

## The Mark Hofmann Case: A Basic Chronology

1954

9 Jan. Steven Christensen born in Salt Lake City, Utah.  
7 Dec. Mark William Hofmann born in Salt Lake City, Utah.

1966

At age twelve Hofmann purchases his first Mormon item: a five dollar Kirtland Safety Society Note signed by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon.

1973

June Mark Hofmann graduates from Olympus High School, Salt Lake City.  
June *Book of Common Prayer* bought by Deseret Book Co.  
27 Nov. Hofmann called to serve a mission to the England Southwest Mission, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He would served primarily in the areas of Portsmouth, Bristol, and Bath.

1976

Spring Hofmann enrolls at Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

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This chronology has been assembled from a variety of sources. I have benefited from a review by various friends and colleagues. A detailed chronology (1980-87) compiled by Mike Carter appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 August 1987. See also *Deseret News*, 31 July 1987, A6; and [William G. Hartley], "Fraudulent Documents: A Chronology for the BYU Symposium" (distributed on 6 August 1987).

1977

15 April Hofmann gets engaged for the first time. He later breaks off the relationship.

1978

June Hofmann gives a photocopy of an account of a second anointing ceremony in LDS temple (supposedly dated 1920) to Sandra Tanner, a professional anti-Mormon in Salt Lake City.

1979

29 April Hofmann writes a college essay in the form of a letter to his mother in which he is very critical of the historical policies of the LDS church.

Fall Hofmann and Jeff Simmonds discuss the CBS TV miniseries based on Irving Wallace's 1972 novel *The Word* (the lost book of James), a story of ancient manuscripts, forgeries and murder.

14 Sept. Hofmann marries Doralee Olds in the Salt Lake Temple.

October Hofmann sells a Second Anointing blessing to Utah State University archivist Jeff Simmonds for sixty dollars. Hofmann makes Simmonds promise he will not tell anyone where he got it. Hofmann now claims a 1912 date for this item.

1980

16 April Hofmann shows his wife a 1688 edition of the Bible and specifically points out that several pages are stuck together. Police later establish that this Bible was purchased by Hofmann in Bristol while on his mission in England.

17 April Hofmann shows Jeff Simmonds the 1688 Bible and they separate the stuck pages, discovering the "Anthon Transcript."

18 April Danel Bachman and Mark Hofmann visit Dean Jessee at the LDS church historical department in Salt Lake City. Jessee then begins his study of the “Anthon Transcript.”

22 April The Church accepts “Anthon Transcript.”

3 May KSL-TV (Salt Lake City) interviews Hofmann in Danel Bachman’s office at the Logan, Utah, LDS Institute of Religion. Newspapers carry the story of the “Anthon Transcript” discovery. Hofmann becomes a celebrity.

1–4 May Mormon History Association annual meetings held in Canandaigua, New York. One session is devoted to the “Anthon Transcript.”

June The Church attempts to check the provenance of the “Anthon Transcript” in order to authenticate it.

27 June Hofmann visits Dorothy Dean in Carthage, Illinois. He tells her he is trying to establish the source of the 1688 Bible.

July Mark and Doralee Hofmann move to Sandy, Utah.

29 July Dorothy Dean signs affidavit, convinced by Hofmann that her mother must have been the source of the 1688 Bible.

13 Oct. The “Anthon Transcript” is sold by Hofmann to the LDS church. In exchange the Church gives him a five dollar Mormon gold coin minted in 1850, a first edition of the Book of Mormon, and several examples of pioneer Mormon Currency. Total value: \$20,000.

## 1981

8 Jan. Hofmann is arrested for stealing a bag of sliced almonds from a grocery store in Salt Lake Valley.

12 Feb. Hofmann calls Michael Marquardt, asking for information on the 1844 succession. He specifically wants to know what Joseph Smith was doing on 17 January 1844. Two days later Marquardt tells him Joseph Smith spent the day at home.

16 Feb. Hofmann shows Church Archivist Donald Schmidt a photocopy of a faded 1844 document that appears to be the text of a blessing Joseph Smith gave to his son Joseph Smith III, 17 January 1844. Schmidt is noncommittal. Hofmann then decides to approach Richard Howard, Church Historian of the RLDS church.

24 Feb. Hofmann informs Howard of the Joseph Smith III blessing. Several days later Howard calls Hofmann, at which time Hofmann promises not to sell it before 8 March.

