

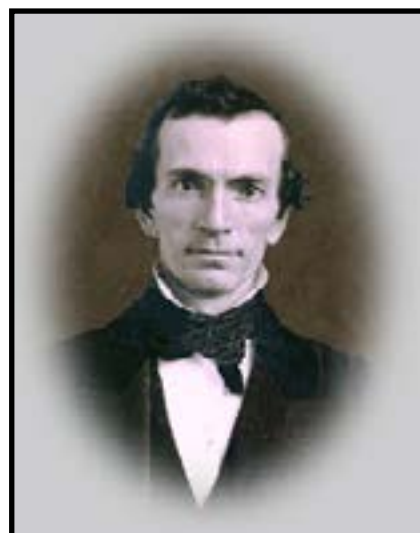
PROBING BLACK HOLES IN MORMON HISTORY

Astronomers tell us that sometimes a star will “collapse into itself and become a black hole and, in a sense, exit the universe” (*National Geographic*, June 1983, page 717). William Unruh, a physicist at the University of British Columbia, says that, “You can’t see a black hole. Just its effects” (*Ibid.*, page 735). On page 736 of the same magazine, we read that “Since not even light can escape a black hole, one can never be seen directly.” It is explained that “black holes theoretically occur when matter collapses into an exquisitely compact state. Its gravity grows strong enough to trap everything, including light, within the horizon of its gravitational field. The earth, for instance, would become a black hole, if it could somehow be squeezed to the size of a marble . . . Medium-size black holes result from the collapse of giant stars too massive to stop at the neutron star stage. They just disappear into their dark prisons” (*Ibid.*, pages 734-735).

While we know very little about astronomy or the theories concerning black holes in space, we have observed a somewhat similar phenomenon in Mormon history. Important documents which could throw a great deal of light on Mormon history, seem to mysteriously “disappear into their dark prisons.” The suppressive tendencies of the Mormon leaders with regard to documents might be compared to the gravitational pull of black holes in space. Just as black holes sweep “up stars and gas within their gravitational reach” (*Ibid.*, page 735), the fear of new discoveries coming out which do not fit the traditional views held by the General Authorities of the Church prevents Mormon scholars from bringing important research and documents to public view.

The Secret Vault

In the last issue of the *Messenger*, we demonstrated the role that Mormon leaders have taken in suppressing important documents. For instance, in 1983, Gordon B. Hinckley, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, secretly acquired a letter which was later declared to be the “Earliest known surviving document written by Joseph Smith, Jr. . . .” Because the document linked Joseph Smith to money-digging and magic, the church leaders decided it would be best to suppress it. Unfortunately for the church, however, copies of the letter got out, and we published a typed copy in the September 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. Instead of admitting



Oliver Cowdery

that it had the letter, the church decided to “stonewall.” On April 29, 1985, Dawn Tracy reported the following:

Research historian Brent Metcalfe said he knows from “very reliable, first-hand sources” the letter exists, and the Mormon Church has possession of it. Church spokesman Jerry Cahill denied the claim. “The church doesn’t have the letter,” said Mr. Cahill. “It’s not in the church archives or the First Presidency’s vault.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 29, 1985)

Finally, when it became clear that some Mormon scholars had photocopies of the letter and were going to turn them over to the news media, the church backed down, and Jerry Cahill admitted his earlier statement was “in error”:

The purported letter was indeed acquired by the church. For the present it is stored in the First Presidency’s archives . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 7, 1985)

The First Presidency’s archive or vault, where the 1825 letter was concealed, is undoubtedly the ultimate “black hole.” Documents which are embarrassing to the Mormon Church disappear into this bottomless abyss and are seldom heard of again. The noted Mormon scholar James B. Allen testified in his deposition that the First Presidency’s vault was “very private” (*The Tanners on Trial*, page 132).

Cowdery's History

Astronomers claim that if a black hole “lies between a distant star and a cosmic observer, the hole will act as a lens. As light rays from the star pass near the black hole, they will be bent by its intense gravity. The bending will create a mirage, and the observer will think he is seeing two stars. Actually, he is seeing what is not there—and not seeing what is” (*National Geographic*, June 1983, page 736).

The suppression of important documents has created many “black holes” which have seriously distorted our view of Mormon history. One of the most important documents which the Mormon leaders have hidden is the first history of the church by Book of Mormon witness Oliver Cowdery. In a revelation to Joseph Smith, he was commanded to keep this history (see *Doctrine and Covenants* 21:1). We have been aware of the suppression of this document for many years. Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth President of the church, had mentioned that the church had “the records written in the hand writing of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian, or recorder of the Church” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 201). We tried to get the Mormon leaders to make this important history available in 1961, but our request was turned down. In *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, published in 1983, we related that we had heard that the Cowdery history was in the First Presidency’s vault and that it contained magic characters. The church made no response to this accusation. Finally, on May 15, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

A little-known history written by an important early Mormon leader contains an account of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin finding the gold plates, rather than the Mormon prophet himself, according to a research historian . . . Brent Metcalfe . . . said his source is a private eye-witness account of the Cowdery history. The document tells of Joseph Smith’s brother Alvin first finding the gold plates by means of a stone, according to Mr. Metcalfe.

Mr. Metcalfe quoted the document as saying: “A taunting Salamander appears to Alvin and prevents him and his companions from digging up the gold plates.”

The reader will remember that just two weeks earlier Brent Metcalfe had charged that the church had the 1825 letter. While the church originally denied this accusation, it was later admitted that the letter was in the First Presidency’s vault. In the case of the Cowdery history, the church took a more cautious position:

LDS spokesman Jerry Cahill said the LDS Historical Department does not have the Cowdery history. He said he would not ask members of the church’s ruling First Presidency if the history is locked up in a special presidency’s vault. . . . “I don’t intend to respond to every report or rumor of documents in the First Presidency’s vault,” said Mr. Cahill. “I have no idea if the history is there, nor do I intend to ask. I can’t have my life ordered about by rumors. Where does it end?” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 15, 1985)

Church leaders seem to have taken a position of silence with regard to the Cowdery history. The Brigham Young University paper, *The Universe*, May 16, 1985, reported:

LDS Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said he would not confirm or deny the contents of the history written by Oliver Cowdery. “Apparently the story says the history is in the First Presidency’s archives but they haven’t released any information about it and I don’t believe they intend to,” he said.

