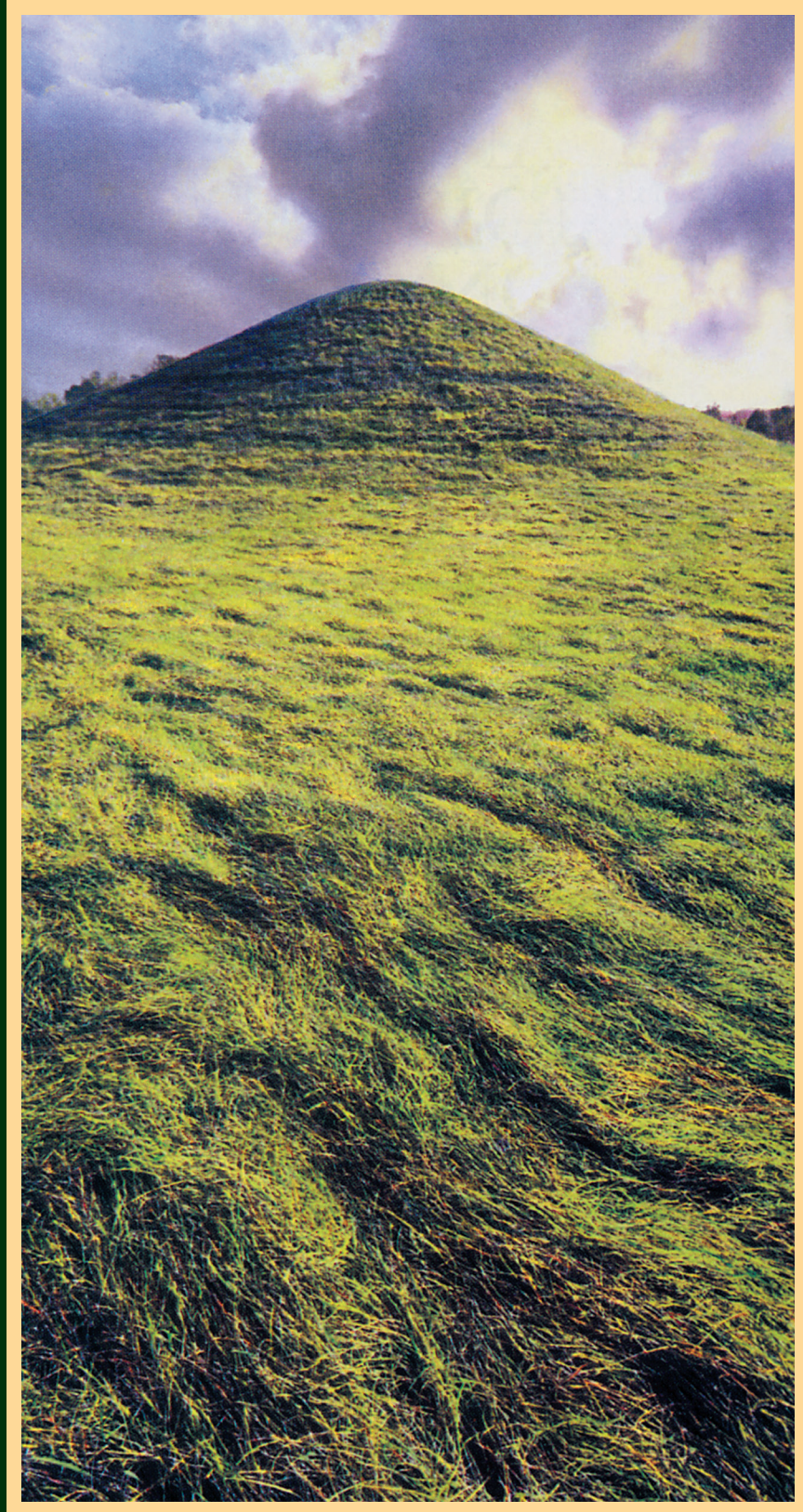
Title What Is the Significance of Zelph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?

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Abstract In June 1834, members of Zion's Camp discovered skeleton bones that Joseph Smith reportedly revealed as belonging to a "white Lamanite" named Zelph. Many Latter-day Saints have referenced this unearthing as evidence that the Book of Mormon took place in North America, rather than in Mesoamerica. This article explores the significance and reliability of the accounts concerning Zelph's existence, and it claims that although such a discovery is exciting and insightful, many of the accounts are inconsistent and most of the details surrounding Zelph and his life remain unknown. The skeleton cannot, therefore, provide conclusive evidence for anything, and Latter-day Saints should remember that more important than identifying the location of Book of Mormon events is strengthening their belief in the book's divinity.



WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF

ZELPH

IN THE STUDY OF
BOOK OF MORMON
GEOGRAPHY?



KENNETH W. GODFREY

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Many years ago while working on a doctoral degree at Brigham Young University, I taught Book of Mormon classes. Each Friday all the graduate student teachers were required to attend a seminar. One of these seminars featured two of the most respected and famous scholars in the church discussing (or rather, debating) Book of Mormon geography. One scholar argued that there had to be two hill Cumorahs, one in Central America and one in the state of New York, and that the events described in the Book of Mormon all took place in a small geographic area in Central America. The other scholar contended that the Nephites and Lamanites had nomadic roots, loved to wander, and, furthermore, that the last great battles of these two peoples probably took place in New York. He argued for only one Cumorah. These two giants in the field of Mormon studies got rather angry with each other and one actually swore in the heat of their debate. I was astonished at the emotion with which they argued their positions. I realized then that issues of Book of Mormon geography can engender strong feelings and have at times divided committed Latter-day Saints. Fortunately the two scholars who led our seminar that day agreed to disagree and parted still friends.

Latter-day Saints continue to want to know where the events described in the Book of Mormon took place, and there continue to be those who claim this or that answer to certain questions. One element related to the question posed by all students of Book of Mormon geography is the account of the 1834 discovery in Illinois of

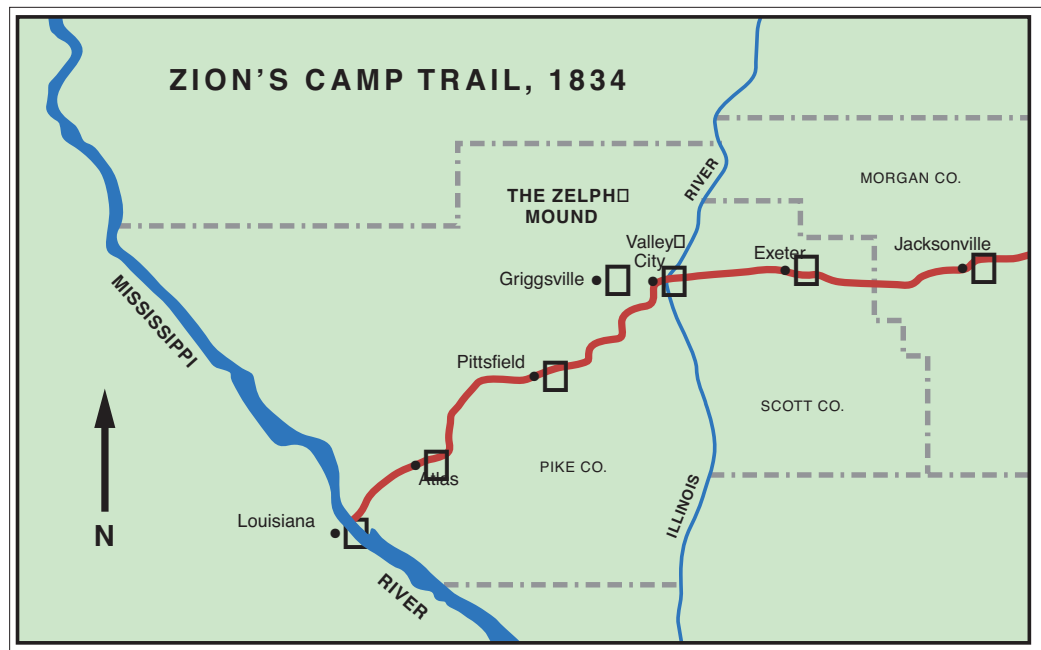
the “white Lamanite,” called “Zelph” by members of Zion’s Camp. Those who support the view that North America was the scene of battles between the Nephites and Lamanites always cite this datum as proof that their view is correct. Before using it as proof of anything, however, careful investigation of the circumstances of this discovery has much to teach us about how historical information needs to be critically examined before one tries to use it to settle a dispute.

As a service to historians and students of geography, this paper assesses the reliability of the known materials on Zelph and contributes an answer to the question, “Which of the ‘facts’ reported in the accounts seem to be most generally supported and which are most doubtful?”

The Setting

On 3 June 1834, one mile south of modern Valley City, Illinois, in Pike County, on the top of Naples Russell Mound Number 8, members of Zion’s Camp located some bones, including a broken femur and an arrowhead, approximately a foot below the earth’s surface. Later Joseph Smith received by revelation the owner’s identity and a few other facts regarding the manner in which he died.