27 Feb. Schmidt and associates in the LDS church historical department inform President Hinckley of the Joseph Smith III blessing document. The Church decides to obtain it.

2 March The Joseph Smith III blessing is sold to LDS church for about \$20,000 in trade. (The Church trades this document to the RLDS church on 18 March for an 1833 Book of Commandments.) Soon after, Hofmann donates to LDS church a Thomas Bullock letter to Brigham Young, dated 27 January 1865, to add credibility to the blessing. About the same time of the blessing transaction, LDS church purchases some "White Notes" from Hofmann. Hofmann also sells some to Al Rust, a coin dealer in Salt Lake City.

April At LDS general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley discusses the Joseph Smith III blessing.

April-May James Dibowski and Albert Somerford, forensic experts associated with the U.S. Postal Inspector's Crime Lab, authenticate Joseph Smith III blessing. The paper tests would be done by the McCrone Institute of Chicago.

May Hofmann purchases a large collection of letters from Steve Gardiner in Utah County. On 18 May he pays Gardiner \$20,000; in November he borrows \$25,000 from Al Rust which he pays to Gardiner. This Gardiner purchase constitutes the core of the catalogue list of Mormon manuscripts Hofmann issues about this time.

15 May RLDS President Wallace B. Smith announces that a team of experts has tested the Joseph Smith III blessing and established its genuineness. About this time Hofmann meets Lyn Jacobs and Brent Metcalfe.

29 May The Joseph Smith to Emma letter (dated 3 March 1833) is sold to Brent Ashworth, a Utah County lawyer-collector, for \$6,000 (\$4,000 in cash, \$2,000 in trade).

## 1982

January Hofmann orders rubber stamps from the Salt Lake Stamp Co. which he would use to make various denominations of Spanish Fork notes.

March Hofmann tells Ashworth of a collection of nineteenth-century letters from the Palmyra area that is coming on the market; he says that a Lucy Mack Smith letter is among them.

6 March Hofmann calls Ashworth to tell him about another "find." He drives to Ashworth's home in Payson and shows him a 13 January 1873 letter of Martin Harris to Walter Conrad. Ashworth wants it; the tentative selling price is established at \$27,000. Ashworth offers to trade documents signed by George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee.

29 July Hofmann shows Ashworth the letter of Lucy Mack Smith to Mary Pierce, dated 23 January 1829. They agree to have Dean Jessee check the handwriting of the letter prior to final purchase by Ashworth. Selling price about \$33,000 in trade.

23 Aug. News conference held regarding the Lucy Smith letter.

17 Sept. Hofmann interviewed by Peggy Fletcher, editor of *Sunstone*. The interview is published in *Sunstone Review* 2 (September 1982): 16–19. Hofmann admits in the interview that with the high prices being paid for Mormon documents "there may be some temptation to forge." Later in the interview he says, "I'm in this for the money."

Sept. Hofmann interviewed by Jeffrey Keller for the *7th East Press* (an off-campus BYU student newspaper). A summary of the interview appeared in the September 1982 issue, 6-7.

20 Oct. David Whitmer to Walter Conrad letter (dated 2 April 1873) sold to LDS church for \$10,000.

21 Oct. Hofmann sells Ashworth a half-page fragment from the "Book of Mosiah" for \$5,000. Later Ashworth buys a second fragment, a full page from the "Book of Helaman," for \$25,000. Both are featured in the *Ensign* 13 (October 1983): 77.

Nov. to Dec. Spanish Fork Co-Operative notes sold to Alvin Rust. Hofmann had prepared several sets of these undated notes, in denominations of ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents, and one dollar. Hofmann sold sets to various individuals at \$1,500-\$2,000 per set.

## 1983

5 Jan. Hofmann calls G. Homer Durham, managing director of the LDS church historical department, about a letter he says he has just found. In contacting Durham, Hofmann skirts the normal Church channels for acquiring documents. Durham takes Hofmann directly to President Gordon B. Hinckley. The document is the earliest known holograph of Joseph Smith, a letter to Josiah Stowell, dated 18 June 1825. The price agreed upon is \$15,000. The Church insists on establishing its authenticity.

10 Jan. Hofmann flies to New York City. He meets there with Charles Hamilton, a well known autograph dealer. Hofmann convinces Hamilton that the 1825 letter is authentic, and he signs a statement to that effect.

