



THE ZARAHEMLA RECORD

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"And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word..." Alma 9:18

MASSIVE GUATEMALA SITE SHOWS GREAT PROMISE

By Raymond C. Treat



Fig. 1—Map of Southern Mesoamerica showing the location of Tikal and El Mirador.

Whenever the Classic Maya Civilization is discussed, attention naturally turns to the large site of Tikal (Fig. 1), the best-known Classic Maya ceremonial center. However, about 80 miles northward from Tikal is the even larger site of El Mirador (also called Mirador) which means "the lookout" in Spanish. El Mirador is located in Guatemala about four miles south of the Mexican border.

Excavations, under the direction of Brigham Young University archaeologist Raymond Matheny, began at El Mirador in early 1979. At the end of the first field season, Matheny and five students presented reports before nearly 400 government officials, leaders and the public in Guatemala City. This was the largest archaeological meeting in Guatemalan history. The

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ATTENTION

This issue of the *Zarahemla Record* is being sent to all members of ZRF and to all members of FRAA (Foundation for Research on Ancient America).

The annual meeting of the FRAA will be held on January 27 at 2:30 p.m. in Partridge Hall, Floor A. Please see page 2 for more details of the meeting.

meeting received national television coverage and front page headlines. Matheny received a standing ovation when he encouraged the government to designate El Mirador as a national park. The cooperation of the Guatemalan government should be a great asset to the El Mirador project.

El Mirador has 12 pyramids and over 200 buildings. Each of the three largest pyramids has a basal circumference of about 3000 feet, which is six times larger than any of the great pyramids at Tikal. The preliminary population estimate for El Mirador is 40,000-80,000 which would make it almost twice as large as Tikal. El Mirador is certainly one of the largest sites known from the southern Maya lowlands. T. Patrick Culbert, one of the current leading Mayanists, lists El Mirador as an example of a massive site along with four others—Tikal, Yaxchilan, Palenque and Copan (Culbert 1973:65). Whether larger sites are found or not, El Mirador clearly was an important city during Book of Mormon times. *Newsweek*, July 16, 1979 quotes Matheny as saying that "It is one of the greatest concentrations of public architecture in the ancient world."

While the existence of El Mirador has been known for a long time, it was only in 1979 that excavations were begun at the site as mentioned above. Sylvanus Morley, the father of Maya archaeology, mentions (Morley 1937-38, 1:102) that El Mirador was first seen by representatives of the American Chicle Company in 1926. (It was in 1921 that George Shufeldt, from the same company, told Morley about the dense habitation throughout the southern Maya lowlands. See the *Zarahemla Record*, Issue No. 1, Classic Maya Population: An Example of Convergence.) The next recorded visit was by an expedition of the Carnegie Institution in 1932 (Ruppert and Denson 1943:49). The Carnegie Institution, for which Morley worked, was responsible for most of the early work in the Maya area. The expedition was only able to stay at the site for a few hours because they were unable to locate a water supply. Ian Graham was next to visit the site. He was able to spend 10 days surveying El Mirador during March and April of 1962 which resulted in the first report on the site (Graham 1967).

A total of 18 archaeologists and graduate students participated in the first field season of the El Mirador project. The group was flown to the site by a Guatemalan