Seven members of Zion’s Camp either wrote or dictated accounts of the discovery of Zelph, but Joseph Smith recorded nothing so far as we know about what took place on 3 June 1834. However, in a letter to his wife, Emma, written the day after, he did say:



Map of the Zion's Camp Trail. Courtesy Stanley B. Kimball.

Previous page: a 2000-year-old Hopewell burial mound. The Zelph mound, which no longer exists, would have looked similar. Photograph by Corson Hirschfeld.

The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as a proof of its divine authenticity, and gazing upon a country the fertility, the splendour and the goodness so indescribable, all serves to pass away time unnoticed.¹

Obviously, Joseph and his companions were inspired and elated as they moved closer to their land of promise in Missouri. The territory they were in was vast, rich, and unsettled. The ghostly mounds of former inhabitants, however, reminded Joseph and his camp that the land had once been occupied. As they went, they talked about the Book of Mormon. Joseph called the land “the plains of the Nephites.” They believed that the mounds had belonged to “that once beloved people,” and they interpreted the mere fact that skulls and bones were readily found as evidence of the divine authenticity of the book.

Those who did write about the discovery of Zeph are generally consistent with one another, but they leave a number of details in doubt. Who was Zeph? Was he a Nephite or a Lamanite? When did he die? What army was he in? The answers to these questions cannot be given with certainty from the complex historical sources that resulted from this event. This means that Book of Mormon scholars must remain tentative in drawing implications from this notable incident, though it does not diminish the fact that Joseph was moved by the spirit of revelation to speak about Zeph and his noble past in connection with Book of Mormon peoples or their descendants.

Those Who Wrote about Finding Zeph

Reuben McBride’s account of the discovery of Zeph is shorter and less detailed than the others but may have been the first one recorded, possibly having been written on the day the find occurred, although in no case are we completely sure when the information was put down in writing. McBride recorded that Zeph was a great warrior under the prophet Omandagus, that an arrow was found in his ribs, and that he was a white Lamanite who was known from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains.²

Another member of Zion’s Camp, 22-year-old Moses Martin, also reported the finding of Zeph. Martin was present when the digging occurred and was impressed with the size of the skeleton and with Joseph’s vision of the unnamed prophet. But he said nothing about his being a

white Lamanite or his having served under a prophet chief named Omandagus or Onandagus. Instead, in the Martin account, the deceased man was “a mighty prophet.”³

Wilford Woodruff recorded that while the camp traveled they visited many of the mounds which were probably “flung up” by the “Nephites & Lamanites.” “We visited one of those Mounds,” Woodruff writes, “and several of the brethren dug into it and took from it the bones of a man.” According to Woodruff, Joseph Smith was told in an open vision that the bones were those of a white Lamanite whose name was Zeph, a warrior under the great prophet who was known from the Hill Cumorah to



One of the largest existing Adena mounds, Minnisburg Mound in western Ohio, measured at least 68 feet high before excavators skimmed off part of the top in 1869. Courtesy Dr. Bruce Smith.

the Rocky Mountains. This is the earliest source for this geographical data. (In Reuben McBride’s account it is Zeph who was widely known.) Later in his life President Woodruff penned two other accounts of this incident, but their wording is essentially identical.⁴

The longest and most detailed near-contemporaneous account of Zeph’s discovery was written by Levi Hancock, later one of the Presidents of the Seventy. Hancock reports that the land was named Desolation and Onandagus was a king and a good man but says nothing about his being a prophet. However, he does inform us that Zeph lost all his teeth but one and implies that Zeph was relatively aged at death. He makes no mention of the Hill Cumorah or of Onandagus’s wide fame but does write that Zeph was a white Lamanite.

In 1845 the *Times and Seasons* published Heber C. Kimball’s account of finding Zeph under the title, “Extracts from H. C. Kimball’s Journal.” Kimball states that Zeph was killed in “the last destruction among the

Zion's Camp by C. C. A Christensen.
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Lamanites” but is unclear as to whether it was the final destruction of the Nephites or the last battle of Zeph’s people, whoever they were. It may refer to a battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites or to a battle of Lamanites against other Lamanites, if we assume that the Lamanites may have had prophets among them. Kimball’s account is also unique in that he says he went with Joseph Smith to the top of the mound and relates that they felt prompted to dig down into the mound but first had to send for a shovel and hoe. The other early accounts do not say that Joseph was present when the bones were dug up; rather, they either state or imply that he was not involved until some later time. According to Kimball, it was later in the day while continuing on the journey westward that the Prophet made the identification of the person whose bones they had found. This is consistent with Hancock’s statement that Joseph spoke “as the camp was moving off the ground.” Kimball’s account makes no explicit reference to the Nephites, and he sees the value of Joseph’s vision primarily not in what is revealed about the ancient inhabitants of that region, but in how it showed that “God was so mindful of” the camp and especially his “servant, Brother Joseph.”⁵

