

MR. BOREN
AND THE
WHITE SALAMANDER



By Jerald Tanner

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MR. BOREN AND THE WHITE SALAMANDER

In the *Salt Lake City 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 on this in the next issue of the *Messenger*.”

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. It tells of an “old spirit” who revealed the Book of Mormon plates to Smith. When he went to get the plates, however, “the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander” and struck him three times.

We first published information on the Salamander letter in the March 1984 issue of the *Messenger*. Sometime later we learned that Dean Jessee, one of the most noted scholars in the Mormon Church, was making a critical examination of the letter to determine whether it was authentic. On October 6, 1984, a man by the name of Kerry Ross Boren wrote Mr. Jessee a letter in which he offered important new information which could help 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. It does not in any way discredit Joseph Smith, but in fact substantiates his accounts of the visions, . . . I have an expanded version of the “white salamander” story from Joseph’s own account.

These things I have always kept to myself, never wishing to publicize that which might in any way reflect negatively upon the Church, . . . I have much which could be beneficial to the Church in proving the veracity of Joseph Smith’s claims.

The next month, Mr. Boren told Jessee that he had “made these papers part of my studies for nearly twenty years” (Letter dated November 13, 1984). If we can trust

copies of letters provided by Mr. Boren, 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 . . . You have expressed concern in not doing anything that would be harmful to the Church. I have the same feelings and yet, so far as the Harris letter and its implications are concerned, 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. . . . if the portion of the collection having a bearing upon the Harris letter could be made available now when it is needed so badly, the remainder could be reserved for a later time. (Letter dated January 9, 1985)

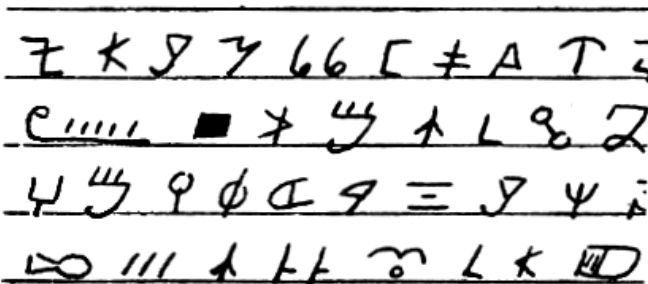
Even though Dean Jessee seemed impressed with the handwritten copies of the documents Mr. Boren provided, he did note that “some of the phrasing and usage of words is foreign to Joseph Smith’s literary style. There are also a few contradictions of fact. . . . Being able to see the actual handwriting of the documents would possibly provide answers to these questions” (Ibid.). On January 26, Mr. Jessee wrote another letter to Boren in which he said that his “interest in the Smith papers continues.” Although Dean Jessee requested xerox copies of the material, Mr. Boren wrote 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 a letter to us in which he made some incredible claims:

I have access to many unpublished records which Joseph Smith had put away before his death in the safe-keeping of my third-great-grandfather, Isaac Morley. Through these, I have access to information concerning

Joseph Smith which is available no place else, including 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. A researcher was provided the information I had about Kerry Ross Boren, and he was able to obtain copies of documents Boren had previously given to Dean Lessee. One of the documents is supposed to contain hieroglyphics or “impressions” from the sealed portion of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. The following is a photograph of some of these characters:



Another page shows characters Joseph Smith translated in 2 Nephi 9:53 and 26:17.

One of the other documents claims to be a handwritten account by Joseph Smith concerning his early visions. The account of the First Vision is very similar to Joseph Smith’s “Strange Account” of the First Vision which we have printed in *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.

Still another four-page manuscript purports to be a condensed version of a “16-page handwritten document, obviously written by someone at the request of, or by dictation from, the Prophet Joseph Smith.” The remarkable thing about it is that it contains the story of the visitation of both the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith and appears to be dated “January 15th 1827 S. Tarbell.” This would be eleven years earlier than the account published in Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*. One unusual thing that appears in this manuscript is that just before the First Vision, Joseph Smith saw, “a dark form approaching very rapidly from out of the woods, and it fell upon me and we struggled to the ground.” At the moment when Smith felt “that I would surely perish” the Father and the Son appeared to him. Since Joseph Smith’s 1832 account of the First Vision mentioned that only one personage (Jesus) appeared in the vision, it is very difficult to believe that this document, supposed to have been written five years earlier, could have any basis in fact.

As if these documents were not sensational enough, Mr. Boren has provided a list of “Items Among Joseph Smith Materials.” 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.”

The list contains 52 different items, and Mr. Boren says he has probably overlooked “numerous other items.” Although I have only been 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. As I have shown earlier, he claims that Joseph Smith gave the documents to his “third great-grandfather, Isaac Morley” for safekeeping. He claims 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 a letter dated June 15, 1985, he claims that he has "seen the documents in question on numerous occasions over a period of nearly twenty years, and have handled many of them and copied a great deal from them." However this may be, there is not the slightest chance that the documents could be genuine. They bear all the earmarks of fabrication. If this matter were brought into court, I would undoubtedly demand the production of the original records, if any such records exist.

