

# Plates And Characters

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## Note From The Author

This is independent research that I've done for my own personal knowledge, and does not necessarily represent the views of anyone associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon plates in Brazil. I thought others might find it of value, so feel free to share it with anyone who might be interested. I have links to my sources for the major items within the paper, and there are a complete list of references at the end. For questions or comments, you can email me at [SealedPortion123@gmail.com](mailto:SealedPortion123@gmail.com).

## I. Introduction

In March 2018, a group of eight men from several different parts of the Restoration declared to the world that they had held the Book of Mormon plates, recently revealed by the Angel Moroni to a man, Mauricio Berger, in Brazil. Mauricio's task is to translate the first part of the sealed plates, which will reveal all things necessary for the saints of the Lord to live together in Zion, corresponding with the beginning of the second invitation and the commencement of the work of the Father.

This has brought a great deal of excitement to the Restoration, as well as some uncertainty among some Saints. One claim that has been made which warrants further investigation is that the last page of the plates held by Mauricio bears a striking resemblance to a forgery of the Anthon transcript produced by Mark Hofmann in 1980. The allegation is that the plates were fabricated based on Hofmann's forgery.

To summarize the findings, a number of different copies of the characters from the Book of Mormon plates were created in the 1800's. The Whitmer Caractors transcript, which is commonly seen today, is not what Martin Harris took to show Professor Anthon. The whereabouts of the real Anthon transcript are unknown. In Hofmann's confession, he

admitted to combining different documents to create his forgery, and the evidence shows that he must have used three main documents: (1) Whitmer Characters transcript, (2) 1844 Placard/The Prophet transcript, and (3) a copy of the Anthon transcript. The Anthon transcript is presumably nearly identical to the Book of Mormon plate from which it was copied, so any features that Hofmann took from the Anthon transcript would show up in the pictures of the Plates. Features that Hofmann invented in his forgery would not be on the Plates. These can be identified and proven.

## II. Historical Background

The historical record indicates that multiple copies of the Book of Mormon characters were created, shown to various people, printed in newspapers, etc. The following is a summary of what is written in the Joseph Smith Papers Project on this subject (<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-2-copies-of-book-of-mormon-characters-introduction/1>)<sup>1</sup>:

We know that Joseph Smith Jr had the plates from September 1827 to June 1829, during which it is recorded that he made at least two copies of characters, plus we have later accounts of other copies. *“Accounts apparently describing different documents may in fact be describing the same document in various stages of completion; in other words, one eyewitness may describe a document that was later added to and described differently by someone else. Similarly, accounts that seem to describe the same document may refer to similarly formatted documents with different content.”*

- Martin Harris took a copy to Philadelphia and New York (Anthon transcript).
  - Joseph Knight Sr. recalled that Joseph’s wife Emma helped produce a document containing the characters.
  - David Hale (Emma’s brother) indicated that his brother Reuben “assisted Joe Smith to fix up some characters such as Smith pretended were engraven on his book of plates.”
  - John Clark, an Episcopalian pastor in Palmyra, was shown a document by Martin Harris with characters from the plates.
  - Palmyra printer Orsamus Turner said Martin Harris showed Turner’s informant an untranslated copy of the Book of Mormon title page.
  - Lucy Mack Smith (Joseph’s mother) wrote that Joseph had transcribed the Egyptian alphabet from the plates.
  - A Palmyra resident remembered seeing characters from the plates exhibited publicly.
  - Joseph showed copies of the characters to visitors such as Michael Chandler and Reverend George Moore.
- (Source: [Joseph Smith Papers Project](#))

## III. Anthon Transcript

In 1828, Joseph Smith copied some of the characters from the plates and gave to Martin Harris to take in search for “the learned”. Harris showed the transcript to Professor Anthon in New York. Harris came away from the meeting convinced that the characters were authentic, but Anthon later tells quite a different account. Some of the key details regarding the characters and arrangement were recorded in several letters that he wrote:

(Source: <http://www.fullerconsideration.com/sources.php?cat=HP-FTC>)

Charles Anthon Letter to E.D. Howe, Feb 17, 1834:

*This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were **arranged in perpendicular columns**, and the whole **ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments**, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calender given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived.<sup>2</sup>*

Charles Anthon Letter to Rev. T. W. Coit, April 3, 1841:

The characters were **arranged in columns**, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with **sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects**, and the whole **ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac**.<sup>3</sup>

Even though these letters were written some years after the visit took place, there is no indication that his account of the description of the transcript is in question. The account of the characters arranged in columns and ending with a circle divided into various departments does not match the Whitmer Caractors transcript.

#### IV. Whitmer Caractors Transcript

The well-known "Caractors" transcript is what most people are familiar with. This was held by David Whitmer until his death in 1888. Handwriting analysis shows it was likely originally created by John Whitmer or Christian Whitmer.<sup>4</sup>

The first account of the transcript being in David Whitmer's possession was in 1871.<sup>5</sup> He maintained that his copy of the characters was the original transcript shown to Professor Anthon. However, he also erroneously believed that he had the original copy of the translated Book of Mormon manuscript. Here is an excerpt from Kimball's paper regarding the Book of Mormon manuscripts:

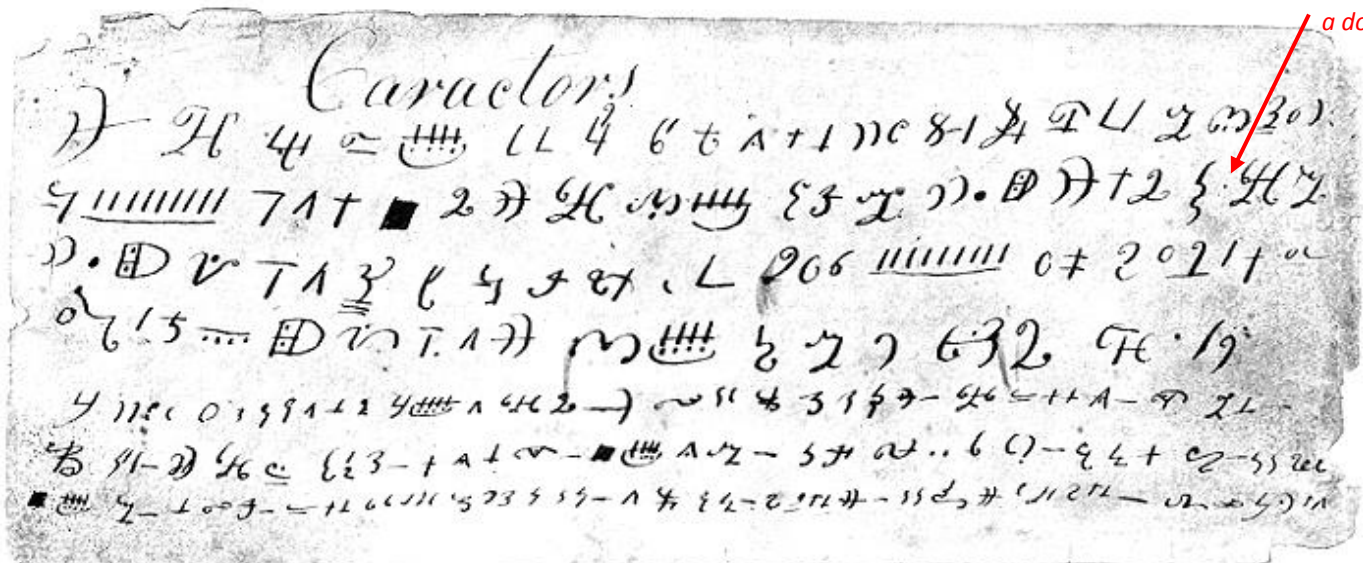
*As protection against loss or theft while it was being printed, Joseph Smith had Oliver Cowdery make a copy of the translation, which copy Cowdery later kept in his possession. (Joseph Smith placed the original translation in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in October 1841, where it was subsequently nearly destroyed by water.) After the death of Cowdery in March 1850, his copy of the translation went to his friend and fellow-witness David Whitmer. ... For many years, Whitmer believed that his copy of the translation was the original. In 1878, however, Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith proved to him that he really had the Cowdery copy. **This is important, for if Whitmer was mistaken about his copy of the Book of Mormon translation, it is equally possible that he was mistaken about the originality of the "Anthon transcript" he claimed to have.***<sup>5</sup>

This is further confirmation that the Whitmer Caractors transcript is likely not what Professor Anthon saw.