George A. Smith, another member of Zion’s Camp, included the following information in a history prepared in 1857: “Monday, 2 June 1834; Some of us visited a mound on a bluff about 300 feet high and dug up some bones, which excited deep interest among the brethren. The President [Joseph Smith] and many others visited the mound on the following morning.”⁶

The Zeph Story and the History of the Church

In 1842 Willard Richards, then church historian, was assigned the task of compiling a large number of documents and producing a history of the church from them. He worked on this material between 21 December 1842 and 27 March 1843. Richards, who had not joined the church until 1836, relied on the writings or recollections of Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, and perhaps others for his information regarding the discovery of Zeph. Blending the sources available to him, and perhaps using oral accounts from some of the members of Zion’s Camp, but writing as if he were Joseph Smith, historian Richards drafted the story of Zeph as it appears in the “Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1.” With respect to points relative to Book of Mormon geography, Richards wrote that “Zeph was a white Lamanite, a man of God who was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Onandagus who was known from the [~~hill Cumorah~~] eastern Sea, to the Rocky Mountains. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during a [~~last~~] great struggle with the Lamanites” [~~and Nephites~~].⁷

Following the death of Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons* published serially the “History of Joseph Smith.” When the story of finding Zeph appeared in the 1 January 1846 issue, most of the words crossed out in the Richards manuscript were, for some unknown reason, included, along with the point that the prophet’s name was Omandagus. The reference to the hill Cumorah from the unemended Wilford Woodruff journal was still included in the narrative, as was the phrase “during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites.”⁸

The 1904 first edition of the seven-volume *History of the Church*, edited by B. H. Roberts, repeats the manuscript version of Richards's account. However, in 1948, after Joseph Fielding Smith had become church historian, explicit references to the hill Cumorah and the Nephites were reintroduced. That phrasing has continued to the present in all reprintings.⁹

If the history of the church were to be revised today using modern historical standards, readers would be informed that Joseph Smith wrote nothing about the discovery of Zelph, and that the account of uncovering the skeleton in Pike County is based on the diaries of seven members of Zion's Camp, some of which were written long after the event took place. We would be assured that the members of Zion's Camp dug up a skeleton near the Illinois River in early June 1834. Equally sure is that Joseph Smith made statements about the deceased person and his historical setting. We would learn that it is unclear which statements attributed to him derived from his vision, as opposed to being implied or surmised either

on by all the accounts. This term might refer to the ethnic and cultural category spoken of in the Book of Mormon as actors in the destruction of the Nephites, or it might refer more generally to a descendant of the earlier Lamanites and could have been considered in 1834 as the equivalent of "Indian" (see, for example, D&C 3:18, 20; 10:48; 28:8; 32:2). Nothing in the accounts can settle the question of Zelph's specific ethnic identity.

Joseph Smith and Book of Mormon Geography

Exactly what Joseph Smith believed at different times in his life concerning Book of Mormon geography in general is also indeterminable. Only a few clues remain. For example, while the church was headquartered in Nauvoo, Joseph read a best-selling book of his day by John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*,¹⁰ which John Bernhisel had sent to him from the East. In a letter dated 16 November 1841, the Prophet thanked Bernhisel and wrote about the book that "of all histories that had been written pertaining to the antiqui-

In 1834, when Zelph was found, Joseph believed that the portion of America over which they had just traveled was "the plains of the Nephite," and that their bones were "proof" of the Book of Mormon's authenticity. By 1842 he evidently believed that the events in most of Nephite history took place in Central America.

by him or by others. Nothing in the diaries suggests that the mound itself was discovered by revelation.

Furthermore, readers would be told that most sources agree that Zelph was a white Lamanite who fought under a leader named Onandagus (variously spelled). Beyond that, what Joseph said to his men is not entirely clear, judging by the variations in the available sources. The date of the man Zelph, too, remains unclear. Expressions such as "great struggles among the Lamanites," if accurately reported, could refer to a period long after the close of the Book of Mormon narrative, as well as to the fourth century A.D. None of the sources before the Willard Richards composition, however, actually say that Zelph died in battle with the Nephites, only that he died "in battle" when the otherwise unidentified people of Onandagus were engaged in great wars "among the Lamanites."

Zelph was identified as a "Lamanite," a label agreed

ties of this country it is the most correct" and it "supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon."¹¹ Ten months later, the *Times and Seasons* printed an enthusiastic review of the Stephens volume. John Taylor was the editor, although Joseph Smith had shortly before announced his own editorial responsibility for the newspaper. The unnamed writer of the review (probably Wilford Woodruff) stated that "we have just learned . . . [that] the city Zarahemla . . . stood upon this land [of Guatemala, whose ruins Stephens was reporting]."