14 Jan. Elwyn Doubleday sells the Lounsbury Collection of Letters to William Thoman. Hofmann will claim he purchased the Harris 1830 letter from Thoman in March 1982. Police later show that this Doubleday sale to Thoman occurred on 14 January 1983.

14 Jan. Letter of Joseph Smith to Josiah Stowell (18 June 1825) sold to LDS church for \$15,000. The letter is then placed in the First Presidency vault.

3 March E. B. Grandin printing contract for first printing of Book of Mormon, signed by Joseph Smith and Martin Harris (dated 17 August 1829), sold to LDS church for \$25,000.

April Hofmann visits the Justin Schiller-Raymond Wapner Galleries in New York City for the first time. He introduces himself as a dealer in rare coins; he also begins to purchase rare children's books from them.

Nov. Letter of Joseph Smith to General Jonathan Dunham, 27 June 1844, sold to Dr. Richard Marks, of Phoenix, Arizona, by Hofmann, who had earlier promised it to Brent Ashworth. Ashworth would learn of the sale on 27 January 1984.

29 Nov. Hofmann calls Michael Marquardt and tells him he has just found a Martin Harris letter. He reads the letter to Marquardt.

1 Dec. Hofmann has Michael Marquardt to his home for dinner. He shows him the text of a letter of Martin Harris to William W. Phelps, dated 23 October 1830. Marquardt tells a number of people about it during the next week.

16 Dec. Lyn Jacobs, fronting for Hofmann, offers to sell LDS church an 1830 Martin Harris letter to W. W. Phelps (the "white salamander" letter). President Hinckley declines, indicating that the price is too high. Brent Ashworth also rejects the offer. Hofmann, "fronting" for Jacobs, approaches LDS Church Archivist Donald Schmidt, eventually suggesting that perhaps a wealthy Church member could be found to buy it and then donate it to the Church. This middleman idea proves to be attractive. Brent Metcalfe tells Hofmann of Steven Christensen.

1984

6 Jan. The Harris letter is sold to Steven Christensen and Gary Sheets. Hofmann had asked \$50,000 for it but had accepted an offer of \$40,000 payable over eighteen months: \$1,000 down, \$9,000 in two weeks, and the balance in increments of \$10,000 at six month intervals.

January Christensen retains BYU historians Ron Walker and Dean Jessee to study historical context of Harris letter. In a 24 January letter to his research team, he counsels them to seek the truth in their studies.

Late Jan. Hofmann tells Christensen he has a cash-flow problem; if Christensen can give him the \$9,000 plus \$5,000 now, Hofmann will give him a bonus: the transcript of a 1 November 1825 contract in which Joseph Smith, Sr., Josiah Stowell, and other partners agreed on the division of proceeds from a money-digging enterprise they had organized to find buried treasure. Christensen agrees to advance the money in exchange for a copy of the text and the right to buy the original for \$15,000 if and when Hofmann acquires it.

February Alvin E. Rust, *Mormon and Utah Coin and Currency* published. It contains several Hofmann forgeries.

February Dean Jessee's *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* appears. It includes six Hofmann forgeries.

March Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Utah Lighthouse Ministry, though wanting to believe the Harris letter authentic, admits to "some reservations" because of its similarity to an affidavit of Willard Chase in E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unvailed* [sic] (1834) and to a statement by early LDS convert Joseph Knight. Tanners publish long extracts from Harris letter in the *Salt Lake Messenger*.

7 March Steven Christensen issues a press release admitting ownership of the 1830 Harris letter, but he says that he will not release it until further research is done on it. His researchers were then working on (1) *examining the physical text* (they chose Kenneth Rendell of Newton, Mass., to do this); (2) *establishing the provenance of the*

*letter* (Dean Jessee worked back to Elwyn Doubleday, a dealer in postal memorabilia in Alton Bay, New Hampshire); and (3) *understanding the historical context of the letter* (Ronald Walker, Dean Jessee, and Brent Metcalfe were working on this aspect).

18 May “Mike Hansen” [Hofmann alias] orders printing plates from Cocks-Clark Engraving in Denver, Colorado, for Deseret currency.

June “Mike Hansen” orders twelve zinc etchings from William Clayton’s *Latter Day Saint’s Emigrants Guide* (1848) from Heisler Engraving in Kansas City, Missouri. Part of the \$389.69 order is paid with a check for \$169.69 signed by Mark W. Hofmann.

August Hofmann sells full set of Deseret currency (dated 1858) to Alvin Rust for \$35,000.