In an interview with Associated Press writer Michael White, Mr. Cahill admitted that the church has possession of the Cowdery history, but he still refused to give any details:

Church spokesman Jerry Cahill said that Cowdery’s history had been in the church’s possession since around 1900 and probably is locked away in the private vault of the governing First Presidency.

But Cahill said he did not know whether it contained the information described by Metcalfe, and he would not try to find out.

“Frankly, I don’t intend to raise the question. Obviously, it’s in the possession of the church, but what shelf it is on I don’t know,” he said. (*The Oregonian*, May 21, 1985)

There seems to be no excuse for the Mormon leaders withholding the Cowdery history. In the last issue of the *Messenger* we argued that in not making the Cowdery history available

. . . the Mormon Church finds itself in a cover-up situation. According to the *Doctrine and Covenants*, God Himself instructed Joseph Smith that “there shall be a record kept among you; . . .” it hardly makes any sense for the Mormon leaders to say that God commanded the history to be kept and then lock it up in a vault so that no one can read it. We have always suspected that this history provides no support for Joseph Smith’s First Vision of 1820, and it has recently been reported that it does not support the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood by Peter, James and John . . .

The “Salamandergate” cover-up even has its own “Deep Throat”—that mysterious and unidentified person who had access to Nixon’s secrets and leaked them to the press. Only a very limited number of people could have had access to the material in the vault of the First Presidency. It is reported that Brent Metcalfe will not name his source for fear that he will get the individual into trouble with the Church.

An Eyewitness

Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985, John Dart reported that the individual who had seen the Cowdery history allowed himself to be interviewed:

Now an allegation is being made that the church possesses a 150-year-old handwritten history that claims that it was the church prophet’s older brother, Alvin, who actually found the golden plates. . . .

Church officials here have been vague in their response to questions about whether they have the history, . . . A highly reliable source told the *Times* in an interview here, however, that he has viewed it in the church’s headquarters.

The source, who insisted on anonymity in order to preserve his standing in the church, said the Cowdery history and the role it gives Alvin Smith lend further credibility to the documents disclosed earlier, which portray Joseph Smith’s involvement in occult methods to find hidden treasures without any references to religious events so familiar to present-day Mormons. . . .

Church Spokesman Jerry Cahill acknowledged that Joseph Fielding Smith, a church apostle who was church president from 1970 to 1972, wrote 60 years ago, “We have on file in the Historian’s Office the records written in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, the first historian or recorder of the Church.”

Cahill said, “I presume (they are) in the possession of the First Presidency” because they are not in the history department archives. He added that he would not ask the First Presidency if it has the purported history, saying he does not want to bother that office with questions about rumored or reported documents. A First Presidency staff member had no comment. . . .

The source interviewed by the *Times* described the Cowdery history as a book bound partly in leather, with marbled cardboard covers measuring about 8 inches by 10 inches in width and height and between half an inch and three-quarters of an inch thick. The pages are lined, he said.

The source said he decided to be interviewed about the history because the Cowdery documents provide corroboration for the salamander references in the Harris letter, which some Mormons are claiming is a forgery.

“I don’t remember the exact wording, but it said that Alvin located the buried gold with his seer stone,” he said. “I remember clearly that it was not a private venture. Alvin had other people with him, including Joseph.”

“There was no mention of a dream beforehand,” he said. The salamander appeared on three occasions, once to Alvin and twice to Joseph,” he added. . . .

. . . the church leadership’s unwillingness to speak further on the issue is being viewed by some as harmful to its public relations. “The church’s silence damages its credibility,” said George Smith . . . owner of the Mormon-oriented Signature Books publishing house.

Indeed, the church got caught with a credibility problem earlier, when it tried to deny that the earliest known letter written by Joseph Smith was in its possession.

“Conspiracy may be a bad word to use,” said the source who claims to have seen the Cowdery book, “but there must have been some sort of agreement that Joseph is the new seer now that Alvin is gone. Certainly the family and Oliver Cowdery knew. I can’t imagine that any more knew, because it’s an important aspect of the founding of the Church and it hasn’t come down in other histories that we know of.” . . . Mormon historian Ronald Walker of Salt Lake City said in an interview, “If we found out that Alvin is involved, it would not be surprising. There is evidence that (Smith family members) were up on Hill Cumorah digging before 1823.”

Walker has shown that the Smith family was among many Americans who had engaged in a “money-digging” craze during the early 19th Century. “I’m not sure the pieces fit together,” Walker said. “What we need is to get the church to release it, if the church has it.” (*Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1985)

As far as we know, Brent Metcalfe and John Dart are the only ones who know who the individual is who saw the Cowdery history. Dart’s article makes it clear that we are dealing with a man, and *The Universe* for May 16, 1985, informs us that he is one of Brent Metcalfe’s friends. *The Universe* reports that while Metcalfe was “going through several private collections, he found a firsthand account of someone who had seen this history written by Oliver Cowdery. A friend of Metcalfe, who had access to the church archives, wrote the account, Metcalfe said. He refused to release information about his friend or how the documents came into his friend’s hands.”

A number of Mr. Metcalfe’s friends have had special access to Church documents. For instance, both Dean Jessee and Ronald Walker worked for the Historical Department at one time. Dean Jessee, however, has

publicly denied that he has seen the Cowdery history. According to the *Phoenix Gazette*, May 18, 1985, Jesse said:

. . . he was unaware of any writings that would indicate that Alvin Smith saw the golden plates, although he said he has not read the Cowdery history. He said he had been under the impression Cowdery's work had been lost. . . "Metcalf's the world's foremost authority on this," Jesse said. ". . . there's a lot that's not available."