Still, other data seem to reflect a different view and make it uncertain just what geographical conception, if any single one, prevailed among the early church leaders. Evidently Joseph Smith's views on this matter were open to further knowledge. Thus in 1834, when Zelph was found, Joseph believed that the portion of America over which they had just traveled was "the plains of the Nephite," and

that their bones were “proof” of the Book of Mormon’s authenticity. By 1842 he evidently believed that the events in most of Nephite history took place in Central America. While it is possible to reconcile these two views—for example by believing that the bulk of Nephite history occurred in Central America while only certain battles or excursions took place in Illinois¹²—it is likely that the thinking of the early church leaders regarding Book of

*Wilford Woodruff's
Journal*

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WILFORD WOODRUFF'S JOURNAL

the camp he was clothed upon with much of the spirit of God. His precepts were very instructive and interesting.

While on our travels we visited many of the mounds which were flung up by the ancient inhabitants of this continent probably by the Nephites & Lamanites. We visited one of those Mounds and several of the brethren dug into it and took from it the bones of a man.

[Interlinearly after "We visited one of those Mounds":] considered to be 300 feet above the level of the Illinois river. Three persons dug into the mound & found a body. Elder Milton Holmes took the arrow out of the back bones that killed Zelph & brought it with some of the bones in to the camp. I visited the same mound with Jesse J Smith. Who the other persons were that dug in to the mound & found the body I am undecided.

Brother Joseph had a vision respecting the person. He said he was a white Lamanite. The curse was taken from him or at least in part. He was killed in battle with an arrow. The arrow was found among his ribs. One of his thigh bones was broken. This was done by a stone flung from a sling in battle years before his death. His name was Zelph. Some of his bones were brought into the Camp and the thigh bone which was broken was put into my waggon and I carried it to Missouri. Zelph was a large thick set man and a man of God. He was a warrior under the great prophet /Onandagus/ that was known from the hill Camorah /or east sea/ to the Rocky mountains. The above knowledge Joseph received in a vision.

It excited the curiosity of people more to see such a Company of people traveling through the country in perfect order. People came forth out of there houses to behold the Scene and thousands of questions were asked concerning our movements.

We had several rivers to ferry and when we arrived at Salt River we pitched our tents to remain stationary for several days. And on the day following our arrival at Salt River we were joined by

Excerpt from Wilford Woodruff's journal showing his entry for the discovery of the “white Lamanite.” *Courtesy Signature Books.*

Mormon geography was subject to modification, indicating that they themselves did not see the issue as settled.¹³

Geography and Nineteenth-Century Mormon Writers

However, after their arrival in the Great Basin, most church members, it appears, believed that Nephite history was large enough to accommodate the whole hemisphere. Church leaders remained cautious and tentative with regard to identifying specific sites with particular events described in the Book of Mormon but were united in holding the view that the hill Cumorah near Joseph Smith's home was where Mormon and Moroni deposited the plates of gold that Joseph Smith later translated.

President George Q. Cannon in 1887 wrote an editorial appearing in the *Juvenile Instructor*, which called for some caution relative to Book of Mormon geography and noted that there “is considerable anxiety manifested [among Latter-day Saints] to identify the sites of the ancient cities of the Nephites and to locate the exact spots where the stirring scenes described in the Book of Mormon were enacted.” Cannon then declared that there are only “a few points which can be identified.” The “hill known as Cumorah among the Nephites,” he wrote, “and as Ramah among the Jaredites, is a spot which we are now familiar with, it being the place where Moroni concealed the records of his father, and to which the Prophet Joseph was directed by his angel guide.” “Joseph Smith,” Cannon wrote, “told some of his followers, that the Magdalena River is the Book of Mormon river Sidon” and that Lehi and his family “landed near the Chilean city of Valparaiso.” Cannon believed that “beyond these few points, it may be said that the sites of the cities of the Nephites are left to conjecture.” Concluding his editorial, President Cannon asserted that he had no confidence in the maps various authors had prepared as aids in studying the Book of Mormon and wrote, “I think it better that we should have no maps at all than to have an incorrect one.”¹⁴

However, B. H. Roberts, in the third volume of *New Witness for God* (1922), came to doubt the validity of the “landed in Chile” statement attributed to Joseph Smith.¹⁵ Much later Frederick Williams III showed that the statement did not originate with Joseph Smith. And even if it could be attributed to the Prophet, then he must have altered his views on the subject because in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842 he said that Lehi's party landed “a little south of the Isthmus of Darien,” which is two thousand miles from Chile.

