



“Representing years of research and careful transcription, this annotated collection of *The Writings of Oliver H. Olney* is an important contribution to the body of Latter-day Saint history—and belongs on the shelf of every serious historian.”

—Alonzo L. Gaskill, professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University



## The Writings of Oliver H. Olney

April 1842 to February 1843 – Nauvoo, Illinois

Edited by Richard G. Moore

**Subjects: Documentary History, Religious studies, Latter-day Saint History**

Oliver H. Olney, an early convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, fled to Nauvoo, Illinois, following persecution in Missouri. In Nauvoo, Olney became disgruntled with church leadership and viewed Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet. His writings, consisting of journal entries, letters, and booklets, express his concerns about what he viewed as serious iniquity within the Church. Despite his opposition to church leadership resulting in his excommunication, Olney remained in Nauvoo and wrote about the things he witnessed.

The handwritten papers of Oliver Olney are housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University and are made available in published form for the first time. They offer historical researchers and interested readers of the early Latter-day Saint movement a unique glimpse from the margins of religious society in Nauvoo. Olney’s writings add light to key events in early Mormonism such as rumors of polygamy, the influence of Free Masonry in Nauvoo, plans to migrate westward to the Rocky Mountains, as well as growing tensions with disaffected church members and rising conflict with Nauvoo’s non-Mormon neighbors.

**340 pages**

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**Richard G. Moore** received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from BYU in American History and his doctorate in Education from the University of the Pacific. He retired after teaching thirty-eight years for the Church Educational System as a seminary teacher, institute instructor and director, and as an instructor for the Ancient Scripture Department at BYU. Dr. Moore is a Richard L. Evan’s Fellow, serving as a member of BYU’s Office of Religious Outreach. The author of four published books and more than a dozen articles, Richard presents often at BYU’s Education Week and the John Whitmer Historical Association Conference. Richard and his wife, Lani, live in Orem, Utah. They have three children and nine grandchildren.

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## Points of Interest

Despite his objection to leadership and eventual removal from church membership, Oliver Olney remained in Nauvoo and was a first-hand witness to many key events such as the growth of Freemasonry, rumors of polygamy, and migration plans to the Rocky Mountains. His record offers invaluable “outsider” verification of themes and events important to Nauvoo history.

### Key topics with page samples

- Olney reports on the rumors of polygamy circulating around Nauvoo (pp 66, 89–90, 110–11).
- Olney talks about Masonry coming into Nauvoo and Church leaders becoming masons (pp 5, 12–13, 16–17, 43, 53).
- Olney writes about the plan of the Church to move to the Rocky Mountains (pp 78–79, 87–90, 106–9).
- Olney includes his own personal spiritual manifestations, including meeting with twelve ancient prophets he refers to as the Ancient of Days (46–47, 95–96) .
- The book includes Olney’s published works: *The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed* and *Spiritual Wifery at Nauvoo Exposed* (pp 241, 275).

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### Excerpt

**[Folder number 3]** City of Nauvoo June 4th 1842

I again have arived at the Citty of Note with feelings of no ordinary kind as there is yet much a doing in the name of the Lord The Inhabitsants of the Citty Together did meet to establish an order of things that zion may be great They apointed Candidates The county to rule some of the Church others not that a sympthy of feelings mite exist Again I Look at the storys that takes the daily rounds that raises much smoke if there is not much fire As there is a connection Between smoke and fire so I must say of the doings of the Citty and the storys afloat Some noted ones of the Citty is said to have power to seal the assurance of an eternal rest if their doings have ben ever so bad It is don threw the orthoroty of the P-hood that threw the institution of masonry they have received Of masonry I cannot speak But of their works I will venture to say will far excede anything that can be found in the history of our American soil since our fathers fought And gained their Independance By the shedding of blood Report says much is adoining amongst the two sex that is unlawful unwise and degrading in every sense of the word The heathen would blush at it As I of late have herd that daily salutes my ears as I am a passing and repassing threw the Citty of Nauvoo that infants are found of which no account has ben given of them I pass by the perticulars and speak on general terms and say their is to much smoke to say their is no fire I now draw to a close and say The half is not told

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