We understand that Ronald Walker has also denied being the "Deep Throat" who exposed the Cowdery history. Brent Metcalfe was at one time a security guard for the Mormon Church and had a number of friends in the Church Office Building. Besides these contacts, it is reported that Metcalfe is well acquainted with Mark Hofmann. Hofmann, of course, was involved in the sale of the Salamander letter as well as the 1825 letter that links Joseph Smith to the occult. There is evidence that Mark Hofmann has had special access to the First Presidency's vault. (As we pointed out earlier, only the most trusted individuals can see documents from that vault.) On September 28, 1982, the *Seventh East Press* reported that since the discovery of the Anthon transcript, Hofmann has "enjoyed privileged access to otherwise restricted Church archive material, including the First Presidency's vault. One reason for this privileged access, Hofmann thinks, is the fact that 'I am not a historian. I'm not going to write an expose of Mormonism.'" Through his discoveries and knowledge of documents, Mr. Hofmann has worked himself into the innermost circle of Mormon historians. He says that "The real reward in the whole business is being able to see things that no one else knows about. It gives me a kick to know that this is original stuff, that no one else on earth has pieced this together or knows what this says. So there's the pleasure. It's like being a detective." (*Sunstone Review*, September 1982, page 17)

Since there are a number of people Mr. Metcalfe has had contact with who could be the source of the information concerning the Cowdery history, we are very reluctant about trying to make a positive identification of the individual. In any case, Metcalfe has revealed that the Cowdery history was actually dictated by Joseph Smith himself. This makes the document of even greater value for those who want to know the truth about Mormonism. It is reported that there is a letter containing information on the contents of the Cowdery history. In addition, it is claimed that there is also a smaller history by Cowdery which is stored in the church's vault. The most sensational story, however, is that there may be

a microfilm of the entire Cowdery history which has escaped the "black hole" of the First Presidency's vault. If a microfilm does exist and a copy should arrive at Utah Lighthouse Ministry, we would waste no time in preparing it for publication.

Not Real Motive

The following is a copy of a letter written to us by George Smith on June 20, 1985:

To the Editors:

In your "Salamandergate" issue (No. 57, June 1985), you incorrectly attributed my motives for presenting Joseph Smith's 1825 letter to Josiah Stowell before the Mormon History Association. Neither was I "very disturbed about the Church denying that it had possession of the letter" (p. 20), nor would such concern have seemed a pertinent reason to read this letter publicly. While I cannot endorse inaccurate denials of owning documents held in trust for the LDS membership at large, examination of this letter was important primarily for analytical reasons. The 1825 portrayal of Joseph Smith's occult digging formulas in his own handwriting has singular relevance for Martin Harris's 1830 "white salamander" letter, the main subject of discussion. The 1825 letter tends to validate Joseph Smith's voice in Harris's recital of Joseph's "salamander" version of finding the gold plates. The letters together establish the use of seer stones, divining rods, and magical formulas to discern the presence of "clever spirits," hidden treasure, and even the gold plates from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Mormon. The 1825 letter is germane in demonstrating that occult practices were concurrent with Mormon origins.

Your article correctly noted that the LDS Church had acquired this earliest Joseph Smith holograph in 1983, following its authentication by Charles Hamilton Autographs, Inc., of New York. After two years of ownership, the last denial was printed in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on April 29, 1985. On May 2, the full text was read before the MHA. The following day, President Gordon B. Hinckley directed LDS spokesperson Jerry P. Cahill to acknowledge Church possession of the letter (*Tribune* 5/6/85), which he did in the May 5 *Deseret News*. The Church then released the text in the May 10 *Deseret News*, and on May 11, the *Los Angeles Times* published a photograph of the handwritten letter.

The yet-to-be-released "First Mormon History," dictated by Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in 1830, further corroborates Joseph's "salamander" version of the gold plates story, once used to describe Mormon origins.

George Smith

Fake Documents & The Harris Letter

By Jerald Tanner

In the *Messenger* for June 1985, we reported that we had learned that someone had “been making up material and attributing it to Joseph Smith. Since such an individual has the ability to create the text of a document like the Salamander letter, we are making a very serious investigation into this matter. We hope to have more to report at this in the next issue of the *Messenger*.”

(As George Smith’s letter pointed out, the Salamander letter was supposed to have been written by Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris in 1830. This letter is very controversial because it links Joseph Smith to the occult.)

The following is a report on the investigation I conducted. On October 6, 1984, a man by the name of Kerry Ross Boren wrote a letter to Dean Jessee, a noted Mormon scholar who was making a critical examination of the Harris letter to determine whether it was authentic. In this letter, Mr. Boren offered important new information which could help Professor Jessee verify the Salamander letter:

I am an inmate at Utah State Prison, . . . My purpose in contacting you at the present time is due to the recent publicity pertaining to the letter of Martin Harris . . . Joseph Smith was my second great grandfather and I have access to, and have had the privilege of, examining some papers and personal effects of Joseph Smith which have never before been seen or published. . . . One of the important things that the information clarifies are the facts behind the Martin Harris letter. . . . I have an expanded version of the “white salamander” story from Joseph’s own account.

If we can trust copies of letters provided by Mr. Boren (they have every appearance of being authentic), Dean Jessee visited him at the prison and also sent him eight different letters. By January 9, 1985, Mr. Jessee seemed to be rather enthusiastic about the matter:

In reading over the material you have sent I see its importance more than ever for a proper understanding of the Harris letter . . . the most harmful thing we can do right now is to remain silent if there is information available that will put Joseph Smith in a better light. . . . there will be all kinds of questions asked, and much criticism brought against the Church. The best ammunition for facing this issue comes from the material you have presented. (Letter dated January 9, 1985)

Even though Dean Jessee seemed to be impressed with the copies of the documents Mr. Boren provided, he did note that “some of the phrasing and usage of words is

foreign to Joseph Smith’s literary style. There are also a few contradictions of fact. . . . Being able to see the actual handwriting of the documents would possibly provide answers to these questions” (*Ibid.*). Mr. Boren only provided his own handwritten copies of the material, and when Jessee asked for xerox copies, Boren replied that he could not “gain access to the original materials until such time as I am released from this place, and therefore can only provide copies of the information . . .” (Letter dated March 17, 1985). The correspondence between Jessee and Boren apparently ended with this letter.