With respect to the plates, careful students of the Book of Mormon learn that Mormon buried all other plates in his possession in the hill of the final battle but

not the ones received by Joseph Smith (see Mormon 6:6). Those were in Moroni's possession for at least 35 years and presumably were to be buried elsewhere (or else why separate them from the primary archive?). That elsewhere was in New York at the hill Cumorah.¹⁶

President Cannon's caution with respect to Book of Mormon geography applies even today. However, church leaders in the past and those today do not discourage students and scholars in their studies regarding Book of Mormon geography. Sometimes they have even promoted serious research. For instance, on the morning of 23 May 1903, President Joseph F. Smith called to order representatives from many parts of the state of Utah who had gathered on the campus of the Brigham Young Academy in Provo for a two-day Book of Mormon convention. Many, if not most, of the church's leading Book of Mormon students were with President Smith and his counselor Anthon H. Lund on the stand. Delegates listened to George Reynolds, B. H. Roberts, Dr. M. H. Hardy, Professor Benjamin Cluff, Charles W. Penrose, Dr. James E. Talmage, and others as they presented sometimes differing views regarding Book of Mormon geography, the site of Zarahemla, and how to properly pronounce the names of people mentioned in the Book of Mormon text.

The discussions following each presentation were vigorous, and President Smith from time to time suggested that the location of various Nephite cities "was not of vital importance, and if there were differences of opinion on the question it would not affect the salvation of the people." As the convention drew to a close, President Smith again "cautioned the students against making the union question—the location of cities and lands—of equal importance with the doctrines contained in the Book [of Mormon]." President Anthon H. Lund "advised those present to study the Book of Mormon and be guided by the advice of President Smith in their studies."¹⁷ None of the speakers used the story of Zelph to augment their arguments as to where Book of Mormon history took place.

Again in 1921, when the committee preparing a new edition of the Book of Mormon (composed of George F. Richards, Orson F. Whitney, James E. Talmage, Anthony W. Ivins, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Melvin J. Ballard) met "to give certain brethren an opportunity to state their views regarding the geography of the Book of Mormon," none of the scholars who spoke to the group used the Zelph story as evidence for their position.

A quarter of a century later, however, Joseph Fielding Smith used the finding of Zelph to support his view that

the hill Cumorah in the state of New York "is the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon."¹⁸

The debate about Zelph's relationship to Book of Mormon geography will likely continue since the facts in hand do not allow for a decisive settlement of the matter. Thus historians should continue to gather and sift the evidence but also advise caution in drawing conclusions.

Some Cautious Conclusions

If, as Sorenson and other writers suggest, most Book of Mormon history took place in Mesoamerica, what can we conclude regarding the discovery of the bones of a white Lamanite in Illinois and the golden plates in New York? It seems possible that some Lamanites could have wandered north after Moroni closed his narrative and fought battles on American soil, and the discovery of Zelph could be used by Latter-day Saints as *prima facie* evidence. We know, too, that the plates Joseph Smith translated came from a hill near his home and were deposited there by Moroni.

Someday I hope Moroni explains more fully just where he was during those last three decades of his life, and I hope Zelph is by his side; and after Moroni is finished, I hope Zelph tells his story, geography and all.

But until that day comes Latter-day Saints, including scholars, should remember the counsel President Joseph F. Smith gave in 1903 and not allow disagreements regarding the precise location of Book of Mormon cities and sites to divide them and cause feelings of ill will to fester. Joseph Smith, I believe, would have *embraced* those who take the Book of Mormon seriously, study it faithfully, and strive to learn all that it has to teach them, including the location of its various cities, battlefields, rivers, and streams. If information on the finding of Zelph is helpful, then we should be grateful that this little-known event in Mormon history happened. Still the message on the pages of the Book of Mormon that Jesus is the Christ and that its prophets were real people who spoke for God is far more important than the location of Zarahemla and Desolation.