Helped Redford?

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 co-authored a book entitled, *Footprints in the Wilderness: A History of The Lost Rhoades Mines*, and has also written a number of articles for such magazines as *The West*, *Frontier Times*, *Golden West* and *Westerner*. The book, *Butch Cassidy My Brother*, by Lulu Parker Betenson, contains this statement on page 173: "Kerry Ross Boren, a recognized authority on outlaw history, National Center for Outlaw and Lawman History, Utah State University, Logan, Utah." Mr. Boren has even written an unpublished manuscript of over 600 pages, "The High Uintas," which is on file at the Utah State Historical Society. 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. The whole thing reminds me of a story that appeared in *The Sunstone Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1983. I quote the following from that article:

It was too good to be true. When Brigham Young University Archives learned Diana Hanson claimed to have a collection of ten letters from Brigham Young and

Joseph Smith dated 1825 to 1843, and eleven volumes of Emma Smith's diaries, archivists and historians were beside themselves. It could turn out to be "one of the great finds of 20th century Mormondom," said Chad Flake, curator of the Special Collections Library at BYU.

An agreement was signed which would pay Hanson \$20,000 down for the collection two Salt Lake City appraisers say could value \$500,000 to \$5 million.

Hanson never received any money. BYU never received the momentous materials. The reason is they never existed.

Hanson purported to have the materials at her home in Bozeman, Montana. However she consistently hedged when it came to actually showing them to anyone. Then, when she returned from two weeks at National Guard camp, Hanson claimed all the items had been stolen during her absence.

All was not lost, however. Hanson said the Journals of the prophet's wife, Emma Hale Smith, were in storage at her sister's home. . . . However, though Hanson claimed the boxes were sent from her former home in Hawaii in 1982, they were not to be found.

Because of the value of their contents the FBI was called in. . . . When FBI agents confronted Hanson about her story, she admitted there were no letters, there were no boxes, there had been no burglary; and though the diaries were by a woman named Smith "There's no reason to believe in any way it's related to Emma Hale Smith or her descendants," reports the *Billings Gazette*, October 20, 1983.

"I made up the list from my own imagination," acknowledged Hanson during FBI interrogation. "I'm sorry this happened. I got caught up in a story which I was unable to stop." . . .

Hanson pleaded guilty October 18, 1983 to a misdemeanor charge of filing a false report and was given a six month sentence, a \$75.00 fine and is receiving court-ordered counseling.

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 place, 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, 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 claims his material is genuine and predates the discovery of the Salamander letter. In a letter dated June 15, 1985, he stated:

I have mentioned the material, including the Martin Harris account, and much more which I have not mentioned, to approximately four people prior to December 1983. The earliest that I discussed this material was shortly after I learned of it, nearly twenty years ago, when I gave an outline of it to Wetzell O. Whitaker, in charge of production for the motion picture department at Brigham Young University. ‘Doc’ Whitaker . . . maintained lifelong interest in producing a full-length motion picture of the life of Joseph Smith. I did some preliminary work with Mr. Whitaker on this until his untimely death. . . . Since

that time, I have spoken of the material with three other persons, one being a Mormon bishop, asking his advice on whether or not to publish the information.

I did interview a Mormon bishop (probably the same man mentioned in the letter) who remembered talking to Boren about the material in late 1983 or early 1984. Unfortunately, he was unable to recall whether Boren actually mentioned the Harris dream or the white salamander as being in these documents. He did remember, however, that when news of the Salamander letter came out, Mr. Boren claimed to have some advance information or document(s) concerning it.

A researcher told us that he has seen a copy of the Harris dream which Mr. Boren has at the prison. It appeared to him that the paper was several years old and worn through use. Unfortunately, when I went to the prison, I did not have the opportunity to examine this paper. In fact, the prison officials would not even let me bring a pencil or a piece of paper into the prison. Mr. Boren also claims that he has another copy, which is not stored at the prison, which dates back to the early 1970s.

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 co-authored 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 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 Rhoads Mines*, p. 335)

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 spirit’s 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*, p. 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.

The same manuscript which Mr. Boren claims is a summary of a document by Joseph Smith, contains a number of other similarities to the Salamander letter. For instance, in some places, it speaks of “The Spirit” instead of the “angel”: “The Spirit had revealed that the cavern was the repository of many ancient records and artifacts, of a people who had lived on this continent long ago, . . .” The Salamander letter claims that the “spirit” told Joseph Smith to “look to the stone.” The Boren manuscript also says that Smith was told to “look to the stone.”

