

Witnesses of Isaac and Alva Hale

Affidavit Isaac Hale

As originally published in *Mormonism Unveiled* (sic) by Eber D. Howe, 1834.

I first became acquainted with JOSEPH SMITH, Jr.¹ in November, 1825.² He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called "money-diggers;" and his occupation was that of seeing, or pretending to see by means of a stone placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure. His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man--not very well educated, and very saucy and insolent to his father.³ Smith, and his father, with several other money-diggers' boarded at my house while they were employed in digging for a mine that they supposed had been opened and worked by the Spaniards, many years since. Young Smith gave the money-diggers' great encouragement, at first, but when they had arrived in digging, to near the place where he had stated an immense treasure would be found--he said the enchantment was so powerful that he could not see. They then became discouraged, and soon after dispersed. This took place about the 17th of November, 1825; and one of the company gave me his note for \$12[.]⁶⁸ for his board, which is still unpaid. After these occurrences, young Smith made several visits at my house, and at length asked my consent to his marrying my daughter Emma.⁴ This I refused, and gave him my reasons for so doing; some of which were, that he was a stranger, and followed a business that I could not approve; he then left the place. Not long after this, he returned, and while I was absent from home, carried off my daughter, into the state of New York, where they were married without my approbation or consent. After they had arrived at Palmyra N.Y.,⁵ Emma wrote to me inquiring whether she could have her property, consisting of clothing, furniture, cows, &c. I replied that her property was safe, and at her disposal. In a short time they returned, bringing with them a Peter Ingersol,⁶ and subsequently came to the conclusion that they would move out, and reside upon a place near my residence.

Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called "glass-looking," and that he expected to work hard for a living, and was willing to do so. He also made arrangements with my son Alva Hale, to go to Palmyra, and move his (Smith's) furniture &c. to this place. He then returned to Palmyra, and soon after, Alva, agreeable to the arrangement, went up and returned with Smith and his family. Soon after this, I was informed they had brought a wonderful book of Plates down with them. I was shown a box in which it is said they were contained, which had, to all

appearances, been used as a glass box of the common sized window-glass. I was allowed to feel the weight of the box, and they gave me to understand, that the book of plates was then in the box--into which, however, I was not allowed to look. I inquired of Joseph Smith Jr., who was to be the first who would be allowed to see the Book of Plates? He said it was a young child. After this, I became dissatisfied, and informed him that if there was any thing in my house of that description, which I could not be allowed to see, he must take it away; if he did not, I was determined to see it. After that, the Plates were said to be hid in the woods.

About this time, Martin Harris made his appearance upon the stage; and Smith began to interpret the characters or hieroglyphics which he said were engraven upon the plates, while Harris wrote down the interpretation. It was said, that Harris wrote down one hundred and sixteen pages, and lost them.

Soon after this happened, Martin Harris informed me that he must have a greater witness, and said that he had talked with Joseph about it--Joseph informed him that he could not, or durst not show him the plates, but that he (Joseph) would go into the woods where the Book of Plates was, and that after he came back, Harris should follow his track in the snow, and find the Book, and examine it for himself. Harris informed me afterwards, that he followed Smith's directions, and could not find the Plates, and was still dissatisfied.

The next day after this happened, I went to the house where Joseph Smith Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the Book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were "my servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him." There was also something said about "three that were to see the thing"--meaning I supposed, the Book of Plates, and that "if the three did not go exactly according to orders, the thing would be taken from them." I enquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma, (I rather think it was the former) that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them then, that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!

After this, Martin Harris went away, and Oliver Cowd[e]ry came and wrote for Smith, while he interpreted as above described. This is the same Oliver Cowdry, whose name may be found in

the Book of Mormon. Cowdry continued a scribe for Smith until the Book of Mormon was completed as I supposed, and understood. Joseph Smith Jr. resided near me for some time after this, and I had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and somewhat acquainted with his associates, and I conscientiously believe from the facts I have detailed, and from many other circumstances, which I do not deem it necessary to relate, that the whole "Book of Mormon" (so called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, and with a design to dupe the credulous and unwary--and in order that its fabricators might live upon the spoils of those who swallowed the deception.

ISAAC HALE.

Affirmed to and subscribed before me, March 20th, 1834.

CHARLES DIMON, J[ustice]. [of the] Peace.

Testimony to the Character of Isaac Hale

State of Pennsylvania, Susquehanna County, ss.

We, the subscribers, associate Judges of the Court of Common Pleas, in and for said county, do certify that we have been many years personally acquainted with Isaac Hale, of Harmony township in this county, who has attested the foregoing statement; and that he is a man of excellent moral character, and of undoubted veracity.

Witness our hands.

WILLIAM THOMPSON.

DAVIS DIMOCK.

David Hale

As quoted in *the History of Susquehanna County* by Emily Blackman.

"[Isaac Hale's] sons were : Jesse, David, Alvah, Isaac Ward, and Reuben. The last named "assisted Joe Smith to fix up some characters such as Smith pretended were engraven on his book of plates." To David Hale, however, "it always appeared like humbug.""

Affidavit Alva Hale, 1834

Editorial Note: Alva is the son of Isaac Hale, brother of Emma Hale Smith
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Alva Hale, son of Isaac Hale, states, that Joseph Smith Jr. told him that his (Smith's) gift in seeing with a stone and hat, was a gift from God," but also states "that Smith told him at another time that this "peeping" was all damned nonsense. He (Smith) was deceived himself but did not intend to deceive others;—that he intended to quit the business, (of peeping) and labor for his livelihood." That afterwards, Smith told him, he should; see the Plates from which he translated the book of Mormon," and accordingly at the time specified by Smith, he (Hale) "called to see the plates, but Smith did not show them, but appeared angry."

He further states, that he knows Joseph Smith Jr. to be an "impostor, and a liar, and knows Martin Harris to be a liar-likewise.

Statement of Peter Ingersoll, 1834:

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Editorial Note: Peter Ingersoll was a Palmyra area neighbor. Since he was not personally affected by the elopement or the money-digging, he had no vested interest in biasing the story. His recollection is included here because it recalls the first encounter between Isaac Hale and Joseph Smith and is a rare glimpse into how the Hales attempted to repair with Joseph.

"In the month of August 1827, I was hired by Joseph Smith, Junior to go to Pennsylvania to move his wife's household furniture up to Manchester, where his wife then was. When we arrived in Harmony, Pa., his father-in-law, Mr. Isaac Hale, addressed Joseph in a flood of tears: "You have stolen my daughter and married her. I had much rather followed her to the grave. You spend your time in digging for money, pretend to see in a stone and deceive the people." Joseph wept and acknowledged he could not see in a stone and never could, and that his former pretensions in that respect were all false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones. Mr. Hale told Joseph if he would move to Pennsylvania and work for a living, he would assist him in getting into business. Joseph acceded to this proposition.

Joseph told me, on his return, that he intended to keep the promise which he had made to his father-in-law, "but," said he, "it will be hard for me, for they will all oppose, as they want me to

look in the stone for them to dig money,” and in fact, it was as he predicted. They urged him, day after day, to resume his old practice of looking in the stone. One day. He came and greeted me with a joyful countenance and said: “As I was passing yesterday, across the woods, I found in a hollow some beautiful white sand. I took off my frock, and tied up several quarts of it and then went home. On my entering the house I found the family at the table, eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment I happened to think of what I had heard of a history found in Canada, called the Golden Bible, so I very gravely told them it was the Golden Bible. To my surprise they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it, for, says I, no man can see it with the naked eye and live. Now, said Joe, I have got the damned fools fixed and will carry out the fun.”

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