

Joseph Smith History 1:27-65



An old photo of the Hill Cumorah¹

Joseph Knight, Sr. and the Gold Plates

Joseph Knight, Sr. had intense interest in the gold plates from the time Joseph Smith, Jr. had told him about them. More than half of what Father Knight wrote in his “Recollections of Early Church History”² are written about learning about the plates, visiting the Smith home the night Joseph received the plates, or concerns about the translation of the plates.

Transcription of what Joseph Knight, Sr.’s wrote of his memories related to Joseph Smith, Jr. and the gold plates:

[The first page of his written recollections is missing. This transcription begins on page 2. Some punctuation, capitalization, and words have been added for clarity.]

“From this, he [Joseph Smith] went to the hill where he was informed the record was, and found no trouble, it appeared plain as though he was acquainted with the place. It was so plain in the vision that he had of the place. He went and found the place and opened it and found a plain box. He uncovered it and found the book and took it out and

¹ Photo from the website | [AAAA AskGramps Website, Church History](#). Posted April 2006. It is similar to other photos taken of the hill in the early 1900s.

² Joseph Knight, Sr. wrote his “Recollections of Early Church History” on both sides of five 8”x10” sheets of paper.

laid [it] down by his side and thought he would cover the place over again, thinking there might be something else [t]here.

But he was told to take the book and go right away. And after he had covered the place, He turned around to take the book and it was not there and he was astonished that the book was gone. He thought he would look again in the place and see if it had not got back again. He had heard people tell such things. And opened the box, and behold, the book was there. He took hold of it to take it out again and behold, he could not stir the book any more than he could the mountain.

He exclaimed, "Why can't I stir this book?" and he was answered, "You have not done right; you should've took the Book and gone right away. You can't have it now."

Joseph says, "When can I have it?" The answer was, the 22nd day of September next, if you bring the right person with you." Joseph says, "Who is the right person?" The answer was, "Your oldest brother."

But before September came, his oldest brother died. Then he was disappointed and did not know what to do. But when the 22nd day of September came, he went to the place and the person appeared and told him he could not have it now. But the 22nd day of September next, he might have the Book if he brought with him the right person.

Joseph says, "Who is the right person?" The answer was, "You will know." Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale, daughter of old Mr. Hale of Pennsylvania, a girl that he had seen before, for he had been down there before with me.

Joseph then went to Mr. Stowell, where he had lived sometime before. But Mr. Stowell could not pay him money for his work very well, and he came to me perhaps, in November, and worked for me until about the time that he was married, which I think was in February.³ And I paid him the money and furnished him with a horse and cutter to go see his girl down at Mr. Hale's. And soon after this, he was married, and Mr. Stowell moved him and his wife to his father's in Palmyra, Ontario county.

Nothing material took place until toward fall the forepart of September. I went to Rochester on business and returned by Palmyra to be there about 22nd September. I was there several days. I will say there was a man nearby, by the name, Samuel Lawrence. He was a seer and he had been to the hill and knew about the things in the hill and he was trying to obtain them. He [Joseph Smith] had talked with me and told me the conversation he had with the personage which told him if he would do right,

³ Joseph Smith, Jr. and Emma Hale were married on January 18, 1827 by a Justice of the Peace Zachariah Tarbell, in South Bainbridge, New York.

according to the will of God, he might obtain [the plates] the 22nd day of September next. And if not, he would never have them.

Now Joseph was some afraid of him, [Samuel Lawrence] that he might be a trouble to him. He [Joseph] therefore sent his father up to Sam's, as he called him, near night to see if there were any signs of his going away that night. He told his father to stay till near dark, and if he saw any signs of his going, you tell him if I find him there, I will thrash the stumps with him.

So, the old man came away and saw no thing like it. This is to show the troubles he had from time to time to obtain the plates.

So that night we all went to bed and in the morning I got up, and my horse and carriage was gone. But after a while he [Joseph Smith] came home and he turned out the horse. All come into the house to breakfast, but nothing was said about where they [Joseph and Emma] had been. After breakfast, Joseph called me into the other room and he set his foot on the bed, and leaned his head on his hand and says, "Well, I am disappointed. "Well," says I, "I am sorry."

"Well," says he, "I am greatly disappointed; it is 10 times better than I expected!"

Then he went onto tell me the length and width and thickness of the plates and he said "They appear to be gold."

But he seemed to think more of the glasses or the Urim and Thummim than he did of the plates. For he says, "I can see anything; they're marvelous. Now, they [the gold plates] are written in characters and I want them translated." Now he was commanded not to let no one see these things but for a few witnesses at a given time.

Now it soon got about that Joseph Smith had found the plates and people come in to see them, but he told them that they could not for he must not show them. But many insisted and offered money and property to see them. But, for keeping them from the people, they persecuted and abused him and they [the Smiths] were obliged to hide them [the plates] and they hid them under a brick hearth in the west room. About this time, came this Samuel Lawrence, and one Beeman [Mr. Beeman, a neighbor], a great Rodsman⁴, and [they] wanted to talk with him [Joseph Smith]. And he went into the West [room] and they proposed to go shares with him and tried every way to bargain with him, but they could not.

⁴ In this time period there were some men who used a y-shaped twig or rod, sometimes called a divining rod, or dowsing rod, to discern where there was underground water, buried metal or ore, minerals, or gems. It was commonly accepted that a rodsman might be able to tell a man where was a good spot to dig a well, for instance.

Then Beeman [Mr. Beaman, a neighbor] took out his rods and held them up, and they pointed down to the hearth where they [the plates] were hid. "There," says Beeman, "it is under the hearth." So they had to guard the house until sometime in November. He [Joseph Smith] obtained \$50 and money and hired a man to move him and his wife to Pennsylvania to her father's [house.], his wife being unwell and wanted to go to her father's. He [Joseph] bought a piece of land of her father with a house and a barn on it. Here the people began to tease him to see the book and offer him money and property, and they crowded so hard that he had to hide them in the mountain."

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