



STATEMENT DM390

Hofmann Pleads Guilty to Mormon Murders

In a plea bargain agreement, Mark W. Hofmann confessed to the murders of two people, and the forging of two documents, including the controversial “salamander letter” (see FORWARD, Winter 1986). As a result he was sentenced to a five-year to life prison term, and is currently serving time in the Utah State Prison.

Hofmann, a dealer in old documents, had been a Mormon in good standing with the LDS Church. Looking like “the boy next door,” the brilliant former Mormon missionary forged the documents with so much finesse that he fooled the experts for a time — until his crimes ended with two murders by bombing. The first victim was **Steven Christensen**, 31, a Mormon who had been involved in the purchase of some of the forged documents. The second was **Kathy Sheets**, 50, wife of intended victim **Gary Sheets**, who had been associated with Christensen in a lucrative trade involving alleged documents from early Mormon Church history.

The Mormon Church had authenticated all of the documents prior to their being revealed as forgeries, and had published their findings in *Church News* (an official LDS Church publication). Most notable among these documents was the letter purportedly written by early Mormon “witness” Martin Harris which asserted that Smith had dabbled in folk magic and had told Harris that a “white salamander,” not an angel, had led him to some golden tablets.

As part of his plea bargain Hofmann agreed to tell all. However, the whole truth surrounding the forgeries and murders has yet to be revealed to the public by the Salt Lake City District Attorney’s office, and since Hofmann is incarcerated at Utah State Prison, he is not allowed to talk with reporters. Therefore, many questions concerning the Mormon church’s past involvement with Hofmann remain unanswered.

—*Marian Bodine*