The following photo of the Whitmer Caractors transcript is a commonly available copy from the internet. For a high-resolution photo, copyright Community of Christ (CoC), visit the Joseph Smith Papers Project:

<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-2-document-1-characters-copied-by-john-whitmer-circa-1829-1831/1>

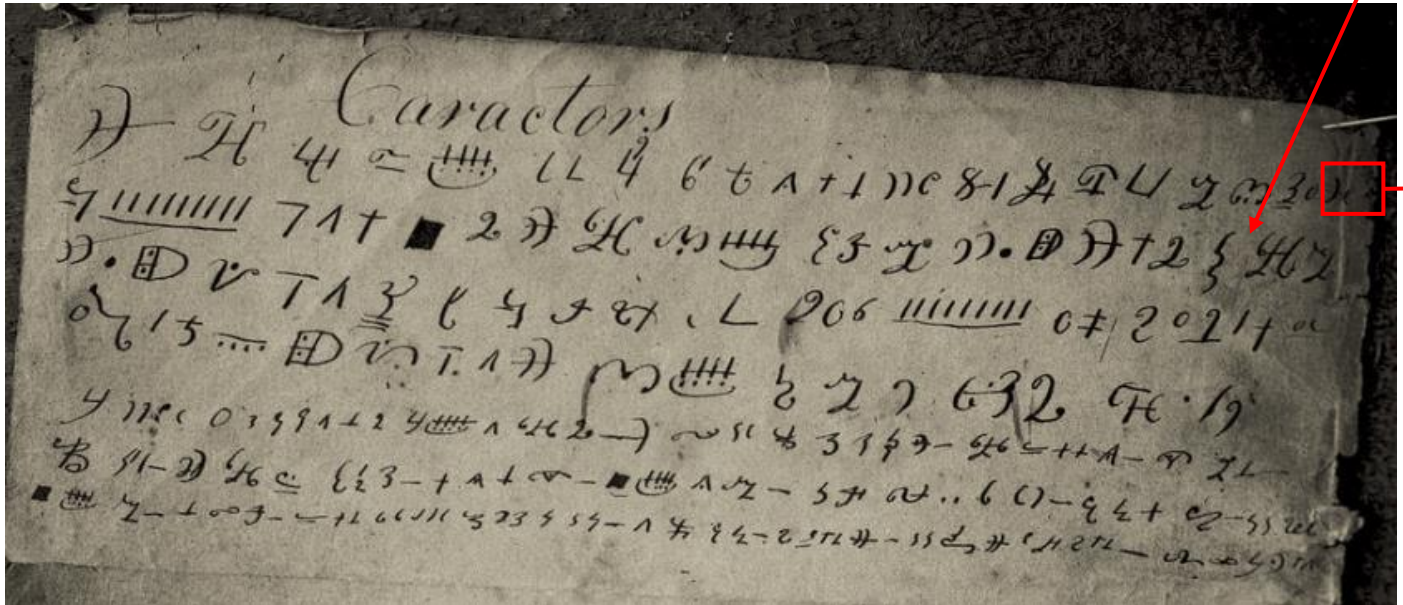
CoC Photo has a dot here



In 2009, the Clay County Museum in Missouri posted online a 19<sup>th</sup> century photo of the Whitmer Caractors transcript. This came from a collection of photos taken by Jacob Hicks, who was described as “the first professional photographer in Clay and Ray Counties (Missouri).”<sup>7</sup> This photo shows the bottom half still attached. It also shows the possibility of one or two additional characters at the end of the first line, possibly a “(” and “2”, that are obscured on the CoC photo. Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/claycountymuseum/3607599278/in/set-72157619435838298>

Photo from the Clay County Museum<sup>8</sup>:

Clay County Museum photo does NOT have dot

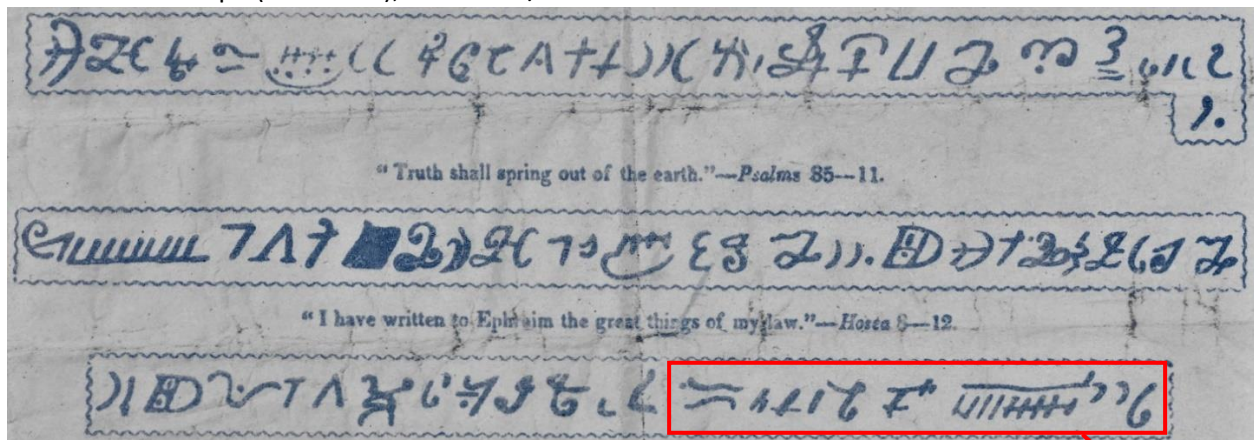


Possibly an additional “(” and “2”

### V. 1844 Placard Stick of Joseph/The Prophet Transcript

In 1844, the church published a broadside or placard titled "Stick of Joseph" with characters from the plates. This largely matches the first three lines of the Whitmer Caractors transcript, but with some differences in individual characters, two additional characters at the end of the first row, and the last half of the last line is rotated 180 degrees.