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’ 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, p. 31)

Boren’s manuscript goes on to state that “Samuel Lawrence . . . was also a seer . . .” (page 6). Joseph Knight also noted that “Samuel Lawrence . . . was a Seear . . .” (page 32). On page 6 of the Boren manuscript we read that “Beaman was reknowned as a ‘rodsman’ . . .” Joseph Knight spoke of “Beeman a grate Rodsman . . .” (page 33). Footnote 12 on the same page talks of “Beaman . . . of Livonia.” The Boren manuscript also refers to “Beaman of Livonia” (page 8). On page 8 of the Boren manuscript we find the following:

Beaman attempted to prove to Joseph that the item—although he did not know what it was—belonged to him by divining the place where it was hidden [by this time Joseph had retrieved the plates and hidden them beneath a stone under the hearth].

This seems to have been taken from page 34 of the Joseph Knight account in *BYU Studies*:

Then Beeman took out his Rods and hild [held] them up and they pointed Dow[n] to the harth whare they ware hid. “There,” says Beeman, “it is under that harth.”

In following the Joseph Knight account which speaks of Beaman as someone who was trying to get the plates away from Joseph Smith, the author of the Boren manuscript may have committed an error. According to Dean Jessee, “Knight may have been confused on this point. According to Lucy Smith, Alvah Beaman helped Joseph Smith conceal the plates . . .” (*BYU Studies*, p. 33, ft. 12).

While I could list other parallels between the two documents, the ones I have presented should be sufficient to convince the reader that the writer of the Boren manuscript has plagiarized from the Joseph Knight account. Since the Knight account was not published until 1976, this would seem to show that the Boren manuscript was created after the Autumn 1976 issue of *BYU Studies* came out.

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* for 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. As I understand it, he was taken into custody at that time and was in the Salt Lake County Jail until May, 1984, when he was sent to the Utah State Prison. 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. Since Boren has been involved with old letters and manuscripts in the past, he could have had contact with those who sell and buy this type of material. In any case, if Jacobs and Hofmann would tell where the letter was obtained, it is possible that I could trace its pedigree back beyond the 1976 issue of *BYU Studies*. This, of course, would completely clear Mr. Boren of any connection with the Salamander letter.

One unique feature of the letter attributed to Martin Harris is that it mentions that it was a "white salamander" that appeared to Joseph Smith. Just recently I learned that the unpublished Oliver Cowdery history also contains this information. Since it did not appear in *Mormonism Unveiled* or any other published source that I am aware of, it seems that it would be very unlikely that a forger could have been aware of it. Although we had no knowledge about a salamander appearing to Joseph Smith before the Harris letter was discovered, the link between salamanders and seer stones was published in our book *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry* in March 1983 (see page 23). I do not know whether Mr. Boren saw this publication before the Salamander letter appeared.

While it seems unlikely that Boren would have had any knowledge of the Cowdery history until 1985, in the interview I had with him, he claimed that he had read extracts from the history in the material he had access to. He maintained, in fact, that Joseph Smith's brother Alvin used his seer stone to make contact with the "white salamander." From the newspaper accounts we have read, it appears that the Cowdery history gives Alvin an important role as a "seer" before his death in 1825. It is claimed, in fact, that he was the one who first discovered the Book of Mormon with his seer stone. The purported letter of Joseph Smith to Isaac Morley, which Boren sent to Dean Jessee on December 9, 1984, claims that Alvin had a vision regarding the discovery of Joseph Smith's seer stone:

. . . My mind was greatly wrought up because of the persecution both my familie and myself had endured in the vicinity of Palmyra and thus we divised to discover the dark stone which Wilard Chase told you [about] that the stone was found in digging a well at about 20 feet and my Brother Alvin asisted me in this because of the vision he had in a dream how he should do it . . .

While this might appear to give some evidence that Mr. Boren had prior knowledge of the Cowdery history, it is very possible that the Willard Chase affidavit was the main source for this statement in the purported letter of Joseph Smith:

. . . I was engaged in digging a well. I employed Alvin and Joseph to assist me; the latter of whom is now known as the Mormon prophet. After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, we discovered a singularly appearing stone, . . . as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat, and then his face into the top of his hat. (*Mormonism Unveiled*, pp. 240-241)

Although Willard Chase does not mention anything about Alvin having a vision concerning the stone, the affidavit of Peter Ingersoll mentions the fact that Alvin used a seer stone (*Ibid.*, p. 233).

While Mr. Boren's claim that he has seen extracts from the Cowdery history and knew of the "white salamander" prior to the discovery of the Harris letter seems questionable, it is possible that there is another source from which he could have obtained information on the subject of salamanders. In his letter of June 15, 1985, Mr. Boren commented:

It should be stated that, even though Joseph Smith himself consistently refers to it as a "toad" or "frog," the "white salamander" is mentioned on other occasions, and especially by Martin Harris, with whom it appeared to have special significance. The same is used repeatedly in connection with "divining."