21–24 August Sunstone Theological Symposium, Hotel Utah, Salt Lake City. First public discussion of the Harris 1830 letter by Jan Shipps and Richard Bushman.

22 Aug. Utah Lighthouse Ministry publishes *The Money-Digging Letter*.

25 Aug. *Los Angeles Times* publishes long article on the Harris letter. Other newspapers across the country follow its lead.

Sept. Utah Lighthouse Ministry publishes copy of a circulating typescript of the 1825 Smith-Stowell letter, and questions why the 1830 Harris letter is devoid of mention of God or angels.

26 Sept. Hofmann learns from Kenneth Rendell that forensic examiner of paper, William G. Krueger, has determined there are no indications of forgery in the 1830 Harris letter.

October In an address at general conference, Elder Bruce R. McConkie warns members who conduct or support historical research threatening to the faith of other members. Three days later Christensen fires Brent

Metcalfe from his research team, but gives him severance pay. Metcalfe had filled in for Christensen in giving a talk to the faculty at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah. The discussion had become very heated over Metcalfe's refusal to bear his testimony to the group after discussing the Harris 1830 letter. Christensen writes a letter to President Hinckley shortly thereafter (16 October) in which he says he has decided to suspend research on the letter and to drop plans to publish a book about it.

30 Oct. Wilford Cardon sends Hofmann a check for \$12,000 for an 1807 Betsy Ross letter.

“Mike Hansen” orders Jim Bridger notes from Utah Engraving Company.

21 Nov. “Mike Hansen” orders printing plate for Emma Smith hymnal back page from Debouzek Engraving, Salt Lake City.

28 Nov. Emma Smith hymnal sold to Brent Ashworth for \$5,000 and a Brigham Young letter.

12 Dec. “Mike Hansen” leaves Mark Hofmann fingerprint, which police later find, on receipt at Salt Lake Stamp Company.

#### 1985

2 Jan. Hofmann sells two Jim Bridger notes to Charles Hamilton for \$10,000.

15 Feb. Steven Christensen receives a report from Albert H. Lyter, III, a forensic chemist in Raleigh, North Carolina. Lyter had examined the ink on the Harris 1830 letter and reported: “There is no evidence that the examined document was prepared at other than during the stated time period.”

26 Feb. Christensen again writes to President Hinckley about the Harris letter.

29 Feb. President Hinckley calls Christensen and assures him that the Church wants the Harris letter.

8 March “Mike Harris” orders plate from DeBouzek Engraving in Salt Lake City for “The Oath of a Freeman.”

11 March Hofmann flies to New York City.

13 March Hofmann purchases five items from Argosy Book Store in New York City for \$51.42. One item he claimed he purchased at this time was the “Oath of a Freeman,” the oldest printed item in American history. Hofmann claimed he paid twenty-five dollars for this specific item. Several days later he returns with the “Oath of a Freeman” to Schiller’s Gallery in New York City. Various authorities are contacted by Schiller to examine the broadside. William Matheson, chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress accepts the item and says a battery of tests will be performed on it to determine its authenticity. In April the Library of Congress tells Schiller and Wapner, Hofmann’s agents, that it wants to buy the “Oath of a Freeman.”

15 March Thomas Wilding and Associate Syd Jensen, at Hofmann’s invitation, agree to invest \$22,500 in eighteen rare books.

20 March Kenneth Rendell sends his final report to Christensen: “There is no indication that this letter [the Harris 1830 letter] is a forgery.”

21 March Wilding and Co. investors give Hofmann \$22,500 to purchase rare books.

25 March “Mike Hansen” orders a second plate of the “Oath of a Freeman.”

3 April Christensen tells *Salt Lake Tribune* that tests show Harris letter to be authentic, that researchers are preparing it for publication, and that their findings will be announced at the Mormon History Association annual meeting in May.

8 April Schiller sends “Oath of a Freeman” to Library of Congress. Asking price: \$1.5 million.

16 April Letter of David and Peter Whitmer to Bethell Todd (dated 12 August 1828) sold to LDS church for \$1,500 by Hofmann.

18 April First Presidency accepts Steven Christensen’s donation of the Harris 1830 letter to Church.

23 April Alvin Rust advances Hofmann \$150,000 to purchase “McLellin Collection” in New York City. Hofmann later tells Rust that he has sold the McLellin Collection to the LDS church for \$300,000.