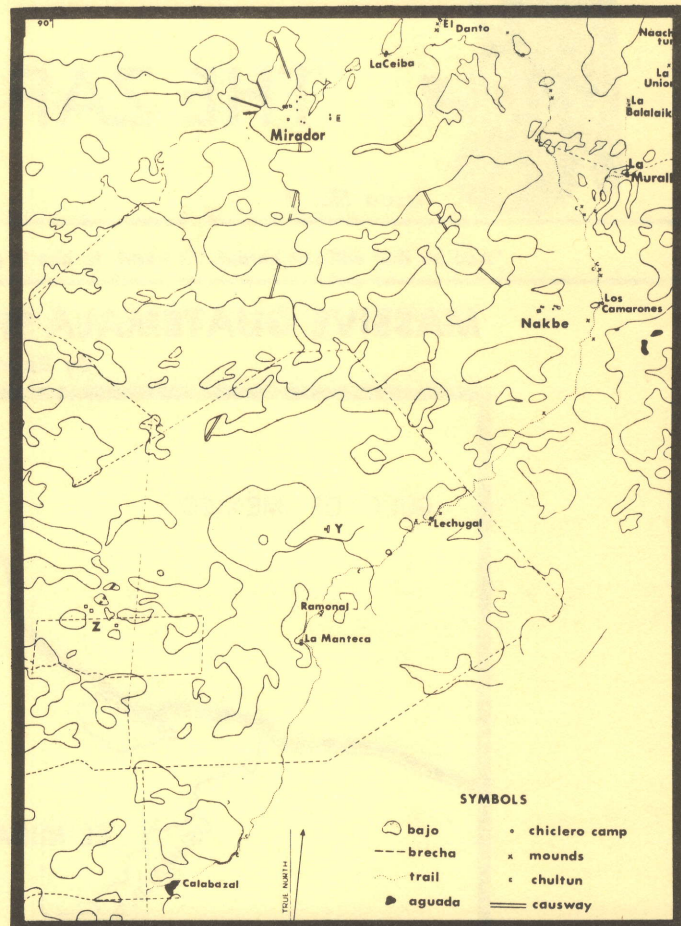
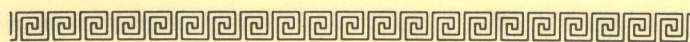


Fig. 2—Map of the El Mirador area (after Graham 1967).

government helicopter. Five students were carried in on the first trip; however, the helicopter was not able to land because the landing pad prepared the year before had grown over by tall brush and grass. The students had to jump about 10 feet into the grass after dropping their gear. They then cleared the pad and waited for the helicopter to return. The helicopter couldn't return, however, because of bad weather so it was returned to use by the Guatemalan army. Then, because of concern for the safety of the five stranded students, the President of Guatemala, General Romero Lucas Garcia, intervened and provided a helicopter to carry in the remainder of the team and their supplies. The airlift was able to resume five days after the first trip. Two students, while they were waiting to be carried in, made a rope net capable of holding 800 pounds of cargo. They also invented a clever drop release which would allow the helicopter to release the load without landing. It took ten days to carry in the remaining supplies. Following the initial airlift, supplies for the expedition were flown into Carmelita (Fig. 2), the nearest jungle village, by DC-3 and then hauled by mule train on a three-day 40 mile trip to the site. One of the objectives of the first season's work was the construction of an airfield at the site to facilitate resupply of future expeditions. Nearly 7000 trees were removed. Most of the trees were very hard wood and many were over 60 feet tall.

Because of the many problems involved, the first season of archaeological work in an isolated jungle area

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FRAA

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Foundation for Research on Ancient America will be held on Sunday, January 27 at 2:30 p.m., Partridge Hall, Floor A, Stone Church. In addition to the business meeting, Patriarch/Evangelist Roy E. Weldon will give an illustrated lecture, "The Deeps of the Three Standard Books."

The FRAA accepted the offer of the Zarahemla Research Foundation to use this issue to publicize the FRAA annual meeting.



I know the Nephite record is true... by Roy Weldon

When I was a teen-ager in high school it suddenly dawned on me that the reason I was an R.L.D.S. church member and a believer in the Book of Mormon was because I had been spoon-fed my religion by my parents from childhood. I reasoned, perhaps correctly so, that the ranch next to my father's in the coast range in northern California was owned by a Portuguese family who were Catholic for the same reason that I was R.L.D.S.—they had been spoon-fed the faith of Catholicism from their childhood. The ranch next to the Portuguese was owned by Japanese who were Bud-dists—again for the same reason I was R.L.D.S. They had inherited it from their forebears.

It then occurred to me, "Why should I be an R.L.D.S. simply because of the happenstance and lottery of life of having been born in an R.L.D.S. home?" While in this frame of mind I asked one of my high school teachers about the Book of Mormon. Her answer indicated Joseph Smith to be a deceiver and the Book of Mormon an imaginary production. About this time I happened to notice a news item of the discovery of a buried city in the jungles of Yucatan which went on to say that the first of these buried cities of an ancient civilization in Middle America was discovered by Stephens and Catherwood in 1839. Thanks to the family altar and the teachings in my home—like a flash I was challenged by the realization that the Nephite Record came off the press 9 years before Stephens and Catherwood's notable discovery and that the Book of Mormon was **ahead of its time** in describing two major civilizations in Ancient America in hundreds of details for which there was little or no validation in 1830.