In my interview with Mr. Boren, he said that he had discovered that the Knights Templars or Teutonic Knights called white salamanders into their seer stones when practicing divination. He claimed that there is some material on this subject which is written in French. In another letter written by Mr. Boren, he mentioned that the "white salamander" is a hermetic symbol which is found in the cabala. It is doubtful that Mr. Boren could have done in-depth research on this subject while in prison. Consequently, if it should turn out that the Knights Templars or Teutonic Knights were in contact with "white salamanders," I would have to seriously consider the possibility that Boren had

knowledge of salamanders and divination prior to the discovery of the Salamander letter. This, of course, would not necessarily mean that he would be capable of actually forging the letter itself. The tests which have been made on the Salamander letter indicate that no ordinary person could have forged it. If it is a forgery, 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 old documents. (It is obvious, of course, that even if he wanted to forge a document, he could not obtain the material necessary to do the job as long as he is in prison.)

Mr. 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). I know that Mr. Boren was at home with old letters and journals. In his manuscript, “The High Uintas,” he spoke of the “Kerry Ross Boren Collection” of documents. The letters in this collection went back to the 1830s. We 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).

Gordon B. Hinckley, of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, has suggested that if the Salamander letter is a forgery, it must have been written by an enemy of the Church. Although Kerry Ross Boren has some very unusual ideas about Mormonism, he does not consider himself as anti-Mormon. In a letter dated January 22, 1985, he asserted: “I am not in any fashion whatsoever anti-Mormon, . . . I doubt that anyone with a stronger testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and the authority of this Church can be found anywhere, . . . I feel that I know the Prophet better than any man alive . . . I will not do anything which can in any way be construed as harmful or demeaning to the Church.” If it could be established that Mr. Boren had anything to do with the text of the Salamander letter, it would probably be for some other motive than that of trying to harm the Church. From Mr. Boren’s correspondence and my interview with him, I get the impression that he would view the Salamander letter, with its stress on treasures and magic, as an accurate representation of Joseph Smith’s esoteric religious beliefs.

Boren and Treasures

The evidence shows that Mr. Boren himself has spent some time searching for treasures. In the book *Footprints in the Wilderness*, page 399, we find a picture of Boren which is labeled: “Author Kerry Ross Boren with metal detector in search of Uintah Mountain treasure. [photo by] Gale R. Rhoades.” On pages 415-416 of the same book, Boren and Rhoades wrote:

. . . the Lost Rhoades Mines; those fabulous and fantastic—almost beyond belief, if we had not proven it herein—veins of pure and enticing gold still exist and are probably the richest mines in history. Their various estimates range from “enough gold to pay off the national debt” to “enough gold to pave the streets of New York City.” . . . An attorney in Salt Lake City had once set the value . . . at more than 160 billion dollars! Staggering, but very possible—even probably—true!

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!

In Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 17, he related that the stories about “my having been a money-digger” arose because of the fact that Josiah Stowel hired him to search for a lost “silver mine” which had originally been “opened by the Spaniards in Harmony.” Boren and Rhoades maintain that the Spaniards opened up gold mines in Utah. On the back cover of their book, we find this interesting statement: “Somewhere in the High Uinta Mountains of Eastern Utah, the source of the famous Mormon gold pieces, millions of dollars of unrecovered lost Spanish bullion, and untold other caches of lost wealth, lay undiscovered after one hundred years of searching. And the quest goes on.” On page 411 of this book we find a drawing of what purports to be a “Copy of old Spanish map showing location of mine and buried treasure.” On page 92 of their book, Boren and Rhoades related that “Brigham Young was told, by the Ute Chief, Walkara, of a secret gold source, high in the back reaches of the Uintah Mountains, and Thomas Rhoades had been chosen as the instrument to bring it forth for the use of the church and its people. . . . the gold procured was never used for any other purpose than for the benefit of the church and its people.” On page 123 they claim that “Another very reliable source . . . tells us that the L.D.S. Church to this very day has stored four bushels of this gold ore and that on the top of the rich ore lies several chunks of what appears to be pure yellow gold—near the size of a man’s closed fist.” On page 326 an account of a vision of Chief Walker is given:

. . . I fasted on the shore of the SPIRIT LAKE where my visions came and TOWATS spoke to me and told me that he would show me a yellow metal which I was to be guardian of until the big hats came, . . . the great Mormonee Brigham Young did not laugh, but told Walker that they knew of his vision, and so Walker told great Mormonee Brigham Young of the Gold and let the Mormonee use it as TOWATS had told him.

Like the Salamander letter, the book by Boren and Rhoades also contains accounts of the treasure being guarded by “the spirits.” For instance, on pages 319-321 we read the following from an account by Mary Reed Harris:

David Copperfield . . . told me once that the mine which the Indians called the sacred one was above Whiterocks. He told us not to go there or the spirits would kill us and scatter our parts all over the mountain. . . .