28 April *Church News* announces Church’s acquisition of Harris letter from Christensen, and publishes the letter, with a careful statement from First Presidency acknowledging apparent authenticity.

29 April Utah Lighthouse Ministry’s *Salt Lake Messenger* accuses LDS church of hiding a second letter that deals with early treasure hunting by the Smith family. *Salt Lake Tribune* claims 1825 Smith-Stowell letter exists, but Church spokesman denies that Church possesses it.

30 April Rhett James questions authenticity of Harris letter based on study of word patterns of “known” Harris writings.

2 May At Mormon History Association annual meetings in Independence, Missouri, Dean Jessee summarizes findings by experts who noted that nothing had been found indicating forgery. As Jessee would reemphasize in the months to follow, one can prove forgery but not authenticity; authenticating is a matter of reducing probability, not of proving. Ronald Walker discusses context of treasure hunting into which the letter apparently fits.

5 May Church spokesman retracts his denial of Church having the 1825 letter, saying he was informed by President Hinckley that the letter was in First Presidency vault and perhaps would be subject of critical study as Harris letter had been.

9 May First Presidency releases text of 1825 Smith-Stowell letter with statement that Dean Jessee says document “appears definitely to be in hand of Joseph Smith” and is earliest document written by the Prophet. Document expert Charles Hamilton of New York had authenticated the letter earlier.

11 May Newspapers nationwide feature headlines claiming that the Smith-Stowell 1825 letter links Mormon church founder to the occult.

14 May Spokesman denies Church has hidden Oliver Cowdery history.

15 May Walter McCrowe Associates find the Harris letter’s paper “consistent” with period of date.

20 May Time magazine publishes “Challenging Mormonism’s Roots” about the documents controversy. Kenneth Rendell verifies, based on his examination and tests, and based on ink and paper tests done by others, “that there is no indication that this [Harris] letter is a forgery.”

25 May Ronald Vern Jackson displays forgery of Neeley court docket to support claim that Harris letter is a fake.

Early June Brent Metcalfe, who earlier had passed to John Dart, a reporter with the *Los Angeles Times*, information from an anonymous source [Hofmann] about the existence of an Oliver Cowdery history hidden by the First Presidency, now meets with Hofmann and Dart in Salt Lake City. Hofmann tells Dart he has seen the Oliver Cowdery history in the vault of the First Presidency, that this history contains a different account of the origins of the Church, and that it credits Alvin Smith with a key role in obtaining the Book of Mormon plates.

5 June Wilford Cardon wires \$110,000 to Schiller-Wagner in New York City to invest in a Charles Dickens manuscript “The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s bargain.” Hofmann had told him of the investment opportunity.

9 June Hofmann offers the same investment opportunity to Thomas Wilding he had offered to Cardon.

13 June *Los Angles Times* cites “insider” (anonymous interview with Mark Hofmann) that LDS church presidency is hiding a Cowdery history.

14 June Library of Congress returns “Oath of a Freeman” to Schiller-Wapner Galleries: price too high at \$1.5 million.

28 June Elder Hugh Pinnock helps arrange a loan of \$185,000 from First Interstate Bank for Hofmann to help purchase McLellin papers.

6 July *Salt Lake Tribune*, citing Hofmann, says McLellin Collection includes Pearl of Great Price Facsimile 2.

29 July Letter of Joseph Smith to General Jonathan Dunham, 27 June 1844, sold to Brent Ashworth, after Hofmann bought it from Deseret Book Co., which had bought it from Dr. Richard Marks, who had bought it from Hofmann. Hofmann loses about \$56,000 on this transaction, but he must keep Ashworth quiet as Ashworth is beginning to tell people how untrustworthy he is.

August Brigham Young papers “sold” to Wilding group for \$23,600.

12 Aug. Hofmann signs contract to buy a home in Cottonwood area of Salt Lake City for \$550,000. Hofmann agrees to pay \$5,000 in earnest money, \$195,000 at closure, and three additional annual installments of \$195,000. The closing is set for 15 October, 1:00 P.M.

21–24 August At Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, historians Michael Quinn, Marvin Hill, and Ronald Walker say that Joseph Smith’s involvement with “folk magic” can be sustained without Hofmann documents.

3 Sept. Hofmann’s \$185,000 check to First Interstate Bank bounces.

10 Sept. Deseret Book sells Hofmann *Book of Common Prayer* for \$50. It contains a signature of “Nathan Harris.” Several days later Hofmann returns to claim that a poem written by Martin Harris was in the back of the volume.