I agree with historian Don Cannon that "we not reject the story of Zelph and its relationship to Book of Mormon geography;" rather, we should be aware of how the story came to us as well as how it became a part of the history of the church.¹⁹ I hope that someday we will understand more fully just how Zelph, Onandagus, and others not mentioned in the Book of Mormon fit into the divine scheme of things on this, the American continent. □

Variations in the Sources Used to Reconstruct

	McBride 1834	Martin 1834	Woodruff 1834	Hancock 1834	HC A1 1842–43
Where it took place	Illinois	Pike Co., Illinois	Illinois	West side of Illinois River	Illinois
Day of personal visit	3rd		“we visited,” implied not with large group	“Many went: I did not go”	
Day Joseph visited					3rd, morning, with several others
Multiple mounds?	Yes	Yes	Yes		Had visited several
Who built mounds			Probably Nephites and Lamanites		
Mound height			300 ft. above river	about 100 ft.	“high” overlooking prairie
Bones seen on surface					Yes
Altar seen?					Stones presented appearance of 3 altars
Motive in digging		Curiosity			
Who dug	Joseph	We	Several of the brethren		
Where dug on mound		Top			
Dug how deep		About two feet			About one foot
Remains found	A skeleton	The bones of	A body, bones of a man	Some bones and a broken arrow	Skeleton and arrow
Name of remains found	Zelph		Zelph		Zelph
Was Zelph a warrior?	A great warrior		Yes	When young, great warrior	Chieftain
Was Zelph righteous?	A man of God, prophet	A mighty prophet	A great prophet		Great prophet
Who was Zelph fighting under?	Omandagus		Onandagus		Onendagus; king and a good man

The Story of the Finding of Zelph

Kimball 1845	<i>Times & Seasons</i> January 1846	Woodruff 1850	George A. Smith 1857	Woodruff 1893
On bank of Illinois river	Illinois		Illinois	Ohio
3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd, "some of us visited"	
3rd, "with Joseph"	3rd	3rd	3rd, with many others	
	Yes	Yes		
	Ancient inhabitants of this country	Ancient inhabitants of this country		
Several hundred ft. above river		Very high, 300 ft.	On a bluff, about 300 ft. high	Very high
Yes	Yes	Yes		
Appearance of three altars	Yes	Three altars		
Felt prompted		Joseph told them to		Joseph said to
	Top	Top		Halfway down
About one foot	One foot	One foot		Little more than six inches
Almost entire skeleton, arrow	Skeleton	Skeleton	Some bones	Skeleton of a man
Zelph	Zelph	Zelph		Zelph
Officer	Chief	Yes		
	Yes	Warrior, prophet. Joined the Nephites		
Onandagus	Omandagus, a prophet	Onandagus, great warrior, prophet		Onandagus

- mighty factors in the achievement of God's purposes" (Roberts, *New Witnesses*, 2:vi–viii).
47. "A Plea in Bar of Final Conclusions," *Improvement Era* 16, February 1913, 313.
48. *Ibid.*, 309.
49. See "Originality in the Book of Mormon," *Improvement Era* 8, September 1905, 801–15; October 1905, 881–902.
50. *New Witnesses*, 3:503–4.

What Is The Significance Of Zelp In The Study Of Book of Mormon Geography?
Kenneth W. Godfrey

1. *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, comp. and ed., Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 324.
2. Reuben McBride, Diary, 3 June 1834, LDS Church Archives. For a detailed account regarding McBride's diary and the fact that it duplicates itself, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, "Zelp," *BYU Studies* 29/2 (1989): 34.
3. Moses Martin, Diary, LDS Church Archives.
4. Wilford Woodruff, Diary, LDS Church Archives. This entry is on a page headed "May 8th, 1834." See also Scott Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* (Midvale, Utah: Signature, 1983), 1:10. John L. Sorenson, in a letter to the author, observes that the only period when an Indian might be known even approximately from the Rocky Mountains to the eastern part of the continent is likely limited to the Middle Woodland Period or Hopewell culture dating within the limits A.D. 1–500. It is possible, though less likely, that something of the same situation of widespread, interregional communication could date to the Mississippian Period, A.D. 1300–1600. It is of course also possible that the Zelp burial, which was near the surface at the mound's top, dated considerably later than the period of mound construction. For information regarding connections between Mesoamerica and the Hopewell Indians, see James B. Griffin, "Mesoamerica and the Eastern United States in Prehistoric Times," in *Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 4:111–31; David S. Brose and N'omi Greber, *Hopewell Archaeology* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1979). Onandaga is the name of a tribe of Indians that belonged to the five-nation confederacy of the Iroquois who occupied upper New York State. See John Mohawk, "Origins of Iroquois Political Thought," *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 3 (summer 1986): 16–20.
5. Heber C. Kimball, Autobiography, LDS Church Archives. This was probably written after the Saints had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley. There is evidence that the autobiography was taken from *Times and Seasons* 6, 1 February 1845, 788.
6. George A. Smith, Journal, 2 June 1834, LDS Church Archives. The following note was appended: "a narrative of which is published in the Church History."
7. Joseph Smith, *Manuscript History of the Church*, Book A-1, 3 June 1834, LDS Church Archives, see n.1, addenda, p. 5. A second copy of the same material known as "Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-2," was apparently written entirely in the hand of Wilmer Benson. It differs from the Richards version in a dozen details of spelling, punctuation, and phrasing, but only two dif-