On May 23, 1985, Mr. Boren wrote us a letter in which he made some incredible claims. He related that he had had access to “some of the papyri, translations of portions of the plates, letters, personal history, genealogy, etc.” While I had serious doubts about these claims, I was very interested in any material relating to the forgery of Mormon documents. At that time I was unaware that Mr. Boren claimed to have material similar to the Salamander letter. In any case, I provided a researcher with the information I had about Kerry Ross Boren, and he was able to obtain copies of documents Boren had previously given to Dean Jessee.

One of the documents which Boren provided was his handwritten copy of an account of Joseph Smith’s early visions, which was supposed to have been authored by Smith himself! The account of the First Vision in this document is similar to Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 145-146). It goes on, however, to say that the Lord revealed “a curious stone” to Joseph Smith which he was to use to find the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The Lord also told him that when he arrived at the place where the records were buried he would be given “a sign” of a “lowly frog but not just a frog but a white frog . . .” On the appointed day, Joseph Smith went to the hill and “saw a frog of the purest white I had ever seen proceed forth out of a hole in the ground at the bottom of a large stone . . .” Joseph removed the stone and saw “a large room or cavern” which contained “plates of gold” and other “ancient items of curious workmanship . . .” Before he could go into the cavern, however, Joseph “again saw the large white frog and immediately above it in the air a shaft of brilliant light descending [and] an angel appeared in the midst . . . and then said unto me behold my name is Nephi . . .”

Mr. Boren also provided a copy of a letter which was supposed to have been written by Joseph Smith to Isaac Morley in 1835. In this letter Joseph Smith detailed

some of his early money-digging experiences. In another manuscript which is eight pages long, Mr. Boren gives a summary of a document written by Joseph Smith. This is also filled with material concerning Joseph Smith and money-digging.

Mr. Boren provided other documents and a list of 52 different items he has had access to. He claims that he has seen the "Mummy" of Pharaoh Necho, three rolls of papyrus, thirteen separate pieces of papyri, a revelation on polygamy that is "more lengthy and detailed" than the one published by the church, a large stack of "correspondence between early Church figures, including many by and to the Prophet," a translation of the lost "Book of Lehi" and other lost books, a translation of the Book of Abraham which contains "much not found in the present published version," and what appears to be original manuscripts of "Newton and also da Vinci."

Although I was only able to examine copies of a small portion of this purported collection, it did not take me long to conclude that it was spurious. I could plainly see how material was plagiarized from different portions of published material and combined to give some very unique interpretations. Michael Marquardt also examined the purported documents and reached the same conclusion.

In all fairness to Mr. Boren, I should say that I do not know for certain that he made up the documents. He claims that Joseph Smith gave the documents to his "third great-grandfather, Isaac Morley," for safekeeping and that they have passed down to one of his relatives who has them stored in the basement of a house in California. Although it seems very unlikely, Mr. Boren could have made his copies from material in someone else's possession. In any case, there is not the slightest chance that the documents could be genuine. They bear all the earmarks of fabrication.

On June 18, 1985, I had a personal interview with Kerry Ross Boren at the Utah State Prison. While much of his story is very difficult to believe, some of his statements seem to have some basis in fact. One of his claims is that he was a ghost writer for the historical part of Robert Redford's book, *The Outlaw Trail*, which was published in 1979. While it does not prove his assertion, I found him mentioned at least fifteen times in Redford's book. In the Forward, Robert Redford gives "special thanks" to "Kerry Boren," and on page 24 he refers to "Kerry Boren, our historian." I have found that Mr. Boren has coauthored a book entitled, *Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines*, and has also written a number of articles for magazines. On page 173 of her book, *Butch Cassidy My Brother*, Lulu Parker Bentenson refers to "Kerry Ross Boren, a recognized authority on outlaw history, National Center for Outlaw and Lawman History, Utah State University, Logan, Utah." While some historians do not have much

respect for Mr. Boren's work, it must be conceded that he has a great deal of ability as a writer.

Proves Letter?

Mr. Boren's contention that the material he has copied helps clarify "the facts behind the Martin Harris letter" must be completely rejected. As I have already pointed out, the material Boren has presented bears unmistakable evidence of falsification. Furthermore, he has not produced any real evidence that the original manuscripts even exist.

While Kerry Ross Boren sets his material forward with the claim that it supports the Salamander letter, it could raise the question of whether Boren himself had the ability to produce such a document. In his letter of January 9, 1985, Dean Jessee mentioned an important similarity between the Salamander letter and Boren's material:

. . . the reference to Harris's having a dream and waking with a coin in his hand, and upon seeing the cavern, throwing the coin back (which is also mentioned in the Harris letter), is very important right now for my work on the Harris letter.

The reference which Professor Jessee speaks of reads as follows in the Harris letter:

I later dream I converse with spirits which let me count their money when I awake I have in my hand a dollar coin which I take for a sign Joseph describes what I seen in every particular says he the spirits are grieved so I through back the dollar.

This statement in the Salamander letter seems incomplete. It does not tell where Harris threw the coin back to. It would be very difficult to throw the coin back into the dream or into the spirit world. Mr. Boren's material seems to provide a logical answer to this question. In Boren's summary ("not a verbatim account") of a manuscript written by Joseph Smith, we find the following:

Martin Harris and Joseph Knight, Sr. came down from Manchester together soon after the treasure was discovered. Harris had had a dream about the Treasure and had awakened with a silver coin in his hand. Taking this to be a sign, he went forthwith to Colesville. . . .