13 Sept. Hofmann admits to Wilding and Syd Jensen that their money had not purchased the “Oath of Freeman” or Dickens manuscript, that Brigham Young papers he had offered to sell did not exist, and that he cannot return their money. Hofmann spends the day trying to raise money. One angry investor hits Hofmann in face. Increasing pressure put on Hofmann.

16 Sept. Leslie Kress and Kenneth Rendell sell Hofmann two pieces of papyrus on consignment for expected \$10,500 sale. 23 Sept. Hofmann offers to sell papyrus piece to Curt Bench, of Deseret Book Co.

25 Sept. Hofmann offers to sell papyrus piece to Ashworth.

30 Sept. Hofmann tries to use papyrus as collateral for \$150,000 loan arranged by Wade Lillywhite of Deseret Book.

1 Oct. Hofmann sells Deseret currency notes to Deseret Book.

2 Oct. Christensen warns Hofmann to tell Elder Pinnock of his problems.

3 Oct. Hofmann sells Nathan Harris *Book of Common Prayer* to LDS church for \$700 in trade.

4 Oct. Hofmann tells Elder Pinnock he must sell “McLellin Collection” rather than donate it to Church, so Pinnock arranges for it to be purchased for \$185,000 during 13–19 October. Mission President David E. Sorensen, working through his attorney, David West, is to purchase the McLellin Collection, if someone can authenticate it. Steve Christensen is chosen to do this.

6 Oct. A one-third interest in a Betsy Ross letter sold to Wilford Cardon.

7 Oct. Radio Shack outlet in Cottonwood Mall sells to “M. Hansen” a battery holder and a mercury switch.

11 Oct. Hofmann offers to sell President Hinckley a Kinderhook plate and Joseph’s translation of it. The offer is declined.

13 Oct. Hofmann tries to sell papyrus (supposedly Facsimile 2), for \$100,000. By now Hofmann's debts are at least \$1,300,000.

15 Oct. Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets killed by bombs. Police warn Ashworth that he may be on the same hit list. As the Ashworths hurriedly go into hiding, their son is involved in a tragic accident that proves fatal.

16 Oct. Hofmann injured by bomb in his car. Some speculate that the bomb was intended for Brent Ashworth or Christensen's attorney.

16+ Oct. Police identify Hofmann as suspect in Christensen and Sheets murders, motive linked to dealing in fraudulent documents. Police with search warrant go through Hofmann's house, find a green high school letterman's jacket, and, in a locked basement room, books and manuscripts and note cards containing words from the Book of Mormon.

19 Oct. Church announces Harris letter was given to FBI to authenticate. The FBI tests did not indicate forgery. Second search of Hofmann home conducted.

21 Oct. Elder Hugh Pinnock releases details of his role in obtaining a loan for Hofmann.

23 Oct. In a news conference, Elders Hinckley, Oaks, and Pinnock give details about their contacts with Hofmann.

25 Oct. Elder Pinnock repays Hofmann's loan to First Interstate Bank.

30 Oct. Information from Rendell says papyrus Hofmann tried to peddle was from him, not part of any McLellin collection.

31 Oct. Hofmann released from LDS Hospital. Later in the day he is charged with illegal possession of a machine gun. He pleads innocent and posts \$50,000 bail. A Daniel Boone letter (1775) is sold at a Sotheby's auction for \$29,000. The letter was a Hofmann creation. Sotheby's later buys letter back.

Nov. Grand Jury hears from people who dealt with Hofmann. No charges filed.

13 Nov. Hofmann takes a polygraph test.

20 Nov. Hofmann's attorney announces that Hofmann passed the polygraph test and thus did not kill Sheets and Christensen.

28 Nov. Traughber papers in Texas are found to contain some McLellin papers but are not the expected McLellin Collection.

Dec. Utah State Supreme Court rejects an appeal that would have forced a nurse to reveal what she overheard Hofmann say in hospital.

17-20 Dec. George Throckmorton and William Flynn begin their investigation of historic documents at the LDS church historical department. They discover cracked ink on documents that Hofmann handled, but they are not sure what caused it.

## 1986

7-20 Jan. Second examination in LDS historical department by Throckmorton and Flynn. About this time the FBI lab in Washington, D.C., reports that its tests had determined that the Harris 1830 letter was *not* a forgery. Neither, according to the FBI, was the 1829 printing contract for Book of Mormon.

