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## Beauty Way More Than Skin Deep

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## BEAUTY WAY MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

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**Brant A. Gardner**

Review of Royal Skousen, Robin Scott Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations Volume 3, Part 1: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon 1 Nephi–Alma 35* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2015). pp 575. \$89.99.

*Abstract: All of the volumes in the Joseph Smith Papers series are beautifully presented, with important photographic and excellent typographic versions of the texts. This volume continues by providing this treatment for the Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon.*

An important addition to the Joseph Smith Papers series is the facsimile edition of the Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Produced in two parts, 1 Nephi–Alma 35 and Alma 36–Moroni 10, the facsimile of the Printer's Manuscript provides a color photograph of a page on the left with the transcription on the right. With the commitment to color in the photographs, the editors have also been able to use color to indicate different hands in the writing and editing visible in the manuscript.

The transcription work relies heavily on Royal Skousen's meticulous work on the Printer's Manuscript, also published in two volumes by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (2001). Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen are the volume editors, so it is no surprise that Skousen's work would form a foundation for these volumes.

There was certainly no reason to completely rework what Skousen had already done, but these volumes clearly supersede the earlier volumes. The 2001 typescript was in a non-proportionally spaced font, and printed landscape in a book bound portrait. That made the volume a little awkward to use and the font less reader friendly than that used in

the facsimiles. The major changes are listed in the facsimiles, and for the majority of students and researchers, these volumes clearly replace the early transcripts.

However, there are some details that Skousen listed in his earlier transcriptions that are not in the facsimile. For instance, on the title page, Skousen's earlier transcript shows that an *i* was written over *e* in the word "interpretations."<sup>1</sup> That particular change is not marked in the facsimile edition.<sup>2</sup> As specifically noted in the explanation of the editorial method employed in the facsimile edition:

The transcript presented in this volume is modified from the transcript published by volume editor Royal Skousen as part of his Book of Mormon Critical Text Project. His transcript has undergone adjustments to ensure that the transcription better corresponds with the style guide of the Joseph Smith Papers Project. The transcript is simplified from the transcription in Skousen's earlier publication, but it still represents the nuances of the initial production of the manuscript as well as its subsequent editing.

Generally, Skousen's transcription is more detailed and literal regarding retracing letters, mending particular letters, representing partially obscured letters, and representing ambiguous characters.<sup>3</sup>

Using the facsimile edition is much easier, and the ability to see the photograph clearly adds information. Still, there are data in the earlier volumes that can be useful and should be consulted for serious work on the manuscript.

In addition to the facsimile and transcription, the volume contains informative introductory material. There is a one-page timeline of Joseph Smith's life, a map of his residences, and an essay introducing the Book of Mormon's discovery and translation. While the introductory material provides nothing particularly new for historians, for many readers the open discussion of Joseph Smith's relationship with treasure hunting and the use of seer stones in the translation represent a new openness in the discussion of these topics. Perhaps most importantly, the text has the first officially published photographs of the particular

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1 Royal Skousen, *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Part One* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 48.

2 Revelation and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1, Facsimile Edition, 13.

3 Ibid., xxix

seer stone that was apparently used during the translation of much of the Book of Mormon.

At the end of the second volume are reference materials. The first provides a chronology of historical events related to the Book of Mormon. This is not, however, a speculative reconstruction of the timeline for the translation. That topic is not represented. Finally, there are short biographical sketches of scribes and printers.

These volumes are an essential resource, and are both more elegant and ultimately more usable than Skousen's previous transcriptions, which were until now the most important resource for scholars interested in the text of the Printer's Manuscript.

**Brant A. Gardner** (MA, State University of New York Albany) is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* and *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* and *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community*. He has presented papers at the *FairMormon* conference as well as at *Sunstone*.