1844 Placard Stick of Joseph (Broadside), with black/white colors inverted<sup>9</sup>:

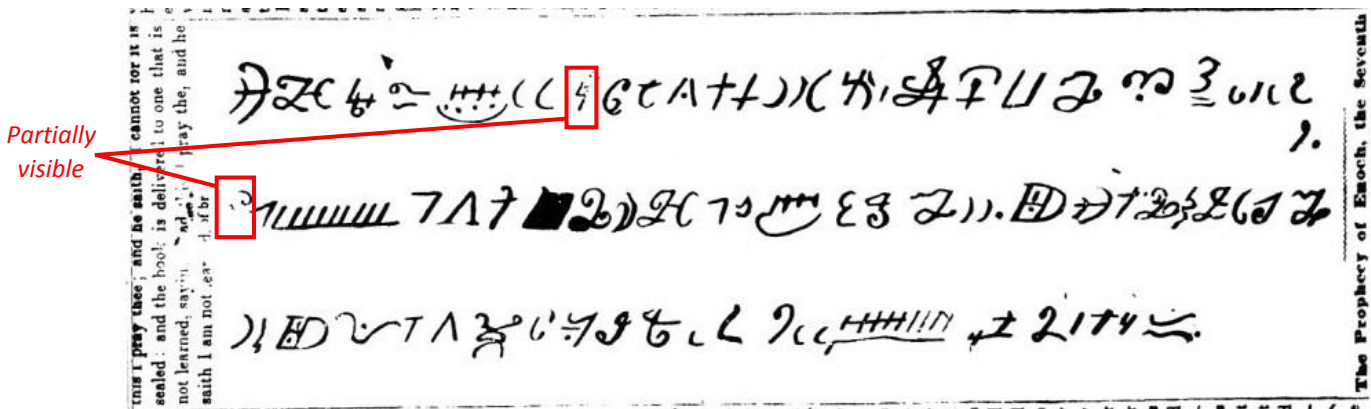


Rotated 180°

Source: <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-2-document-3-stick-of-joseph-1844/1>

A similar copy appeared in a church paper, The Prophet, also in 1844. It is virtually identical, but with a couple of characters only partially visible and the characters on the last line are not rotated.

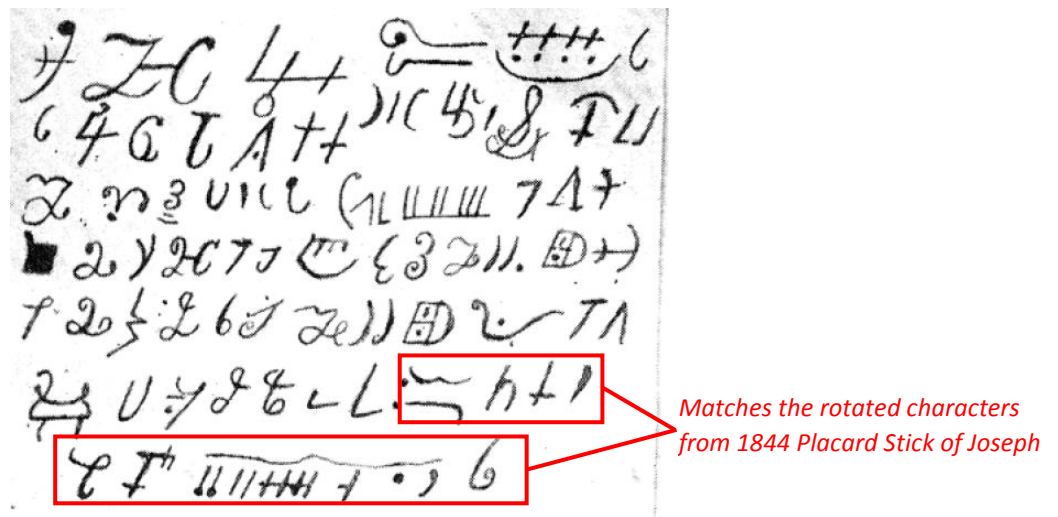
The Prophet, December 21, 1844<sup>10</sup>:



Source: <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/sealed-book-preliminary-observations-newly-found-anthon-transcript>

## VI. Eva Grace Print

A print was found in the photograph collection of Eva Grace Smith Madison, which was made sometime between 1879 and 1892<sup>11</sup>. The original document from which this print was taken is unknown. The characters appear to have been copied from the 1844 Placard Stick of Joseph, since it includes the rotated last partial line.



Source: <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/and-yet-another-copy-anthon-manuscript>

We don't know if Hofmann found this particular print, but the purpose of showing it here is to emphasize the fact that numerous copies, prints, and photos of the characters were made in that time period, and hidden away in various collections.

## VII. Additional Copies

In addition to the transcripts mentioned previously, there is evidence of another copy of the Anthon transcript. Joseph's mother, Lucy Smith, wrote that Mrs Harris obtained a copy of the (Anthon) transcript that Martin Harris took to New York (Source: [History of the Prophet Joseph Smith by his mother Lucy Mack Smith](#)):

*In a short time Mr. Harris returned, and his wife's anger kindled afresh at his presence, insomuch that she prepared a separate bed and room for him, which room she refused to enter.*

*A young man by the name of Dikes, had been paying some attention to Miss Lucy, Martin Harris's oldest daughter. To this young man Mr. Harris was quite attached, and his daughter Lucy was by no means opposed to him; ... She [Mrs Harris] told him, **if he would manage to get the Egyptian characters from Mr. Harris's possession, and procure a room in Palmyra for the purpose of transcribing them, and then bring her the transcript, that she would consent to his marriage with her daughter Lucy.***

*To this, Mr. Dikes cheerfully consented, and suffice it to say he succeeded to her satisfaction, and thus received the promised reward.*

*When Mr. Harris began to make preparations to start for Pennsylvania the second time, with the view of writing for Joseph, his wife told him that she had fully decreed in her heart to accompany him. Mr. Harris, having no particular objections, informed her that she might do so; that she might go and stay one or two weeks, and then he would bring her home again, after which he would return, and resume his writing for Joseph. To this she cheerfully agreed.*

*But Mr. Harris little suspected what he had to encounter by this move. The first time he exhibited the characters before named, **she took out of her pocket an exact copy of the same; and told those present, that Joe Smith was not the only one who was in possession of this great curiosity, that she had the same characters, and they were quite as genuine as those shown by Mr. Harris.***<sup>12</sup>

Not only are the whereabouts of the original Anthon transcript unknown to us, but also Mrs. Harris's copy. She could have made any number of additional copies from her copy. There is speculation that Mrs. Harris was a likely candidate for having stolen the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi from her husband. She could have passed both documents on to anti-Mormon activists or organizations who kept them for future use against the church.

## VIII. Hofmann Forgery

Mark Hofmann produced a forgery of the Anthon transcript in 1980 and sold it to the LDS church. By 1987, he had confessed to numerous forgeries and plead guilty to murder and theft.<sup>13</sup>

A copy of Hofmann's confession was obtained, which revealed a number of interesting findings. Hofmann admitted to using the Whitmer Caractors transcript, and the versions published in the Broadside (1844 Placard) and the Prophet. He did not admit to using any other versions. However, his testimony has been proven to be somewhat unreliable. At least twice in other parts of his confession, he "misremembered" certain events until confronted with the facts, upon which he changed his story. Hofmann's confession, Volume 1, can be downloaded here (140 MB): <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1PXYdhErdSrq4CPxcl--eRLSevMITycr>

For what it's worth, following are some excerpts from his confession on how he created his Anthon transcript forgery (selected questions/answers only, not a complete list):

*Q. You mentioned just a minute ago you talked about you wanted to make some changes from the characters that were in the Whitmer Transcript. What was your idea and why did you go about it that way?*

*A. Well, I wanted it to look like it preceded the other transcripts. In other words, the other transcripts were copied from this one or specifically the Whitmer Transcript. I wanted the chronology, I believe to appear that the Whitmer*

*Transcript, as you call it, came from this copy. I think I made it appear as though the Broadside version and the copy, I believe it was in the newspaper, called the Prophet, came from not the Whitmer copy or my copy but another copy that is unknown which originated from my copy. I believe I tried to make it so that the Whitmer Transcript came directly from my copy as far as the detailed changes or whatever.*

*Q. How did you go about deciding what to do as far as making changes in each specific character?*

*A. In some of the characters I added details which did not appear in the others. The way they trace the chronology of that sort of thing and in fact, I had just recently read a book where they were trying to establish the different versions of some of the Shakespeare works and it can be done scientifically as far as details that one has that the other doesn't. And if the details appear to be mistakes in transcribing or if they seem to flow with the natural rhythm of the character or whatever, that's what I was trying to do.*