Carre-shin-ob . . . is what the Utes call the forbidden mines, . . . the Indians won’t go there. They believe it is haunted. My father told me he had seen Carre-shin-ob once, and that inside the entrance to the cavern or the tunnel was dead bodies or bones, piled up, and bags of gold ore.

I have already told of Joseph Sharp’s encounter with the two personages (apparently apparitions) who told him to “Put the gold back,” and how, like Martin Harris, he tossed it back.

On pages 367-371 we read of a “clairvoyant” by the name of Caleb Landreth who went out to search for the lost gold. Landreth told the group of treasure hunters that “they must follow the directions of the spirit . . . the spirit of the departed princess had led him there for a purpose. It was that he should have half of all the gold found to organize a church. He was to be prophet for that organization and the money he was to receive was to be used to build churches. . . . Then taking a pencil and paper he called upon the spirit to direct him to the gold mine.” The account reminds one of the “old spirit” in the Salamander letter who directed Joseph Smith to the gold plates.

On pages 348-349 of their book, Boren and Rhoades give an account of a man who reopened the grave of his grandmother who had been dead for about thirty years because he believed that “some very important information about the mine” had been written in the Bible which was buried with her. The man and two companions “took the Bible from between her cheek and hand and carefully placed the lid back on the coffin . . .” In the Salamander letter, the “old spirit” would not give Joseph Smith the gold plates because he did not bring his brother Alvin, who had died. Joseph then asked the spirit if he should bring his brother’s remains.

Mr. Boren seems to have been fascinated by stories of lost treasures. In an article entitled, “The Lost Ewing Mine,” Boren wrote:

. . . one cannot visit the canyon of Jesse Ewing without feeling a bit uneasy. The grave of Jesse Ewing is witness to your search. The discovery might make you wealthy, but only displeasure will be felt by the spirit of Jesse Ewing if you are the one fortunate enough to discover the Lost Ewing Mine. (*The West*, February 1971, p. 49)

I do not know how deeply Mr. Boren studied divining and other occultic practices, but it appears he has some knowledge of these subjects.

Book of Lehi

In the June 1985 issue of the *Messenger*, I wrote the following:

Another thing that I feel should be made available is a purported forgery of the 116 pages which were lost from the Book of Mormon manuscript. It was Mark Hofmann himself who told me of this forgery. I feel that it could have a very important relationship to the Salamander letter. The reader will remember that although the Salamander letter removes the divine elements from the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, it has some of the basic facts of the traditional version. Interwoven with these facts, however, we find important elements of money-digging. At any rate, Mr. Hofmann claimed that he was aware of a forgery of the 116 pages which were lost from the Book of Mormon (the Book of Lehi) and that these pages contain money-digging interspersed with portions that are similar to the story found in the printed Book of Mormon. I told Mr. Hofmann that this forgery should be made available, but he has never given me the name of the person who is supposed to have it (see *The Money-Digging Letters*, p. 21).

If this manuscript really exists, I can see no reason why Mr. Hofmann has suppressed its location. It could throw important light on the origin of the Salamander letter. If, on the other hand, the manuscript does not exist, it does show that the idea of money-digging being inserted into an important Mormon document was in somebody’s mind prior to the discovery of the Salamander letter. I cannot help thinking that there might be some connection between the story of the forged Book of Lehi pages and the Salamander letter.

Rumors concerning the Book of Lehi had begun to spread just before the Salamander letter was discovered. In any case, it is interesting to note that Kerry Ross Boren lists “The Book of Lehi” as being among the “Joseph Smith Materials” he has had access to. In his letter of June 15, 1985, Mr. Boren commented: “The Book of Lehi contains no reference to money-digging, although there are references to mines and precious metals. It is more concerned with Lehi and his family and their wanderings in the wilderness, prophetic dreams and New World migrations and settlements.” Mr. Boren claimed to have access to another book translated from the gold plates which gave information on the subject of money-digging. Although neither Mark Hofmann nor Mr. Boren will tell us who owns the Book of Lehi, both say that it is in California.

Misspellings

One thing that should be of great concern to Mormon scholars is the fact that there seems to be an attempt in the Boren material to duplicate the spelling errors of Joseph Smith. For instance, Joseph Smith seems to have consistently misspelled the word *brethren* as “Brotheren” in his letters. The author of the Boren manuscripts follows this spelling in the purported letter of Joseph Smith to Isaac Morley, December 1, 1835. It speaks of “the Brotheren,” “these Brotheren” and “the other Brotheren.” In a letter written by Joseph Smith on August 18, 1833, we find a number of spelling errors. For example, we find the following: “Chirch,” “safty,” “servent,” “distroy,” “kept” and “enimies” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pages 283-288). All of these misspellings are duplicated in the purported letter to Morley.

