

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

A HISTORIC PRESS.

In Rose, Wayne county, New York, is published a large-sized 4-page newspaper made up principally of patent plate matter, but devoting a few columns in each issue to the local news of the vicinity, and rejoicing in the abundant title of *The Farmers' Counsel and Times*. The name of Wayne county will arouse interesting recollections in veteran members of the Church as well as in those who by reading are familiar with early events in Church history. All such will be still more interested in learning that the old press upon which the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed is still in existence; furthermore, that it is still in serviceable condition; and that the very paper to which we have just referred is regularly printed upon it. The issue for July 12 is before us, and the most valuable article in it is a historical sketch of the piece of old machinery.

Major John H. Gilbert, who at last reports was still alive and residing at Palmyra, N. Y., at the age of 92 years, worked in the office of the *Wayne Sentinel* (E. B. Grandin, proprietor,) during the months from September, 1829, to March, 1830, the time during which the Book of Mormon was printed. He was a compositor and also a dancing master; and his duties in the latter calling took him away from his "case" so frequently, that Wm. VanCamp (deceased), another employe in the office, "distributed" the type, in order to give Gilbert a chance to work the next day. He relates that the "copy" from which he set was on ruled paper—an expensive article in those days—and "the letters were so closely crowded together that words like 'and' and 'the' were divided at the end of the line. The copy was in a Mr. Cowdery's handwriting, but it was produced from a tightly buttoned coat each morning by Hyrum Smith. One day's supply only was given at a time, and even this was carefully taken away at night, there being but one occasion when Gilbert was allowed to take it away from the office. There were no marks of punctuation in the copy—a great bother to Gilbert in 'reading proof.' At times Cowdery occasionally 'held the copy.' The 'matter' was 'paged' so that thirty-two pages could be printed at a time on one of Robert Hoe & Co.'s 'Smith' six-column hand-presses. After the sheets had been run through once and properly dried, they were reversed and printed on the other side. The book-binder then folded them by hand, and severed the leaves with an ivory paper cutter. The result was that the 2,500 large sheets made 5,000 small sheets, with sixteen pages printed upon each side."

The identical press that printed these sheets is now owned, the article continues, by Barless Bros., of Rose, N. Y.; upon it "*the Farmers' Counsel and Times*" is at present printed, and arrangements were completed for its exhibition at the World's Columbian

Exposition at Chicago last year by the state board of managers on exhibits." As establishing the correctness of the assertion, the following affidavit, prepared two years ago, is submitted:

STATE OF NEW YORK, } ss.
COUNTY OF WAYNE,

John H. Gilbert, a resident of Palmyra, said county and state, came before the undersigned, and being duly sworn, says that his age is 90 years; that he was born on the 13th day of April, 1802; that he is well acquainted with the printing press owned by Barless Bros., of Rose, said county and state; that he knows that said printing press is the identical printing press upon which the original Mormon Bible was printed; that he knows said printing press to be what is known as the Mormon printing press; that he was a compositor on the said original Mormon Bible; said Mormon Bible having been printed in Palmyra, said county and state; that there can be no question as to the identification of said printing press—owned by Barless Bros.—as to its being the identical printing press upon which affiant worked upon in the printing of the original Mormon Bible.

[Signed] JOHN H. GILBERT.
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 8th day of July, 1892. And I hereby certify that affiant is known to me to be the identical John H. Gilbert that he represents himself to be.

R. C. BARLESS,
Notary Public.

THE SPRINKLING TAX.

The announcement made in the News last evening that the Territorial supreme court had decided the sprinkling tax ordinance of Salt Lake City to be invalid was received with satisfaction by the people generally, who have felt that the manner in which the tax was levied was a grievous injustice to most of the property owners affected. The ordinance provided for a special tax of seven cents per foot frontage on all streets sprinkled. When the levy was made in 1891 it was protested against by a number of taxpayers. As in all instances of this kind, where resistance is to be made to an unjust enactment, it is necessary for some one to take the initiatory step. The contest against the special sprinkling tax was headed by O. H. Pettit, Esq., who held the position of city councilor for a term previous to the time of the passage of the ordinance, and who in that capacity had given attention to the street sprinkling subject. He took up the fight in earnest, and notwithstanding that the case went against his side in the district court, he persisted in carrying on the struggle, and through the able presentation by his attorneys of the cause in the higher court has secured a great triumph on behalf of the people.

To the court Mr. Pettit and his conferees set out that the city had levied a tax upon their property to pay for sprinkling, and threatened to enforce the collection by selling the property if the tax was not paid at once. They insisted that such sale would be an irreparable injury to

them, as the tax sought to be enforced was inequitable and illegal, and they asked relief from the court. This complaint was demurred to in the district court, the demurrer sustained and an appeal taken. On the appeal the supreme court, in a unanimous opinion, held that while the statute gave the city power to levy taxes by local assessment for sewerage, paving and other like purposes, including street improvements and repairs, authority to levy such tax for street sprinkling had not been granted in express terms; and further, that as street sprinkling was not a permanent improvement, the clause empowering the corporation to levy a tax for improvements did not apply to sprinkling, therefore the ordinance passed by the City Council was without authority of law, and void.

As the matter now stands, those who paid the tax under protest must be reimbursed by the city; a few who permitted their property to be sold rather than pay the tax also must have their property title cleared by the municipality. As for those who paid the tax without protesting, should they enter suit for its recovery because of wrongful collection, the value of their claim must be determined by the courts. In any event the city must refund a considerable sum which it has collected.

For the unpleasant predicament in which the municipality finds itself in regard to the sprinkling business, the blame belongs to the city councilors who, elected in February, 1890, passed the ordinance, and their advisers in the premises. It was urged as a "progressive" measure by its advocates, but in fact the ordinance was outrageously unjust in its design, and a Council which possessed due regard for the rights of the taxpayer never would have enacted it. Its unfairness has been patent from the first, and it is not to be wondered that the people feel relieved by its being swept away. If the ordinance had not been so grossly oppressive in its distribution of burdens as compared with the benefits received, it is improbable that there would have been any contention against it. The city was empowered to "levy and collect local taxes, in proportion to benefits," in districts created, but the sprinkling tax levy was out of all proportion to benefits for the greater part of those who had to pay the tax, hence the fight against it.

The street sprinkling, however, is a necessity. Not that its omission would be the monstrous wrong that some would have it appear, but still it is a necessity to the comfort and health of the inhabitants, as well as to the good condition of the streets in those sections of town where there is considerable amount of traffic. The question of how to carry it on presents itself, therefore, before the city administration, and no doubt the present City Council will find a way out of the dilemma, notwithstanding the handicapped position in which it finds itself by reason of the policy of its predecessors. It is suggested that the expense must be met out of the general tax. But this will be a manifest injustice to some unless the whole city can be sprinkled—a contract that is too large to undertake at present; so if a plan can be formulated by