My mother called me a "bookworm." I spent what little money came into my hands in buying Horatio Alger story-



books, which I intensely enjoyed. Now at 15 years of age I graduated from Horatio Alger to Bancroft's **Native Races** and Prescott's histories of Mexico and Peru. I was thrilled to discover the mounting evidences of the history and authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Now today, December 22, 1979, 65 years later, hundreds of books and 25 trips into Latin America later, I am prepared to say, "I know the Book of Mormon is true." I say I know despite John Dewey and the academic world's downgrading of the use of words like "know", "absolute", and "prove."

I know the Book of Mormon is true for two major reasons—the prophetic and the academic; the direct (spiritual awareness) and the indirect (the scientific evidences);

the primary (witness of the Spirit) and the secondary (the witness of scholarly evidences).

Since 1949 and publication of **Other Sheep**, there have been 11 booklets and books involving the academic approach to this wondrous book of the Restoration involving 147,500 in print including Volume 2 of **Book of Mormon Claims and Evidences** fresh off the press. A number of the above books have had the able assistance of F. Edward Butterworth.

In view of the above facts, it seems well in this brief presentation to deal with the primary, direct, spiritual experiences of why I know the Nephite Record is true.

Punishment for Adultery

Among my many angles of research on the Nephite Record is the Mosaic Law which the Nephites adhered to until Christ's visit to them. I was being shown through the museum of Larco Hoyle in northern Peru in 1949 by a graduate student of archaeology from the University of

(Continued on page 4)

Trujillo, Peru. The exhibits were divided into sections. My guide told me what each exhibit involved such as the animals, products of agriculture, and the diseases they suffered, including a depiction of an operation, all done in pottery of superb coloring and technique. Then came the section on crimes and punishments. Up to this moment, my guide had not singled out any piece of pottery for comment. He then walked over close to the potteries depicting crime and punishments and pointed out a pot with a high spout with a man and woman tied to it. There were specks scattered over the body of this piece of pottery. My guide told me the specks represented stones and the crime was adultery. Immediately I was immersed in the spirit of the Lord and there came over me an intense awareness of the divinity of the Nephite Record.

Elephants - Machinery - Tools

Historians and archaeologists have long been mystified as to how immense stones weighing upwards of 390 tons were quarried, moved and fit together like a bottle stopper as evidenced at Cuzco, Peru and Tiahuanaco, Bolivia.

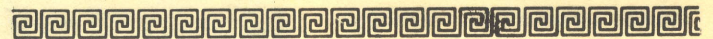
I knew there was evidence of elephants in Mexico but I did not know of such in South America. Elder Francis Anderson and I were being shown through the national museum at La Paz, Bolivia. Our guide was the brother of the President of Bolivia. A huge head of an animal with tusks protruding loomed ahead. Excited, I asked my guide, "Que es eso (what is that)?" Immediately he answered, "La cabeza de un elephante (an elephant head)." Once again as I had come to the end of another long road of research I found the Lord waiting there to flood my soul with the intense awareness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, that the Book of Mormon is true and that Jesus Christ is my Savior and your Savior and the Savior of the world.

Climbing Giengola

On the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico there is a huge flat mountain. It was August, 1953, and there were four of us including Joseph Anway of Rich Hill, Missouri, my son Ward, and Ron Anderson also of Rich Hill. It was the hot time of the year. The humidity was stifling. We were visiting ruins not visited before by Book of Mormon scholars. Our guide in the town of Tehuantepec said, "Regresa cuando el tiempo es mejor (return when the weather is better)." We finally "pesoed" him into being our guide. After wading the Tehuantepec River and walking some considerable distance we reached the base of the mountain. The climbing ahead was steep as a stairway—boulders and brush. Two of the boys were not feeling equal to the climb so it was agreed to leave one guide, an assistant, with the two in the shade while Ron Anderson and myself proceeded up the mountain. Finally we reached the first wall of three walls that surround the unexplored ruins on the mountain—perhaps an ancient Gadianton robber hold-out. After pausing to take pictures, I realized I was totally exhausted and unable to proceed on up to our destination but as our guide got ready to continue the climb I felt the Spirit come to me and I was strengthened to proceed.