Misspellings can be useful in helping authenticate documents. When Mark Hofmann discovered the original “Anthon Transcript” in 1980, this method was used by Dean Jessee. After talking to Mr. Jessee, Danel W. Bachman wrote: “In addition to paper, ink, and script comparisons, there are other indications that the document is authentic and is the original ‘Anthon transcript’ . . . 2. There are typical misspellings of words, such as ‘caractors,’ ‘coppied,’ ‘Citty,’ ‘propsey,’ and ‘Isaih.’”

The Boren documents show us that in the future we will have to be very careful about using misspellings as evidence of a document’s authenticity. It is obvious, of course, that if someone came forth with a letter bearing the signature “Joseph Smith” which had all the words he usually misspelled written correctly, we would have to question its authenticity. On the other hand, however, the fact that typical misspellings appear must not carry too much weight in determining a document’s authenticity. It might only prove that we are dealing with a clever forger.

It is interesting to note that both the Anthon transcript and the purported letter of Joseph Smith to Morley (the Boren document) misspell the word *city* as “citty.” My brief examination of the documents written in Joseph Smith’s own hand leads me to believe that Joseph Smith knew how to correctly spell *city*. In the eleven different places I have found it in his writings it is spelled “city” (see *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, pages 7, 16, 252-253, 468, 515, 557, 560 and 616). It is true that Smith misspelled the word *cities* as “Citys” on at least one occasion—when he spoke of Martin Harris taking the Anthon Transcript “to the Eastern Citty” (see “Joseph Smith’s 1832 Account of His Early Life,” as photographically reproduced in *Joseph Smith’s 1832-34 Diary*, page 10; also found in *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, page 7). It would appear to me that Joseph Smith knew the correct spelling of *city*, but added an extra *t* when he tried to make the plural form of the word. The 1832 account has the correct spelling of the word just three lines above the word “Citty”: “. . . to new York City . . .” The Anthon transcript, on the other hand, reads: “. . . to new York Citty . . .” As I have already stated, the Boren manuscript uses the spelling “citty”: “. . . Brother Gilbert and Brother Hadly are now in the citty . . .”

In looking over “Joseph Smith’s 1832 Account of His Early Life,” I notice that it has a number of important parallels in both wording and spelling to the writing on the back of the Anthon transcript. Parallels between the two documents, of course, would be expected because both documents deal with the same subject and were supposed to have been written by the same author. In both documents the word *characters* was originally written without the letter “h,” and in both cases it is added above the line. The 1832 account uses the word “copy,” and the Anthon transcript reads “coppied.” It is interesting to note, however, that in a letter to his wife, dated March 21, 1839, Joseph Smith spelled the word *copied* as “coppied” (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, p. 409).

If we exclude letters written above the lines to correct spelling, there is an interesting parallel between Joseph Smith’s 1832 account and the Anthon transcript. The 1832 account speaks of the “the Propicy of Isah.” (This, of course, is supposed to read, “the prophecy of Isaiah.”) The Anthon transcript also refers to “the propicy of Isah.” The 1832 account has the letters “ia” added above “Isah” in an attempt to correct the spelling. The Anthon transcript has the letter “I” above “isah” and “h” over “propicy.” That these words were identical before corrections were added above the lines might be used as evidence that Joseph Smith himself wrote both documents. Unfortunately, however, according to Dean Jessee’s transcript of the 1832 account (*The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, p. 8), the words

“Prophecy of Ish” were written by Joseph Smith’s scribe, Frederick G. Williams. Joseph Smith’s handwriting ended in the line just before these words appear. In an entry Joseph Smith recorded in his own hand in his diary (November 29, 1832), he spelled *prophesied* as “Prophecyed” (Ibid., p. 16).

Summary

Kerry Ross Boren wrote to the Mormon scholar, Dean Jessee on October 6, 1984, claiming to have documents that would prove the Salamander letter. My examination of Boren’s material convinced me that it is not authentic. Because of similarities to the Salamander letter, the question then arose as to whether Mr. Boren (or someone who was acquainted with him or his materials) could have written the Salamander letter. My examination of Mr. Boren’s material revealed that it had strong parallels to *Mormonism Unveiled* and Joseph Knight’s account of Joseph Smith’s early experiences which was published in *BYU Studies* in 1976. This is rather disturbing because the Salamander letter also has many parallels to these two publications. The interview I had with Mr. Boren convinced me that he has both the knowledge and imagination to prepare the text of a document like the Salamander letter. So far, however, I have found no evidence that Boren has the expertise necessary to forge a document that could get past the document examiners. On the other hand, Mr. Boren has worked with old documents for many years and has had original letters dating back to the 1830s.