*Q. Did you blow it up? How were you able to focus in on each character?*

*A. Someplace I remember there were some engravings of the Whitmer Transcript which I wasn't satisfied with. I eventually found a photograph which would tend to be more accurate. **There were some spots on the Whitmer Transcript that I wasn't sure if they were handwritten or if they were dots or what on the paper. I made that determination by comparing—***

*Q. And basically once again, because I'm still a little confused, to show your document preceded the other one, what did you do as far as the characters?*

*A. For one thing, **I added more detail. I also added spacing.***

*Q. Did you add together some of the characters or did you take apart some of the characters?*

*A. I did both. I believe in the Hofmann version it's drawn with more care and it does not look like it was taken from the Whitmer Transcript. But rather, the Whitmer was taken from it because it has more details, the way the characters are grouped. In fact, I believe that Bachman gives reasons in his article that you've shown me of why the Hofmann Transcript probably precedes the Whitmer.*

*Q. Are these things you were thinking of, at the time you were deliberately doing?*

*A. Yes, **I was purposely adding detail to make it look as though this preceded the Whitmer rather than vice versa.**<sup>14</sup>*

It is interesting that Hofmann mentions trying to make it appear as if there were an additional unknown copy, as if he already knew there was another unknown copy because he had used it. However, the most important part of his confession is the admission of creating additional details to the characters to make it look like his were the original. In the character comparison (Section X), the additional details added by Hofmann are identified. They mainly consist of additional flourishes, loops, feet, tails, etc.

Hofmann also indicated that he grouped certain characters together. This can also be seen pretty clearly on his forgery. One of the main characteristics the Hofmann forgery has in common with the Plates is with the spacing and grouping of characters. As discussed below, Hofmann seemed to like taking more credit than what was actually due him, so this could be another example of that. If he saw the real Anthon transcript (ie the mysterious unknown copy he brought up), he would have been able to get some of the character spacings and groupings from that, and then added some additional ones on his own.

Where would Hofmann have seen a missing copy of the Anthon transcript?

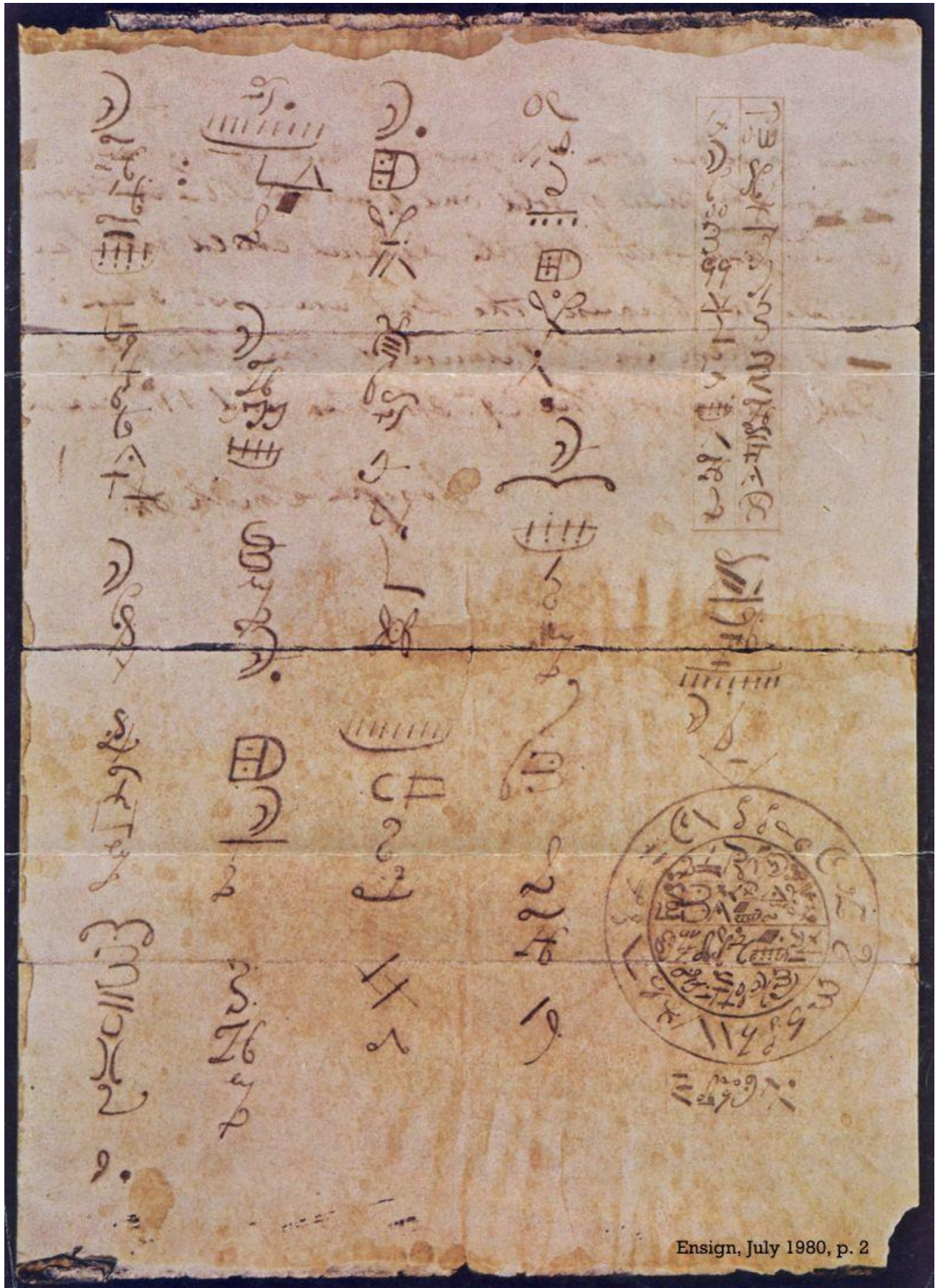
- Hofmann was an avid collector of historical literature, traveling the country hunting for pieces. He could very well have stumbled across the real Anthon transcript, or a copy/photo, or fragment of it, hidden in miles of microfiche in a library archives, or in someone's private collection.
- Perhaps an anti-Mormon individual or organization was in league with him to discredit the church, and had been saving a copy (such as Mrs. Harris's copy) for just this situation.
- It could even have been in a dream.

We have already identified two items that sat forgotten until recent years – the 19<sup>th</sup> century photo of the Whitmer transcript from the Jacob Hicks collection, and the print from the Eva Grace collection. Doubtless there are many additional copies and photo's sitting forgotten in various collections.

At least twice in Hofmann's confession regarding his forged documents, it can be shown that he either misremembered or intentionally lied about certain details. In the forgery of the Joseph Smith III blessing, Hofmann initially denied using Joseph Smith III's patriarchal blessing given by his grandfather as a source. When confronted with the similarities in some of the wording, Hofmann changed his story and admitted that he did actually use it. Another example occurred when Hofmann claimed he made up the name of "Alan Bullock", along with his birthdate, as the person from whom he supposedly purchased the Joseph Smith III blessing. But, it turns out that Alan Bullock was a real person living in Utah at that time, with the same birthdate that Hofmann had used. Hofmann actually had gone to great lengths to prevent the LDS church from contacting this individual, so he knew full well that it was a real person.<sup>15</sup>

We know that we can't trust Hofmann's word as to what he did or didn't do when making his forgeries, but we can look at the evidence. We can compare his forgery of the Anthon transcript to the other transcripts and identify the extra details that he claims to have added, as well as look for any mistakes that he might have made.