It was some two weeks later and the four of us were on a trail over the mountains of southern Guatemala en route to Copan, Honduras. Ward and Joseph Anway were some 100 yards following in the rear. Ron Anderson and I were in the lead. Suddenly Ron turned to me and said, "Roy, remember that first wall up to Giengola?" I said yes. "When we reached that wall, I was totally exhausted but when the guide started to move, the Spirit came over me and strengthened me." We had both experienced the same visitation at the same time. Little had I suspected that Ron Anderson, a senior and miler for the Rich Hill High School, would have been totally exhausted as I was and have the same experience at the same time the Lord had strengthened me.

I testify that again and again as I have come to the end of a long road of researching some specific approach to this marvelous book, I have found my Lord waiting there to flood my soul with the knowledge that the Nephite Record is divine. The overwhelming awareness of the historicity and authenticity of the Book of Mormon lies under my feet like the proverbial Rock of Gibraltar. ■



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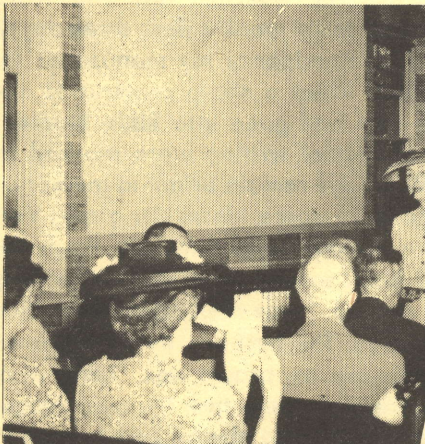
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Zarahemla Research Foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation chartered under the laws of the state of Missouri. This is a non-church sponsored association. A major aim of the Foundation is to provide information and materials to assist in Book of Mormon ministries. ZRF is open to all who desire to improve their understanding and use of the Book of Mormon.

A major goal of this newsletter is to provide a bridge of understanding between the scientific-oriented field of archaeology and Book of Mormon studies. Keeping abreast of archaeological information is a full-time job, hence few people are in a position to devote the time needed to this subject. Yet, there is a wealth of information and enlightenment there that remains to be tapped. This newsletter hopes to draw on the finds of those who are in a position to give time to these areas of research and make this information available to interested church members.

HOW BOOK OF MORMON STUDIES CAME INTO BEING

By Thelona D. Stevens



Thelona Stevens teaching a class in Chicago in 1946 using her new book, *Book of Mormon Studies*.



Thelona at her desk in the auditorium in 1949, where she did most of her writing.

Though reared in a home with both parents members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ, my religious instruction was decidedly limited because we lived in isolation from church privileges most of my growing up years. My determination was to someday establish my own home on a different basis. My companion, of course, would be a Latter Day Saint and we would locate where there were many other members, preferably in Independence, Missouri. These dreams were not fulfilled at first because I married a man who was not a member of the church and our home was established in Miami, Florida where there was then no congregation of the church. This marriage was not contracted lightly. It resulted from a spiritual experience which came following earnest prayer about the matter, and since Fred and I had discussed religion more than anything else during our courtship, I thought the spiritual experience meant that he would accept the church after we were married and all would be well.

When I felt so confident that Fred would accept the church after we were married, I did not take into account my own inability to answer his questions and give him the information which he demanded. Not being able to attend my own church was a decided handicap. I could not take him there and let him learn for himself. When he pressed me for answers to his questions, my inadequacy prompted resentment on my part, and we often had unpleasant words. The awfulness of quarreling over religion appalled me, and one day I determined that it would not happen again. It did not, for Fred just stopped asking questions.

Fred's work as chief steward on Vincent Astor's world-going yacht took him from home often for long periods and great loneliness marked my life. Friends, sorry that I was alone so much, sought to draw me into their activities, but I preferred to remain at home with my young daughter, for the activities which they offered did not satisfy the inner longing I had for God and association with God's people.

I have had very few dreams to which I could attach spiritual significance but one of them came about this time. Through this means came the conviction that I had something special to do regarding the Book of Mormon, but just what and how I had no idea. Lacking circumstances conducive to study, it took me a long time to respond to the decided urgings within to study the Word of God. Finally, one day I was made to realize that I was just drifting along with the world, and that I either had to learn about my church or just give it up. That brought me to make a solemn promise to God that I would study one hour a day, for I would never give up the church I told him.

