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## Times and Seasons: An Archaeological Perspective on Early Latter Day Saints Printing

### ABSTRACT

The Mormon experience in early newspaper printing paralleled the common fortunes of the church and its followers from the founding in 1830 to the fragmentation in 1846. These quasi-official extensions of church doctrine and practice were highly effective in publicizing the new religion.

The most influential of several Mormon newspapers—*Times and Seasons*—was printed in four successive shops at three locations in Nauvoo, Illinois, from June 1839 to May 1846. Their locations and sequence, two of which were in dispute, drew upon historical sources, architectural remains, and patterned artifact distributions.

Printing types and line-of-type separators were distributed horizontally in such manner as to indicate strongly that the first two shops were in two successive buildings on the same site.

Type sorts excavated, compared to expected frequency sort from standard fonts, suggested a non-random loss-discard situation for some letters related to subject matter of *Times and Seasons*.

### Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), is one of the most successful of various religious groups originating in America. From humble beginnings at Fayette, New York, in 1830, the church gained converts rapidly as it found successive, but temporary, homes at Fayette; Kirtland, Ohio; Independence and Far West, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois. After fragmentation at Nauvoo in 1846, the followers of Brigham Young settled the valley of the Great Salt Lake in what is now Utah, where the LDS Church has exercised strong religious and secular influence ever since. Its members commonly refer to themselves, and are so referred to by others, simply, as Mormons.

Those who were faithful to doctrines of the church founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., did not join

the epic trek to the West but remained at Nauvoo or were scattered to various places after 1846. Several congregations were formed and remained more or less viable through the years. In 1868, a son of the founder, Joseph Smith III, exercised his conviction, shared by many others, that he was his father's rightful heir to the church leadership. He effected a restoration of the original doctrine and practice. Thus was born the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). Today, it is a strong organization with world headquarters at Independence, Missouri. Its members commonly refer to themselves simply as Saints.

### The Missouri Experience

All Latter Day Saints, whether now LDS or RLDS, throughout their history have placed great faith in the printed word. They have depended on it, particularly in the early years, to support missionary activities of the church and, in later years, to report and analyze worldly matters as well. But it was an intense preoccupation with spiritual service to the Saints that caused the earliest Mormon printing not only to set the pattern for what was to come but also to sow the seeds of discord between Mormons and non-Mormons (Banks 1948:1-2).

*The Evening and the Morning Star* was begun in June 1832 at Independence, Missouri. It was the first newspaper to be published by the Saints, just two years after the founding of the church. It was also among the first newspapers in Missouri, coming only 24 years after Joseph Charles' *Missouri Gazette* (1808-1818), the first paper in St. Louis, then the capital of the territory.

In the fall of 1831, soon after the first contingent of Saints arrived at Independence, it was reported at a church conference at Hiram, Ohio, that the frontier community had no printing press and no church. Church leaders at the conference instructed W. W. Phelps, a poet-journalist-editor of Canandaigua, New York, and recent convert to the faith, "to stop at Cincinnati on his way to Missouri from

## Shell Buttons, Blanks and Cut-outs

A home industry making shell buttons undoubtedly existed at Nauvoo, as indicated by the occurrence of numerous fresh water clam shells with cut out portions, undrilled button blanks, and completed buttons (Figure 25 R-S). Species range in size from a tiny disk 7 mm in diameter having four holes to larger ones up to 22 mm in diameter.

Similar complexes occurred at the Homestead Summer Kitchen site (Bray 1972) indicating a home industry there. Although one might assume that a home button industry would be confined to the earlier period of occupation, it seems probable that this one extended well into the 20th century as both cut-outs and blank buttons occurred in the basement fill of building 1—deposits dating from the 1920s and 1930s. These were carried from elsewhere, but it is doubtful whether they were appreciably older than the time of filling.

Shortly before publication of this paper, it was learned that a Mr. Knipe, an older resident of Nauvoo, according to his own testimony, cut shell button blanks one winter during the Great Depression. The cutting rig he used was apparently not complemented with a drill jig for drilling holes—he sold the blanks to a button manufacturer.

## Glass Buttons

There are three 2-hole and four 4-hole specimens. Five are plain white undecorated. One has a painted reddish band on the periphery, and another has a line of adjacent slashes around the periphery.

## Iron Buttons

Two overall buttons comprise this group. They are almost indistinguishable because of rust.

## ✓ Glass Beads

These are all faceted: four blue and two green. One specimen is 18 mm long and 10 mm in diameter; the other blues range from 4 to 6 mm in diameter. Two of these occurred in the basement fill and are not included in Table 8.

## Silver Finger Ring

This is a 5 mm-wide band with “sterling” stamped on the inner surface. The outer surface has the stamped initials I.A.H., on either side of which is a simple floral wreath. The ring is for a male finger. It is, perhaps, only a coincidence that the initials are the same as those of Isaac A. Hill, a pioneer brickmaker at Nauvoo.

*The Household*

## Ceramics

Analyses and discussions of Nauvoo ceramics have appeared in previous reports (Bray 1972; Waselkov et al., 1975). These are available in microfiche from the University of Missouri. Major ceramic types from Nauvoo block 149, lot 3 are presented in (Table 7). A selection of characteristic types are illustrated in Figure 25A-Q. Those from the basement of building 1 are not included—they are practically all 20th century types.

The ceramics recovered from the excavations outside the basement included a wide range of 19th century decorative and paste types. Numerically, the whiteware—latest of the creamware-pearlware-whiteware continuum—exceeded all others with 697 sherds. This is in contrast to some other English ceramic assemblages at Nauvoo which tend to be weighted on the side of pearlware paste

O-P, Bisque (unglazed porcelain) arm and leg from doll (German? ca. 1875); Q, Salt glaze, gray stoneware (American ca. 1860-1900); R, Fresh water clam (*Unio* sp.) with portion cut out for manufacture of button; S, Shell cut out and blank shell button; T-V, Bone buttons; W, Wm. H. Harrison presidential campaign medal—1840; X-Y, Hard rubber buttons—Goodyear's patent; Z-Z', Gilt buttons with stamped legends on reverse; Z'', Lead-face military-style button.