Photo of Hofmann's Anthon Transcript forgery<sup>16</sup>:



Ensign, July 1980, p. 2

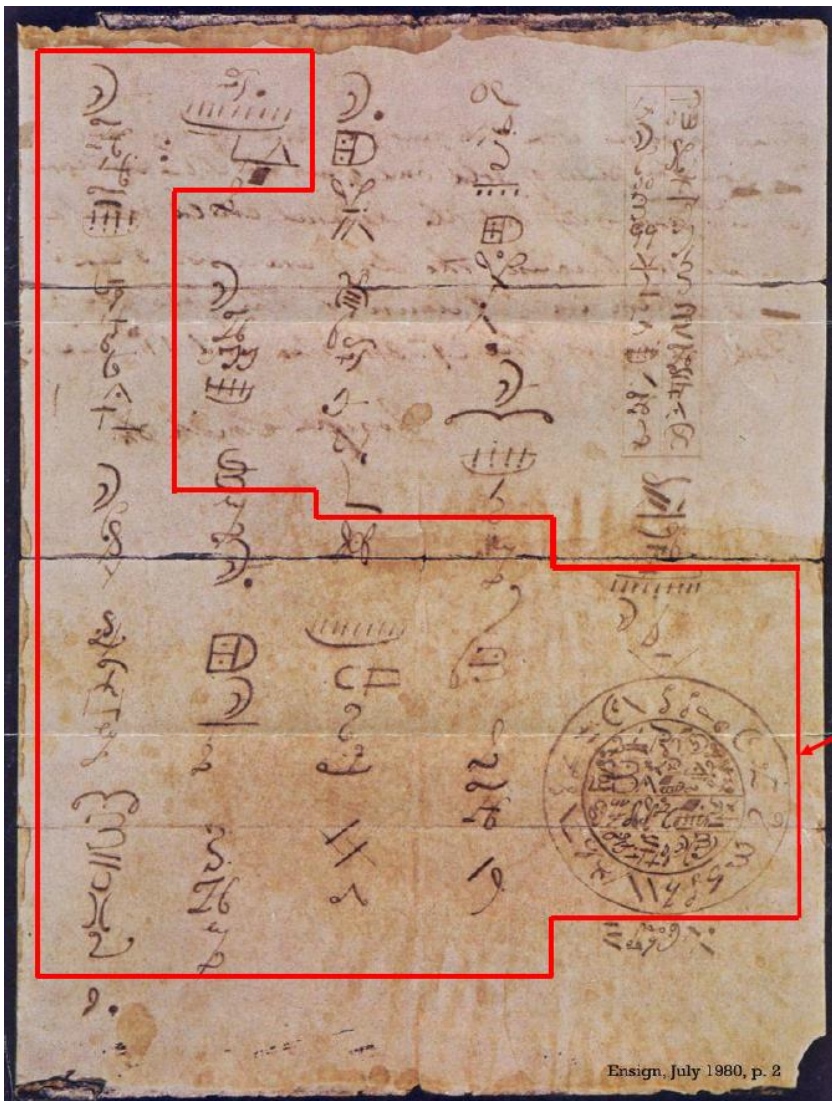
## IX. The Golden Plates

Some photos have been taken of the characters on the Plates in Mauricio's possession and circulated. Much like in Joseph Smith's day, copies of the characters were shown around and published in papers. If Joseph Smith would have had a camera, he probably would have taken pictures rather than making handwritten copies.

Following are three photos of the characters on the back side of the last plate. The 1<sup>st</sup> photo was taken by one of the eight witnesses. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> photos were taken by Mauricio and have since been widely shared.



The following graphic was provided by one of the eight witnesses showing which parts of the plate are in common or partially in common with the Hofmann Forgery. On the Plates, the area in the top-right corner, outside the red lines, contain different characters and are in horizontal rows.



Only the characters in the red box are on the plate. The orientation is the same.

There are characters on the plate that are not in this transcript.

The plate is taller than this transcript.

There is an elaborate border etched on the plate.

Characters in the seal are significantly different than what is on the plate.

## X. Comparison of All Known Versions

The following pages compare each character from all known transcripts. The additional details that Hofmann added are pointed out, as well as the likely sources of details that varied from the Whitmer Caractors transcript. Obviously Hofmann didn't see the real plates, so **features that are marked as coming from the Golden Plates simply mean they came from the Anthon transcript**, which presumably is nearly identical to the plates. The characters from the "Golden Plates" are only those visible in the pictures displayed in Section IX above.

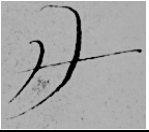



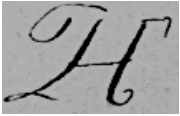



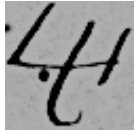

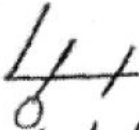

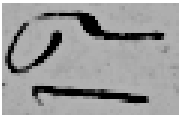



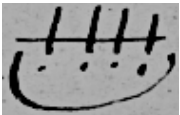

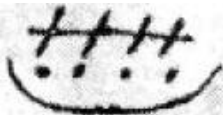
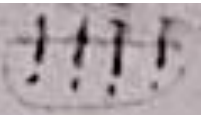



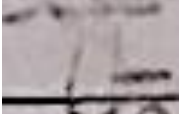
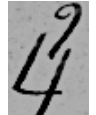

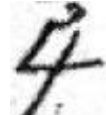

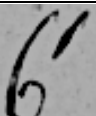



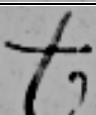




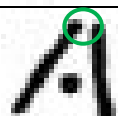
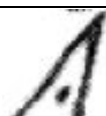
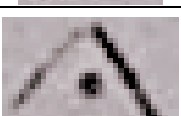
Look for these indicators:

- Green circles indicate features that Hofmann copied from transcripts other than the Whitmer Caractors transcript, and to highlight features that were merged.
- Red circles indicate unique features added by Hofmann.
- Yellow circles indicate characters that Hofmann missed, but are on the Plates (character D17 in the following table).
- Characters that are known to exist on the Plates but are not visible in the provided photos are indicated by "Not visible".
- Characters that do not exist on a particular version are marked with a "—".

The following modifications were made to improve the clarity of the characters for easier comparison:



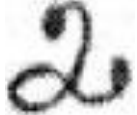




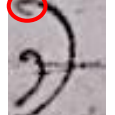
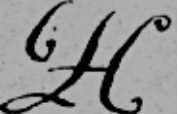


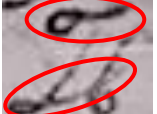
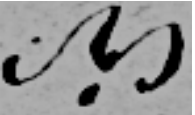


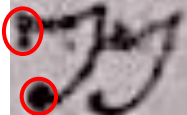
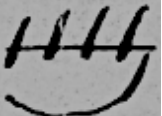


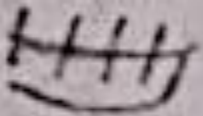
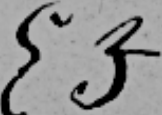


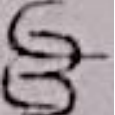


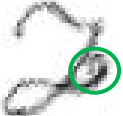
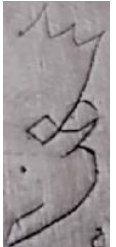

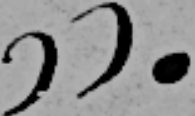
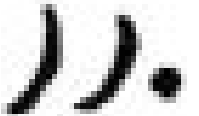

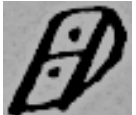








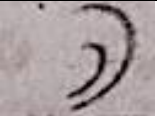
- The backgrounds were made as light as possible, and the characters as dark as possible.
- The colors on the 1844 Placard were inverted.
- The size of the characters were magnified varying amounts.
- The rotated characters on the Eva Grace print were rotated back to the proper orientation.