9 Jan. Terri Christensen delivers Steven Fred Christensen, Jr., by cesarean section. It would have been Steve's thirty-second birthday.

22 Jan. Third examination by Throckmorton and Flynn, joined by Al Lyter. Exam conducted at Utah State Crime Lab.

4 Feb. Prosecutors charge Hofmann with two murder counts, twenty-three counts of theft by deception and communications fraud involving, among others, the "Anthon Transcript," Harris letter, and nonexistent McLellin Collection. Hofmann goes to Salt Lake County Jail.

5 Feb. Probable cause statement released, listing Hofmann documents involved in fraud counts. Investigator George Throckmorton says none of documents described are authentic.

7 Feb. Rendell says several Hofmann documents are forgeries, but he is not sure about Harris letter. Prominent LDS historians, with only media reports about case for fraud to counter earlier reports showing authenticity, maintain view that some of the documents are authentic.

9 Feb. Hofmann released on \$250,000 bail.

11 Feb. *Salt Lake Tribune* quotes James R. Dibowski, former director of U.S. Postal Crime Lab in Cincinnati, contending Joseph Smith III blessing document is genuine.

April Prosecutors examine forty witnesses to collect evidence to build their case against Hofmann.

1 April LDS church announces it is returning court documents received from Hofmann to Hancock County, Illinois.

4 April Hofmann charged with four additional theft by deception counts.

11 April George Throckmorton examines a second copy of "Oath of a Freeman" loaned to police by Wilding. He says it is a fake printed from a negative made in Salt Lake City.

14 April Preliminary hearing in the case of The State of Utah v. Mark W. Hofmann begins.

18 April Investigators show that Hofmann used "Mike Hansen" alias and that Mike Hansen bought bomb ingredients and engraved plates used to print some documents sold by Hofmann.

Former LDS Church Archivist Don Schmidt testifies that Church took few steps to authenticate documents from Hofmann, indicating that most documents were examined solely on basis of their historical contexts.

19 April Fourth examination of documents, conducted in a laboratory at Throckmorton's home. At this point 688 documents including 302 Hofmann documents have been examined. Sixty-one of these are believed to have been forged by Hofmann.

20 April LDS church announces that forty-eight documents were purchased or otherwise obtained from Hofmann. The Church paid Hofmann \$57,100 for seven items; the other forty-one were acquired by donation or trade.

23 April Hofmann reinjures his knee, falling and fracturing the kneecap. Hearing postponed until 5 May.

May *BYU Studies* special issue focuses on tests the Harris and Smith letters had been subjected to and on issues raised by the letters, including treasure hunting in and before Joseph Smith's time, based on non-Hofmann sources.

3 May Mormon History Association annual meeting, Salt Lake City. Special session on early Mormon history. Papers by Ronald Walker and Alan Taylor later published in *Dialogue* 19 (Winter 1986). At the same meetings, Richard Lloyd Anderson makes a slide-lecture presentation on the Joseph Smith to Hyrum Smith Revelation-Letter (May 1838) showing the problems with the postmark.

7 May William Flynn, investigator for Arizona State Crime Lab, announces cracked ink proves Harris letter and other Hofmann documents were forged.

22 May Hofmann bound over to Utah Third District Court for trial on charges of murder and fraud. On 6 June he pleads not guilty to all charges. Judges rule that Hofmann would face five separate trials; the first, for murder, scheduled for 2 March 1987.

24 May Unanswered questions, including how Hofmann passed polygraph test, remain after preliminary hearings end. Based on what public has been told, many people still reluctant to agree with prosecution's case.

Summer-Fall Roderick McNeil uses a scanning auger microscope to examine the age of the ink on the documents Hofmann sold to the Church. He concludes that none were written before 1970.

16 Oct. Church announces that a search of its archives and First Presidency's vault found no Oliver Cowdery history.

28 Oct. Jerald Tanner publishes *Tracking the White Salamander: The Story of Mark Hofmann, Murder and Forged Mormon Documents*.

26 Nov. David Yocom, the recently elected Salt Lake County Attorney, removes prosecutor Gary D'Elia from the Hofmann case. Two weeks later D'Elia resigns from the county attorney's office.

Early Dec. Defense attorney Yengich and prosecutor Stott begin open discussions about a plea bargain.