Although Mr. Boren is in prison at the present time, the charge against him appears to have nothing to do with forgery. Boren claims that he has “never sought self aggrandisement or financial gain in this work” (Letter dated January 22, 1985), but he did tell Dean Jessee that he was “compiling a book on the life of Joseph Smith, using much of the information that I possess” (Letter dated October 6, 1984). Since Mr. Boren is a very good writer, it is possible that he could produce a book that would bring thousands of dollars in royalties. If Mr. Boren is the author of the material in his possession, this would certainly be a fraudulent scheme to make money.

Mr. Boren has prepared a summary of a document which Joseph Smith was supposed to have written. It contains a story that is strikingly similar to the account of Harris’s dream in the Salamander letter. Boren insists that this document was in existence before the Salamander letter was discovered. Although a researcher claims that this material is written on paper that appears to be several years old, I have not had the privilege of examining it; therefore, I am unable to pass any judgment on the matter. I have found, however, that a book by Boren and Rhoades

contains some interesting parallels to the story about Harris throwing the coin back. This material dates back at least five years.

Like Joseph Smith, Mr. Boren has spent some time hunting for lost treasures and mines. He also seems to have done some research on the occult.

One of the most disturbing things about the material in Mr. Boren’s possession is that it contains misspellings that are found in Joseph Smith’s own writings. 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 which is 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.

PARALLELS TO THE SALAMANDER LETTER

By Jerald Tanner

Revised July 11, 1985

On the next page the reader will find a complete text of the Salamander Letter—a letter attributed to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris. In **bold type** I have added quotations from seven publications which resemble portions of the Salamander letter. The books and articles quoted are as follows:

1. *Mormonism Unveiled*, by E. D. Howe, 1834
2. *Brigham Young University Studies*, Autumn 1976
3. *New Witness For Christ in America*, by Francis W. Kirkham, 1951
4. *Tiffany's Monthly*, interview with Martin Harris, 1859
5. *A.B.C. History of Palmyra and the Beginning of "Mormonism,"* by Willard Bean, 1938
6. *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 1983
7. *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, by B. H. Roberts, 1930

While the Salamander Letter has been declared authentic by Kenneth Rendell, Incorporated, the parallels between it and other publications which appeared from 1834 to 1983 still leave some doubt in my mind. Most scholars feel that the letter is genuine and that any parallels between it and other sources only tend to confirm that a common story was known by Martin Harris and other writers. While I agree that parallels could be taken as evidence for the authenticity of the letter, it is the close proximity of important parallels in Howe's book, *Mormonism Unveiled*, that causes concern. It is, in fact, very disconcerting to find only two pages in the Howe book separating highly significant parallels. Then, too, why are most of the important parallels found in Howe's book rather than in the interview Martin Harris had with *Tiffany's Monthly* in 1859? Although I feel that the evidence provided by an examination of the text of the letter contradicts that derived from scientific testing, I believe there is another way to resolve the issue. This is by finding the pedigree of the document. If, for instance, it had been in the Phelps family for many years, this would add a great deal to a

case for its authenticity. So far I have not had any success with regard to this matter. In *The Money-Digging Letters*, page 11, I suggested that Mark Hofmann and Lyn Jacobs were involved in the transaction. This was confirmed in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, April 28, 1985. It says the letter was "discovered by Lyn Jacobs" and was purchased by Jacobs and Mark Hofmann in "late 1983." On May 10, 1985, I called Lyn Jacobs hoping to learn where he obtained the Salamander letter. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Jacobs said he would not give out any information with regard to the discovery. I feel that since the letter will have a profound effect on the religious views of many people, scholars should put pressure upon Jacobs and Hofmann so that they will tell us where the letter came from. If there is no accountability as to where documents come from, it will tend to encourage forgers to enter the Mormon document business. Scholars should not continue to side-step this important issue. They should press to discover where the letter was located and if anyone could testify that it was in existence prior to 1983. If, for instance, I found that the letter was in existence prior to March 1983, I would not be concerned that it links a "salamander" to a seer "stone" in the same way as a reference in our book *Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, page 23. If the history of the letter could be traced back prior to 1976, when Joseph Knight's account of the discovery of the gold plates was first published in *BYU Studies*, I would feel much better about the whole matter.

One important development with regard to the Salamander letter is the announcement by Brent Metcalfe that the Oliver Cowdery history mentions a salamander appearing to Joseph Smith on two different occasions. At the present time the Mormon leaders are suppressing this important document and refuse to even discuss it. If this report proves true, it could provide important evidence with regard to the Salamander letter.

Although I still have doubts about the authenticity of the Salamander letter, if it is proven true, it will provide additional support to our thesis that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in magic and money-digging and that he may have "transformed the guardian of the treasure into the angel who gave him the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been translated" (*Mormonism, Magic and Masonry*, p. 40).