Harris had expressed to Knight that he thought Joseph Smith was a fake, and had stolen the treasure from them . . . but when they confronted Joseph, he related Harris' dream in detail without being prompted.

Harris would not be content until he had seen the Treasure for himself, to be content that Joseph had not removed any of it. After much persuasion, Joseph agreed to take Harris as far as the place where the buckets of silver coins were located . . . Upon seeing the piece, Harris was content and tossed his coin back

into the lot, swearing an oath that he would never reveal anything which he had seen.

The parallels between the two accounts are too strong to be ignored. If it could be established that Boren's material was in existence before the Salamander letter was discovered in late 1983, it would seem to show that it (the Salamander letter) is a forgery—i.e., a condensed version of the material Boren provided us with. The other explanation, of course, is that the Salamander letter provided structural material for someone with a vivid imagination. In this case, it would not reflect on the Harris letter. Mr. Boren insists that his material is genuine and predates the discovery of the Salamander letter.

While I have not yet found any compelling evidence that Mr. Boren's material predates the discovery of the Salamander letter, there are some stories in a book he coauthored with Gale R. Rhoades which sound like the account of Harris throwing the coin back. According to Boren and Rhoades, Joe Walker told of going into a sacred mine with Butch Cassidy. He claimed he found a rock that "shined like almost solid gold." Cassidy, however, "told me anyone who took any part of that gold would have the curse of God placed upon him . . .

"I slipped a small piece of that gold in my pocket but when we stepped outside, Butch drew his gun and told me to put it back. . . . I went back and put that piece of rock—about the size of my hand—on top of one of those leather bags, . . ." (*Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines*, page 355).

The account of Cassidy chastising Walker for taking the sacred gold sounds similar to Joseph Smith rebuking Harris in the Salamander letter for taking the spirits' coin. On page 378 of the same book, we read of a man named Joseph R. Sharp who went to the mine and tried to remove the gold. As he "prepared to climb from the mine," he was met by two Indians—apparently "apparitions delegated to watch over the sacred Ute gold." One of them "spoke with a voice of authority; calm, yet loud and in perfect English, saying: 'Put the gold back, Leave here and never return or you will surely die.'

"As quickly as the Indians had appeared, they disappeared, and with no apparent means of departure; vanished, as it were, into thin air! Mr. Sharp was taken aback by this weird display and he tossed the gold back into the mine. . . ." (*Footprints in the Wilderness*, page 378).

The reader will notice that Mr. Sharp "tossed the gold back into the mine." In the Salamander letter, Martin Harris throws "back the dollar." While my copy of the book was not printed until 1984, I have located a copy

printed in 1980 which contains the same stories. This would be at least three years before the Salamander letter was discovered.

In the March 1984 issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, we pointed out that the Salamander letter contains some striking parallels to *Mormonism Unveiled* (published in 1834) and a manuscript written by Joseph Knight (first published in *BYU Studies*, Autumn 1976). When I examined the Boren manuscript, which contains the report concerning Martin Harris's dream, I found parallels to both of these publications. Furthermore, in a note to Dean Jessee, Mr. Boren specifically mentioned the "Willard Chase affidavit" which was published in *Mormonism Unveiled* and contains important parallels to the Salamander letter. The parallels between Boren's manuscript and the Joseph Knight account are so strong that they cannot be explained away as mere coincidence. Some of the parallels are even to footnotes which Dean Jessee has provided to go along with Joseph Knight's account. One of the more interesting parallels (which is also similar to the Salamander letter) is found on pages 5 and 6 of Boren's manuscript:

. . . the angel instructed him that he could remove the plates one year from that date, if he would obey certain commandments and follow certain instructions. He would be required to bring someone with him. Someone who would be able to remove the plates.

When Joseph inquired as to whom that person would be, the angel told him only to look to the stone for instruction. Upon doing so, he saw Emma Hale, . . .

The reader will notice how similar this is to Joseph Knight's account:

. . . and the personage appeared and told him he Could not have it now. But the 22nd Day of September nex he mite have the Book if he Brot 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, . . . (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1976, page 31)

Perhaps it is only a strange coincidence that both the Salamander letter and the Boren material have parallels to Joseph Knight's account and *Mormonism Unveiled*, but the parallels do raise the question as to whether Mr. Boren or someone who has seen his material could have written the Salamander letter.

Although physical tests which have been made on the Salamander letter seem to show that it is authentic, Lyn Jacobs has stubbornly refused to tell where he obtained

it. The *Deseret News*, April 28, 1985, said that “The letter was purchased in late 1983 by Jacobs and Mark Hofmann . . .” The crime which Kerry Ross Boren was sent to prison for was apparently committed in August 1983. It would appear, then, that if he had anything to do with the Salamander letter, it would have been before he was jailed in August, 1983. Mr. Boren maintains that he has not had any contact with either Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann. I have no way of knowing whether this statement is true.

The tests which have been performed on the Salamander letter indicate that if it is a forgery, no ordinary person could have produced it. It would have to be the work of a very skilled forger. Only a person familiar with old documents, chemistry and the process of document authentication could prepare a letter that would have a chance of passing the tests the Salamander letter was submitted to. As far as I know, Mr. Boren has never been charged with forgery, and he has not offered to sell me any documents. Boren claims that he is “not an expert in document authentication.” He maintains, however, that “as a genealogist and researcher I have spent most of my life working with such items and am fully capable of recognizing them as being of the period and scope in question.” (Letter dated June 15, 1985) Mr. Boren was obviously at home with old letters and journals. In his manuscript “The High Uintahs,” he spoke of the “Kerry Ross Boren Collection” of documents. The letters in this collection went back to the 1830s. I have been told that Boren even had original Jesse James material. A photograph of a portion of an important letter he discovered relating to Butch Cassidy was published in the *Westerner*, May-June 1973. One thing that is a little suspicious about the letter is that Boren chose to suppress the names of both the writer and the recipient (see pages 41 and 62).