My resolution to study was actually more than I bargained for, as I did not know where to begin and I was still faced with the problems which had made me defer response to the urgings to study which had been with me so long. My health was extremely poor then; I had no one to study with me; I had no one to help me; I had no teacher. It took me a long time to discover that I had a wonderful teacher—my Heavenly Father!

Strangely enough, though I had had the knowledge given me that I would have something to do with the Book of Mormon, my earliest efforts at serious study were directed to the Bible. My complete inadequacy caused me to write to the Department of Religious Education (so-called then) and ask for materials on the Bible produced by our own church. They answered that they had nothing to offer me! This resulted in my making selections from the index and concordance of my Bible, stories that I might learn in order to teach our young daughter as she grew up. I made a list of such stories, and also listed some quotations that appealed to me which I felt I should memorize. Then I started reading the Bible, starting at the first of it. It was most difficult, for my comprehension seemed so limited and I came to doubt my ability to learn anything until it finally dawned upon me that I had not been asking for God's help. As I prayed to understand (and eventually this prayer included a petition to

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remember what I learned and where I found it), the dreaded hour of trying to study alone gave way to glorious periods of enlightenment and joy in what I was finding in the Scriptures.

Correspondence with the Department of Religious Education from time to time caused Brother C. B. Woodstock, then director of the department, to suggest that if I should develop some outlines or other materials which the church could use, I should let him know. Hence, as my understandings grew, I kept notes and sought to systematize them.

The things I was learning thrilled me and created such a longing to share them that I sought outlets among my friends, but for years they did not show interest in what I had to say and Fred was totally unresponsive for I had failed him when he was willing to learn. Earnestly I prayed that somehow God would permit me to share with others some of those wonderful truths I was discovering.

Years passed, about nine of them, as I continued my searchings and studies of God's Word. Then, quite unexpectedly, Fred wanted to visit Independence. Our trip here resulted in his purchase of some property which he recognized as a good investment. He warned me, however, that he had no intention of living here. Yet, before that year was over, we were living in Independence! Three years later Fred was baptized and later ordained to the priesthood. What happiness for us both, which lasted until his death in 1964.

We had been living in Independence only a few weeks when I badly injured an ankle. I had taught a lesson on Job to a church school class in one of the little tower rooms at the Stone Church. Leaving there, I caught a heel in a crack in the floor and it threw me. I fell down three steps, crushing one side of an ankle. This kept me in bed six months. It was during that time that I put my notes on the Bible together, so when the Department of Religious Education asked for them, I had them ready. Had it not been for that accident, I would not have been ready!

I was just getting around again when I was asked to assist in the Department of Religious Education during an emergency. That "temporary" service lengthened into about twenty-five years, about twelve of which were spent in the field of Leadership Training. Then, at the request of the First Presidency, my attention was turned to work for the blind, and I developed the program which is still in operation, Services to the Blind.

Shortly after joining the Department of Religious Education, they printed **Bible Studies**. It was so well received that they asked me to write something similar on the Book of Mormon. I was overwhelmed at the thought. I could never do justice to that wonderful book, the Book of Mormon! Yet, a warmth in my bosom kept me from refusing to try. A dear friend suggested that I seek a special blessing of the Lord for this work. Accordingly, I went to Brother Hubert Case for this purpose. What a beautiful prayer of blessing Brother Case pronounced upon my head. As I went happily home, I told the Lord it was all good and well to have his servant pray so beautifully for me, and I felt assured of His help, but at the same time I knew that I would have to do something very special myself. Hence, I promised that I would fast from

breakfast until the book was written. Also, I promised never to attempt to work on it without first praying for direction. Those two promises were kept faithfully. The Lord blessed me with stimulation of mind and recall of things which I had studied earlier, and the work progressed rapidly, so that in six months (less three days), I turned over to the First Presidency my manuscript for **Book of Mormon Studies**. What a sharp contrast to the nine years and more that had gone into **Bible Studies**!

Those six months of special writing were marked by experiences which will always remain bright in memory. I saw no visions; I heard no voice instructing me. Yet, definitely I was aware of help beyond myself. From the start the work on the book was unusual in that I simply could not develop an outline. I was dependent upon God for each day's undertaking. The first day that I sat down with my materials before me, my prayer was, "Lord, what do I do now?" The impression came that I should gather together materials for which I had always had to turn to for reference. This assembly of reference material I called "Introductory Readings," which comprise the first thirty-eight pages of the book. That being done, I asked, "What next, Lord?"