Dear Sir

Palmyra Oct 23d 1830

Your letter of yesterday is received & I hasten to answer as fully as I can—Joseph Smith Jr first come to my notice in the year 1824 in the summer of that year I contracted with his father to build a fence on my property (**During the summer of 1824 there was a small leak that soon grew larger. During the fall of 1824 Joseph Smith, sr., and his son, Hyrum, were walling a basement and digging and curbing a well for Martin Harris.** 5:35) in the course of that work I approach Joseph & ask how it is in a half day you put up what requires your father & 2 brothers a full day working together he says I have not been with out assistance (Nor was this the only assistance. . . he [David Whitmer] found to his surprise that he had accomplished more in a few hours than was usual to do in two or three days. 7:Vol.1, p. 126) but can not say more only you better find out the next day I take the older Smith by the arm (**I took him by the arm** 4:169) & he says Joseph can see anything he wishes by looking at a stone Joseph often sees spirits (**This light of the stone, . . . enabled him [Joseph] to see any thing he wished. Accordingly he discovered ghosts, infernal spirits** 1:259) here with great kettles of coin money (**kettles filled with gold and silver** 1:237) it was Spirits who brought up rock (**Joseph, Sen. told me . . . the large stones . . . we call them rocks, . . . are, in fact, most of them chests of money raised by the heat of the sun** 1:233) because Joseph made no attempt on their money I latter 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 greived so I through back the dollar In the fall of the year 1827 I hear Joseph found a gold bible I take Joseph aside & he says it is true (**They told me that the report that Joseph, Jun. had found golden plates, was true** 1:253) I found it 4 years ago with my stone (**He found them by looking in the stone** 4:169) but only just got it because of the enchantment (**the enchantment** 1:267) the old spirit come to me 3 times in the same dream & says dig up the gold (**after a third visit from the same spirit in a dream he proceeded to the spot** 3:Vol. 1, p.151) but when I take it up the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole (**after the plates were taken from their hiding place by Jo, he . . . looked into the hole, where he saw a toad, which immediately transformed itself into a spirit** 1:275-76) (Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers “affirmed that they could bind to their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph, or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose.” 6:25) & struck me 3 times (**and struck him. . . the spirit struck him again, and knocked him three or four rods** 1:242) & held the treasure & would not let me have it because I lay it down to cover over the hole (**that he would cover the place over** 2:31) when the spirit says do not lay it down (**he had been commanded not to lay the plates down** 2:31, footnote 5) Joseph says when can I have it (**Joseph says, “when can I have it?”** 2:31) the spirit says one year from to day if you obey me (**you have not obeyed your orders . . . come one year from this day** 1:242) look to the stone after a few days he looks the spirit says bring your brother Alvin (**bring with you your oldest brother** 1:242) Joseph says he is dead (**he said that he was dead** 1:243) shall I bring what remains (“Whereas reports have been industriously put in circulation, that my son, Alvin, had been removed from the place of interment” 5:34) but the spirit is gone Joseph goes to get the gold bible but the spirit says you did not bring your brother you can not have it (**he went to the place and the personage appeared and told him he could not have it now** 2:31) look to the stone Joseph looks but can not see who to bring (Lawrence . . . asked him to look in his stone, he looked and said there was nothing; 1:243) the spirit says I tricked you again (**This rogue of a spirit . . . intended it would seem to play our prophet similar trick** 3:Vol. 1, p. 290) look to the stone (**he told him to look again** 1:243) Joseph looks & sees his wife (**he looked in his glass and found it was Emma** 2:31) on the 22d day of Sept 1827 they get the gold bible—I give Joseph \$50 to move him down to Pa (**He obtained fifty Dollars in money and hired a man to move him and his wife to pensylvany** 2:34) Joseph says when you visit me I will give you a sign he gives me some hiroglyphics I take them to Utica Albany & New York in the last place Dr Mitchel gives me a introduction to Professor Anthon says he they are short hand Egyptian the same what was used in ancent times (**taken by Mr. Harris to Utica, Albany and New York; at New York, they were shown to Dr. Mitchell and he referred to professor Anthon who . . . declared them to be ancient shorthand Egyptian** 1:273) bring me the old book & I will translate says I it is made of precious gold & is sealed from view says he I can not read a sealed book—Joseph found some giant silver spectacles with the plates (**Joseph Smith, through a pair of silver spectacles, found with the plates** 1:273) he puts them in a old hat & in the darkness reads the words & in this way it is all translated (**he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would appear . . . Thus was the hol [whole] translated** 2:35) & written down—about the middle of June 1829 Joseph takes me together with Oliver Cowdery & David Whitmer to have a view of the plates our names are appended to the book of Mormon which I had printed with my own money (**The whole expense of publishing an edition of 5,000 copies, was borne by Martin** 1:13) space and time both prevent me from writing more at presant if there is any thing further you wish to inquire I shall attend to it

Yours Respectfully
Martin Harris

W W Phelps Esq