- ferences are substantive. Where Richards describes Zelp as "a man of God," Benson puts "a son of God," and Richards's "a great struggle with the Lamanites" reads in Benson, "the last great struggle with the Lamanites."
8. *Times and Seasons* 6, 1 January 1846, 1076.
 9. Joseph Smith, *He Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902), 2:79–80. Compare 1948 edition, pp. 79–80. Fletcher B. Hammond states that Preston Nibley, Assistant Church Historian, had authorized him to say that "the 1904 edition of the Documentary History of the Church, Vol. II, at pages 79 and 80, correctly reports the 'Zelp' incident, and that that part of the 1934 [1948] edition of the same history which differs from it is erroneous. That is to say that the Prophet Joseph did not say: 'Onandagus who was known from the hill Cumorah, or, eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains'; but he did say: 'Onandagus, who was known from the eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains'; he did not say Zelp was killed 'during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites, 'but he did say Zelp was killed in a battle . . . during a great struggle with the Lamanites.'" However, as we have shown previously, it is impossible to know exactly what Joseph said on these matters. Therefore, even Preston Nibley's educated statement may attribute more to Joseph Smith than the facts warrant. Fletcher B. Hammond, *Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing, 1959), 103, see pp. 100–103.
 10. See John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, 2 vols., ed. Richard L. Predmore (New York: Dover, 1969).
 11. Letter of Joseph Smith to John M. Bernhisel, 16 November 1841, in Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 502. For a discussion of other journal and diary entries concerning the possible location of Book of Mormon lands, see Ross T. Christensen, "The River of Nephi: An Archeological Commentary on an Old Diary Entry," *Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* 158 (December 1984): 1–9. Christensen discusses some diary entries of Charles L. Walker, Reuben McBride, and Levi Hancock, and then treats the topic "How Much Did the Prophet Know?" (about Book of Mormon geography and archaeological claims).
 12. See Donald Q. Cannon, "Zelp Revisited," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Illinois*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995), 107.
 13. See, for example, John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 8–23; John E. Clark, "A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 20–70. Even though most events of Nephite history may have taken place within a relatively small area, it is evident that cultural transmissions radiated out from Central America, both to the north and to the south; see "Mesoamericans in Pre-Spanish South America," in John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 215–17, and "Mesoamericans in Pre-Columbian North America," in Welch, ed., *Reexploring*, 218–20.
 14. George Q. Cannon, "Editorial," *Juvenile*

- Instructor* 22/4 (1887): 221.
15. B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God II* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1951), 3:501–2.
 16. This information was shared with me by John L. Sorenson, in a letter dated 1 June 1999.
 17. "Book of Mormon Students Meet," *Deseret Evening News*, 25 May 1903, 7.
 18. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), see 3:232–36.
 19. Cannon, "Zelp Revisited," 109.

Out of the Dust

1. "Are the Jaredites an Extinct People?" *Improvement Era* 6, 1902–1903, 43–44.
2. See *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 73.
3. Based on Peter Kendall, "Answers Surface for Lake Enigma," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 February 1999.
4. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., "Over the Transom: Three more Arrowheads," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (May/June 1999): 42–43.
5. Matthew Roper first noted the name Aha. John A. Tvedtnes drew the article to our attention.
6. Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 198.
7. See John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 414–17.
8. Edward H. Ashment, "The Book of Mormon and the Anthon Transcript: An Interim Report," *Sunstone* 5, 1980, 29–30; Ariel L. Crowley, "The Anthon Transcript," *Improvement Era* 47 (1944): 542, 576–83; Crowley, "The Anthon Transcript and the Maya Glyphs," *Improvement Era* 55, 1952, 644–45; and Carl Hugh Jones, "The 'Anthon Transcript' and Two Mesoamerican Cylinder Seals," *Society for Early Historic Archaeology Newsletter* 122 (September 1970): 1–8.
9. For the alphabetic signs, see G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 6. On the history of the language, see John L. Hayes, "Arabic," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric M. Meyers et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:166–69.

Credits: In the previous issue (8/1), the painting of a New Zealand Maori settlement used on pages 4–5 was *The Time of Kai* by Gottfried Lindauer 1907, oil on canvas. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Mr. H. E. Partridge, 1915. We appreciate Louis Midgley's facilitating our use of this illustration. In the same issue, the pictures on pages 44–45 and 47 were taken from a mural by Diego Rivera in the National Palace in Mexico. Used with the permission of Dolores Olmedo.