I felt that I should begin with the earliest people of whom we have record in the Book of Mormon, the Jaredites. In writing about the Jaredites, certain principles of the gospel which God has used in dealing with all peoples of all ages had to be set forth in lesson form, it occurred to me, which meant that nine lessons comprised that earliest part of **Book of Mormon Studies**. I felt somewhat disturbed at that, for I could not see how I could possibly cover the rest of the Book of Mormon and condense it into a one-year study course. Lacking an outline, I just did not know how to do it.

Seeking the Lord's help, work then began on the Nephite migration and their development in ancient America. It seemed logical to begin with an account of their leaving the Old World and their arrival in the New World, their bringing records, and the writing of their own records. Yet, it seemed to me that there should be a special lesson on the background of the Nephites as to their ancestry. This is the subject of Lesson Twelve in **Book of Mormon Studies**. At the close of a day's work on this lesson, I went to bed and to sleep. During the night I awakened, and one clear thought went through my mind, after which I promptly went to sleep again. The first thing in the morning, this same thought went through my mind again, and I remembered that the same thought had come to me during the night. The thought was, "The Lord gave the Israelites the land which he promised them, their promised land'. But this is a **land of promise**, not only to those whom God would lead to this land, but to the whole world through the gospel." I tried for two days somehow to fit that thought into the lesson I was working on, the ancestry of the Nephites, but it just did not fit in there. Giving up at the end of the second day, I retired after asking God's direction and had just about gone to sleep when my mind was suddenly filled with light and thoughts beyond my own abilities, I well knew. My husband was already asleep and I hesitated to turn on a light and awaken him, so in the dark I grabbed my pencil and pad which were on the night table beside me and jotted down

rather unsuccessfully some of the thoughts which flooded my mind. In the morning, I asked that these thoughts be returned to me so that I might be able to use them as God wished. I was enabled to recall them as I developed the next lesson. This is Lesson Thirteen, "The Land of Promise to the Righteous."

Lesson by lesson, God's direction marked my efforts. Often I felt that I had put everything I knew into a lesson and even said aloud at times, "There is nothing left for another lesson," but always after prayer, thoughts came and the work continued. Not until working on what we term the New Testament of the Book of Mormon was I able to develop the semblance of an outline for the remainder of the lessons.

Finally, one day I called the work finished, and as I sat at my desk with the manuscript before me, I took up the Book of Mormon. It fell open at Ether, the fifth chapter. My eyes lit on verses 39 and 40. I read: "And now, I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood; and then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things."

"In plain humility . . ."

The Christ, who had done everything, exactly as his Father had commissioned him! He had not made one single mistake. He had left nothing undone. He gave his life in supreme sacrifice—the perfect offering after a sinless, perfect life. Yet, he could come to Moroni, a lonely servant of his trying to fulfill his mission under great difficulties, evidently needing ministry. Christ appeared to him, and talked with him "face to face in plain humility." If ever a being had the right to feel self-elation, surely Christ had that right! Yet, he was humble. The awfulness of pride entering into the heart of any human being was appalling. How dare we puny human beings, with all our faults and limitations ever take any honor or glory unto ourselves!

I pray that I shall never forget the experience and the lesson which was etched upon my mind. Actually I feel extremely impersonal about anything I have ever written, for I know full well that God gave me the understanding and whatever ability I have to express these understandings, for which I asked Him. So, no credit is due me, and of course the Scriptures are all his. Paul asked, "What has thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7.) It is all His work. I am only a tool in God's hands, and I am still seeking to be available for Him to use as He sees fit.

Editor's Note: Since the **Book of Mormon Studies** first came out there have been 12 printings, a total of 16,184 copies printed. This book is still available from Herald House. ■

MASSIVE GUATEMALA SITE from page 2

must be mainly devoted to constructing a camp. One thing that was done at El Mirador to improve living conditions was to import a flock of chickens to help reduce the insect

population. The insect repellent produced for "civilized" bugs did not work on the real jungle varieties!