The Row/Position indicators for the most part are based on the location of the character on the Whitmer Caractors transcript, starting with the top row (A) and left-most character (1).




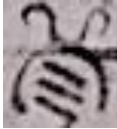
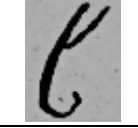
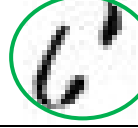

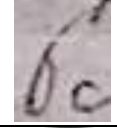
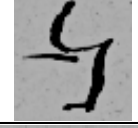




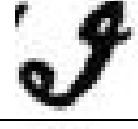
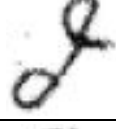






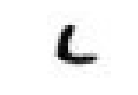


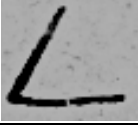
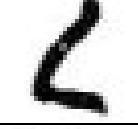


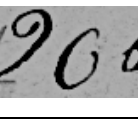






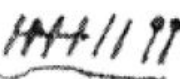
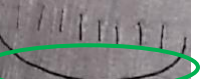
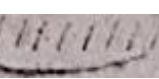
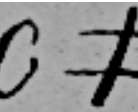


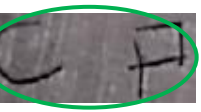
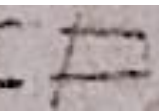
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
A1				Not visible		
A2				Not visible		
A3				Not visible		
A4				Not visible		
A5				Not visible		
A6				Not visible		The horizontal line above Hofmann's character is bleed-through from the other side.
A7				Not visible		
A8				Not visible		
A9				Not visible		
A10				Not visible		

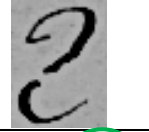


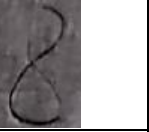

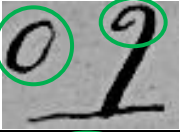



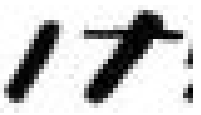

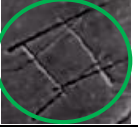
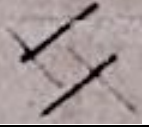


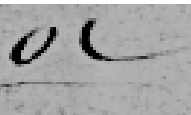



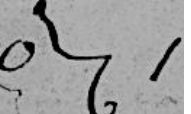

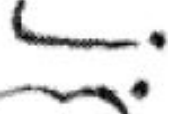

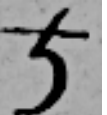

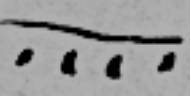

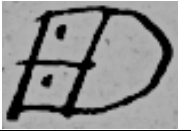

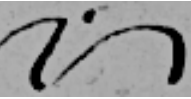

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
A11				Not visible		
A12						
A13						Plates do not have Hofmann's extra detail at the bottom of the "("
A14						
A15						Some similarities between the Plates and Hofmann. Hofmann could be a combination of Whitmer and the Plates.
A16						The "4" on the Plates is significantly different than the others.
A17						Both the Plates and Hofmann have an arc at the bottom of the character. The top of the character is completely different on the Plates.
A18				-		
A19						Looks like the engraver was in a hurry on the Plates (See the section 'Fine Engravings').
A20						



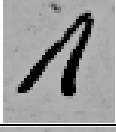

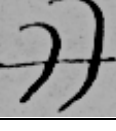
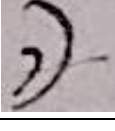
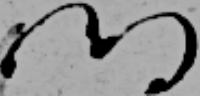

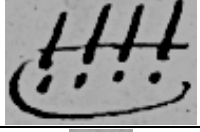
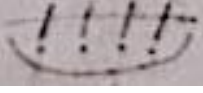
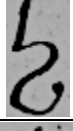










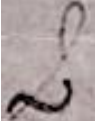
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
A21						The plates do not have Hofmann's added feet on the ends of the "3".
A22				Not visible		
A23				Not visible		
A24				Not visible		
A25	-			Not visible		
A26	-		-	-		
B1				Not visible		
B2				Not visible		
B3				Not visible		
B4				Not visible		



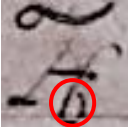


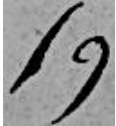

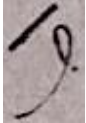
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
B5				—		
B6				—		
B7				—		
B8				—		
B9				—		
B10				—		
B11						
B12						Lower character on the plates is a "3" with tail, but a "J)" on the others. Hofmann could be a combination of Whitmer and the Plates.
B13						
B14						Placement of the horizontal line at bottom of the character matches between the Plates and Hofmann.

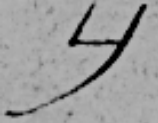

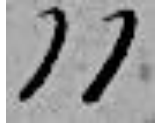



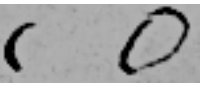



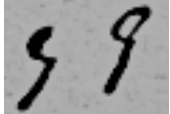
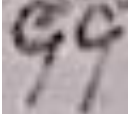
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
B15				—		
B16						
B17						The plates do not have Hofmann's added feet on the ends of the "3". Hofmann mistakenly added the dots.
B18						Plates are only partially visible.
B19	—			—	—	
B20				Not visible		
C1				—		
C2				—		
C3				—		
C4				—		

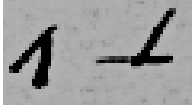


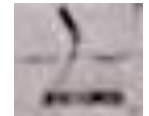
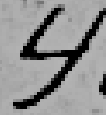

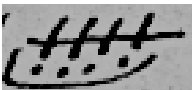


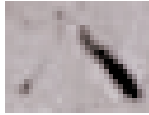
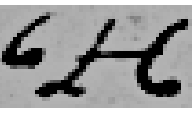

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
C5				—		Hofmann combined Whitmer and the Placard/Prophet.
C6				—		
C7				—		
C8				—		
C9				—		
C10				—		
C11				—		
C12						Character matches between the Plates and Hofmann.
C13						Curved line at bottom of character matches between the Plates and Hofmann.
C14						Characters match between the Plates and Hofmann.

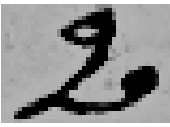

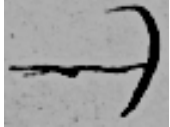

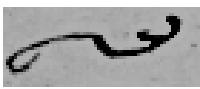
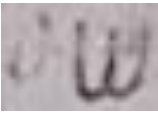
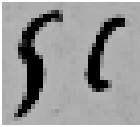





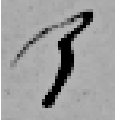

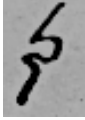





Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
C15						Plates are an "8" and Hofmann is a backwards "S" with added loops.
C16		-	-			Hofmann combined Whitmer and the Plates into one character with a fully closed loop at the left end.
C17						Hofmann likely combined Whitmer and the Plates.
C18	-	-	-			Some similarities in overall shape between the Plates and Hofmann, but the Plates do not have Hofmann's added loops.
C19				-		
D1				-		Hofmann is significantly different than Whitmer.
D2				-		Hofmann is significantly different than Whitmer.
D3				-		
D4				-		
D5				-		





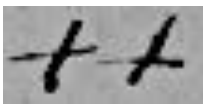

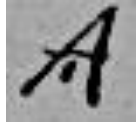
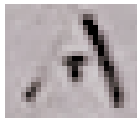





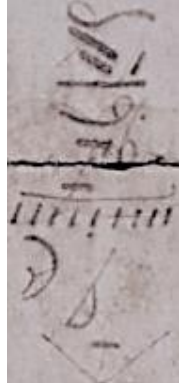
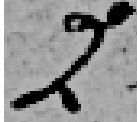
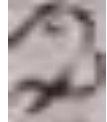
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
D6				—		
D7				—		
D8				—		
D9				—		
D10				—		
D11				—		
D12						
D13						The left character largely matches between the Plates and Hofmann, although Hofmann has a space separating them.
D14						The lower right character on the plates is significantly different than Whitmer and Hofmann. Likely a combination of Whitmer and the Plates.
D15						Hofmann combined Whitmer and the Plates.