It is interesting to note that like Joseph Smith, Mr. Boren has spent some time searching for treasures. In the book *Footprints in the Wilderness*, page 399, we “find a picture of Boren which has labeled: “Author Kerry Ross Boren with metal detector in search of Uintah Mountain treasure.” On pages 415-416 of the same book, Boren and Rhoades wrote:

. . . the Lost Rhoades Mines; those fabulous and fantastic . . . veins of pure and enticing gold still exist . . . Their various estimates range from “enough gold to pay off the national debt” to “enough gold to pave the streets of New York City” . . .

Should any of our readers someday endeavor an expedition into the Uintahs in a quest for this gold, the authors would wish you the best of luck . . . Who knows? Maybe we’ll see you in the mountains.

Like the Salamander letter, the book by Boren and Rhoades also contains accounts of the treasure being guarded by “the spirits,” and on pages 367-371 we read of “the spirit” who was directing a clairvoyant who was searching for a lost gold mine.

One thing that should be of great concern to scholars is the fact that there seems to be an attempt in the Boren material to duplicate the spelling errors of Joseph Smith. This, of course, shows that there has been a very serious study of the writings of Joseph Smith with intent to deceive. Whether the author of the Boren materials has actually taken the final step and prepared documents which have the appearance of dating back to Joseph Smith’s time is not known. As Mormon documents increase in value, the possibility of forgery will also increase. I have recently learned that another man in Southern Utah has been forging documents relating to the Smith family. The forgeries were so good that they have passed into archival collections.

In my investigation I have been seriously handicapped by secrecy. Mr. Boren maintains that the basement of a house in California contains the original documents from which he made his copies. He claims, however, that he cannot release the location of this house. When I turn to the Salamander letter, I find the same problem. Lyn Jacobs refuses to tell me where he obtained it.

If I had investigative power like the FBI or could subpoena documents, it probably wouldn’t take me long to learn the answer to the question I have concerning Mr. Boren’s relationship to the Salamander letter. If, for instance, I could force Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann to reveal where the Salamander letter was obtained, I might be able to learn if it was really in existence prior to the time Mr. Boren came on the scene. Furthermore, I could compel Mr. Boren to reveal the location of the “original” documents (if any such documents exist) as well as the material he has stored at the prison and material in the possession of his friends. His papers would probably prove very helpful in determining the truth about his claims.

Since I have no power to gain access to the documents and information I need most, I am unable to provide a conclusive answer regarding Mr. Boren’s relationship to the Salamander letter. Perhaps some of those reading this paper can provide help. If anyone has any pertinent information on the Salamander letter, Kerry Ross Boren, Lyn Jacobs or Mark Hofmann, it would really be appreciated.

The information I have used in this article is only a summary of a 10-page report I have written on Mr. Boren and his documents. The entire report is published under the title, *Mr. Boren and the White Salamander*.

More Discoveries!

In his book, *Nightfall At Nauvoo*, the Mormon writer Samuel W. Taylor commented that “the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, contains some of the liveliest reading ever to emerge from the city of the Saints.” In the *Messenger* we have tried very hard to provide information that is both accurate and up-to-date. Fortunately, we have had some very good sources and have been able to break some important stories. For instance, in March 1983 we reprinted a money-digging agreement which Joseph Smith and his father entered into with seven other men and stated that we had heard that “a Mormon researcher had discovered the original handwritten copy” of the document. We commented that the details of the discovery would “probably be announced soon.” One year later, March 1984, we still had nothing further to report on the money-digging agreement, but we did announce the discovery of the Salamander letter and printed important extracts from it. In the September 1984 issue of the *Messenger*, we revealed that the Mormon Church had bought a letter which linked Joseph Smith to magic. We said that the letter was dated June 18, 1825, and bore the signature “Joseph Smith, Jun.” We printed a typed copy of the letter in that issue of the *Messenger*.

As the months passed, we realized that we had announced the discovery of three very important documents, but had no way to absolutely confirm their contents. In fact, we had no way to prove that the money-digging agreement and the 1825 letter even existed. Although we had complete confidence in our sources, we began to wonder if some of our readers might feel that we were listening to too many rumors. Nevertheless, an October 24, 1984, we went even a step further and reported that there was a possibility that William E. McLellin’s copy of Joseph Smith’s revelation to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon to someone in Canada had been found (see *The Money-Digging Letters*, pages 21-22). (This revelation completely failed and caused Joseph Smith a great deal of embarrassment.) Finally, in the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger* we wrote that “it has recently been reported that Mark Hofmann has obtained the original Egyptian Papyrus which Joseph Smith used as Fac. No. 2 in the Book of Abraham.”

Since publishing the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, many things have come to light which tend to vindicate our statements concerning these documents. In the June 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, we were able to print photocopies of both the Salamander letter and the 1825 letter. Although the money-digging agreement has still not been released, the Mormon scholar Ronald W. Walker wrote concerning the “agreement” and said that

“A facsimile of the original document has recently been obtained by Salt Lake businessman, Steven Christensen.” (“American Treasure Digging: A Persisting Idea,” unpublished paper, footnote 124)

McLellin Collection

On July 6, 1985, our statement concerning the discovery of the original of Facsimile No. 2 was verified in an article written by Dawn Tracy:

One of the most famous relics in Mormondom—considered by the faithful to be sacred scripture—has been located and sold in Texas. But the manuscript’s location and name of the buyer are secret, according to a collector who discovered the relic and other significant documents.

The relic, called Facsimile No. 2, is part of a collection containing papyrus fragments that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe church founder Joseph Smith translated into the Book of Abraham. . . .

Mark Hoffman, a Salt Lake seller of historical autographs and manuscripts, said he located a collection—including Facsimile No. 2—that at one time belonged to William McLellin, an early Mormon apostle. . . .