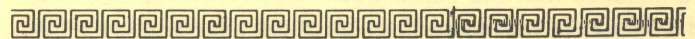
As can be seen from Fig. 2, El Mirador is surrounded on three sides by bajos or low swampy areas. One narrow bajo almost divides the site in half. The west half is a plateau square on three sides. The east half is on a hill.

There have been no corbeled arches, so typical of the Maya area, found so far at El Mirador. This may be because the architecture is not very well preserved, probably due to poorly made mortar. Some mortar was observed to have mud in it. Ian Graham notes that "The structures of Mirador are extremely impressive despite their uniformly ruinous condition. They are certainly the most massive in the Maya area, and there are large constructions in greater numbers here than at any other known site (Graham 1967:45)."

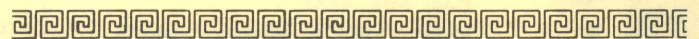
Also of note are the many causeways radiating out from El Mirador. One causeway goes to the site of Nakbe about eight miles to the southeast and another goes to an unrecorded site marked "Z" on the map (Fig. 2), about 12.5 miles south-southwest. Several other causeways fan out northward to unknown destinations. It is not known yet whether or not these causeways, which are visible by air only in the bajo areas, continue as roads in the upland areas. There are many Maya roads known so it is likely they do. For example, there is a 62 mile long Maya road located about 200 miles northeast of El Mirador.

Like many other sites in the southern Maya lowlands, El Mirador apparently begins during the 600-500 B.C. period. If this is the case, then the beginning of El Mirador correlates with the beginning of what is called the Mamom phase. This phase is known from a large part of

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Stories from the Book of Mormon filmstrips are now available through Creative Ministries Inc. Several years ago the LDS Church developed a set of 24 sound color filmstrips for use in their educational system. These have been re-released through this Blue Valley Stake corporation with cassette tape soundtracks (for manual and auto advance machines). The complete set can be ordered for \$95 (less than \$4 per filmstrip) plus postage from Creative Ministries Inc., 19404 East Holke Road, Independence, Missouri 64057.



Nephi Speaks

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done?

Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save;

Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.

Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 13:27-30)

the southern Maya lowlands. It is possible because of timing and location that El Mirador is part of the Mamom phase. The answer must await the ceramic study. The timing and characteristics of the Mamom phase fit in well with the arrival of the Mulekites, the last of the three Book of Mormon migrations from the Old World.

Most of the 21,000 pieces of broken pottery (sherds) collected in the first season fall within the 300 B.C. - A.D. 100 period when a majority of the large buildings were constructed. The most interesting part of El Mirador culture history is in the apparent timing of its decline and abandonment. There is evidence that El Mirador began its decline as early as A.D. 300. It is estimated that the site was finally abandoned about A.D. 500. This is about 400 years earlier than the general abandonment of the southern Maya lowlands. At present, there is no archaeological answer as to why El Mirador was abandoned so much earlier than most other southern Maya lowland sites.

From the Book of Mormon, we know there was almost constant warfare among the Lamanites after the destruction of the Nephites in A.D. 384-5 (Mormon 4:10). Therefore, we would expect the abandonment of the site to be linked to the political situation. If El Mirador actually began its decline around A.D. 300, it would be following the Book of Mormon culture history quite closely, as the people divided again in A.D. 231. Why didn't the Lamanites choose to continue the development of this very large site since they continued to live in and add to many other sites in the southern Maya lowlands? We do not know, but the possibility exists that El Mirador had special significance during the Nephite period, a significance that the Lamanites chose to downplay. This, of course, is no more than an hypothesis, given the preliminary state of the El Mirador evidence. However, hypotheses are a necessary step toward understanding archaeological evidence.

All in all, El Mirador promises to be one of the more interesting sites to believers in the Book of Mormon. We shall be looking forward to the information proceeding from future field seasons.

The new data coming from El Mirador is another example of the literal explosion of information which is coming from New World archaeology and especially from

Mesoamerica, the prime area for the location of the Book of Mormon. The culture history of El Mirador as revealed thus far is part of an ongoing convergence of Mesoamerican archaeological data with the culture history of the Book of Mormon. The fact that there are a lot of geographical and archaeological details in the Book of Mormon indicates that this kind of information is worthy of study and that it is and will be a part of God's plan in preparing a people of great faith and power.

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