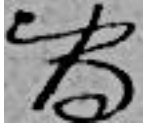

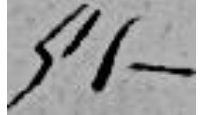



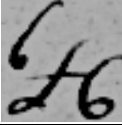
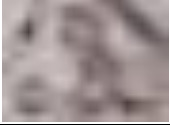




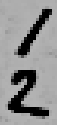


Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	1844 Placard /The Prophet	Eva Grace Print	Golden Plates	Hofmann	Comments
D16						Hofmann's character matches the other H's at A2, B7, B18, E12, E23. Whitmer is likely missing the lower left tail loop, which is present on the Plates.
D17					—	Both the Plates and Whitmer have the small circle character. Hofmann is missing this character.
D18						









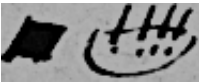

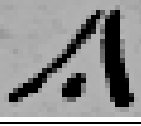

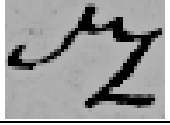

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
E1			First column of Hofmann's small characters.
E2			
E3			
E4			
E5			
E6			


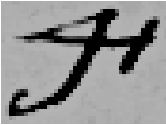
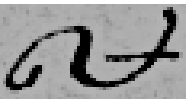






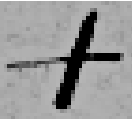
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
E7			
E8			
E9			
E10			
E11			
E12			




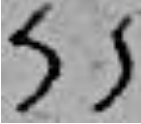
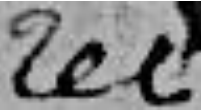


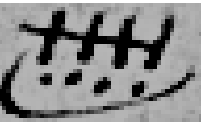
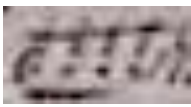


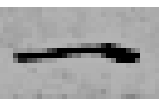
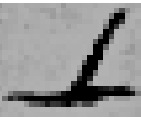

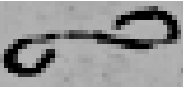

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
E13			
E14			Second column of Hofmann's small characters.
E15			
E16			
E17			
E18			
E19			
E20			
E21			
E22			





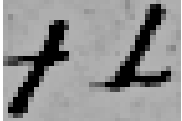
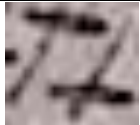





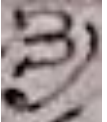

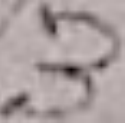






Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
E23			
E24			
E25			
E26			
E27			
E28			
E29			These characters above the seal on Hofmann could not be directly matched up with Whitmer.
E30			Hofmann starts in the inner circle, top left side, going clockwise.


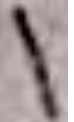
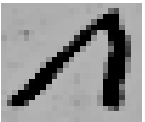









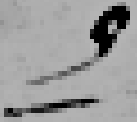

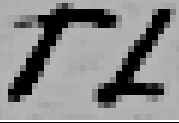

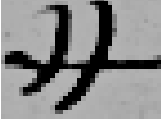



Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
E31			
E32			
F1			
F2			
F3			
F4			
F5			
F6			Beginning here, Hofmann's characters in the central part of the circle are not in order, and difficult to match up.
F7		?	
F8			


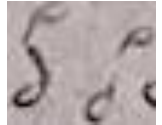
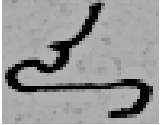
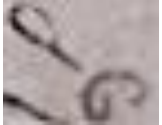
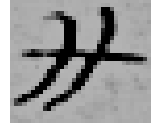

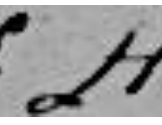

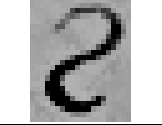

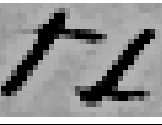



Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
F9		?	
F10		?	
F11			
F12		?	
F13			
F14		?	
F15			
F16			
F17		?	
F18		?	





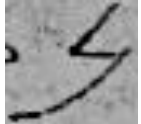



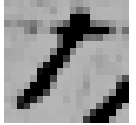


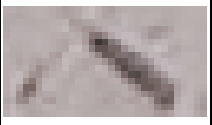
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
F19		?	
F20		?	
F21		?	
F22		?	
F23		?	
F24		?	
F25		?	
F26		?	
F27		?	
F28		?	

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
F29			
F30		?	
F31		?	
F32		?	
G1			
G2			
G3			
G4		?	
G5			Hofmann is at the lower left of inner circle, going counter-clockwise.
G6			

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
G7			
G8			
G9			
G10			
G11			
G12			
G13			Hofmann starts the outer ring on the lower-right side, and goes clockwise.
G14			
G15			
G16			

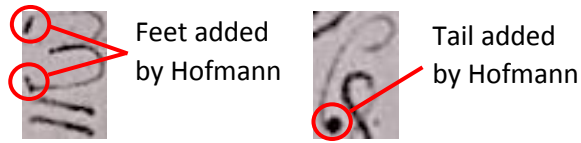
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
G17			
G18			
G19			
G20			
G21			
G22			
G23			
G24			
G25			
G26			

Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
G27			
G28			
G29			
G30			
G31			Hofmann ends on the right side of the outer ring.
G32			Hofmann moves down to the line below the circle.
G33			

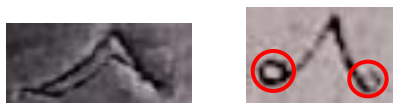
Row / Position	Whitmer Caractors	Hofmann	Comments
G34			
G35			
G36			
G37			
G38			
G39			

## XI. Analysis

- None of Hofmann's additional feet and tails are on the Plates. Examples: A13, A16, A19, A20, A21, B11, B17, C15, C16, C18, D14.



- A couple of characters have a loop in common between Hofmann and the Plates. Examples: D13, D15.
- There are significant similarities in overall character form and placement. Examples: A15, A17, B11, B12, B14, C12, C13, C14, C16, C17, C18, D13, D15.
- Some characters have similarities in overall shape, but yet don't have Hofmann's added details, such as C18.



- On some of the characters, it is apparent that Hofmann combined or merged features from different transcripts. Here are examples of Hofmann combining Whitmer characters with features from the matching Placard/Prophet characters (C5, B18):

Whitmer Caractors		1844 Placard/ The Prophet		Hofmann
	+		=	
	+		=	

- In looking at some of the other characters, it is apparent that Hofmann had an additional source. The following examples show characters where Hofmann combined the Whitmer characters with the corresponding character from the Plates, ie the missing Anthon transcript (C16, C17, B17, D15):

Whitmer Caractors		Golden Plates		Hofmann
	+		=	
	+		=	
	+		=	



- Hofmann missed a dot, which does appear on both photos of the Whitmer transcript and on the Plates (D16/D17):

Whitmer Caractors CoC Photo	Whitmer Caractors Clay County Photo	Golden Plates	Hofmann

- Hofmann added dots that don't belong (B17). He likely got the idea to add dots to this character due to the single dot that exists on the CoC photo. However, the Clay County Museum photo, which pre-dates the CoC photo by 100 years, does not have this dot. The dot is simply a speck, or a later addition, that made its way onto the transcript after Jacob Hicks took his photo. The Plates do not have either of Hofmann's dots.