Mr. Hoffman said other items in the latest find are diaries of William McLellin, including “day-to-day and weekly activities, and papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830’s.”

“The collection is of considerable historical value in regards to the early [Mormon] church,” he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 6, 1985)

We had been aware of the possibility of more of the Joseph Smith Papyri coming to light since 1971. In the May 1971 issue of the *Messenger*, we quoted from a letter which related that Dr. Hugh Nibley had told someone that “there was more papyri found and that it was discovered in Texas. . . . Mention was made by Nibley that Facsimile No. 2 was among the papyri.” Research by Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters led us to believe that the papyri might be in the possession of a Mr. Markham, the owner of Markham’s Trading Post in Cleveland, Texas. Dawn Tracy contacted Mr. Markham’s children, and although she learned that Mark Hofmann had been in contact with their father, they claimed no knowledge of the McLellin documents. If Mark Hofmann did not obtain the McLellin collection from Mr. Markham, it is very likely that he found them in that area of Texas. It appears that J. L. Traughber, who had McLellin’s diaries at the turn of the century, lived in Tyler County, which is not very far from Cleveland, Texas. In a letter written

from Mobile, Tyler County, Texas, on July 11, 1901, Mr. Traugher commented:

I have some little manuscript books written by Dr. W. E. McLellin. I also have his journal for parts of the years 1831-2-3-4-5-6. I have over thirty letters compactly written by Dr. McLellin containing much on the subject of Mormonism. (Handwritten copy made by Michael Marquardt)

The reader will remember that Dawn Tracy said that Mark Hofmann had obtained the “diaries of William McLellin.” These diaries must have been the same ones Mr. Traugher had in his possession in 1901. We have learned also that Mark Hofmann did obtain a copy of the revelation to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon as part of the McLellin collection. In *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 22, we told of a letter in which McLellin said he had made a copy of this revelation. The following is taken from a typed copy of this letter in Michael Marquardt’s possession:

But again, Joseph had a revelation for Oliver and friends to go to Canada to get a copy-right secured in that Dominion to the Book of Mormon, it proved so false that he never would have it recorded, printed or published. I have seen and mad (*sic*) a copy of it, so that I know it existed. (Letter from William McLellin to Joseph Smith III, dated July 1872)

Dawn Tracy reported that Hofmann also obtained “papers, letters and affidavits written around the 1830’s.” We understand that these affidavits and/or statements were given by John and David Whitmer, Martin Harris, Emma Smith and Elizabeth Cowdery. In his letter to Joseph Smith III, McLellin claimed what Joseph Smith did not use the Urim and Thummin in translating the Book of Mormon “but translated the entire Book of M. by means of a small stone. I have certificates to that effect from E. A. Cowdery (Oliver’s widow,) Martin Harris, and Emma Bidamon. And I have the testimony of John and David Whitmer” (*Ibid.*, page 5). Martin Harris’s affidavit could throw important light on the Salamander letter.

The McLellin collection is also supposed to have letters between McLellin and Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer, as well as other letters, documents and four fragments from the Joseph Smith Papyri.

While Mr. Hofmann’s statement that he had acquired the McLellin collection did not appear in print until July 6, 1985, he probably discovered it over three years ago. In an interview published in *Sunstone Review*, September 1982, Hofmann commented: “I can tell you about some of the things I have sold this last year since the Joseph Smith III blessing. One of my favorites is the 1831 journal of William E. McLellin.” *Seventh East Press* for September 28, 1982, reported:

. . . Hofmann has bought and sold many other important historical documents that have not come to the media’s attention. . . Hofmann did not make copies of any of these historically significant documents for Church historians because, in his words, “of course, that would make the document less valuable.” Speaking specifically of the McClellan journal, Hofmann remarked that he was sorry that historians will not soon have the chance to study the journal, but “I am not in the business for historians: I am in it to make a living.”

At the time we read about the 1831 journal we were not aware that this was only part of a large collection. Consequently, we were not too disturbed about the fact that it was being suppressed.

Just before we published the January 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, an anonymous source informed us that Mr. Hofmann had said that he was selling the original of Fac. No. 2 to the Mormon Church and that it would never be seen again. According to Dawn Tracy, however, “Jerry Cahill stated the church does not own or possess the collection,” and “Brent Metcalfe said . . . evidence suggests the documents are owned by a private individual.” No one seems to know who this “individual” is or where the collection is now located. When the church was still suppressing Joseph Smith’s 1825 letter, George Smith stated that it was his understanding that President Gordon B. Hinckley “purchased the letter in 1983 in his own name from collector Mark Hofmann . . .” We have no additional information to support this accusation, but if President Hinckley bought the letter in his own name, the church leaders could say that the church did not own it. According to the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, June 30, 1985, “President Hinckley said he acquired” the letter “for the Church.”

In any case, it is not known if the individual who holds the McLellin collection is trying to suppress it for the Mormon Church. Dawn Tracy reported that “Mr. Hofmann said terms of the sale agreement stipulate he is not to divulge the name of the buyer nor the amount of the sale.” In the June 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, page 9, we quoted Mark Hofmann’s admission that if the church wanted him to, he was willing to help suppress knowledge of the Joseph Smith III Blessing document and “not breathe a word of its existence to anyone . . .” That Mr. Hofmann would even think of allowing such an important document to go into a “black hole” forever is deplorable, to say the least. We hope that the individual who has the McLellin collection will not continue to suppress it.