## 1987

7 Jan. Plea bargain agreed to.

7-8 Jan. Stott and David Biggs drive to Yengich's home in Salt Lake City. Hofmann confesses his crimes to them.

22 Jan. Yengich forces Mark Hofmann to confront his family with his guilt.

23 Jan. Plea bargain announced. Hofmann pleads guilty to two counts of second-degree murder and two counts of communication fraud involving the Harris letter and McLellin papers. Twenty-six other counts dismissed, and Hofmann agrees to be interviewed about the murders and documents. He goes to the Utah State Prison. Belief continues among some historians that not all Hofmann-related documents are forgeries.

11 Feb.-  
27 May Interviews conducted with Hofmann in prison.

23 April At the invitation of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History and the department of history, BYU, George Throckmorton discusses the Hofmann forgeries with historians and archivists at BYU for two hours.

31 July County Attorney's office releases 600-page transcript of interviews its staff conducted with prisoner Hofmann. Hofmann confessed that all the documents listed on statement of probable cause were forged. Some dissatisfaction is expressed in scholarly circles and in the public with the incompleteness of Hofmann's confessions.

August D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* published.

6 Aug. BYU symposium on "Church History and Recent Forgeries." The concluding address by Elder Dallin Oaks published in the *Ensign* 17 (October 1987): 63–69.

4 Sept. Deseret Book Company, owned by the LDS church, announces the closing of its fine and rare book department.

## 1988

9 Jan. Hofmann parole hearing. Citing his "callous disregard for human life and that the killings were done to cover other criminal activities," the parole board tells Hofmann that he should spend the rest of his life in prison.

March Michael George interviews Hofmann for about seven hours. Hofmann claims to have forged documents with at least eighty-three different signatures. When asked how he felt about the people he murdered, Hofmann responds, "I don't feel anything for them. My philosophy is that they're dead. They're not suffering. I think life is basically worthless. They could have died just as easily in a car accident. . . . I don't believe in God. I don't believe in an afterlife. *They don't know they're dead*" (see Robert Lindsey, *A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Murder and Deceit* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988], 378, italics in original).

April Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders, with a Forensic Analysis by George J. Throckmorton* published. In the summary to his forensic analysis, Throckmorton concludes: “During the one-and-one-half-year investigation into the Mark W. Hofmann documents, more than 6,000 documents reportedly dating from between 1792 and 1929 were examined. Of that total, 443 documents came from Hofmann. Of these, 268 (or 60 percent) were found to be authentic—mostly public court records and other historically insignificant items. Another 68 documents (or 15 percent) could not be proven either genuine or forged. However, 107 documents (or 24 percent) were found to be forged” (552).

21 April The family of Kathleen Sheets awarded nearly two million dollars in a court judgment against Mark W. Hofmann.

August Naifeh and Smith, *The Mormon Murders: A True Story of Greed, Forgery, Deceit, and Death* published.

6 Aug. *Salt Lake Tribune* reports that Hofmann was plotting to have members of the Utah Board of Pardons killed.

10 Aug. Doralee Olds Hofmann files for divorce.

19 Aug. LDS church releases official statement condemning *The Mormon Murders* for its “scurrilous descriptions, accusations, and willful misrepresentations of the actions and motives of the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

15 Sept. Hofmann attempts suicide by way of a drug overdose. He is rushed to the University of Utah Health Sciences Center.

27 Sept. Hofmann transferred to hospital at Utah State Prison.

Sept. Lindsey, *A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Murder and Deceit* published.

1 Oct. *Salt Lake Tribune* announced that Deseret Book Co. had filed a civil law suit in Utah’s Third District Court

against Wade Lillywhite, a key witness in the Hofmann forgery case. Lillywhite, a former employee in Deseret Book Company's Fine and Rare Book Department in Salt Lake City is accused of defrauding the bookstore of \$236,308. On 13 January 1989 Lillywhite pleads guilty to falsifying records and stealing rare books for his own use, and on 17 March 1989 was sentenced to ten years probation and restitution totaling almost \$229,000.

16 Oct. Richard P. Lindsay, managing director of public communications for the LDS church, tells *Deseret News* that the Church plans to publish "a complete list of errors, misquotes and exaggerations" in *The Mormon Murders*.

### 1989

16 Feb. *Salt Lake Tribune* announces that the LDS church public relations department is working on a full account of the Hofmann case. Rumors also circulate that a book-length history of the Hofmann case is being researched by members of the LDS church historical department.