Whitmer Caractors CoC Photo	Whitmer Caractors Clay County Photo	Golden Plates	Hofmann

If the plates were created based on Hofmann's forgery, how could they have caught Hofmann's mistakes, skipped Hofmann's added feet/tails details, and figured out the unknown characters in Hofmann's character merges? The more likely explanation that fits all the above details, is if Hofmann had an additional source.

## XII. Fine Engravings

The characters in question come from the last plate and were engraved by Moroni. We can conclude this since it is the last plate of the vision of the Brother of Jared, which Moroni wrote and sealed up (Ether 1:98-99 RLDS, 4:4-5 LDS).

A seemingly unexpected characteristic of these characters is that some of them appear rather rough or rushed, not at all what one might expect of "fine engravings", as reported by the Eight Witnesses.



Looks rushed



Likely supposed to be a single line

The witnesses related that two different engraving tools were used on different parts of the plates. The tool used on some plates by Moroni produced engravings that were rougher than the engraving tool used on the rest of the plates, which had smaller, finer engravings. Moroni was also fleeing from the Lamanites while he finished the plates, so it should not be surprising to find less elegance on the plates made with the second engraving tool and produced in Moroni's final years.

### XIII. Conclusion

No amount of research could prove that these plates are the same ones engraved by Mormon and Moroni, and translated by Joseph Smith Jr. But, we can see from the evidence presented that things are not as simple as they might initially appear.

Due to the following reasons, it is the author's conclusion that the plates in Mauricio's possession were NOT created from Hofmann's forgery:

- (1) None of Hofmann's added feet/tails details are on the Plates.
- (2) Hofmann combined some character features from multiple transcripts, including from the characters on the Plates (ie a copy of the lost Anthon transcript).
- (3) The Plates have a character dot that Hofmann missed, which is present on the Whitmer transcript, but there are no other indications that an alleged forger might have used any part of the Whitmer transcript.
- (4) The Plates do not have character dots that Hofmann incorrectly added, one of which is present on the CoC photo of the Whitmer transcript, but not on the 19<sup>th</sup> century photo (which is the more accurate photo).

Hofmann must have seen one of the lost transcripts of the back plate, which gave him the layout and some key details. Possibly he didn't realize that it was an authentic copy, or it was so significantly different from the known Whitmer's Characters transcript, that he could only use parts of it and still come up with a believable forgery. He needed to use all the characters from the Whitmer transcript, or else people wouldn't have believed his forgery was the source. If he had found one of the lost transcripts, why wouldn't he have just obtained and sold that one? It could have been on microfiche or a photo, neither of which would be worth as much as the original document, if anything.

The possibility that someone created a set of fake plates, using the Hofmann forgery as the source for the last page, but deviating so significantly from it (ie the horizontal lettering in the top right, many of the characters, etc), stretches the imagination. They also would have had to have spotted the additional details such as the feet/tails that Hofmann added, and specifically not included ANY of them. If they had spotted the extra feet/tails details based on careful comparison with the Whitmer transcript, then again, why make so many other deviations? The inclusion of character D17, which Hofmann missed, shows they would have been paying attention to details. They would have known that people would use the existing transcripts to compare with the plates and point out all the differences. If they intended people to believe the plates were authentic, they would have made a much closer copy of either Hofmann's forgery or the Whitmer transcript. The alternative explanation that Hofmann saw one of the lost copies of the Anthon transcript would explain every single observation made so far.

If Hofmann saw a copy of the real Anthon transcript, and if it remained hidden from us, there is no scenario in which the real Book of Mormon plates could be presented without people making accusations of fraud. What devious Being could possibly have an interest in discrediting the coming forth of additional records from the Book of Mormon plates? Thankfully for us, someone greater is overseeing this work and it will continue to roll forth until it fills the whole earth.

*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.*

*Isaiah 28:10-11*

## XIV. Appendix A

### Whitmer Caractors Transcript Source

The first four lines of the Whitmer Caractors transcript contains many of the same characters as the Plates, but with portions of lines 2, 3, and 4 not being present on the Plates at all. Due to the number of characters in common, they likely represent phrases and entire sentences that are in common. But, since there are also so many characters not in common, the Whitmer transcript must be from some other part of the Book of Mormon plates. The phrases and sentences in common could talk about any number of topics, such as: the Brother of Jared, the House of Israel, the sealed portion, or an admonition to the reader, etc, any of which could have been copied by Moroni from another location in the plates.

The differences between the individual Whitmer characters and the characters on the Plates could be explained by the Whitmer transcript being a copy of a copy, and/or perhaps Moroni's writing style was somewhat different than his father's – the Whitmer transcript might be a copy of Mormon's writing, while the back plate is in Moroni's writing.

What are the odds that Joseph Smith Jr would have copied the characters (which would become the Whitmer transcript) from another location in the plates, and which just happen to mostly match the back plate? While examining the plates, he could easily have spotted a matching sequence of characters to those on the back plate, and decided to use those to create another list of characters. To some people, spotting matching sequences is intriguing, so it should not be surprising if Joseph Smith Jr noticed and copied the corresponding characters from within the plates (later becoming the Whitmer transcript), as well as copying the characters from the last plate to create the Anthon transcript.

### Method of Sealing the Sealed Portion

One might wonder how Joseph Smith made a copy of the back plate which Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon if the sealed portion had straps around it, as per today's witnesses. The straps would have concealed some of the characters. Per one of the witnesses, the two straps were like a belt that could easily be undone. The main method of sealing the plates were with pins, which still remain on the second portion.

### Orientation, Reading Direction

According to one of the witnesses who talked with Mauricio regarding this topic, the Plates are read Hebrew style, from right to left (RTL), top to bottom. But, the book as a whole is orientated as a Western-style book, with the pages turning from right to left. In a typical Hebrew book, the pages are turned from left to right, with the spine on the right.

This makes the Plates a combination of Hebrew RTL reading direction, but Western style paging turning direction. How odd! We have these words from Joseph Smith Jr.:

*I wish also to mention here, that the Title Page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, **taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection** or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated; the language of the whole running [the] same as all Hebrew writing in general;<sup>17</sup>*

Joseph Smith Jr confirms that the reading direction is RTL as in Hebrew. Then, by indicating that the Title Page was the very last leaf, on the LEFT HAND SIDE of the plates, confirms that the plates he had were also orientated such that the pages turned Western style, right to left.

This can be deduced by several clues: (1) When Joseph said "the very last leaf", he was referring to the last leaf that he translated, prior to the sealed portion. It wouldn't make any sense for him to translate the last page of the sealed portion - not only was the sealed portion not to come out in his day, but if the book was closed, then the last page wouldn't have been on the left or right.

(2) If the pages of the plates were turned Hebrew style, left to right, then in order for the title page to be on the left would mean one of two things - either the back side of the page was blank, with the next plate being the first page of the sealed portion, or the title page was the first page of the sealed portion. Neither of which would make much sense. It certainly wouldn't have taken more than one page to engrave the characters for the title page, since there were multiple printed pages that were translated for each engraved page. If the title page were the first page of the sealed portion, that would have been a hefty block of pages bound together, not a "leaf" as Joseph described.

(3) The best explanation that fits Joseph's words, is if the pages turned Western style, right to left. Then, the title page, being on the back side of the last translated leaf, would lie on the left. The sealed portion would be sitting on the right. There would be no unanswered question of "what was on the back side of the title page?".

## XV. References

- <sup>1</sup> "Appendix 2: Copies of Book of Mormon Characters, Introduction," The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed May 12, 2018, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-2-copies-of-book-of-mormon-characters-introduction/1>
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