Archivists who are concerned with authenticating old documents are anxious to learn their provenance, i.e., their origin and how they came into the hands of their present owners. In the case of the Salamander letter, Hofmann and Jacobs refused to provide any information

that would help scholars find out if it has a pedigree which can be traced back to the time it was supposed to have been written. With the McLellin collection, however, we find ourselves in a far better position. We know that J. L. Traugher had McLellin's journals in 1901, and it may be possible to trace where they went from there. As we have shown, McLellin himself mentions some of the other documents. So far we have not found anything concerning McLellin having the original of Fac. No. 2. Although it has been alleged that McLellin may have stolen it from Joseph Smith in 1838, there is evidence that Smith still had it 1842. In any case, if the original should ever become available, we do have two different drawings to compare it with. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 335-336, we demonstrated that the circular object found in Fac. No. 2 of the Book of Abraham is in reality a magic disk or hypocephalus which Egyptians placed under the head of a mummy. We have presented good evidence to show that it was damaged when Joseph Smith obtained it and that his reconstruction has been falsified. We believe that the release of the original disc would vindicate our criticism of Fac. No. 2.

Smith's 1826 Trial

At our request Wesley P. Walters has prepared the following:

1826 TRIAL RECORD RECOVERED

W. P. Walters

On March 20, 1826, four years before he published the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, Jr. was hauled before the local court in Bainbridge, New York. He was accused of being "a disorderly person and an imposter" because of his claim to locate buried treasure through his peep-stone. The record of that trial, torn from the justice's docket book and taken to Utah in 1870 by his niece, was published in three independent printings and then the original record disappeared. Consequently, Mormon writers like Francis Kirkham and Dr. Hugh Nibley questioned the authenticity of both the trial and the published record of it.

In 1971 this writer and his associate Fred Poffarl came across the bills which Justice Neely and Constable De Zeng had submitted to the county for this 1826 arrest and trial of Joseph Smith. Justice Neely's bill listed the case as The People verses "Joseph Smith The Glass looker." The date and the court costs were the same as that on the printed trial record, the costs totaling \$2.68 in both instances. Accordingly, Mormon writers like Donna Hill and Dr. Leonard Arrington came to accept the trial

as authentic. However, the original docket record still remained missing.

Recently reliable sources in the Salt Lake area have reported that Mormon document dealer Mark Hofmann of Salt Lake City has acquired this missing record. Several years ago we learned that the last person to have the trial record was Rev. Samuel Johnson Carroll. Rev. Mr. Carroll was the editor of the Methodist periodical, the *Utah Christian Advocate* and he published the record there. After considerable research we succeeded in tracking down the grandchildren of Mr. Carroll. One granddaughter, Miss Eleanor Carroll of Alamos, Sorora, Mexico, reported that her grandfather's scrapbook was in storage with some family items in Sedona, Arizona. Lacking funds to bring Miss Carroll back to Arizona to retrieve the scrapbook, we shared this information privately with Mr. Hofmann. According to our sources, Mr. Hofmann followed up on this information, brought Miss Carroll to Arizona and purchased the scrapbook, which did contain the original trial record. A current letter, dated May 29, 1985, from Miss Carroll confirms that the scrapbook was indeed removed from storage and is no longer in her possession. It is not presently known if Mr. Hofmann has sold the document or if he still has it in his possession.

According to the agreement made when the information about the potential location of the document was shared with Mr. Hofmann, he was to supply us with photocopies of the document should the information prove correct. To date there has not been such reciprocation.

About the time this information was shared with Mr. Hofmann, he shared with us the news that he had located the original money-digging agreement of November 1825. This agreement spelled out the shares which Joseph Smith, his father and other members of the money-digging company were to receive if their treasure digging activities proved successful. It was Joseph's involvement in that business agreement that led to his 1826 trial. According to Mr. Hofmann, it was the plan of Mr. Steven Christensen (who had purchased the 1830 Martin Harris letter telling of Joseph's money digging activities) to publish the Harris letter along with the 1825 letter of Joseph's to Josiah Stowell (telling of treasure-guarding spirits), as well as a photo of the 1825 agreement. That work did not materialize and the November agreement remains unpublished.

It is hoped that these valuable historical documents will soon be made public, especially because of the current interest in Joseph Smith's early activities in magic and money-digging. * * * * *

The reader will notice that Wesley Walters tells of receiving a letter from Eleanor Carroll. In this letter Miss Carroll says nothing about Mark Hofmann, but

only indicates that the scrapbook has been “lost.” If Mr. Hofmann did purchase the scrapbook from her, it is possible that there was a nondisclosure clause written into the sales agreement. If such is the case, she would not be able to reveal where it went to. We really do not know what the truth is about this matter, but we hope that if the record does exist, it will not remain another “black hole” in Mormon history.

Walter’s statement about Steven Christensen having a photocopy of the 1825 money-digging agreement is verified in another article in this issue of the *Messenger*.

IRS’s Final Ruling

On March 30, 1983, the IRS ruled that we were “exempt from Federal Income tax under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.” This was a temporary ruling, however, and could have been changed if it were determined that we were a “private foundation.” Fortunately, on July 17, 1985, we received our final determination: “. . . you are an organization of the type described in section 509(a) (1). Your exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the code is still in effect. Grantors and contributors may rely on this determination until the Internal Revenue Service publishes notice to the contrary.” We would be happy to provide a copy of this letter to anyone who needs it for tax purposes.

At the present time we are a little behind on our bills, and this is preventing us from getting enough paper to continue our work in an effective manner. We still owe our lawyer over \$5,000. Any contributions would be appreciated.

Update On Appeal

On May 15, 1985, the final hearing on our appeal of the Ehat lawsuit was heard before three judges of the 10th circuit court. The hearing went very well for our lawyer. Mr. Ehat’s lawyer, on the other hand, had a difficult time fielding the thorny questions the judges threw at him. We are hopeful that the outcome will be in our favor. The decision could arrive at any time.

BOOKS & VIDEOS

Sandra Tanner Video No. 1. Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. **Price:** \$30.00

Sandra Tanner Video No. 2. Interview on Mormonism with Milwaukee television station. **Price:** \$20.00

The Tanners on Trial, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Over a hundred large pages with many photographs of original court documents. **Price:** \$5.95

An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? by Michael Briggs. **Price:** \$2.00

Tract Pack. An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. **Price:** \$1.50

Where Does It Say That? By Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. **Price:** \$5.95

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